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Frantz Fanon in the Middle East

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Frantz Fanon in the Middle East

Marc Lynch

As a Martiniquais-born, French colonial citizen, intellectual contributor to Algeria's Revolution, and perhaps the most influential anticolonial thinker of his time, Franz Fanon's writings have defined intellectual histories of decolonization in the global South and inspired national liberation and freedom movements to this day. Scholars of the Middle East across a wide range of subfields and disciplines have over the last decade been rediscovering Fanon for insights into the social construction of race, psychoanalysis and the clinic, the possibilities of writing decolonial history, the failures of post-liberation revolutionary elites, and the limitations and necessities of decolonization. The growing academic literature on Fanon in the Middle East moved into the broader public arena last year, in part through reviews of Adam Shatz's well-timed and beautifully written biography *The Rebel's Clinic,* which read Fanon's ideas through his biographical experience and psychological practice as well as his role in the Algerian war of national liberation.[1] His views on violence in the context of decolonization struggles, which briefly became an object of great scrutiny in the wake of the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, were only one part of the much broader multidimensional and sophisticated theoretical engagements with Fanon across Middle Eastern Studies.[2]

Inspired by the emergence over the previous decade of this diverse theoretical and historical literature on Fanon in the Middle East, POMEPS and the Centre d'Etudes Maghrébines à Tunis (CEMAT)'s Laryssa Chomiak, along with Jillian Schwedler and Lisa Wedeen, convened a workshop on Fanon in late September 2023 – the first POMEPS workshop focused on political theory. The focus on Fanon furthermore continues our efforts at POMEPS to break down artificial barriers between the Middle East and Africa, and between Middle East Studies and the broader discipline.[3] The choice of location was intentional: much of Fanon's revolutionary writing was done in Tunis, after he was deported from French Algeria for his work with the FLN, and he continues to be revered among Tunisian intellectuals and the broader public. While Fanon wrote for a global audience, he was firmly situated in a North African context and embodied the complex interactions between those countries both with France and with decolonizing Africa: Fanon's work engages heavily with French philosophers, his career began in France, and his work for the FLN included both diplomatic missions to the Sahel and West Africa. Discussing Fanon from the global south, as **Muriam Haleh Davis** reminds us, helps us to situate his thought in its full political context and to rescue his political thought from the particular concerns of American political theorists.[4]

There is an irony, therefore, that for all the interest in Fanon among anticolonial and postcolonial thinkers across the global South, Fanon made curiously little impact in the Middle East in the early years.[5] Irene Gendzier engaged with Fanon in the pages of *The Middle East Journal* very early on, highlighting both his clinical practice and his revolutionary appeal, prompting a rebuttal from Charles Butterworth over the applicability of Fanon's theories of violence from the Algerian context to Palestine and the broader Middle East.[6] Edward Said drew on and engaged with Fanon in his critique of Oirentalism.[7] But that interest faded quickly, as **Khalil Dahbi and Montassir Sakhi** observe in this collection. As anticolonial struggles gave way to postcolonial authoritarian state-building, Fanon's arguments about revolutionary failure (see **Hanene Barouni** in this collection) and the multiple levels of continuous decolonial work required for fundamental decolonization (see **Arwa Awan** in this collection) became less convenient to suspicious autocratic regimes. What's more, the PLO's move via the Oslo process from national liberation movement to Israel's partner in management of the occupied Palestinian territories contributed to delegitimizing armed struggle as a form of political action – and, by proxy, the permissibility of invoking Fanon in at least the Palestinian context.

Several authors in this collection take up this question of Fanon's limited impact on Arab political thought. **Dahbi and Sakhi** ask, "Why haven't Arab intellectuals successfully integrated Fanon's work as an integral part of their political tradition and intellectual heritage?" In an earlier essay, Omnia Shakria observed that "the preface to the Arabic edition registers disagreements with Fanon's conceptualization of the "national question," arguing that the book was written first and foremost for Africa, albeit with wide-ranging resonances for the colonized Third World intellectual in search of the end of colonialism through violence and the pursuit of freedom and dignity."[8] I suspect that the tensions between Nasser's pan-Arabism and movements defined by pan-Africanism and the Global South may also have contributed to Fanon's relegation, with Algeria (and its revolution's most prominent theorist) defined as "African" and thus immaterial to the concerns of Nasserism or Ba'athism.

The neglect of Fanon in the Middle East should not be overstated. North African scholars, as **Muriam Haleh Davis** shows in this collection, engaged with Fanon at a much greater level than did their counterparts in the Levant and the Gulf. Fatah and the Palestinian fedayeen saw the most value in Fanon, in line with their general immersion within global anti-colonial movements.[9] **Lauan Al-Khazail** in his contribution to this collection shows similar theoretical engagement with Fanon, in his case by the Lebanese Marxist author Mahdi Amil.[10] **Rebecca Ruth Gould**, in this collection, demonstrates the role Fanon played for Ali Shariati (whether or not they actually exchanged letters) as he grappled with the role of religion in revolutionary change in the Iranian context. More broadly, as several authors in this collection note, Fanon's ideas were widely discussed in the transnationalized intellectual and political circles of the anticolonial Left. **Emma Stone Mackinnon** observes: "*Wretched* in particular is written as something of a handbook for the anticolonial revolutionary movements of its moment. The national revolutionary organizations to which it was addressed were deeply interconnected, and those networks provided the material infrastructure to circulate ideas and texts. That infrastructure involved publishers and newsletters, actors moving through nodal cities like Tunis, Accra, and Dar es Saleem, and regular meetings in the form of contentious, heady conferences. This rich networking itself was a self-consciously political project, directly defiant of the very compartmentalization Fanon described." Mackinnon describes Fanon's thinking as 'portable' as he moved within and against the colonial world. **Al-Khazail**, in this collection, argues for 'stretching' Fanon's insights beyond their original context in the same way that "Sara Salem points out how Fanon *stretches* established Marxist categories to "contextualize the specificity of capitalism in the colony without completely disregarding the assumptions underpinning Marxism."[11]

The shifting political context in the Arab world, as well as changes in broader intellectual fashion, helps explain the regional renewal of interest in Fanon. **Khalil Dahbi and Montassir Sakhi** argued in this collection that the 2011 Arab uprisings in Morocco rescued Fanon's thought from decades of neglect.[12] As Anna M. Agathangelou put it in an early article applying Fanon's thought to the uprisings, "engaging with Fanon allows us to understand the key postcolonial predicaments such as the leadership of revolution as well as the national bourgeoisie."[13] Fanon, from this perspective, helps to explain both the drivers of the uprisings and the failures of many revolutionary elites. Brahim El-Guabli and Jill Jarvis recently observed that "Frantz Fanon famously analysed the spatial and epistemological regime under colonial occupation, diagnosed the bodily inscription of colonising violence in the very muscles of the colonised, and identified the fundamental instability of colonial force. He also reckoned presciently – on his own deathbed, at the cusp of Algeria's hard-won independence – with the violence of nationalisms to come. That is, Fanon articulated the task of a decolonisation he would not live to see, and warned that when the national bourgeois took up the relay baton of power, colonial force could simply reorganise itself so that the new army and police become agents of state terror."[14] **Hanene Barouni** in this collection draws on Fanon to analyze the failures of revolutionary elites, showing how his analysis of African anti-colonial struggles helps to explain the inability of Arab revolutionaries to transcend the limitations built into their structural positions – an argument Sara Salem, in particular, has developed in

relation to the broader conditions of postcolonial Arab authoritarianism through the development of dependent bourgeois elites and Jasmine Gani has taken up in the case of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.[15]

The collapse of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process has also played a key role in the renewed interest in Fanon. Nearly two decades ago, Irene Gendzier articulated a common sense view: "who can pore over Fanon's arguments about colonizer and colonized without thinking of Palestine and Iraq?"[16] Many scholars have followed that line of thought. The parallels between French and Israeli settler colonialism, the intimacy of the violence, the intractability of the competing nationalist claims, the racialization of the colonized – all of these point towards the applicability of Fanonian thought. But at the same time, as Somdeep Sen has argued in an important book on Palestine which draws heavily on Fanon, the dominance of Israeli narratives and liberal norms of conflict resolution have often marginalized or even ostracized Fanonian approaches to the possibilities and necessities of violence in the Palestinian case, even when they are broadly accepted in other contexts. That marginalization and its implications is itself a question, not an axiomatic truth: "If an armed struggle is commonly perceived as a necessary response to oppression and as a means of possibly unmaking the condition of suffering for the marginalized in general and the colonized in particular, it is not surprising that voices from within Hamas routinely deem its armed resistance as the appropriate response to Israeli rule… for Fanon, violence was central to the (re-)invention of the decolonized subject en route to liberation."[17] The ethical, political and analytical difficulties of thinking violence in this way can be seen in Matthew Abraham's 2013 attempt to read Hamas suicide bombing through a Fanonian lens as clearly as in the more recent polemics.[18]

An alternative way of reading Palestine through Fanon is through the Cameroonian scholar Achille Mbembe, who famously viewed the Israeli occupation of Palestine as "the most accomplished form of necropower."[19] The defining feature here is not Palestinian violence alone but the realities of decades of Israeli violence, domination, and control over the land and people, down to the morbidity of allowing just enough calories into Gaza to keep people alive but weak. He reads Fanon through the specificity of the colonial and anticolonial moment: "the irrepressible and relentless pursuit of freedom requires us to mobilize all life reserves. It drew the colonized into a fight to the death – a fight they were called upon to assume as their duty and that could not be delegated to others." Mbembe's reading of Algeria intentionally echoes the experience of Palestine: "France attempted, in Algeria, to conduct 'a total onslaught' which provoked in return a response that was just as total on the part of the Algerian resistance. Following his experience of the war, Fanon was convinced that colonialism was a necropolitical force animated at its core by a genocidal drive."

Mbembe, like multiple contributors to this collection, sees Fanon's call to violence through a clinical lens: "in Fanon violence is both a political and a clinical concept. It is as much the clinical manifestation of a political 'disease' as an act of 're-symbolisation', which allows for the possibility of reciprocity and hence for relative equality in the face of the supreme arbiter which is death. Thus, by choosing violence rather than being subjected to it, the colonised subject is able to restore the self."[20] Violence here refers to more than the physical act. Mbembe uses "the language of 'work' – 'violent praxis', as a 'response to the initial violence of the settler'" – a charge taken up by **Arwa Awan** in this collection. But, critically, these concepts are 'portable', in Mackinnon's sense: for instance, Yasser Munif has recently interpreted the Syrian uprising through the lens of Fanon's analysis of anticolonial movements, while applying Mbembe's concept of necropolitics to the regime's violent response.[21] Nouri Gana and Heike Härtung recently noted that "Although Fanon's understanding of the transformative power of violence is perhaps best read in its particular historical context, it also gestures toward the creative possibilities of narrative violence."[22] Misreading violence, they argue, means that "the historical roots of violence are obfuscated; the anger and apprehension that stir, as we write, at the heart of many Palestinians and Iraqis, and which are excited by diurnal occupation and humiliation, are carefully displaced into psychic and moral loci, structural, evil, or diseased inclinations toward violence."

Ghina Abi Ghannam, in this collection, places the systematic misreading of violence at the center of the failings of mainstream social psychology, drawing correlations between Fanon's denunciations of the Algiers School's racialized assumptions about the innate violence of Algerian Muslims to broader trends in the discipline. "The transformational instrumentality of violence for Fanon is not solely situated in its promise to spatially dismantle the material conditions surrounding the individual, but as one that is, organically and additionally, psychological. For to him, the spatial "Manichean structure" of colonial domination- the structure of one compartment ruling over the other -is replicated inwards, within the psychology of the colonized. Consequentially, the spatial revolutionary action seeking to threaten this Manichean world is simultaneously reproduced in an internal revolutionary struggle that takes place in the consciousness of the colonized."

Another key theme of this collection is to take up the mantle of recent scholarship which focuses less on *Wretched* and more on Fanon's earlier texts such as *Black Skin/White Masks*, his clinical writings and lectures, and his writings on the Algerian revolution. **Lisa Wedeen**, in her opening comments to the workshop, found herself drawn to *Black Skin/White Masks* for anticipating the move towards theorizing the social construction of racialization. So too did many of the contributors to this volume. In my own work on racialization, I have found Fanon's emphasis on the psychological dimension as grounded within a broader societal context useful as a corrective both to overly abstract analyes of 'othering' and to an exclusive emphasis on skin color; these forms of racialization can be seen in contexts such as Turkey's Kurds and Israel's treatment of Palestinians as powerfully as in the race relations of the West. As **Emma Mackinnon** asks in this collection, "Is there a divide between the Fanon of *Black Skin, White Masks* and the Fanon of *Wretched of the Earth* – written so far apart, temporally and geographically? Is, say, the man narrating through his own tears at the end of the famous fifth chapter of *Black Skin* the same as the author invoking the need to "set afoot a new man" and begin a new history of humanity in the conclusion of *Wretched*? Reading these together requires we reconcile a certain pessimism about one's current condition with a determined hopefulness for change." The authors in this collection offer multiple paths toward balancing such imperatives.

The papers in this collection also reflect a recent turn towards focus on Fanon's role as a psychiatric practitioner.[23] The publication of a vast trove of his case files has invited scholars to explore the connections between his medical practice and his political thought, uncovering a remarkable new vein of praxis. As **Robyn Marasco** notes in this volume: "With more than two-thirds of his casework now available in the recently published volume, *Alienation and Freedom*, which also includes transcripts from his Tunis lectures, scholars are rediscovering Fanon's clinic and relating to it in new ways." This wealth of new sources allows **Andrea Cassatella** to dig deeply into Fanon's pyschiatric method and its connections with his political thought. **Wael Garnaoui** uses his own psychiatric training and experience to read the experience of young Tunisians seeking to migrate through the lens of Fanon's psychiatric thought, equating current visa practices with the Algiers School which Fanon so bitterly criticized and enduring colonial racial practices. Marasco explores themes of abandonment in Fanon's writing in part by engaging with this wealth of new casework material.

This collection offers an introduction to the rich new scholarship on Fanon in Middle East Studies, and points the way towards a multitude of productive avenues of research and theoretical engagement. It is important to not lose the urgency and universality of Fanon's writing and message in *Wretched of the Earth* in these theoretical reflections, or to neuter the true radicalism of his search for genuine decolonization. Taking stock of the broader context of Fanon's theoretical development, including his psychiatric writings and practice, enriches our understanding of his relevance to today's challenges – and helps put Middle East Studies into ever closer dialogue with broader trends in political theory and postcolonial studies.

Endnotes

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[3] Hisham Aidi, Marc Lynch and Zachariah Mampilly, "Africa and the Middle East: Beyond the Divides" POMEPS Studies 2020

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[5] Jeannie Morefield, *Unsettling the World: Edward Said and Political Theory* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2022).

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[9] Katlyn Quenzer, "Beyond Arab Nationalism? The PLO and its Intellectuals, 1967-1974," Interventions 21, 5 (2019): 690-707; Fadi Bardawil, *Revolution and Disenchantment: Arab Marxism and the Binds of Emancipation* (Oxford University Press 2020); Sattar Izwaini (2019) The Re-Presentation of Fanon's *Les Damnés de la Terre* in Arabic Translation, Interventions, 21:2, 151-171, DOI: 10.1080/1369801X.2018.1487328

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[11] Sara Salem, "Stretching Marxism in the Postcolonial World. Egyptian Decolonisation and the Contradictions of National Sovereignty," *Historical Materialism* 27, no. 4 (2019): 6.

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[13] Anna M. Agathangelou, "The Living and Being of the Streets: Fanon and the Arab Uprisings," *Globalizations* 9, 3 (2012): 451-466.

[14] Brahim El-Guabli and Jill Jarvis, "Violence and the politics of aesthetics: a postcolonial Maghreb without borders," *Journal of North African Studies* 23, 1-2 (2018): 1-10.

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A Fanonian Intervention into the Social Psychology of Violence

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Psychological roots of violence have always been prominent in political discourse; with the phrase "war begins in the hearts of men" echoing from statements made by John F. Kennedy to UNESCO's 1945 constitution (Richards, 2006; Cohrs & Boehnke, 2008). The field of Social and Political Psychology has historically and systematically concurred with this assertion. The necessity of unsettling this tradition does not lie in problematizing the presumed relationship between psychology and violence. Instead, it lies in the observation that psychological science, in its microscopic valorization of the individual, has adopted a worldview that is definitively implicated and reflexive of a larger neoliberal project – a project that crudely situates historical and material predicaments within the individual (Adams, Estrada-Villata, Sullivan & Markus, 2019).

It is well documented that the history of social psychology has been imbued and entangled with military projects. Across time, we see psychology carrying the labor of flattening, de-historicizing, and dis-arming historical-material conditions, offering instead a scientific lamination that smothers those under its microscope.

This paper hopes to begin a contemplative process on how critical social psychologists would study and engage in "conflict" zones if we were moored to questions of history from below, troubling power and appreciating violence in all its complexity, attentive to the possibilities that would materialize for us if we begin with Fanon. I will turn to the writings of and musings about Fanon to outline our way forward toward a critical social psychology that appreciates violence in all its complexity, and not reductively as a violation of social relations or international contracts; where we interrogate and sever social psychology's complicity with militarism; where we understand the self as a porous space, destabilizing what Segalo (2020) would call poison in the marrow, and position our discipline as a theoretical and empirical project of interrogating the spheres of colonial capture.

Social psychological investigations of violence

One deliberate narration of the history of Social and Political Psychology tells a story of a subdiscipline that has long been engaged in a tradition of displacement and diversion; conventionally relocating theoretical focus from the systemic and structural roots of the societal issues it investigates to models that take the atomized individual as the main unit of analysis (Richards, 2006). In this narrative, the field emerges as an "intellectual handmaiden" to dominant political projects (Fine, 1994), a necessary "scientific backdrop" that justifies and corroborates, "the logic of coloniality" to borrow from Sunil Bhatia (2017).

This laden characterization of Social and Political Psychology contradicts the popular textbook account that narrates the history of the field as a linear advancement towards a psychology that is proximal to the natural sciences, defined and upheld by principles of the scientific method. In this domain, the scientific method hinges on a set criteria of protective scientific rigor that presumably shield knowledge production from getting skewed by extraneous societal variables and biases held by researchers—that is, a scientific method that is grounded in a commitment to aperspectival objectivity (Datson, 1992; also conceptualized as the "view from nowhere", Grosfeguel, 2002), (null) hypothesis testing (Gigerenzer, Krauss & Vitouch, 2004), and inferential statistics (Battersby, 2003).

The antithesis of the historical telling of social psychology as a discipline that has been edging ever closer to the ideal of a natural science is a counternarrative of the field as one that is deeply contaminated with the economic and political context surrounding it; more broadly defined as

"the geopolitics of knowledge production" (Grosfeguel, 2002). With that, the ebbs and flows of research trends and disciplinary paradigms appear to be aptly characterized by a two-way "inextricable entwinement" with world politics (Tetlock, 1998). Moreso, Richards (2006) argues that while modern Psychology overtly claims to be directing labor towards ending the conflicts it studies (also identified in Vollhardt's and Belali's (2008) review); covertly, psychology has traditionally participated in sustaining these conflicts through the production of knowledge that has informed military strategy.

Rewinding to the field's birth story, the need to inform US military strategy (post-World War II) emerges as one of the main motivational tenants for the foundation of modern Social Psychology (Moscovici & Markova, 2006): to "provide social knowledge that could be applied to specific military problems, rebuilding civilian integrity, combatting demoralization, involvement in military administration, studying domestic attitudes and providing strategic information as well as developing international relations." More evidence for the collusion between political and research agendas in the field can also be traced back to some of its foundational classical studies. Arguably the most striking of these is Gustave Le Bon's "Crowd Psychology," produced in the wake of the Paris Commune and skewed to bolster adherence to "French civilization" and combatting communism. Le Bon's analysis of crowds as evolutionarily lagging masses, irrational, easily swayed by certain laws was intentionally offered up to the French authorities to "co-opt and direct the instinctive energies ever threatening to break loose" (Richards, 2006, p.185).

In his historical review of social psychology and international relations, Tetlock (1994) argues that social psychologists "stray far from the traditional scholarly ideal of value neutrality". Ultimately, this observation can be read as emblematic of a larger trend within psychological research that positions it as an accomplice to colonial military projects (see the American Psychological Association (2021) "Apology to people of color" for reference). In fact, across time, unfolding political conflicts have undeniably directed research attention in Social and Political Psychology: from the influx of research on persuasion and propaganda during World War II, to the study of deterrence and war attitudes during the Cold War, to ultimately arriving at social identity and intergroup frameworks in the more recent political moment of ethnonationalist conflicts (Vollhardt & Belali, 2008).

On the surface, the ostensibly scientific make-up of mainstream Social and Political Psychology configures a "rhetoric of Truth" that is reliant on statistical and methodological procedures substituting for conceptual arguments (Batterby, 2003). In reality, the "methodological playing field" has been systematically tilted "in favor of certain hypotheses and aggressively combines epistemic and political goals" (Tetlock, 1994, p. 901). This collusion can be openly gleaned from Moscovici and Markova's (2006) historiography of the field that reports on the initial institutional structure of Social and Political Psychology, evidencing that individuals who occupied leading positions in research were also employed by American governmental agencies. Predictably, this materialized in indisputable intimacies between scientific and military agendas, particularly resonating and complying with the military interests of the United States and its allies.

What makes this record increasingly significant is the added observation that informing international conflict marks one of the primary applications of social psychological research (van Lange, 2006), with investigations of the "Arab-Israeli conflict" emerging as the most frequently examined context of international conflict in the field (as cited in Vollhardt & Belali, 2008). Our need to scrutinize a collusion of military and scientific objectives in light of such scholarly tractions becomes all the more urgent as Adams et al. (2019) urges us to adopt a framing of mainstream psychological science not as a "mere observer" to neoliberalism and coloniality, but as an actor that reproduces it and lends it "scientific authority". One important way this authority materializes can be traced to a core "basic assumption" in psychological science which Bulhan (2004) identified as the *stability-equilibrium bias*. This assumption is employed to achieve social control and directly invested in the longevity of the status quo. In it, "stability, balance, and consonance" are registered as more desirable than "conflict, change and upheaval", refusing the

possibility that contradictions and crises mark a generative and productive space for human history (Bulhan 2004: 67) – an assumption that Frantz Fanon valiantly rejected.

Here, we turn to the scholarship on violence as a literature that is ripe for diagnosing the implications of this wedding between the scientific and the political. The abstraction of violence from its historical-material context and its relocation to within the individual, more precisely within individual dysfunctionalities, should not be seen as an anomaly or scholarly malpractice, but as a realization of the broader objective for a scientific corroboration of political projects. A prime example comes from Vollhardt's and Bilali's (2008) review of the violence literature in Social Psychology that identifies frameworks attempting to investigate direct and structural violence as "focus[ed] almost exclusively on prejudice and stereotyping". This framing holds the "untested assumption that intergroup attitudes (e.g., modern racism, affirmative action attitudes) have a direct effect on society and intergroup relations" (Vollhardt and Bilali 2008: 22). The end of violence as such is not conceptualized as a change in the systemic and structural prerequisites of violence, but in attitudinal shifts that lie within the individual living under violence.

More geographically pointed to the Middle East, Hakim et al. (2023) identified a trend where the experimental literature in social psychology overwhelmingly presents the violence in historic Palestine as an intractable and protracted "intergroup" conflict, emptied from its history and isolated from the current reality of Israeli settler-colonialism, apartheid, or occupation of land. In this designed context, the violence is flattened and located within a war of identity-motivated narratives and counternarratives where Jewish Israelis and Palestinians alternate the roles of victims and perpetrators. In this literature, "dependent variables" or "outcome variables" typically signal what the researchers recognize as "the end of violence". And so, in analyzing dependent variables, the "end of violence" was almost exclusively constructed and operationalized as the emergence of harmonious attitudes and emotions between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians, rather than as material interventions that threaten the settler-colonial project. We thus see an evolving pattern where rooting violence in psychological antecedents has serious system-protecting implications – as a methodical force that reroutes investment in ending violence from abolishing systems that necessitate violence to interventions that mitigate the violent (psychological) byproducts of these systems (e.g., hostile intergroup emotions/attitudes) while maintaining the structures/operations that enable violence and warrant violence to survive.

Such findings point to a wider conventional trend that blurs historical-material grounds for violence in favor of the individual unit of analysis. As a result of this fixation, the field has committed itself to a wider project of inventing "realities in which war seems logical" (Richards, 2006)—following the formula that if inhabitants of a specified region consistently presented psychological predispositions to violence (e.g., sectarianism, prejudice, stereotyping…), then it would make sense that the land these individuals occupied would be particularly predisposed to violence. With that, psychology matter-of-factly creates "conflict zones" where the (in this case, Middle Eastern) individual is the main destabilizing agent, as it is their perceptions of the geopolitical situation, their ideologies, and their psychological predispositions that create violence. This then molds a story that distills violence from the material conditions surrounding it and exonerates colonial history and present from its contribution to the production and maintenance of precarity.

Here, we land at two foundational questions that demand the conjuring of Fanon: 1) Is psychological study, by definition, obliged to be sitting contentiously at odds with historical materialism? and 2) what are the tenants of a social psychological investigation into violence (particularly violent resistance) that does not risk compromising the historical-material context?

A Psychology Switching Sides

Mounting critical scholarship has recently interrogated the potential for academic inquiry to speak or respond to revolutionary action. Tuck and Yang (2014) have previously

questioned whether research, particularly on communities who have been traditionally under its microscope, should be ultimately refused, opposing the conviction that knowledge production is useful by default. Fanon's theorization on the tools of modernity can be particularly generative in thinking through the political complexity of producing knowledge in the academy, as we contemplate a political psychological approach to violence that is allied with liberation struggle.

I take as a starting point Fanon's refusal to fixate the tools of modernity in a spatial-temporal lock that recognizes them as inanimate solid objects with a staple utility, infinitely wedded to the project that brought them into existence. This is clear, for example, in *A Dying Colonialism* which contained his theorizations on the radio, the press, and the French language. To elaborate, Fanon postulates that the tools of modernity have the potential to change sides, to transform into instruments of mass struggle, "once they cease to be instruments of the enemy and [become] useful for the revolution" (1959: 7).

Similarly to the experiment of the radio during the Algerian revolution, research, empirical evidence, data, theory, and in this case, social psychological paradigms and methods, have revolutionary valence. Fanon urges a reframing of the flat rejection of "scientific acquisitions" imposed by "war experts" that rids them of their potential as revolutionary weaponry. Instead, he warns against the intuition to look at the tools of modernity as "perceived in themselves, in calm objectivity", for on the contrary, "the negative or positive coefficients" of these instruments should be evaluated in the context of their use, their purpose, and their relationship to the oppressive colonial system and the resistance facing it.

Particularly elaborating on a metamorphosis where the radio, which had historically been a signifier and an instrument of colonial subordination, saw a "rapid and dialectical progression" to becoming revolutionary weapon for the resistance, marking a case in point for the ability of the tools of modernity to transition into vehicles out of the inert native environment in colonial settings.

Applying the same logic, what is brought into question here is the potentiality for political psychological inquiry, as it operates empirically and theoretically, to escape its "identity" that locks it as an instrument in the arsenal of colonialism.

Fanon as a Starting Point

In contemplating the ability for Fanon to interpolate social psychology, we have previously asked whether the field, and the academy more generally where it currently sits, allows for an appropriate handling of Fanon (see Abi-Ghannam, Perkins & Fine, 2023). Gleaning through Fanon's faint presence in the field, we left the project wary of unintentionally subsuming Fanon, of creating what Cedric Robinson (1993) would call yet another "imagined Fanon" in the effort to curate a Fanonian Political Psychology.

From this uncomfortable position, we found Fanon's comradeship that preceded, accompanied, and rippled through his writing to be the immutable site of departure for this Political Psychology. And so, in beginning this outline of entry points, it is clear that constructing interventions into a field that has long been an accomplice to colonial/military projects in the region should begin and grow with a political commitment to an endpoint of liberation. This means engagement with struggle on the ground as inseparable from knowledge production—guided by Fanon's (1952) conviction that our task "is no longer a question of knowing the world but transforming it."

Fanon's call falls in line with Marxist models of science as a transformative endeavor, where it is not only the researchers' standpoint (i.e., positionality) that is important to consider but also their endpoint—i.e., the projects and ideals that the scholarship is produced to contribute to (Stetsenko, 2015).

A Redefinition of the Psychological

First, this project is anchored in Fanon's unsettling definition of "Psychology" as one that cannot exist within

the atomized individual. In his psychoanalytic writings, Fanon distinguishes between a *neurology* that attempts to "locate" psychological- cognitive and emotional-processes in the brain and *psychology* which, to him, inherently contains the material world surrounding and infiltrating the individual (Fanon, 2018). Taking this definition, it follows that the mainstream's attempt to sever psychological processes from the context/history surrounding the individual produces knowledge that is not only lacking, but definitively un-psychological.

Beyond the mainstream, this definition also allows us to elaborate on the work of critical psychologists who have called for a psychology of the individual that is cognizant of the historical and material (e.g., Weis & Fine, 2013). It is relevant here to point to Fanon's (1952) thesis on sociogeny, which recognizes the social psychological outside of ontological givens but as processes that are socially and dynamically produced and evolving. As opposed to imagining psychology as one end of a spectrum existing within the individual facing the material conditions on the other end, for Fanon, the psychological names a point of contact between the body and the world—a construct that, by definition, captures this interaction.

This definition is uplifted here for a purpose that extends beyond a mere technicality. An understanding of psychology that intrinsically contains what is situated outside of the individual allows for the radical reconstruction of what warrants the recognition as a "psychological paradigm". It follows that Fanon's psychological framework is conscious that problems not purely located within the individual, "cannot be solved" purely through processes that target the individual (1964), adding elsewhere that psychological dysfunctionalities within the individual can only be alleviated "when things, in the most materialist sense, have resumed their rightful place" (1952: xv).

With this criticism, Fanon identifies a ritual that psychology has continued to adhere to long after his departure, which attempts to reduce systems and structures of oppression to a relationality "on the individual level". Here, Fanon recognizes "the psychological" not only as a diversion, but as a watchdog, a soldier of the colonial, adamantly asserting that "Colonialism is not a type of individual relations but the conquest of a national territory and the oppression of a people: that is all. It is not a certain type of human behavior or a pattern of relations between individuals" (Fanon 1964: 81).

Predominantly adhering to an intergroup framework, as demonstrated earlier, social psychological investigations of violence are formulated as a question of relationality, typically conceptualized at the (identity-based) group level and operationalized/measured at the individual level. Within this setup, the individual's psychology is positioned as both a precursor/predictor of violence and the realm where "the end of violence" would realize itself. To illustrate, and as evidenced in Hakim et al. (2023), first, Fanon postulates that the end of violence is conceptualized as "less racist, more open, more liberal types of behavior" (Fanon 1964), as opposed to material threats to the structures and operations of colonialism – again pointing to liberal fantasies of ending violence through attending to the excess of psychological "side effects" of systemic violence, indirectly extending the longevity and bolstering the infrastructure of said violence while shouldering a proclaimed commitment to end it.

This argument is clear in Fanon's response to Mannoni's dependency complex, where justifications for continued colonial occupation and intervention is not traced back to the interests of colonizing forces, but to the psychological archetype of the colonized (1952), asserting that "not all people can be colonized," only those who possess the psychological predispositions requiring it.

In *Racism and Culture*, Fanon also opposes the rudimentary tradition of conceptualizing byproducts of colonial oppression, such as prejudice and racism, as attitudinal psychological constructs—urging us to abandon the framework that understands oppression as a product of "mental quirks" and recognize that it is "military and economic oppression generally precedes, makes possible, and legitimizes" prejudice (Fanon 1964: 88).

This tradition is not only limited to the settler-colonial context of Palestine but is also applicable to the wider conceptualization of turbulence and precarity in the Middle East through sectarianism as an explanatory social-psychological model. Here, Fanon urges a reframing of internal disputes, or what he names "autodestructive violence", which includes sectarian violence, beyond its surface-level identitarian structure but rather as a consequence of rigid neocolonial structures. Fanon's critical reading that refuses to ground identitarian conflict as located strictly within psychological prejudice falls in line with Amel's writing on "violence that is incapable of achieving change," which attributes instability to the intractable steadiness of colonial structures in colonized land, even after independence. And it is precisely this shrouded stability of colonial social structures that instigates the surface-level political instability which the identity-based psychological models fixate on.

As for understanding engagement in violence through antecedent psychological pathways, "[t]he colonized people are presented ideologically as a people arrested in their evolution, impervious to reason, incapable of directing their own affairs, requiring the permanent presence of an external ruling power" (Fanon 2018: 654). But referring both to the antecedents and the possible end of violence, Fanon asserts that "no personal relation can contradict the fundamental datum" dictated by the colonial conquest of land" (Fanon 1967: 83).

With that, I follow Fanon's recognition that the synonymous interplay between the psychological and the individual in psychology must be disrupted. This means moving towards a political psychological inquiry into violence that "is not an individual question" (Fanon 1952).

A Fanonian Psychology of Violence

In his calm and characteristically prophetic tone, Fanon (1961) begins his treatise on violence by declaring that decolonization is always a violent process. To him, decolonization is a procedure of replacement, a collision between two opposing forces, a project of complete disorder birthing a new human. The transformational instrumentality of violence for Fanon is not solely situated in its promise to spatially dismantle the material conditions surrounding the individual, but as one that is, organically and additionally, psychological. For to him, the spatial "Manichean structure" of colonial domination- the structure of one compartment ruling over the other -is replicated inwards, within the psychology of the colonized. Consequentially, the spatial revolutionary action seeking to threaten this Manichean world is simultaneously reproduced in an internal revolutionary struggle that takes place in the consciousness of the colonized.

Through this, Fanon draws a framework of violence, particularly violent resistance, as a political-psychological process that is cognizant at once of the material conditions that surround engaging in decolonial struggle as well as its embodied psychological antecedents, byproducts, and consequences. Fanon's articulation offers a ruthless criticism of the mainstream imposition of "the psychology of extremism/terrorism" onto revolutionary collective action while also complicating and extending the recent critical scholarship on critical consciousness that sidelines engagement with revolutionary action as a component of consciousness raising.

Effectively, the model Fanon offers and embodies extends beyond conceptual interventions, but seeps into method, writing, and praxis. As is evident from the long history of Fanon's work being taken up in liberation struggles as a "philosopher of the barricades" (see Hudis 2015), Fanon's model of knowledge production in psychology, specifically on violence, is one that is not exclusively dedicated to theoretical contributions to scholarly literature. Instead, Fanon soberly describes, from within the fires of revolt, what can generally only be understood in retrospect. Fanon's psychology engages a Marxist- that is, historical-materialist- analysis informed by geopolitical, structural, and sociological particularities that pour into his psychology.

Fanon's reading of revolutionary violence is one that sits with the complexity that accompanies struggle.

Living in contradictions, he both commits to offering a detailed reading and confident calculation of the events that accompany decolonization, but also never loses his initial argument opening *The Wretched of the Earth* that decolonization is a project of complete disorder. Fanon's writing depicts an inherent element of liberation, the inability to name, where the pace of the revolution moves faster than our ability to cognitively process its events and trajectories. Fanon comfortably and expertly wrestles with this inability to grasp violence and, instead of attempting to impose a framework that risks reifying/abstracting the complexity, he accepts spontaneity as a necessary force that is to be studied, exploited, and directed in the course of revolutionary action.

At odds with mainstream social psychology's reification and denaturalization of violence, Fanon urges bringing revolutionary violence out of the abstract and into the material reality of liberation, out of the pathological and into the natural. In the colonial reality, Gilly observes that Fanon's writing conceptualizes violence as a sign of life. Within the context of a Manichean world, "in the revolutionary struggle, the immense, oppressed masses of the colonies and semi-colonies feel that they are a part of life for the first time" (Gilly 1965: 1). Taking psychology to be the study of lives, Fanon reconfigures the meaning of life challenging the neoliberal configuration frequently adopted in psychological science of an entrepreneurial productive self (as laid out in Adams et al. 2019), positing that "existing, in the biological sense of the word is not synonymous with "existing as a sovereign people"" (Fanon 1964: 78).

Fanon defines the self "as a body in the middle of a spatial and temporal world [and is thus conceptualized as] a real dialectic between the body and the world". In a settler-colonial context that signifies the Manichean world, engagement in revolutionary violence is a marker of this existence that extends beyond the physiological vital signs of life. In the Manichean world, the colonized individual to Fanon is rendered an object, the body is delimited and spatially coerced, fixed in their compartment (Sekyi-Otu 1996). It is within this context that revolutionary violence emerges as a transformative force, not only threatening oppressive structures surrounding the colonized, but also the oppressed self within them.

Fanon's call to simultaneously observe the world within and without the individual when contemplating violence probes a critical interrogation of mainstream social psychology and its potential. This contemplation would ambitiously attempt to offer a retelling of the story of violence outside of the paradigms of pathology, extremism, or identity-based intergroup conflict that currently rule over the field.

To consult Fanon as a rupturing force undeniably unsettles the traditional social-psychological analysis of "Middle Eastern conflict zones". In one respect, this force lends us the language to critically read the literature built on intergroup paradigms, in both settler-colonial and neocolonial settings. More importantly, Fanon's reconfiguration of psychology, violence, and the self outlines the tenants of a political psychology that has the potential for a rapid and dialectical progression in its positionality with respect to projects of de/colonization.

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Resisting Resilience, Fanonian Revolutionary Psychiatry and the Politics of Exhaustion

Notes after the Beirut Port Explosion

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Lebanon recently marked the third anniversary of the Beirut port explosion. Three years on, the complex temporalities of the catastrophe and its aftermath are coming to the fore: It is an 'event,' slowly consolidating, in the way those of us who experienced it or were in some form affected by it, have found a way of narrating it (or not); in any case a memory in formation, since some time has passed, some distance from it has occurred. Three years on, the explosion's dust has settled in some way, somewhere in our minds, however radically different people have been able to process what has happened. At the same time, it carries the presence/presencing of an acute, open wound that fails to heal: as life continues, throughout the harbor districts, the streets of Karantina, Gemmayzeh, Mar Mikhayel, Geitaoui, and far beyond, this wound protrudes from the half-renovated buildings: collapsed, barred window frames, bleached posters offering meal-deals according to the old Lira rate – but also the visible and invisible traces of the surging unemployment, homelessness and poverty that the explosion caused or harshly exacerbated.

These haunting effects of an event hurrying farther and farther away while remaining imminent bespeaks very much the unfolding crisis in how we conceive of trauma and its treatment: the post in "post-traumatic" is by no means unequivocal, and especially its *collective* experience – in war, catastrophe, crisis – poses the question of the political vis-à-vis the psychological. This essay's aim is to gather a few reflections and pose a few questions about the political import of how crisis inflicts psychological injury.[1] Building upon the critique of the discourse of resilience[2] as reproducing neoliberalism (Bracke, 2016) as well as Frantz Fanon's theory and praxis of revolutionary psychiatry, I want to interrogate the politics of madness, psychological trauma and exhaustion vis-à-vis the political uprisings and revolutions, such as the one in Lebanon from 2019 onward, as sites of resistance and struggle. The essay is not intended as a kind of uncritical celebration of resistance (Abu-Lughod 1990) or romanticization of psychological breakdown; it rather asks how both the embracing of mental health crisis, as well as the appeal to rest and care, constitute invisibilized sites of political struggle.

Through the prism of the port explosion and the discourses on mental health and trauma it sparked in 'post-revolutionary' Lebanon, I link feminist resilience critique (embedded in its larger neoliberalism critique framework) with the rejection of resilience emerging on the ground. I mobilize Fanon's critique of colonial psychiatry as well as his notion of sociogeny in order to formulate exhaustion as a site of resistance and struggle. Leading us away from a masculinist, vitalist notion of revolution and towards the multiplicity and complexity of revolts and revolutionary moments (Agathangelou 2012), then, the Fanonian labor of dis-alienation emerges as care and rest, which in turn form the ground for the global, transnational continuous task of decolonization.

I. Resilience, reذلience

Like a phoenix from the ashes, Beirut will rise again. This and similar slogans started mushrooming throughout the city – in French, in English, in Arabic – after August 4, 2020, even as broken glass and debris were still being swept away. Many people online and in daily conversations embraced this old narrative of Beirut as city eternally in crisis, always on the brink of destruction, but always strong enough to foster solidarity among the people to rebuild, repair and heal. To be sure, their hopeful call reflected

the reality on the ground, with people in the streets self-organizing within hours after the blast, coordinating rescue, bringing out broomsticks and clearing the rubble off the streets, donating blood, packing lunches and water rations for volunteers across the affected areas.

But the damning absence of a concerted political and institutional response, both in Lebanon and abroad, as well as the deep-running complicity and negligence of politicians and businesses,[3] led to an angry outburst of rejection of this resilience narrative by Beirut youth, which one expects from a population rendered increasingly precarious and disposable to 'just get up' and move on from the continuous hardship imposed on it.[4]

1. "My government did this." Graffiti near the explosion site. Source: Daily Sabah.

Resilience, while certainly a form of self-empowerment, carries the risk of reifying and reproducing such hardship, as it continues an order in which everything is "subject[ed] to the logic and logistics of crisis."[5] In her critique of resilience as neoliberal discursive tool, Bracke writes:

> The resilience of the wretched of the earth is arguably fetishized by the economic and political institutions that bear the bulk of responsibility for contemporary conditions of precarity that are (required to be) met with resilience.[6]

Thus, while the people in Lebanon took on responsibility in the aftermath of the explosion, many rejected the continued expectation to carry what Samaddar (2015) calls the "postcolonial burden of resilient life." Bracke draws on Neocleous (2013) to show how "disciplines of resilience cultivate a sense of 'preparedness'" for the next crisis, the next shock, the next catastrophe,[7] and therefore "thwart… the developing of skills of imagining otherwise."[8] In light of the post-revolutionary moment, with repeated popular uprisings not having led to any betterment, and Lebanon's ongoing economic crisis, people's anger arguably bespeaks a formation of a new, but different resistance. Rather than moving on and bracing for the next crisis, it is about claiming space for pain, humiliation, exhaustion.

Considering Fanon's thought beyond the setting of the colony, much can be said about how Lebanon's post-civil war history serves as primary example for shock-like neoliberalisation (Klein 2007, Agathangelou 2012, see also Elfeituri 2021 on the 'Solidere' Effect across the Middle East) leading to an unprecedented economic breakdown in recent years, showcasing "how capitalism generates itself anew, reminding us what Fanon has already noted: the politico-ontological slaughtering and suffocation of flesh."[9] Considering mental health as one of the contemporary battlegrounds of which and how populations are rendered *debilitated* rather than disposable (Mbembe 2003), nesting in between the biopolitical and the necropolitical regime (Puar, 2017; Weheliye 2014), I hold that Fanon's sociogenic approach forces us to not simply add "politics" to "mental health" but show their incessant interwovenness by means of a subjectivity critique that continuously contests normalcy. To speak again with one graffiti, we found somewhere in Beirut shortly after the blast: 'reذلlience' – pronounced similarly to resilience, it contains the word ذل (dhel) – humiliation.

II. Pathologies of Freedom vs. breaking free from 'health'

Fátima Fouad, building on Lamia Moghnieh's work on the WHO-backed psychologization in the Lebanese mental health care system which aims for "solving social problems with therapeutic solutions,"[10] describes how "the 'mental health crisis' rhetoric" guiding the governmental Mental Health Strategy in Lebanon "exposes the cruel optimism

of seeking an impossible fantasy of happiness within a capitalist reality."[11] 'Cruel', as Berlant shows, because this desire "is actually an obstacle to your flourishing."[12] Fouad touches not only upon the impossibilities of healing at the nexus of neoliberalism and humanitarianism, but also the missionary-colonial inheritance of mental health institutions in Lebanon. Reading her argument through the lens of Fanonian sociogeny lays bare how people's suffering is evaluated and treated in an individualized framework that leaves grave societal problems untouched. The mental health institution itself is just another site where alienation, neurosis, and exhaustion (forms of crisis, thus) are reproduced.[13] Already in an early text from the Saint-Alban ward notes, Fanon describes this:

> We must not confuse 'weariness' with 'rest'. No more 'weariness' with 'idleness'. Weariness is the refusal to continue; we have been able to start, we have even gone quite far towards carrying out the act, but there now arises this immense weight in the arms, this unusual heaviness in the legs, this unusual void in the head and above all this anguish that harrows your breast.[14]

Anticipating Fanon's later deconstructions of the 'lazy', 'idle',[15] or 'passive' Arab, most succinctly in "The North African Syndrome" as well as the phenomenologically intense embodiment described with combat breathing in *BSWM*, this 'weariness' stops us in the tracks and asks: Can this refusal, this weight, not also be actively embraced? Is there a politics of exhaustion played out in the non-acting, not-participating, refusing to continue? And perhaps, the rejection of resilience in turn also exposes a kind of 'passivity' hidden underneath the self-projecting, future-oriented 'preparedness' of the 'resilient self' for the next crisis to come; namely her non-engagement, non-recognition of the injury suffered.[16]

Fanon's revolutionary psychiatry decisively builds upon Henri Ey's understanding of madness as pathology of freedom. Eromosele (2020) discusses this vis-à-vis the emergence of Mad Studies, where madness can be conceived of as possible mode of freedom and/or liberation instead. Arguing that Fanon ontologically relies on the notion of madness as *dis*order, he writes:

> To articulate normative mental conditions as a construct – as the anti-psychiatrists would later do – would undermine his position that racism, colonialism and the wars they foster are direct sources of harm to both the colonized and the colonizer.[17]

I think Eromosele is right in pointing out that the Fanonian conception of madness functions along the lines of a madness-health binary – he was not an antipsychiatrist and approached madness as a source of violence and unfree expression of alienation. But in taking Fanon's notion of sociogeny seriously, it is perhaps not necessarily madness, but health that can be deconstructed most powerfully: With mental illness being materially rooted in the social structure of the colony, being "tied to, and inseparable from subjection – that is, the racialised logic of domination and dehumanisation",[18] the colonizer *might conceive* of themselves as healthy, but are actually merely displacing their own alienation built on the dehumanization and subjugation of the colonized other.

Fanon's sociotherapeutical clinic, which precisely aims at disalienation, breaking open the purported 'normalcy' of living and working in the colony, is therefore interested in the very articulation of madness: "the patient has a need to verbalize, to explain, to explain himself [sic], to take a position."[19] Such a 'permission' of madness mirrors Fanon's emphasis on the political salience of articulated 'abnormality'. He notes; "in the psychological field the abnormal is he who demands, appeals, and begs."[20] And contrarily to the demanding, 'mad', 'abnormal, as he discusses in one of his later lectures held in Tunis, "the normal individual, it is also said, is someone *who does not make a fuss*. But, then, the trade unionists who protests and make demands, are they not normal?"[21] In Fanon's clinic, madness is taken seriously as 'foreign' and "anarchic element"[22] that elucidates the pathology of the colonial status quo.

Fanon's psychiatric and political concerns thus coincide in sociogeny; emerging as a critique of normative

psychoanalysis, which only takes into account the individual (ontogenic) perspective, where socio-political conditions become secondary.[23] Instead, refusal of this normative functioning and erratic "abnormal" behavior can then, also with Fanon, be thought as manifestation of one's humanity-freedom in the face of dehumanization-unfreedom. In the context of psychoanalytic praxis under occupation in Palestine, Sheehi and Sheehi write:

> liberal psychoanalysis not only imposes a revisionist history of Fanon's writing and theorizing on political violence, but also remains complicit through psychoanalytic innocence with forms of oppression in that it seeks to graph a universalized "healthy" adaptability and psychic defenses onto colonial and necropolitical subjects whose humanity and psychic interiority are negated.[24]

In the settler-colonial context of Palestine, the expectation that it would be possible to simultaneously be negated/subjected to a colonial order and able to 'healthily' adapt to it, thus reproduces debilitation as the norm. In Lebanon, this debilitation (which, to be sure, is inextricably linked to the debilitation of Palestinians) has often been normalized by means of a certain denial or deferral that localizes war and Israeli aggression within the constructs 'South Lebanon' and to some extent 'Dahiye' as perpetual warzone(s), distinct from another 'post-conflict' neoliberal Lebanese reality, which before the start of the genocide in Gaza even included certain steps towards rapprochement.[25]

Refusing to normalize debilitation, refusing resilience in neoliberal racial capitalism, then, can be thought of as a refusal of 'health' and 'madness' alike, or differently put as an embrace of 'healthy madness.' In light of continuous injury and debilitation, the perspective of resistant refusal/refusal as resistance of the resilience-narrative recasts the relation between sick/mad and healthy/sane beyond normalizing binaries. Fostering instead a kind of Bulhanian 'informed militancy,' a politics of exhaustion that prioritizes rest, care, and mutual aid – is what I want to turn to now in this last section of the paper.[26]

III. Toward a transnational politics of exhaustion

The Beirut port explosion proved to be an incisive moment in many Lebanese biographies, but it was also, in more than one way, a transnational event. In the months after, I spoke to many diasporic Lebanese, who feel survivor's guilt all the way in Australia and Canada. I myself feel it, too, for not having been home that very day, for only having some broken windows, for enjoying the utmost mobility with my passport and access to dollars, while Lebanese and Syrian friends had to wait months and years for their documents to be issued. The event ripped through the country, the entire globe, yet at the same time, at its very detonation point, so many stories were erased as well, as the perilous narrative of a national trauma began to congeal: the Syrian victims, many of them young children who were not remembered by name, the migrant workers from Kenya, Ethiopia, Ghana, and other places who became homeless and jobless overnight yet remained subject to the kafala system, unable to return home – and also the many who decided to leave the country as Lebanon itself all of a sudden turned into a humanitarian cause, with governments like French President Macron's intensely paternalistic, neocolonial gestures of provision. This traumatic incision cemented the sense that the Lebanese revolution was now definitely over, that people's resources were fully exhausted, not just because of the blast but also the successive state repression.

Erasing the many marginalized stories – to which I also cannot give sufficient space in such a short piece – is also something that the 'resilience' discourse enacts by denying the differential vulnerabilities of the survivors as well as erasing certain deaths. In formulating and narrating the collective memory of the blast beyond a national, exclusionary, and conservative myth of the resilient eternal city, and rather in the name of a politics of exhaustion, of embracing psychological crisis, counteracts the alternative-less futurity that functions through "*grammars and ethics of suffering* in the name of security and humanitarian regimes."[27] Munira Khayyat calls this "resistant ecologies… that persist and make life amidst returning seasons of devastation"[28] – a praxis that incorporates pain and

negative emotions in as much as spaces for joy and imagining otherwise. Kind of surprisingly, then, focusing on pain, exhaustion, and trauma allows for a sociogenically informed reflection that is precisely *not* what Tuck rejects as *damaged-centered* perspective, but a praxis of care for and solidarity with each other.

Similarly, Johanna Hedva, arguing through a lens of chronical illness how capitalism produces the disposable 'Sick Woman', writes:

> 'Sickness' as we speak of it today is a capitalist construct, as is its perceived binary opposite, 'wellness.' The 'well' person is the person well enough to go to work. The 'sick' person is the one who can't….When being sick is an abhorrence to the norm, it allows us to conceive of care and support in the same way.[29]

Both Khayyat and Hedva in their own very contexts make room for a rediscovery of exhaustion and pain beyond passivity and restriction, as an open field of a politics of care. They thereby also counter neoliberal temporalities of no-future or no-alternatives, or its opposite of 'cruel optimism', always finding space for different imaginaries that resist debilitation without denying it. Discussing Fanon's very own imaginary of an African Solidarity to come, Nica Siegel asks:

> to the extent that neocolonial forms of violence and economy had the power to fracture hopes for decolonial justice, would the persistence of pathology, in the self, in the family, in the nation, not indicate the *persistence of war by other names*?[30]

It is this war by other names – certainly fought in Lebanon, but simultaneously across the world – and the ways in which it continues to debilitate and produce entire populations who need to sustain themselves through combat breathing, that a sociogenic lens can identify and analyze.[31] In their special issue entirely dedicated to Fanon's enigmatic formulation of combat breathing, Perera and Pugliese note how amidst the 'strange intimacy of state violence' that combat breathing encapsulates,

> not only the possibility of survival and endurance, but also an *answering back to the necropolitical command to cease to be.* This answering back is at once a practice of resistance and a mobilisation of life-forces in order to enact political, economic and cultural transformation.[32]

Echoing this necessity of answering back, and with Fanon, I hold that it is crucial to take the psychological as the point of departure for a transnational awareness for this political agency,[33] but beyond that also to recognize how debilitation can serve as a source for revolutionary knowledge and activity, which then wanders from the Arendtian space of visibility and public speech towards manifold networks of care-as-resistance, or rest-as-resistance, and so forth – while also helping to foster a multiplicitous politics of memory. Such a consideration of the exhausted, debilitated, mad mind as a mind that is nevertheless knowing, imagining, and dreaming then can also be the basis for a revolutionary politic that nests the Fanonian call for direct and violent action within a network of care and rest – a space where it is possible to take a break from combat breathing.

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Endnotes

[1] I am speaking of *injury* here deliberately, pointing to recent discussions in disability studies and bio-/necropolitical thought of how the space between life and death is governed, see also Puar's theorization of debilitation (2017). Considering mental (ill-)health in this context, I argue, proves especially fruitful for extending the discussion on how lives and bodies are rendered disposable under global racial neoliberal capitalism.

[2] I want to give as a caveat here that this paper is not criticizing the therapeutical import nor the psychic reality of resilience as a very self-empowering way to deal with trauma, but rather wants to bring to the forth the possible pressures of resilience discourse at the societal and collective level.

[3] It took months of investigative journalism for the public to know that the 2,750 tons of ammonium-nitrate stored at the port, close to a highly populated area, had been there for six entire years. The circumstances of both the blast itself as well as the long storage time are still not transparent and the Lebanese government has not been cooperative with the clearance. It has however become clear that multiple high offices of the government were aware of the danger the chemical posed.

[4] For different magazine and newspaper articles in English thematizing resilience after the explosion, see:
https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1291894/not-resilience-subsidence.html
https://nowlebanon.com/its-not-okay-to-always-be-okay/
https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/how-much-more-can-we-take-beirut-is-in-mourning-and-rejects-resilience-38669
It is important to note that this resilience discussion largely took and takes place in the English language. Resilience does not have a direct equivalent in Arabic, but in psychology مرونة (marune) is used, which however carries more of a notion of flexibility. صمود (sumud) , usually translated as steadfastness, and discussed widely in the literature on resistance, also relates to the notion. In many ways, sumud (with its connection to and connotation especially also with the Palestinian struggle for liberation) could also be read as an important counter discourse/definition to a notion of resilience that focuses on an individualized psychological fortification – or coping.

[5] Lemke, 2021, 171.

[6] Bracke, 2016, 14.

[7] See also: Neocleous, M., 2013. Resisting resilience. Radical philosophy, 178, 2–7.

[8] Bracke, 2016, 15.

[9] Agathangelou, 2011, 240.

[10] Moghnieh, 2023, 107.

[11] Fouad, 2023.

[12] Berlant, 2011, 1.

[13] See also Hierons in this volume on the systematic disconnection of Palestinians from their collective identity by the medical-academic apparatus as part of Israeli settler-colonialism.

[14] Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom*, 280.

[15] See also: Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom*, 530.

[16] See also Marasco's beautiful discussion of restlessness and abandonment in this volume, where she mobilizes the Fanonian interlocking of politics and psychology in a similar manner. Refusing to ignore one's injuries, and those of the community around us, is then also a refusal to abandon.

[17] Eromosele, 2020, 5.

[18] Sithole, 2014, 325-6.

[19] Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom*, 498.

[20] Fanon, *Black skin white masks*, 121.

[21] Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom*, 518, emphasis mine.

[22] Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom*, 517.

[23] Alessandrini notes Fanon's 'deep ambivalence about psychoanalysis', citing Hortense Spillers: "While Fanon offers our clearest link to psychoanalysis in the African/third world field, there is sufficient enough doubt concerning the efficacy of psychoanalysis, implied in some of his writings, that he appears to withdraw with the left hand what he has proffered with the right."' (in Alessandrini, 2014, 11)

[24] Sheehi and Sheehi, 2021, 94.

[25] Thinking the colonial and capitalist aspects of this debilitation together is crucial here, as has been done by the Beirut Institute of Critical Analysis and Research in a collective statement published in October 2023: "Israel is in fact the bulwark of neo-liberal capitalist expansion in the Middle East. In its cyclical repetition of primitive accumulation from the incarceration of Palestinians, Israel and its allies represent the Real of the drive, of the drive for valorization and surplus-value extraction from both the living and the dead. There is no anti-capitalist struggle without an anti-colonial struggle, and vice versa." (see: https://bicarlebanon.org/palestine/).

[26] This last point also leads us back to the revolutionary appeal of psychiatry (and also psychoanalysis). Fouad closes her essay with this double question: "'what can psychoanalysis offer militants?' but also, 'what can militancy offer analysts?'"

[27] Agathangelou, 2011, 211.

[28] Khayyat, 2022, 4. As I pointed at above, it is no coincidence that Khayyat speaks from the South of Lebanon. The bombardment of Southern Lebanese villages, which is part and parcel with the genocide Israel is committing in Gaza as this piece is written, is still more often than not conceived of as affecting not really Lebanon itself, but just its somehow disjointed Southern borderscape.

[29] Hedva, 2016, 12.

[30] Siegel, 2023, 26, emphasis mine.

[31] Similarly, as As Abi-Ghannam explores in this volume, finding a way out of the psychologizing deadlock of the 'Middle East conflict zone' involves the consideration of violence beyond 'simple' and individualizing pathologization.

[32] Perera and Pugliese, 2011, 2, emphasis mine.

[33] See also Cassatella in this volume with reference to the importance of psychic life in ongoing decolonial struggles.

The Work of Decolonization:
Fanon and the Post-colonial Predicament

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Frantz Fanon is rightly celebrated for offering one of the sharpest analyses of colonialism's devastating social and psychic structure and for placing the question of violence at the very center of the struggle for anticolonial liberation. Fanon's reflections on the need to transform social relations after the formal termination of colonial domination have tended to draw less attention, particularly within Western academic scholarship on Fanon over the past two decades. This tendency has also meant a neglect of Fanon's materialism, that is, Fanon's acute awareness of the role that economic relations play in giving shape to human reality.

This aspect of Fanon's political thinking was perhaps recognized more clearly in his own time than in ours. Che Guevara placed Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth (1961)* in the company of the Marxist economist Paul Baran's *Political Economy of Growth* (1957) as two great accounts of the problem of colonial underdevelopment. [1] The Black Panther Party as well as other Black radical groups and actors drew on Fanon to formulate their analyses of Black communities as American empire's internal colonies, subjected to economic immiseration and underdevelopment.[2] Fanon's insights about the distortion of social relations brought by colonial underdevelopment, tied up necessarily with cultural and psychic depredations, are worth revisiting today when capitalism continues to wreak havoc on the social fabric of postcolonial countries in its neoliberal, neocolonial iterations. For it was these insights about the importance of material social relations that shaped Fanon's understanding of what genuine decolonialization would entail. Put simply, for Fanon, the promise of human emancipation held out by decolonization, which was one of overcoming the profound human disfiguration brought by colonial rule, had to do with *re-organizing social relations*, which are also economic relations.

This essay elaborates Fanon's thinking about this predicament of anti/post-colonial politics by highlighting his conceptualization of *work.* The category of work in Fanon's thought is a Hegelian inheritance; only when we grasp this philosophical account of work present in his thought can we fully come to see why Fanon placed such emphasis on anti- and post-colonial forms of work. The category of work allows us to glean Fanon's distinct view of colonization as a shrinking of colonized people's reality and decolonization as a creative enterprise that allows them to be reintegrated into social reality through collective work that generates their material universe and elevates their consciousness.

The Hegelian idea of work appears for the first time in the last few pages of Fanon's *Black Skins, White Masks* (1952) where he famously engaged with Hegel's master-slave dialectic, popularized especially by the French-Russian thinker Alexandre Kojève's lectures on Hegel from 1931 through 1939 in France.[3] For our purposes, what is key here is Fanon's takeaway from these famed passages in Hegel interpreted through Kojève's lens: work as an external manifestation of human activity which performs the role of reconciling the individual with the world. By working on and transforming the material world around us, according to Hegel and Kojève, we come to acquire a social existence which makes our subjective existence real by infusing the world with our activity.[4] At the same time, we come to be at home in this world which is no longer foreign to us. Work, therefore, is a means of humanization, of individuals becoming integrated into a social fabric.

I argue that this idea of work articulated quite early in his writings guided Fanon's thinking about colonialism as well as the process of decolonization. If work allows the reconciliation between the self and the world through practical human activity, for Fanon, colonialism was

marked by a complete rupture of this reconciliation. Work, in the classic sense of labor, appeared as *forced* work in the colonies, as Fanon put it in his Tunis lectures: "Labour was conceived as forced labour in the colonies, and even if there is no whipping, the colonial situation itself is a whipping; that the colonized does nothing is normal, since labour, for him, leads to nothing."[5] Colonialism thus prevented the most essential form of humanization by turning the expression of self- and world-creating human activity into back-breaking toil.[6] Idleness of the natives is the necessary response to this degradation of labor: this "idleness is lived in the colonial context as a will not to make raising profit easy."[7] It "contends with the rapaciousness of the settler," whose activities are not geared towards "determinate economic development" of the region but rather at "amass[ing] the biggest possible profit in the shortest possible time."[8] Against this degradation of work as labor, Fanon posited: "Work must be recovered as a humanization of man." [9]

Fanon's conception of work was not limited to strictly economic activity. It encompassed various forms of human activity whereby humans come to forge a social bond with others. This expansive view of work attested to Fanon's belief in the inseparability of the economic realm from other realms of human existence, such as cultural, psychic, and social. The impossibility of humanizing work in the colonial world within the regime of forced labor instituted by colonial capital resulted in an impoverishment of reality, which affected all realms of social life where individuals were turned into fragmented atoms untethered from a cohesive whole. A colonized people, Fanon says, is "reduced to a collection of individuals who owe their very existence to the presence of the colonizer."[10]

This social impoverishment can be gleaned in Fanon's observations about the psychic life of the colonized. For example, in a piece written in 1955, Fanon analyzed the Algerian's refusal to confess his crime, viewed by colonial authorities as a product of the Algerian's propensity to lie and deceive. For Fanon, the accused Muslim's refusal to take responsibility for his act, his refusal to embrace the sentence imposed on him, or admit guilt, is grounded in the absence of recognition "of the group by the individual."[11] Confession would mean authenticating the social apparatus that is in fact completely foreign to him. Fanon sees the traditional role of confession or admission of guilt as "a way of initiating a reintegration within the social group."[12] However, there can "be no reintegration if there has been no integration."[13] Integration, as we will see in Fanon's reflections on decolonization, has to do with work which allows individuals to become part of a social reality.

Fanon's reflections on culture in the late 1950s carried over this preoccupation with the state of social dissolution introduced by colonial rule. In his talk "Racism and Culture," given at the Congress of Black Writers and Artists in 1956, Fanon argues that "The characteristic of a culture is to be open, permeated by spontaneous, generous, fertile lines of force."[14] Appeals to past glory by negritude writers and "external appearances, relics, and knowledge frozen in time" by colonial authorities betray "a determination to objectify, to confine, to imprison, to harden."[15] They neglect the fact that a people's culture is "a dense, subterranean life in perpetual renewal"—and not "an inventory of behavioral patterns, traditional costumes, and miscellaneous customs" which culture becomes under colonial rule.[16] The sclerosis of cultural life highlights Fanon's broader analysis of the colonial world: it is shorn of the reconciliation between the subjective and the objective which characterizes an individual's humanizing, rather than reified and disfigured, relation with the world.

Decolonization meant a restoration of this reconciliation, which meant a rebirth of the social bond that integrates individuals with the world. This rebirth would necessarily involve reorganizing economic relations, which we shall explore towards the end of the essay. Examining Fanon's views on the role of work clarifies what this holistic vision of decolonization entailed. I argue that we can parse out three significant and distinct variations of anti- and post-colonial work in Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*: first, work as humanizing violence aimed at the death of colonialism during the war for national liberation; secondly, as collective political activity that allows people to exercise their minds and engage with practical issues of

socioeconomic and political import in tandem with others; and lastly, as unalienated, humanizing labor in a system of joint means of production which Fanon contrasted with the numbing drudgery of capitalist work. What is common to all these forms of work is that they perform an integrating function in restoring the social bond that relates humans with the world.

The condition of social disintegration we mentioned earlier is first challenged, Fanon tells us in *Wretched,* by the development of combativity, which nurtures a nascent national consciousness. As the "decisive confrontation" approaches, oral literature, folk tales and popular songs, having become stale and petrified, gain life and transform; traditional art forms such as woodwork are transformed—"the tormented mask comes to life;" and pottery abandons formalism, embracing a deluge of colors reflecting the revolutionary upsurge.[17] "[E]verything conspires to stimulate the colonized's sensibility, and to rule out and reject attitudes of inertia or defeat."[18] What emerges is the possibility of new forms of social relations, which is also the possibility of "integrating oneself into the coherent, constructive development of a world."[19] As Fanon puts it, "Violent combat begins to undo… [colonial] fragmentation by procuring the people "substance" and "coherence."[20]

This is precisely why Fanon calls anticolonial violence a form of "work."[21] Violence aimed at the death of colonialism becomes work because it initiates the process of integrating isolated individuals into the fold of a social collective, which had been sapped of all reality by colonial domination. But the work of anticolonial violence can only be the beginning. For Fanon, anticolonial violence was not synonymous with decolonization. While it contained the seeds for the birth of a new society, the initial burst of explosive violence had to be quickly overcome in other forms of work if those seeds were to actually blossom. The "intense emotion of the first few hours" where "my blood calls for the blood of the other" will spell doom for the possibility of a genuine decolonization "if left to feed on itself."[22] This form of work had to transform into other forms of durable work in order to sustain a coherent social framework within the horizon of the newly formed nation.

In *Wretched*, Fanon discusses a second form of work, which is collective political activity enabled by a participatory democratic political system at village, district, and regional levels. This decentralized political structure would foster active participation at the local level so that citizens "have the opportunity to speak, to express themselves and innovate." Political work would raise people's consciousness as they become practically involved in the rebuilding of their nation: "At every meeting the brain multiplies the association of ideas, and the eye discovers a wider human panorama."[23] This economic development had to be bottom-up. For Fanon, even such obvious national goals such as reduction of harmful imports and increasing the GDP should not be dictated by authorities but must involve public campaigns and input of the masses.[24] This is the political work that Fanon found critical for postcolonial societies so that the state does not become an alienated essence, an imposition, but rather a creation of the people meant to serve them and derive its momentum from them.[25]

The democratic feature of Fanon's political vision corresponded with his socialist economic vision, which emphasized a third form of work, namely unalienated labor that engaged both the mind and the muscles, elevated their consciousness, and reintegrated them into a national social reality that they identified with. "It is only when men and women are included on a vast scale in enlightened and fruitful work that form and body are given to that [national] consciousness."[26] This is the only kind of national consciousness that Fanon supported, the kind that is anchored in "social and political consciousness," and, in the end, in "humanism."[27] As Fanon put it, "capitalist exploitation and cartels and monopolies" which "are the enemies of under-developed countries" must be replaced by "a socialist regime…completely oriented towards the people as a whole and based on the principle that man is the most precious of all possessions."[28]

To become productive and reintegrating, work must undergo a transformation from what it used to mean; it has to lose the meaning of daily drudgery for a specific number of hours and regain its significance as world- and self-

creating social praxis. This means restructuring economic arrangements so that the "land belongs to those who work it" and that wealth is distributed and social relations are reorganized.[29] All these structural and institutional changes lead to the realization by the people that "work is not a physical exercise or the working of certain muscles, but that one works more with one's brain and one's heart than with muscles and sweat."[30] This means, to recall Marx, that the hands and the minds of those that work are reunited. Fanon recounts: "The fellahs [peasants] who were able to judge and see for themselves the produce they had harvested were eager to understand how it worked. They very quickly realized that work is not a simple notion, that slavery is the opposite of work, and that work presupposes freedom, responsibility, and consciousness."[31]

In prioritizing the human task of work, Fanon differs greatly from both colonial and capitalist models of economic development[32] and those upheld by a host of postcolonial statesmen, who (sometimes with good reasons) made the singular pursuit of economic development and industrialization their goal. The economic model that came to dominate in the Middle East and North Africa during the postwar period tended to emphasize the welfare responsibilities of the state while often barring the political arena from democratic contestation and planting a centralized state at the helm of the economic sphere.[33] While it is true that neoliberal policies in the following decades wiped away whatever benefits existed under this older model,[34] Fanon's vision is an important reminder of the variety of postcolonial development models that were once on the table and that hold important resources for the present.

Sometimes compared with Yugoslavia's self-management model, Fanon's vision emphasizes bottom-up popular development. In a striking passage, he says: "If the building of a bridge does not enrich the consciousness of those working on it, then don't build the bridge, and let the citizens continue to swim across the river or use the ferry."[35] The importance of efficient transport paled in comparison with the human need to shape reality. "The bridge must not be…foisted upon the social landscape as a deus ex machina, but, on the contrary, must be the product of the citizens' brains and muscles."[36] Foreign technicians will probably be needed but the "the techniques [employed must] seep into the desert of the citizen's brain so that the bridge in its entirety and in every detail can be integrated, redesigned, and reappropriated."[37] Which is to say that the "citizen must appropriate the bridge." "Then, and only then, is everything possible."[38]

Fanon's expansion of what work means, does, and discloses, signals the emergence of a new human relation to the world, which is inspired, at least in good part, by his reading of Hegel's master-slave dialectic. His humanist agenda might appear too utopian, unable to survive the concrete demands of political contingencies and economic imperatives. But I believe that Fanon's unique attunement to the human heart of political and economic questions, which tend to be seen through the prisms of technocratic management and efficiency, is as instructive today as it was sixty years ago. He provides us with a vision of decolonization which aims at a total transformation of the social relations disfigured by colonialism, disclosing thereby the incompleteness of decolonization in our own time.

Endnotes

[1] Che Guevara, "Note de Che Guevara," n.d., FNN 2.17, Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine (IMEC), France.
[2] Mumia Abu-Jamal, "Frantz Fanon and His Influence on the Black Panther Party and the Black Revolution," in *Frantz Fanon and Emancipatory Social Theory*, ed. Dustin Byrd and Seyed Javad Miri (Brill, 2079), 7–26, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004409200_003.
[3] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 2008); G.W.F. Hegel, "Mastery and Servitude," in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, ed. and trans. Terry P. Pinkard, Cambridge Hegel Translations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 108–16.
[4] Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, ed. Allan Bloom, trans. James Nichols, Jr. (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1980), 23.
[5] Frantz Fanon, "The Meeting between Society and Psychiatry: Notes Taken by Lilia Ben Salem, Tunis, 1959-1960," in *Alienation and Freedom*, ed. Jean Khalfa and Robert J. C. Young, trans. Steven Corcoran (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 530.
[6] « Etudes et Recherches Sur La Psychologie En Algerie: Recontre de La Societe et de La Psychiatrie (Notes de Cours, Tunis, 1959-60) » (University of Oran, n.d.), 15, FNN 6.2: Articles médicaux, Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine (IMEC), France.
[7] Fanon, "The Meeting between Society and Psychiatry: Notes Taken by Lilia Ben Salem, Tunis, 1959-1960," 529.
[8] Fanon, 529.
[9] « Etudes et Recherches Sur La Psychologie En Algerie: Recontre de La Societe et de La Psychiatrie (Notes de Cours, Tunis, 1959-60) » (University of Oran, n.d.), 15, FNN 6.2: Articles médicaux, Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine (IMEC), France.
[10] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 220.
[11] Frantz Fanon and Raymond Lacaton, "Conducts of Confession in North Africa (1) (1955)," in *Alienation and Freedom*, ed. Jean Khalfa and Robert J. C. Young, trans. Steven Corcoran (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 412.
[12] Jean Khalfa, "Fanon, Revolutionary Psychiatrist," in *Alienation and Freedom*, trans. Steven Corcoran (London Oxford New York New Delhi Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 195.
[13] Fanon and Lacaton, "Conducts of Confession in North Africa (1) (1955)," 412.
[14] Frantz Fanon, "Racism and Culture (1956)," in *Toward the African Revolution: Political Essays* (New York: Grove Press, 1988), 34.
[15] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961, 160–61; Fanon, "Racism and Culture (1956)," 34.
[16] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961, 160, 172.
[17] Fanon, 174–75.
[18] Fanon, 174–75.
[19] Fanon, 232.
[20] Fanon, 219.
[21] Fanon, 44.
[22] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 2002), 139.
[23] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961, 136.
[24] Fanon, 135–36.
[25] Fanon, 136, 139.
[26] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 2002, 204.
[27] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961, 144.
[28] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 2002, 99.
[29] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961, 133, 143.
[30] Fanon, 133.
[31] Fanon, 133.
[32] See, for example, France's technocratic development model in postwar Algeria which sought to create rational economic agents. Muriam Haleh Davis, "'The Transformation of Man' in French Algeria: Economic Planning and the Postwar Social Sciences, 1958–62," *Journal of Contemporary History* 52, no. 1 (January 2017): 73–94, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009416647117.
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[35] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961, 140.
[36] Fanon, 141.
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[38] Fanon, 141.

Specters of Revolutions:
Fanonian Reflections on *Toward the African/Arab Revolution*

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In *Toward the African Revolution*, Frantz Fanon poses a peculiar but thought-provoking question: "[w]ho are they, in truth, those creatures, who hide, who are hidden by social truth beneath the attributes of *bicot, bounioule, arabe, raton, sidi, mon z'ami*?"[1] Fanon's question on the nature of dissidents and revolutionaries brings one to consider the nature of revolution itself. One can argue that revolutions are never obsolete. Indeed, revolutions are always "spectered" as they seem to haunt human history. The word haunting unveils questions on legacy, history and memory. Fanon's writings on revolutions spark an engagement with other texts, times and possibilities of resistance. Literary works and political discourses on Arab revolutions, for instance, seem to share similar questions on the nature of revolutions and revolutionaries. Fanon's reflection and provocative analysis of revolutions in Africa urge readers to think about the aftermaths of the Arab Spring. The post Arab spring literary representations of dissidence and revolution seem to unveil and challenge certainties about language, gender roles, elite culture along with the holy myth of a finished revolution. Arab writers, like Fanon, grapple with questions of nationalism, the essence of revolution and the role of revolutionaries, violence, and the socio-political realities of their societies as they seek to understand and reflect on the revolutionary struggles unfolding in the Arab world.

Revolutions in Fanon's writings are "in the making"; they reveal the multiple jeopardy that Africans face as they attempt to reclaim their voices and identities. Accordingly, revolutions are constructed and deconstructed in experiences and narratives about the self and the other; they become sites for negotiating other possibilities of becoming African, Arab, and militant. Like Fanon's inquiries into the nature of revolutions, Arab writers appear to engage in parallel explorations as they examine the complexities of identity, the struggles for liberation, and the socio-political landscapes that shape their narratives. Through their works, they explore the historical and contemporary forces that shape their societies, seeking to articulate the aspirations and challenges faced by their communities in the pursuit of justice and self-determination.

This paper seeks to examine the diverse manifestations and metaphors of revolution in the writings of Fanon and some Arab writers. The study of their poetics of re-writing and re-inventing other possibilities of becoming revolutionary reflects on some possible alliances between the past and the present in the MENA region as they foster a direct relationship with political and cultural transformations. This paper argues that a Fanonian dream of "This Africa to Come" and rethinking revolutions through the African and Arab context can offer new interpretations of becoming revolutionary. It reads two critical texts about the Arab Spring through the lens of Fanonian readings of revolution: Egyptian novelist Alaa Al Aswani's *The Republic of False Truths* and Tunisian writer Kamel Riahi's *Frankenstein Tunis.* These texts interrogate the aftermath of Egyptian and Tunisian "revolutions" in order to reveal the socio-political effects on people as they might become the new "wretched of the earth."

On Revolutions and Other Apost Dreams

> It so happens that the unpreparedness of the educated classes, the lack of practical links between them and the mass of the people, their laziness, and, let it be said, their cowardice at the decisive moment of the struggle will give rise to tragic mishaps. National consciousness, instead of being the all-embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of the whole people, instead of being the immediate and most obvious result of the mobilization of the people, will

> be in any case only an empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been.
>
> —Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (148)

Frantz Fanon warns the reader against dreaming dangerously[2] about revolutions. Revolutions, he prophesies, may betray the wretched who made them. A revolution might become an "empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty" at the hands of the unprepared. And what could be more important today than speaking about "tragic mishaps" and the "crystallization of the innermost hopes" —of revolutions and revolutionaries?

At the heart of Fanon's thinking on revolution in Africa and elsewhere, as we infer from his words in *The Wretched of the Earth*, is a venture into reading moments of "national consciousness" otherwise. Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, *The Wretched of the Earth*, *Toward the African Revolution* each in their own way reveal the intersection between colonial experiences and national struggles. Fanon maps out the past by rethinking historical injustices as they offer a leap into the present, already loaded with historical traumas, projecting into the future of the wretched.

To speak of memory as knowledge of both present and future carries with it the special significance of Fanon's writing about other possibilities of being African and becoming revolutionary. Fanon's "wretched of the earth," demarcated as the miserable and pitiable sufferers, are not only at the margin of history and memory but are also at the margin of revolutions. The word wretched reveals the failure of revolutions as they do not achieve their goals. Writing about the miserable African – and, dare one say it, Arab –attempts to reclaim voices often silenced in the grand narratives of war, speeches of independence and freedom, and official news discourses to wrestle them into history and memory.

Fanon's work reveals his examination of history and memory, which are forces of cultural, economic, and political change, to say the least. In effect, one can look more closely at his dissident writing and voice as he confronts historical injustices and false narratives. Fanon's reading of history is loaded with encounters with the trauma of pre-colonial and post-colonial tragedies. The traumas of yesterday's colonial wretchedness, as this paper suggests, are the traumas of today's revolutionaries and the revolution itself.

It is from this perspective that this article asks: What is a revolution for Fanon? What does it mean for a revolution to be a travesty? Do revolutions breed new species or monsters? Do they make the wretched more wretched? And how do post-Arab Spring narratives seem to highlight similar questions about revolutions?

The Prophet speaks: On Dreams and Realities

> "Each generation must out of relative obscurity discover its mission, fulfill it, or betray it."
>
> —Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (206)

Fanon observes that genuine revolutions must be creative; otherwise, they die and take away revolutionaries. Revolutions, accordingly, must unite people to understand the truth, here referring to a new state of mind. It signals people's transition from ignorance to knowledge and their ongoing struggle to change political, cultural, and socio-economic realities that impede change and hold people back. He posits that African people "come to know themselves. They have decided, in the name of the whole continent, to weigh in strongly against the colonial regime" (*The Wretched*, 164). Self-knowledge, or what is referred to as discovering one's mission, can generate moments of truth and change. Fanon posits that to think (of) revolution, one must think truth. What is more, revolution is defined as a journey towards self-liberation. Fanon links revolution to responsibility, but it is the responsibility of the nationalists, the elite, and the political parties:

> The national government, if it wants to be national, ought to govern by the people and for the people, for the outcasts and by the outcasts. No leader, however valuable he may be, can substitute himself for the popular will; and

the national government, before concerning itself about international prestige, ought first to give back their dignity to all citizens, fill their minds and feast their eyes with human things, and create a prospect that is human because conscious and sovereign men dwell therein.[3]

Fanon's words reflect his philosophy of revolution as a people's experience manifested in their articulation of liberation. The "national" consciousness argument is best illustrated in the marriage between theory and praxis. In advancing this thesis, Fanon seeks to suggest that a revolution—while it should be praised for its attempt to give dignity to all citizens—has to be called into question when it comes to examining political and social realities produced by national governments. Such political and social change in no way stops at the level of theorizing emancipation and social justice, but must unite people and leaders in action. Fanon warns against conflating people's longing for socio-economic changes with the falsified discourses of the pernicious national bourgeoisie. Fanon remains skeptical of new governments that could falsify facts and seize power to create a new form of domination. He then adds:

> Now the nationalist bourgeoisies, who in region after region hasten to make their own fortunes and to set up a national system of exploitation, do their utmost to put obstacles in the path of this "Utopia." The national bourgeoisies, who are quite clear as to what their objectives are, have decided to bar the way to that unity, to that coordinated effort on the part of two hundred and fifty million men to triumph over stupidity, hunger, and inhumanity at one and the same time. This is why we must understand that African unity can only be achieved through the upward thrust of the people, and under the leadership of the people, that is to say, in defiance of the interests of the bourgeoisie.[4]

Fanon's warnings about betrayal, exploitation, and failure highlight the defective link between people's demands and the agendas of the nationalist bourgeoisie. Fanon holds that revolution is often betrayed by "new species of men" who carry the seeds of more destruction and corruption. In other words, the new leaders become the new enemies to resist and rebel against. In Fanon's view, the encounters with failure and hostility should not result in antagonism and conflict. What he suggests instead is an original mode of thinking about revolution, through dissident voices:

> The clear, unreal, idyllic light of the beginning is followed by a semi-darkness that bewilders the senses. The people find out that the iniquitous fact of exploitation can wear a black face, or an Arab one; and they raise the cry of "Treason!" But the cry is mistaken; and the mistake must be corrected. The treason is not national, it is social. The people must be taught to cry "Stop thief!"[5]

From this perspective, revolutionaries have to adapt themselves to the new struggle for liberation. Breaking the chains of illusion and disillusionment is necessary if people want to be treated as human beings. The people, Fanon reveals, rebel when they are deprived of truth; if they know truth, they can know themselves, which can change their experiences of the world. Fanon argues, "To tell the truth, the proof of success lies in a whole social structure being changed from the bottom up."[6]

A similar bottom-up reading of revolutions and their histories can elucidate details about national and social articulations of pain, hope, memory, illusion, trauma, and dangerous dreams. Here we arrive at the crux of Fanon's philosophy of social change, or revolution. Fanon is aware that 'History' profanes revolutions because revolution is sacred like truth. In other words, he is aware that only the 'brave' can be revolutionary, and only the truth is revolutionary, and truth always falls outside history. Truth could only rise from the ashes of others' memories and histories.[7] To explore the themes of revolution, freedom, and dreams and hopes of revolt in the works of Alaa Al Aswani and Kamel Riahi, one can delve into how these texts resonate with Fanon's writing of revolution. Both writers reflect on the complexities and dangers of revolutionary movements, revealing the perils of uprising both in the past and present. Fanon's philosophy of

revolution echo throughout their text, highlighting the ongoing struggles of African people in their quest for dignity and justice.

The Rebel Speaks: Trust the Tale not the Teller[8]

> "O my body, make of me always a man who questions!"
>
> —Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks, (*232)

Adopting Fanon's logic can help understand other moments of failed uprisings. Alaa Al Aswani's *The Republic of False Truths* (2018) and Tunisian writer Kamel Riahi's *Frankenstein Tunis* (2023) are narratives of thwarted dreams and lost hopes. Their texts invoke the voices of rebels and monsters torn between revolutionary dreams and dark realities, hope and despair, and order and disorder. Just as Fanon spoke about "fulfilling" or "betraying" the post-colonial revolutions, Al Aswani and Riahi share similar experiences of narrating stories of betrayal and lost moments of change in the aftermath of Arab uprisings. The texts become dissident representations of historical conditions and people's attitudes toward these conditions. *The Republic of False Truths* and *Frankenstein Tunis* show, transmit, perform, deconstruct, construct, and unfold counter-narratives about failed uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia. Both books were banned by authorities under the pretext of 'slandering the state,' transgressing boundaries, and destabilizing order. Al Aswani and Riahi audaciously challenge the official narratives about fulfilled or finished revolutions. They are outspoken activists and intellectuals who seek to speak truth to power. The messages in the texts are clear, and the encounter with the post-spring realities is vivid.

The Republic of False Truths, جمهورية كأن, unveils the political and social hypocrisy of a country falling apart. Everything seems "كأن," "as if" it is fine, ordered, and fulfilled. This Arabic word "كأن," chosen by Al Aswani, underlines the political manipulation of news and minds where everything looks fine, ordered, and fulfilled. Egyptians after the revolution seem to be consumed by debates about national identity and social and economic changes. Contrary to the rosy picture propagated by the political regime, revolutionaries seem to suffer alone in silence. "False truths" are just exposed through the polyphonic stories of different characters who resisted or participated in the Tahrir Square events in 2011. Policemen, religious figures, workers, schoolteachers, trade union activists, government officials, young men and women, actors, and factory owners are depicted as they share their narratives of protest or domination.

Al Aswani's text gives voice to the alternative experiences of sons and fathers, daughters and mothers, government officials and rebels, teachers and actors as they share their thoughts of revolution and uprising. Al Aswani addresses the reader directly about how to interpret and think about *The Republic of False Truths*:

> Dear Reader,
>
> You will never know who I am because I shall sign this book with a pseudonym. I am not afraid. I come, thank God, from a family of brave men, generation upon generation. The only thing is that we live in a lying, backward society that adores delusions, and I am not willing to pay the price of others' stupidity. I have lived for fifty-five years, and most of those years I have spent in deep thought, which has led me to comprehend a number of truths, which it is now my duty to both proclaim and document. The theories that I shall put forward in this book would merit academic study, were we living in a decent society. We are, however, in Egypt, where the serious thinker and the brilliant scientist find no recognition, and where glory – and what glory! – goes to liars and impostors. Let me start my theory with the following question: 'What is the essence of the relationship that ties a man to a woman in Egypt?

Al Aswani's loaded question about the relationship between a man and a woman in Egypt is an alibi. One might rephrase the question as follows: what is the essence of the relationship that ties a revolutionary to a nation or to a revolution that is faltering? The sarcastic representation

of love, revolution, and relationships that follows in the narrative reveals the author's fury. Al Aswani's characters fail to answer this question as they are surrounded by 'bitchy mothers' and 'ruthless fathers' who fail to love each other. Love and revolution can blind people to the realities of Egypt. Everything seems to be false. The republic is false too. Only the revolution is true, the writer says:

> It's the truth, Mazen. I really am 'nothing' and all the young people who took part in the revolution are 'nothing'. They did to us, and will go on doing to us, whatever they want. They will kill us and abuse us sexually and put out our eyes with shotgun pellets and no one will bring them to trial and no one will hold them to account. Do you know why? Because we're 'nothing'. Because we mounted a revolution that nobody needed and nobody wanted. I know you still believe in the People. I, though, will never believe in them. This people, whose freedom and dignity the best among us gave their lives to defend, doesn't want freedom and dignity. You used to ask, 'Why the hatred that we see on the faces of the officers as they kill us?' Because they hate what we represent. Because we're demanding to be citizens, not slaves. The people for whose sake we rose up, Mazen, hate us and hate the revolution […] Everything in Egypt is a lie, except for the revolution. Only the revolution is true, which is why they hate it, because it shows up their corruption and their hypocrisy. Egypt is the Republic of False Truths, and we presented the Egyptians with the reality and they hated it from the depths of their hearts.

The above passage deserves to be cited in full as it echoes Fanon's arguments about tragic ends, alienated revolutionaries, and thwarted hopes. Changes in state power, accordingly, fail to bring about social transformation and correspond with revolutionaries' aspirations. The voice of Asma Zanaty, a dissident revolutionary and school teacher, seems to represent the many voices of those betrayed by people's silence and submission to corruption, injustice, and exploitation. Al Aswani's affirmative defiance is illustrated in his refusal to yield to the political manipulation of revolution. Al Aswani's statement "only the revolution is true" in the Republic of False Truths is a locus where two antagonistic movements are at work: the revolutionaries and the nonrevolutionaries. The clash between truths and lies played out at the political manipulation of revolution, transforms people's minds about power and resistance.

By the same token, Fanon warns against those who seem to be manipulated by a new state power. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, he observes that:

> Sometimes people hold a core belief that is very strong. When they are presented with evidence that works against that belief, the new evidence cannot be accepted. It would create a feeling that is extremely uncomfortable, called cognitive dissonance. And because it is important to protect the core belief, they will rationalize, ignore and even deny anything that doesn't fit in with the core belief.[9]

Indeed, social and political changes require a new understanding because revolutions create new realities and articulations. Fanon seems to have some sympathy for people who cannot fathom a different reality. People have to step out of their comfort zones and face truths about themselves, their failure and their ignorance, to 'spring into' the possibilities of being a citizen, a free Man, and an independent human being. The transition is often painful as it entails breaking deep-rooted chains of ignorance and developing new cognitive skills. That is why Fanon adds: "uprooted, pursued, baffled, doomed to watch the dissolution of the truths that he has worked out for himself one after another, he has to give up projecting onto the world an antinomy that coexists with him."[10] Egyptians, who belong to the wretched of the earth, feel uprooted and baffled as they fail to understand the truth.

On Monsters: To Speak or Not to Speak

> "Decolonization is quite simply the replacing of a certain "species" of men by another "species" of men."

> —Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (35)
>
> "Zombies, believe me, are more terrifying than colonists."
>
> —Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (56)

In his analysis of revolutionary times, Fanon uses the metaphors of "monsters," "zombies," and "serpent-men," to describe the birth of new species who are often the official spokespersons of revolutions. The metaphors depict leaders who betray the people and put an end to the revolution. The monstrous imagery stands for the embodiment of the dehumanization of the revolution's enemies. The metaphors evoke the evil that they can inflict — an evil beyond human knowledge. Fanon says:

> There are maleficent spirits which intervene every time a step is taken in the wrong direction, leopard-men, serpent-men, six-legged dogs, zombies—a whole series of tiny animals or giants which create around the native a world of prohibitions, of barriers and of inhibitions far more terrifying than the world of the settler.[11]

Like Fanon on monsters and their frightening world, Tunisian writer Kamel Riahi describes similar monsters in *Frankenstein Tunis.* The text includes articles and literary allusions that reflect on post-revolutionary Tunisia mainly through the metaphor of Frankenstein. Frankenstein is both the president, Kais Saied, and the people who grapple with the father or leader absence. Tunisians are described as orphans and uprooted children who dream about returning home. In his article, "A Night in Tunisia," Riahi shares his own experience of the Tunisian Uprising:

> When Tunisians see that some members of the old regime have been named to cabinet posts, there is a new wave of disturbances, and people start saying that revolution has been stolen from them […] I support the revolution and, like so many young people, worry that it will be stolen from us by the traitors, thieves and killers who have ruled us for far too long. (227)

Like Fanon and Al Aswani, Riahi trusts revolutions but doubts the new ruler's resistance to truth and change. More to say, he doubts the people who are described as slaves because of their fear and oppression. Riahi argues that Arab peoples are enslaved by their terror of freedom and truth (238). Riahi criticizes Saied's constitutional coup, arguing that the suspension of Tunisian parliament serves to stifle the very revolution he claims to support. The text forewarns of different attempts to intimidate people who defend the freedom of expression, as evidenced by the imprisonment of activists and journalists who advocate for freedom and political opposition.

By the same token, Fanon holds that people grapple with the meaning of change and the post-revolution reality: "[t]he people, the people who had given everything in the difficult moments of the struggle for national liberation wonder, with their empty hands and bellies, as to the reality of their victory."[12] Fanon, here, seems to capture the tragedy of the revolution: people's ignorance breeds fear and makes them yield themselves to the new power. People do not know how to respond to change. The new reality frightens them. They wait for a savior to tell them what to do next. People are afraid of the new reality because they are hungry and ignorant. Hopes about social transformation, justice, and dignity are turned into bitter disappointment. The new leaders, transformed into terrifying monsters and zombies, seize power from the people.

Riahi adds that Arabs, too, create their own Frankenstein. What is interesting for the reader to think about is the analogy made between Mary Shelley's monster and the Tunisian monster. Both Victor Frankenstein and the Tunisian people longed for the mother's presence as they were traumatized by pain, anxiety, and wretchedness. The monster, accordingly, could denote aid — the dream of a possible "man of or from the people."[13] However, monsters cannot overcome their monstrosity, and there is worse to come: monsters, too, can betray people. Riahi highlights the analogy between Victor's dream and people's hope, between the people and the state, and between knowledge and ignorance. He states that Victor's monster is an imaginary and fictive product of scientific

experimentation, whereas the Tunisian or Arab monster is the material product and the living emblem of human choices, the product of people's ignorance and fear (244). The monster seems to bring more destruction and pain.

Riahi's bleak world of a betrayed revolution and a country falling apart uses bitter language, which points to similar experiences examined in Fanon's and Al Aswani's writings about revolutions and monsters. Fanon, Al Aswani, and Riahi were unapologetic, daring, and dissident. Their texts speak truths and facts. The present article examines Fanon's reflections on revolution, resistance, and political change. Reading Al Aswani's and Riahi's texts through the lens of Fanon, or, to put it differently, seeing Fanon's legacy through the lens of Arab texts on revolutions and uprisings, allows the reader to understand more about the present movements of uprising in the world. It is intriguing to compare how different texts, from past and present, speak to each other in provocative and creative ways. They become a gateway, opening up a different mode of thinking about revolutions. 'The Prophet, the Rebel, and the Monster' dream dangerously about a new text and a new world: that of the unwretched. What Fanon taught us yesterday and today is that "when we revolt it's not for a particular culture. We revolt simply because, for many reasons, we can no longer breathe."[14]

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Endnotes

1 Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, 3.
2 It is inspired by Slavoj Zizek's *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously*, 2012.
3 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 205.
4 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 164.
5 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 145.
6 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 65.
7 With a nod to Cathy Caruth's *Literature in the Ashes of History*, 2013.
8 I borrow this expression from D.H. Lawrence.
9 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 119.
10 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 2.
11 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 55.
12 Fanon, *Towards the African Revolution*, 187.
13 Inspired by Chinua's Achebe *Man of the People*, 1988.
14 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 65.

Method in Frantz Fanon's Clinical Works

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In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in Frantz Fanon's thought, especially as a result of the publication of its psychiatric writings (2018 [2015]).[1] These writings have contributed to shift scholarly attention to his long ignored clinical works as central to rethinking his entire work (Arnall, 2020; Gibson & Beneduce, 2017; Khalfa, 2018b; Khan, 2019; Lazali 2018; Marriott, 2018; Robcis, 2020; Ureña, 2019a, 2019b).[2] While a great deal of emphasis has been put on specialized clinical content, less attention has been paid on the theoretical contribution these works offer beyond psychiatry itself in terms of 'method' broadly understood as the relevant approach to address, analyse and understand the reality of colonised and formerly colonised people. I suggest that by putting forward an interdisciplinary approach centred on the idea of translation as method, or in his words "transmutation", Fanon offers powerful resources to decolonizing processes in knowledge production (1954: 205; 1961: 174).

Fanon's Psychiatric writings

Written between 1952 and 1961, Fanon's psychiatric works reflects his intense clinical practice, especially in North Africa between 1953-57, when Fanon worked at the psychiatric hospital of Blida-Joinville in Algeria (1953-56), and then Tunis (1956-57).[3] These works point to the psychosomatic predicament of colonised subjects resulting from *the* traumatic disorders provoked by colonial wounds, which disconnect, mentally and corporeally, the self from herself, as well as from culture and society (1952: xv; 1961: 181).[4] While being primarily clinical in nature, these writings exceed such domain, and display a complex approach to broad questions of psychic life - as referring to the psycho-affective, somatic and spiritual dimensions of human existence - and decolonization.

In North Africa, Fanon practiced and further experimented with social therapy, which he learnt in France under the mentorship of Francois Tosquelles.[5] Reflecting the Lacanian insight about the social constitution of personality, social therapy is centred on the idea that patients can heal only in social forms and through activities that addresses the "process of dissolution and reconstruction [*dissolution-reconstruction*] of the personality" (1954a: 134). The objective of these activities is first, to create the conditions for patients to become aware of their conditions under colonialism: the persistence of numerous and sometimes "indelible wounds", the systematic negation of humanity, in sum the psychic and social dissolution of personality (1961: 219; 1956c: 53); and second, to "relearn" and "rediscover the meaning of freedom" the loss of which is connected to madness (1954a:173; 1956c: 53).[6]

A key theoretical background for Fanon's critical approach to these matters occurs in his 1952 *The North African Syndrome*. Here he exposes the racial prejudice of the Algiers School of Psychiatry or Ethnopsychiatry, which relies on prior anthropological assumptions about North-Africans as primitives and operates through a naturalized process of translation as overdetermination.[7] Fanon illuminates that by displaying "pain without lesion", North African patients present somatic manifestations of psychological illness that remain illegible under the cognitive "pre-existing framework" of traditional psychiatry (1952b: 7). Abstracting from context, such a framework ignores how psychological distress is experienced and interpreted, as well as whether non-organic factors possibly contribute to its understanding. In contrast to this approach, Fanon adopts, drawing from Heinrich Meng, a "situational diagnosis" that takes into account patients' lived experience together with social and political factors in the analysis of mental health (1952b: 13). Further, he expands the analytic focus beyond patients' consciousness to include what they experience in their body and with which consequence in terms of

somatization of psychological stress.[8]

Two other essays – 1954's "Social Therapy in a Ward of Muslim Men: Methodological Difficulties" written with Francois Azoulay, and 1956's "TAT in Muslim Women: Sociology of Perception and Imagination", written with Charles Geronimi – are key texts that display most clearly Fanon's critical approach. The reflections occurring there focus on psychological diagnostics and socio-therapeutic activities organized for European women and Muslim men segregated in the same ward. While Fanon and Azoulay observe visible improvements in personal and collective rehabilitation among European patients, they register a "total failure" among Muslim men (1954b:199). Similar results emerge from tests (TAT: thematic apperception test) designed to study the personality of patients (1956b).

Fanon and his collaborators identify the problem of this failure in the uncritical application of their method. Traditional diagnostic approaches force patients into, "a different, foreign, heterogeneous and non-appropriable world" whose rigid borders—cultural, political, and epistemological—affect the possibility of meaningful feedback and imagination (1956b: 280). This "western inspired social therapy in a ward of mentally ill Muslim men" informed by the "supremacy of Western culture" remains anchored in a racialized approach that essentializes and separates the biological from psychological and sociological dimensions, thereby eliding the psycho-affective significance of patients' social and cultural background, geopolitical location, as well as the epistemic value of lived experience (1954b: 205). In all observed cases, the "heterogeneity" between the cultural background informing the tests and therapeutic activities for patients, keeps the latter alienated from the cultural values and social referents resonating with their *concrete* lived-experience.

Fanon and his collaborators identify three main explanations for their methodological mistakes (1954b: 204, 209-10). The first is to assume that North Africa was French, and to adopt "a policy of assimilation [*politique de l'assimilation*]" that effectively translates indigenous patients into Western models, rather than trying to understand them "in their cultural originality" (204). In this framework "assimilation does not presuppose a reciprocity of perspective" but "is up to one entire culture to disappear in favour of another" (204).[9] The second one is to consider biology alone as the relevant disciplinary prism through which to identify what counts as, and determines, mental illness. The last one is that the methodological separation of psychic life from culture produces a methodological reductionism marked by essentialist features (1956b: 283).

To overcome these difficulties, Fanon and Azoulay advocate for a "revolutionary attitude" that engages with "modesty" the culture of their patients and pays attention to the specificity of indigenous Algerian society, going thus from a position of unquestioned Western epistemic supremacy to one of "cultural relativism" or equality (196, 205). Inspired by Marcel Mauss, they opt for a holistic model that considers the interaction and impact on psychic life of biological, psychological, and socio-political dimensions. To an approach that translates Muslim patients into a Western framework, one that indeed forcibly assimilates them into it, they propose a different form of translation, which they call "transmutation".

> It was necessary to try to grasp the North African social fact. It was necessary to demand that 'totality' in which [Marcel] Mauss saw the guarantee of an authentic sociological study. A leap [*saut*] had to be performed, a transmutation [*transmutation*] of values to be achieved. Let's say it: it was essential to go from the biological level to the institutional one, from natural existence to cultural existence (1954b: 205)

In this passage, transmutation appears as a form of translation through which to move across (*trans*) different fields of enquiry, while modifying (*mutation*) the original unidimensional model that relies on the alleged epistemic primacy of scientific (medical) knowledge. This epistemological shift from biology to culture, social relations and politics – and also, as we shall see from methodological separation to relationality – appears necessary to understand the nature of mental illness

as a 'total fact', and to devise supporting conditions for reconstructing the personality. For Fanon, what undergirds the necessity of this change is an understanding of mental illness as a "pathology of freedom", a notion he borrows from Henri Ey that points beyond the organic dimension (1951: 42).[10] As a result, mental illness cannot be taken as a discrete phenomenon that is graspable only through a biological approach. Unless historical context, culture and social relationships are also taken into account, there is no adequate understanding of the nature, sources and overall reality of mental illness. For Fanon, humans always exist in relation with other humans, and thus "the human being as an object of study demands a multidimensional investigation" that is reflective of social context (1954b:55). Informing Fanon's emphasis on the methodological value of the "total fact" of mental illness, the idea of "multidimensional investigation" anticipates the need of medical interpretation and cure to (re)connect dimensions that are kept separate in the analysis and treatment of patients, as racial schemas would want them.

By calling for a shift away from biology, Fanon and Azoulay both affirm and perform a break with past scientific approaches without fully doing away with them.[11] In their view, the application of medical theory across contexts is not to be totally rejected, but it requires paying attention to the material, historical and cultural conditions of the patients under analysis in a comparative perspective. More fundamentally, it requires a mutation in the ways in which intercultural encounter is approached, analysed and dealt with in colonial contexts. As a result, psychiatric practice demands a "functional analysis" of signs in relation to the cultural understandings, contexts and forms of sociability in which social attitudes can be meaningful at all (1954a: 206). Ranging from politico-economic discussions of land dispossession and its effects on social transformations to sociological considerations on ethnicity and religion, as well as politico-philosophical reflections on the cultural and agential bases of political rules, their analyses seek to enact a methodological mutation in order to provide first of all an analysis of the formation and contemporary status of Muslim Algerian society, as the context in which the mental illness of targeted patients can be understood (1954; 1955a). Particularly worthy of mention among these are their analyses of modified social conditions under colonialism and of cultural attitudes towards mental illness.[12] Fanon and Azoulay highlight that with French colonialism also occurred the transformations of land ownership (from collective to private), the modernization of farming, and the decline of nomadism replaced by a growing proletarianization. These changes brought about a fundamental cultural modification and dissociation in the way in which Algerians related to authority, society and tradition (208).

If transmutation calls for an ethnographic and comparative approach to address the intercultural context of mental illness, it also urges shift towards considering political structures and the corporeal form mental illness takes. Fanon's attention for these elements emerges in a 1957 text written with Slimaneh Asselah, "The Phenomenon of Agitation in the Psychiatric Milieu: General Considerations, Psychopathological Meaning". Breaking from conventional psychiatry, the authors affirm that "agitation demands to be understood not mechanically but dialectically" (1957: 296, 292). This means that patients' behaviour "must be understood within the clinic in question and its possibilities regarding assimilation" (291). Raising the question of "discrimination" *alongside* that of medical interpretation, this insight unearths the false neutrality of traditional medical theory and practice, which appears as a "racism with scientific pretension" (1955c: 251). Methodologically, it marks an epistemic mutation from causality to relationality.

For Fanon and Assilah, it is thus only from a politically sensible analysis of medical epistemology that agitation can be understood 'in context.' Approached this way, agitation appears as a "modality of existence" with which patients attempt to make and give sense to their alienated existence under condition of colonial distress (299). Attentive to the epistemic importance of the body seen as a source of knowledge that is revelatory of political forces but also of cultural difference, Fanon and Asselah do not read the manifestations of 'agitation' as indicative of an organic pathology.[13] Rather they consider them as the patients'

response to the "annihilation of perceived reality", the breakdown of their "system of reference" (295). In this way, they expand and deepen the frame of analysis and possibilities of understanding what is involved in mental illness in a colonial situation by centring the body as an archive.

Translation as Method

What is the significance of Fanon's 'method' as it appears in his psychiatric writings? The response to this question, I suggest, lies in the appreciation of translation as method, one that illuminates methodological issues that are relevant to the decolonization of traditional psychiatry as well as to broader approaches to the decolonization of knowledge production. Indeed, what emerges from Fanon's holistic and relational approach is that medical analysis needs to be attentive to the cultural, social and political background of symptoms for it to effectively interpret them. Because patients live in material, political and cultural conditions that have been profoundly modified by the experience of colonialism, a critical interpretation is in order. This is a type of intercultural interpretation that, occurring under modern constraints – political, economic and cultural – requires attention to often profoundly different and yet interrelated system of reference and thus move away from traditional approaches. It is in this context that the idea of transmutation acquires decisive significance.

On my reading, transmutation in Fanon is not simply a way to "stretch the analysis" of Western psychiatry to account for the colonial context, as he did with European psychology in *Black Skin, White Masks*, and Marxist theory in *The Wretched of The Earth,* as Gavin Arnall has suggested.[14] Nor is it solely a form of cultural translation akin to literary models, as it appears in Robert Young's account.[15] It is more fundamentally an epistemic change about how to approach questions of relevance and processes through which to determine referents. For Fanon, medical interpretations need to take into account the context, understandings and values of the subjects it analyses, its referents, but this cannot be simply done by simply transferring or adaptively stretching meaning across contexts. A mutation of epistemic value is in order. While this mutation regards changes in the relevant dimensions of analysis – clinical, cultural, socio-economic, and political – it also regards the relevant terms in which, and the intersecting disciplinary fields through which, the nature of illness is to be understood. So, if Fanon embraces a form of traveling theory, this would not simply be one that adapt itself to different material and cultural conditions, but also one that seeks to cross-disciplinarily determine the object of its analysis and critically negotiate the terms of understanding, without however indicating conclusive criteria for translation.[16] This is what the critique of assimilation as lack of epistemic reciprocity of cultures points to. Seen this way, transmutation illuminates a critical attitude that is culturally and historically sensible towards medical approaches and their cultural underpinnings, and that remains vigilant about the racial schema undergirding claims about universal validity. Unlike recent interpretations of Fanon's view on translation, which highlight that when the original travels across spaces and times contexts is subjected to the alteration of the receiving context, my reading suggests that transmutation as analytic method can allow for a deeper break in terms of the authoritative sources and approaches to relevance.[17] The methodological quest for reconnection at work in transmutation counters racial schemas based on theoretical essentialism and separations.

Further, my suggestion seeks to highlight that Fanon's idea of transmutation anticipates and expands the call for a historically sensible interdisciplinarity of contemporary approaches to the decolonization of knowledge forms (Mamdani, 2019; Mbembe, 2019). This is a call that seeks to go beyond disciplinary divisions of knowledge that came with the developments of social and human sciences in the 19th and 20th centuries, divisions that came also with the proliferation of methods internal to them, mirroring modern separatist schemas of knowledge production and circulation. The point here is not simply to emphasize that Fanon offers an example of, and illustrates the need for, interdisciplinarity to counter the separatist conditions of possibility for racial knowledge production. It is also and above all to highlight the significance of psychic life

to African and other struggles for decolonization beyond early and more recent focus on the political (Nkrumah, 2018[1972]; Nyerere, 1966; Mamdani, 2020), economic (Amin, 2010; Cabral, 1979; Nkrumah, 1964, 1966) or epistemic (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018) domains, which, taken in relative autonomy, end up overlooking both questions of intersectionality and agency.

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Endnotes

[1] See Khalfa, J. and Young, R. (Eds) *Frantz Fanon: Alienation and Freedom*, trans. by Steven Corcoran (London: Bloomsbury, 2018). My exploration could also include *Black Skin, White Masks* because it is a self-proclaimed clinical study. Yet, I opted to privilege the psychiatric writings that come out of his clinical practice, and not those whose insights are generated by clinical knowledge. For this reason, I have considered chapter five of *The Wretched of the Earth*. In what follows, I use 'psychiatric' and 'clinical' interchangeably when referring to these writings.

[2] An exception to the long neglect of Fanon's clinical writings is Bulhan, H. A., *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression.* New York: Plenum Press, 1985. More recently, Cherki, A. *Frantz Fanon. Portrait*. Paris: Seuil, 2000.

[3] See especially Fanon 1953a, 1953b; 1954; 1955a; 1955b, 1956a; 1956b; 1956c; 1957.

[4] This characterisation of mental illness under colonialism echoes the one concluding *The Wretched of The Earth,* which points to the "pathological dismembering of his [the colonized] functions and the erosion of his unity, and in the context of the community, the fracture, the stratification and the bloody tensions fed by class, and finally, on the immense scale of humanity, the racial hatred, slavery, exploitation and, above all, the bloodless genocide whereby one and a half billion men have been written off" (1961: 238).

[5] For an insightful overview of social-therapy, see Robcis, C. "Frantz Fanon, Institutional Psychotherapy, and the Decolonization of Psychiatry," *The Journal of the History of Ideas,* Vol. 81, Issue 2 (2020): 303-325.

[6] While Fanon retains the 'validity' of social therapy until his resignation in 1956, it is especially in relation to the possibility of fostering creative re-imagination of the self that he takes distance from it. Experimenting with Geronomi the Psychiatric Day Hospital in Tunis from 1957, where patients leave the institution at the end of daily therapeutic activities and thus keep a concrete quotidian connection with society, Fanon realizes the irreducible limits of a kind of social-therapy that remains linked to the institution as the primary locus of rehabilitation in a colonized context. As he pointedly says: "Thus we have come to believe that the only true socio-therapeutic milieu is, and remains, material society itself" (1959b: 352).

[7] For useful works on the context of colonial psychiatry in North Africa relevant to Fanon's time, see Cherki, A. *Frantz Fanon. Portrait* (Paris: Seuil, 2000); Richard C. Keller, *Colonial Madness: Psychiatry in French North Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). For a larger bibliography on this matter, see Robcis, C. "Frantz Fanon, Institutional Psychotherapy, and the Decolonization of Psychiatry," *The Journal of the History of Ideas.*

[8] For a perceptive reflection on Fanon's phenomenology of the body as key to the analysis of psychic life, see Gibson, N. and Beneduce, R. *Frantz Fanon, Psychiatry and Politics*, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2017.

[9] The theme of reciprocity and equality of cultures represents Fanon's pivotal ground for his critique of racism as a cultural phenomenon in his "Racism and Culture" (1956d).

[10] This understanding emerges from his medical dissertation, where Fanon distinguishes the neurological and the psychiatric. This distinction allows for discerning that even when there are organic origins to mental illness, the "polymorphism" of the latter suggests a connection to the social space one lives in (1951: 42). For an insightful exploration of this matter, see Khalfa, J. "Introduction: Fanon Revolutionary Psychiatrist" in *Frantz Fanon: Alienation and Freedom.* See also Gibson, N. and Beneduce, R. *Frantz Fanon, Psychiatry and Politics*, 38 ff.

[11] In the 1956 text written with Francois Sanchez, "Maghrebi Muslims and their attitude to Madness", Fanon affirms that while Maghrebi Muslims' attitudes toward mental illness offer an important contribution to the care of persons, it is the Western medical approach that provides "a rational understanding of mental affections!" (275). Placing these traditions in some form of complementarity, this statement complicates the extent to which or the standard according to which different cultural traditions are ultimately equal.

[12] For a discussion on the psychological and methodological salience of Fanon's focus on 'attitude' as moving beyond cognitive approaches, see Maldonado-Torres, N." Frantz Fanon and the Decolonial Turn in Psychology: From Modern/Colonial Methods to the Decolonial Attitude." *South African Journal of Psychology*, 2017, 47(4): 432- 441.

[13] On the question of the body as a source of knowledge, see also Ureña, C. "Decolonial Embodiment: Fanon, The Clinical Encounter, and the Colonial World", *Disability and the Global South* 6.1 (2019): 1640-1658.

[14] Arnall, G. *Subterranean Fanon. An Underground Theory of Radical Change*. Columbia University Press, 2020, 5.

[15] Young, R. "Frantz Fanon and the Enigma of Cultural Translation", *Cultural Studies/Translation Studies* (2012): 1-10, 5.

[16] See Said, E. "Traveling Theory" in *The World, the Text, and the Critic.* Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1983. For Said, that theories travel across space and time means that they are subject to possible transformations that depend on the historical conditions of their reception, circulation and form of resistance animated by critical consciousness.

[17] Young, "Frantz Fanon and the Enigma of Cultural Translation", 2.

Between Presence and Conspicuous Absences:
Fanon in Moroccan political thought

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This paper examines the influence of Frantz Fanon's decolonial thought within the Moroccan Left, spanning from the late 1960s to the Arab uprisings' era. Drawing on an analysis of published texts and firsthand interviews, it traces the ways in which pivotal figures and movements of the Moroccan Left, the social democratic *Ittihadi* tradition and the Marxists of *Ila al-Amam*, engaged with Fanon's ideas. Through this exploration, the research not only underscores the direct engagement with Fanon's oeuvre, but also the more subtle underground currents through which that influence endured and contributed to shaping Moroccan political thought. Finally, it concludes with a brief overview and questioning of the notable absences and more recent timid reemergence of Fanonian thought in some corners of the Moroccan Left.

1. The Relationship with the National Movement and the Socialist Left (UNFP-USFP)[1]

Two primary hypotheses guide our understanding of the intricate relationships between Moroccan socialist intellectuals and their organizations with Fanon and his decolonial thought. The first hypothesis centers on Abdallah Laroui's pioneering work, *L'Idéologie Arabe Contemporaine*, and sees it primarily as a response to Fanon and the decolonial thought he shares with Mehdi Ben Barka and many other national liberation leaders.[2] Laroui suggests a new direction that the Arab Left should pursue to establish its political stance and its inherent conflicts. The work signifies a break between two paths. Fanon is seen by Laroui as the architect of a failed revolution because it couldn't overcome the cultural and national challenges specific to each country. Fanon's revolution is rooted in a critique of imperialism. As Laroui points out, Fanon's understanding of imperialism is abstractly and universally centered on inequality, unlike Lenin's, which is situated in a historical context and a stage of European capitalism's development.[3] This latter, analyzed by Fanon as a distortion of the colonized's bodies, doesn't account for the reactions and structures of "consciousness." Indeed, unlike the slave's body, which is compelled to rebel against the colonizer in all its forms, consciousness has other collective arrangements that often lead it down more complex and reactionary paths.

Laroui thus describes Fanon's work as primarily read by Arab Leftists:

> Frantz Fanon's book, which aimed to be the Bible for all underdeveloped humanity, remains, nonetheless, confined to a singular experience. Some Westerners mistakenly attribute to it a universal significance it cannot possess; its thematic focus is distinct, even if it appears to delve deep into all situations of domination. It does not, in any way, facilitate an understanding of Arab cultural issues. The European reader, primarily acquainted with economic analysis and prone to equating all third-world countries, must set aside many of his biases if he wishes to grasp the nuances of certain issues that, at first glance, might seem of theological subtlety.[4]

Furthermore, Laroui criticizes Fanon and his Moroccan readers, like historian Mohamed Zniber, for holding an anti-nation-state political stance.[5] That is to say, a critique of the inability to address the national question as a necessary superstructure and, above all, as a historical element constitutive of the new post-independence nation-state. In short, Laroui criticizes Fanon's "anti-historicism. This is why he categorizes Fanon and Ben Barka as "technophiles" within his typology: they prioritize a new vision of social transformation over history and the specific

consciousness of each nation-state and the broader Arab-Muslim nation.

The implications of Laroui's analysis are significant: they announce a break, at the moment of independence, between the time of anti-colonial struggle and the beginning of national reconstruction. Among the intellectuals and the Arab Left, it gives voice to a statist form of socialism that, for decades, only superficially inherited Fanon's anti-imperialism: an image of distancing from the West in the name of a nationalist conception of sovereignty. Hence, it is unsurprising that some of Fanon's works are translated into Arabic by intellectuals from pan-Arab and authoritarian regimes, and sometimes adopted in national education systems, as in Syria.[6]

Why haven't Arab intellectuals successfully integrated Fanon's work as an integral part of their political tradition and intellectual heritage? It initially seems puzzling that Laroui, initially published by Maspero in Paris, was widely and controversially received in the Arab world. Fanon, on the other hand, re-emerges with La Découverte, Maspero's successor, deeply marking anti-racist and anti-imperialist movements *in the West* but without inspiring the same level of engagement among Arab thinkers. Laroui offers one answer: "Resorting to folklore does not serve the same role among Arabs as Négritude does among Africans, even though, through F. Fanon, it has influenced some of them, especially the Algerians. The goal of the Arabs is not to devalue written and rational expression, but rather to broaden its social significance."[7]

This phenomenological contradiction dissipates when one examines Fanon's theory of imperialism itself and understands the nature of the works of those organic intellectuals from the Left whose thought centers on the colonial question. Indeed, it is not in Laroui's work that one finds Fanon's impact, even though one can point to a competitive tendency or simply a recognition of Fanon's contribution highlighted. This Gramscian observation, indicating the centrality of the cultural question, is precisely taken up by another socialist school of thought in Morocco, embodied in the project of Mohamed Abid al-Jabiri and intermediaries like Mohamed Berrada, Mohamed Zniber, and Mouloud Maamri. Thus, the second hypothesis to be explored is that there exists a subterranean and recycled reception of Fanon within the Moroccan Socialist Left: his decolonial theories and his critique of the Western model serve as an essential background in the oppositional construction of the left.

It is among these thinkers of the UNFP and later the USFP that the connection with Fanon's thought and action is realized, albeit in a complex manner. The "underground work" hypothesis presupposes a discontinuity in Fanon's reception, or a circulation of his thought using a different language and terminology that does not necessarily reproduce his concepts. Moreover, it assumes, within the Left emerging from the independence struggle, a suspension of the critique of European society and colonial activity (neo-colonialism or colonial hegemony) in favor of a new focus on struggle marked by the specificity of "national" and local issues.

A key date in Morocco, 1975, marked by the birth of the USFP, can be seen as a national turning point. Under the pen of Mohamed Abid al-Jabiri and Omar Bendjelloun, the USFP's founding congress claimed a break from Mehdi Ben Barka's Revolutionary Option in favor of adopting a Democratic Option focused inward. This moment offers a dual marking, of the "interior," namely Morocco, and of the "the Sahara question."[8] These two events, on the one hand, distanced the *Ittihadi* Left (representing the dominant opposition in Morocco) from Ben Barka's revolutionary thought, which aligns with Fanon's political action. On the other hand, they announce a fixation on the Moroccan national question, especially concerning what was considered the nerve center of national liberation movements, namely Algiers.

These two events immersed the main Moroccan opposition movement, along with intellectuals, in a quest for a new discourse focused on internal critique. They abandoned the spirit of the Tricontinental and the antiracism that were challenging the structures of European hegemony, in favor of new national urgencies.

This suspension of the previous sequence was further reinforced by the establishment of a new border order and a new relationship between Europe and its former colonies: the recognition of new sovereignties undoubtedly dealt a heavy blow to international solidarity movements. Similarly, the attainment of independence dragged many movements into the new logic of power exercise and reaction.

However, this observation of "suspension" remains incomplete if one does not consider the continuities, including the underground ones, with Fanon's thought. Politically, socialist intellectuals and activists kept the figure of Ben Barka at the center of their legacy (fight against the *Makhzen*, the centrality of organization, national unity, Pan-Arab and Pan-African solidarity, classism, and Marxism, etc.). Fanon's thought, on the other hand, takes a completely renewed direction, which we summarize in three major actions in the case of Moroccan intellectuals and the Left.

First, the early translation of Fanon's works, especially his uptake by influential Leftists like Mohamed Berrada[9], irrigated the new post-1975 sequence of debates revisiting analyses on colonial hegemony. Berrada's book – co-written with Moroccan historian and USFP activist Mohamed Zniber and Algerian linguist Mouloud Mammeri – summarizes aspects of the cultural struggle introduced by Fanon in his three works *Black Skin, White Masks*, *The Wretched of the Earth*, and *The Fifth Year of the Algerian Revolution*. It opened a new perspective that revitalized the reception of Marxism in Morocco by integrating a deconstructivist and postcolonial line and endowing it with a renewed capacity to grasp – and confront – the cultural question in its generality, and the question of Islam in particular. Berrada's book describes and presents a form of resistance indicated by Fanon in his study of colonization and its acculturation effects and mimicry trapping future postcolonial elites:

> "Fanon's response to the colonial desire for domination and hegemony will only be fruitful if the colonized turns to the resurrection of elements affirming the genius and greatness of the people. It is through this resurrection that a thick barrier is formed that protects the people from the toxins and deceptive narratives disseminated by the colonizer in the minds of the inhabitants of his colonies (...) returning to the past to explore a national civilization is one of the foundations of the cultural struggle, as it helps establish a solid defense to preserve the culture of peoples against the domination of Western culture and its standards, and because it allows intellectuals to break out of the circle of concepts they acquired in Western universities and their institutions (...) The colonized who writes for his people must use the past as a means to foresee the future, to call for action, and to establish the foundations of hope."[10]

Second, therefore, Fanon's legacy is not abandoned but recycled: it allows for a departure from the well-trodden paths of economism and continues the movement of warning against the nationalist temptation. Can we say that it is taken up as a method of producing a politics of critique and deconstruction of the various forms of power in the new independent state? Mohamed Achâari, in an interview, put it this way:

> "It's not just the question of colonization, and especially of the new colonization, that disappears within our movement (USFP). After 1975, the question for us was to keep an eye on the critical theory of the West, but to focus action on democracy. We all had an awareness of the exploitation practiced by the new colonization. Al-Jabiri kept reminding us of it in the party. But we knew that only democracy would allow us to challenge it again. So yes, our intellectuals read and translated Fanon, but while agreeing with his findings, we took a completely different tactic." (interview with Mohamed Achâari, 08/2024)

Finally, it is in the work of Mohamed Abid al-Jabiri, who, to our knowledge, does not make a direct reference to Fanon, that the latter's project finds a fulfilled translation not only in Morocco but in the Arab world, given the aura and spread of al-Jabiri's intellectual and political

project. Indeed, the cultural question and the Gramscian foundation are undeniable in both authors. We know that Mehdi Ben Barka, having recruited al-Jabiri in 1957[11], allows this inter-knowledge between the two projects. Al-Jabiri has a keen understanding and adherence to Ben Barka's action (the Tricontinental, Morocco's internal and external struggle). This connection through coexistence in a common field is reproduced in al-Jabiri's long project marking the history of the Moroccan Left and various movements – including Islamic ones. Al-Jabiri responds to Fanon's quest for the "new man" and a "Third World not mimicking Europe" with a genealogical dive into the Arab-Muslim tradition and reason, aiming to establish a new historical bloc against the same Europe described and studied by Fanon.

2. The Relationship with the radical Left and the Moroccan Marxist Leninist Movement (*Ila al-Amam*):

Fanon significantly influenced the radical left in Morocco. During the emergence of groups that would later constitute the organization Ila al-Amam, Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* was a pivotal read for many amidst the dynamic radical environment of 1965 Morocco. The newly introduced cultural magazine, *Souffles*, frequently cited Fanon across various subjects, in several contributions from both Moroccan and international writers.[12] Fanon's ideas were central in the extensive critique of the cultural magazine's Négritude movement. Similarly, when it came to arguments on the importance of culture in the decolonization process, as well as on the role of intellectuals in it, the Fanonian imprints were hard to miss. Not only were there numerous direct or indirect references, but the very writing style and tone of many of the texts found in the magazine reflected the significant influence of Fanon's ideas. The artistic and poetic background of the magazine's founders, as well as their prior personal trajectories, made it so that their personal encounter with Fanon's thoughts, their readings and understandings of it, all came through a deep affective and emotional encounter. As stated by Abdellatif Laabi[13]:

> "Later, during my studies at the University of Rabat, I encountered 'The Wretched of the Earth.' Reading it, I felt as though I was reading my own history, or at least the history that my people, like all colonized peoples, had experienced. This history I had observed with my child's eyes, and its scars still mark my flesh and memory, for I narrowly escaped death during a nationalist protest in Fès when I was seven or eight years old. Marx's text had provided me with a kind of social cosmogony, allowing me to identify the contending forces in the world. Fanon's work, on the other hand, enlightened me about my own social body and both my past and present memory. It made me articulate my identity, vigorously stirred my roots, and instilled in me a fervor to exist, to assert, and to resist." (p. 31-32)

Fanon's ideas played a pivotal role in the introspection of the soon-to-be leaders of the Moroccan Marxist Leninist Movement (MMLM) regarding their prior political affiliations. In a context marked by numerous radical shifts both locally and globally—such as the onset of the Years of Lead, the mysterious disappearance of Ben Barka, the brutal crackdown in 1965, the emergence of Tricontinentalism, the waning of Pan-Arabism post-1967, and the rise of global Maoism—their analysis steered them towards two primary paths.

Firstly, recognizing the significance of culture in revolutionary and decolonial contexts, they introduced the French-language cultural magazine, *Souffles*, which was later complemented by *Anfass* in Arabic. Secondly, the deep personal connection they felt with Fanon's ideas and life journey, which remained evident in both magazines even as they shifted towards a more Marxist-Leninist stance, can be seen as the driving force behind their venture into revolutionary political action. This aligns with the aforementioned hypothesis suggesting an underlying influence that subtly shapes the interpretation, direction, and application of Marxist-Leninist principles.

Abraham Serfaty's initial contributions to *Souffles* serve as a prime example. In his dual-article analysis titled

"Culture and Scientific Progress,"[14] Serfaty primarily focused on demystifying and critiquing the notions of "western culture" and European supremacy. As his argument unfolded, especially in its concluding sections, he directed his criticism towards Abdellah Laroui. He portrayed Laroui's Marxist approach as fundamentally flawed, constrained by a positivist and binary view of Marxism and its perception of national culture. This view, according to Serfaty, was deeply influenced by the West's self-representation and its portrayal of Arab culture.

Serfaty's stance here echoed Fanon's perspectives. He contended against the perceived "Western" modern essence of Marxism, advocating for its modification to align with the unique cultural nuances of the Moroccan setting. This included recognizing the country's Islamic traditions not as regressive, but as potent sources of liberation, in contract to the pseudo-traditional hegemonic interpretation advanced by Hassan II at the time. To underscore his point about the significance of religion as a reservoir of popular resistance and its compatibility with a humanist Marxist decolonial project, Serfaty specifically referenced the Islamic tradition. After citing a Hadith and referencing the life of the prophet, he further added "Man can only realize himself within the framework of the Community, the Ummah, a community based on justice and equality."[15]

While references to the Marxist-Leninist canon were prevalent, the documents of *Ila al-Amam* and the political direction they advocated unmistakably reveal an underlying Fanonian influence guiding their critiques and decisions. One of *Ila al-Amam's* foundational documents, *"Saqaṭat al-aqniʿa, falnafṭaḥ al-ṭarīq al-ṯawrī"*[16] (published in 1970), emphasizes the importance of national culture, including its Islamic dimension, which it perceives as imbued with a fundamental concern for social justice and resistance in the face of self-interested domination by both local and foreign forces.

This inclination is also evident in "*Muswada ḥawl al-istrātījiyya al-ṯawriyya*,"[17] a document circulated in 1972 by *Ila al-Amam*'s National Committee, which delves into the topic of revolutionary violence and its prerequisites. In this document, the organization chronicles the history of popular uprisings dating back to precolonial times. It concludes that assimilating this legacy and merging it with Marxist-Leninist ideology is a duty for revolutionaries, referring specifically to the organization's members. Given that Serfaty and Laabi, who were the founding figures and principal ideologists of the organization, explicitly expressed their Fanonian influences in their more intellectual writings in *Souffles/Anfass*, the roots of *Ila al-Amam's* somewhat unorthodox stances on these matters can be more clearly connected with that same undercurrent.

3. Absence and Resurgence

Fanon's thought subtly influenced Moroccan Leftist movements between 1975 and the late 1990s. During the Years of Lead, it diversified the Marxist framework by tempering universalist tendencies, warning against totalitarian drifts, and highlighting the uniqueness of the colonized world and the challenges of emerging national bourgeoisies. Alongside the "French theory" championed by Michel Foucault on one side, and a humanist approach to the Marxist-Leninist cannon on the other, it made a generation of Moroccan Leftist intellectuals recognize the intricacies of both revolutionary action and postcolonial modes of domination. This complexity led many to explore diverse aspects of culture, religion, and tradition. Serving as a brake against the excesses of postcolonial power, Fanon's legacy prompted introspection within that intellectual and political milieu.

However, from 2000 to 2011, there was a noticeable silence regarding Fanon's ideas in Morocco and the broader region. The Iraq invasion and the War on Terror gave rise to narratives that initially struggled to produce a decolonial critique in the Fanonian sense. Instead, the discourse mirrored the warnings in *The Wretched of the Earth*, a retaliation through religious competition, tribalism, and ethnic conflicts. During this period, Fanon's writings were mainly taken up within the diaspora and postcolonial immigrant movements in Europe. One hypothesis for this

silence and discontinuity suggests that Fanon's work was most potent when analyzing colonization mechanisms and "whiteness" during direct colonial confrontations. While his concepts were immediate blueprints for liberation movements under colonization, in the post-independence phase, Fanon's writings became invaluable for studying the effects of "new colonization" and the pitfalls of national governance and bourgeoisie. However, these latter concepts appear as a program yet to be fully developed. A former leader and intellectual of the USFP attests to this:

> "The questions raised and problematized by Fanon were also debated by the party's intellectuals in the 1980s. Topics like the new colonization, the role of the national bourgeoisie in the new phase, and the relationship with the West were indeed discussed. Yet, these issues weren't seen as resonating with or mobilizing people, both within the party and in society. They were viewed as matters for the party's intellectuals. In fact, in the 1985 party congress, the text set for adoption was entirely focused on the relationship with the new colonization. However, it was dismissed by the congress's presidency before being presented to the party. Why? It was deemed too "intellectual" and "abstract." I believe these issues were central in thought but confined within the party." (Interview with Mohamed Achâari, 08/2024).

The MMLM, particularly with *Annahj Addimocraty*—which sees itself as a continuation of *Ila al-Amam's* political legacy—also exhibits a noticeable absence of Fanonian references. Explicit mentions of Fanon are infrequent and often lack depth. The perspective that views religion and tradition as potential sources of emancipation in a Marxist sense has similarly faded. The rise of Islamist actors, coupled with the tensions and conflicts between them and the radical left, especially on university campuses, might have influenced this shift. Additionally, the subsequent war on terror and its repercussions could have further steered *Annahj's* discourse away from invoking religion or tradition.

It wasn't until the post-Arab uprisings phase, with a new generation distanced from strict partisan views, that Fanon's concerns were revisited. This generation drew from work already undertaken within the diaspora and postcolonial immigrant movements in Europe during the 1980s-1990s, where Fanon's writings found a new resonance. Notably, the European branches of Moroccan leftist parties revived this legacy, striving to analyze both the postcolonial state of Morocco and the condition of immigrants[18] from former colonies. For instance, recent activities and publications from FGD Europe[19], PSU Belgium[20], and USFP-Paris have embraced Fanon's work.[21] Within Morocco, the rapprochement between *Annahj* and *Al Adl wa Al Ihssane*, which started in the context of the 20th February Movement and continues to this day, inaugurated a return to a more Fanon-friendly approach to the questions of national identity and religion within the Moroccan Marxist Left.

In conclusion, this paper illustrates how Fanon's thought significantly shaped the narratives within the Moroccan Left, offering a framework for revolutionary and anti-imperialist discourses. Fanon's ideas helped craft a powerful narrative that resonated across both the *Ittihadi* and the Marxist Lefts in the country. However, as the Moroccan Left's focus shifted toward local issues, these global, Fanonian narratives receded, revealing notable absences in the political discourse. The recent revival of Fanon's thought, particularly in response to the Arab uprisings, not only reintroduces these global themes but also sheds light on the gaps left by their earlier neglect. This resurgence underscores Fanon's continued relevance in shaping narratives of resistance, while also pointing to the critical areas where the Moroccan Left's discourse had once fallen silent.

Endnotes

[1] *Union Nationale des Forces Populaires* and *Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires*

[2] While adopting, in several sections, the same writing style as the conclusion of "The Wretched of the Earth" and using the term "essay," this contrasts with the assessment of its foreword writer and thesis supervisor, Maxime Rodinson.

[3] Laroui : « L'imperialisme retrouve sa tonalité romaine : possession intemporelle du monde connu ; aucune chose n'échappe à son désir, aucune place à son ombre. Abstrait, il résume toutes les formes de l'inegalite, etc. » (p.51) In a footnote, Laroui notes: "c'est cette notion qui est au centre de la pensée de F. Fanon, non la définition concrète de Hobson et de Lénine", Laroui, Abdallah, *L'idéologie arabe contemporaine,* Maspero, Paris, 1967, (p.52).

[4] ibid, p.5. This critique can also be found among some Algerian readers of Fanon, see for instance Muriam Haleh Davis study in this volume.

[5] ibid, p.55.

[6] By Syrian Nasserists Sami Mesbah ed-Deroubi and Jaman al Attassi in that case. Their translation was distributed by Lebanese publisher Dar Attali`a.

[7] ibid, p.179.

[8] Especially after the "Green March" and the assassination of USFP leader Omar Benjelloun.

[9] Mohammed Berrada, Mouloud Maamri, and Mohammed Zniber, *Frānz Fānūn Aw Ma'rakat Al-Shu'ūb al-Mutakhallifa* (Rabat: Dar al Kitab, 1963).

[10] See for instance Idrīs al-Khaḍrāwī, "Idrīs al-Khaḍrāwī, "Mā al-laḏī yuthīr al-shaghaf bi-fikr Frānz Fānūn? Ṣafaḥāt Sūriyya," *Ṣafḥāt Sūriyya*, January 1, 2022, https://www.alsafahat.net/2022/01/01/إدريس-الخضراوي-فانون؟-فرانز-بفكر-الشغف-يثير-الذي-ما/.

[11] Nūr al-Dīn Ikjān, "al-Jābrī shāhidan.. 'alāqāt 'amīqa ma' al-qā'id al-ummī al-Mahdī bin Barka," *Hespress*, June 17, 2018, https://www.hespress.com/433950-الجابري-شاهدا-علاقات-عميقة-مع-القائد.html.

[12] See Kenza Sefrioui's article "« Encore un qui a tout dit ! ». Le groupe de 'Souffles', lecteur des 'Damnés de la terre' de Frantz Fanon," *Politique africaine* 143, no. 3 (2016): 73.

[13] Abdellatif Laâbi, *La brûlure des interrogations: Entretiens avec Laabi* (Paris: Editions L'Harmattan, 1985).

[14] Published in Souffles issues 12 and 13-14 (1968-1969).

[15] Souffles, 13-14, 1969, p. 12-13. It is worth noting here that Abraham Serfaty was a Moroccan Jew.

[16] In English "*The masks have fallen, let us open the revolutionary path.*"

[17] In english, *"Draft on the Revolutionary Strategy."*

[18] Wael Garnaoui's contribution in this volume deploys a Fanonian framework to explore the topic of migration. For a deeper dive, see also his recent book, *Harga et désir d'Occident: étude psychoanalytique des migrants clandestins tunisiens* (Cité El Ghazala: Nirvana, 2022).

[19] Montassir Sakhi, "Risāla ilā al-Mu'tamar al-Indimājī li-Fidrāliyyat al-Yasār," لكم-*lakome2*, accessed December 1, 2023, https://lakome2.com/opinion/291994/?fbrefresh=5.

[20] Public meeting on Migration organised by the PSU, with its then secretary general, Nabila Mounib.

[21] Interview with two USFP-France members. See also the communique by the USFP-France, published in early 2023, drawing on Fanon to interrogate the role of a Moroccan party abroad and the paralyzing tendency to idealize past party achievements.

Frantz Fanon the Sociologist?
Algeria, Tunisia, and the Creation of a Discipline

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Of the three books written by Fanon in his lifetime, *L'An V de la révolution algérienne* (*Year V of the Algerian Revolution*) is the most anchored in the realities of Algerian daily life.[1] In this work, Fanon set out to show how a "new society" had been born during the armed struggle against the French occupation. Fanon writes, "It is true that independence produces the spiritual and material conditions for the refashioning (*reconversion*) of man. But it is also the inner transformation (*mutation*), the renewal of social and family structure that impose, with the rigor of the law, the emergence of the Nation and the flourishing (*l'épanouissement*) of its sovereignty."[2] When the legendary French editor François Maspero published a new version of this book in 1968, he did so under a different title – *Sociologie d'une révolution* (*Sociology of a Revolution*) – which was also the title for the first Arabic translation of this work in 1970.[3]

The discussion between Maspero and Fanon regarding the title is telling. Fanon sent a rough outline of the book to Maspero in 1959, proposing *L'An V de la révolution algérienne* as a title. The French publisher responded with concerns regarding the political risks of publishing such a work in France, asking: "Are you firmly decided on the title…?" He explained his reticence by the fact that "such a precise title would seem to be to be the quickest way to invite seizure" and proposed "Birth of a Nation" as a title.[4] While Fanon understood Maspero's concerns, he claimed to prefer "Reality of a Nation," which indeed captures the content of the book and it's description of the "radical mutations" that had occurred in the "new Algeria" that the book described.[5] Yet Maspero's subsequent framing of the book as a work of sociology invites a number of questions: How should we explain this new disciplinary designation for Fanon's work? How did it reflect the ways in which Fanon's work had influenced intellectual debates, particularly in North Africa? This piece describes how Fanon's work shaped the discipline of sociology in Algeria and Tunisia over the course of the 1960s and 1970s. At the same time, however, as his identity as a psychiatrist from Martinique fit uneasily with the revolutionary aims of the Algerian state, which sought to promote an Arab and Islamic identity, especially after the 1965 coup.

The posthumous (and largely informal) integration of Fanon into Algerian and Tunisian sociology cannot be understood outside a specific political context, which included a continued dependency on French institutions and models. The articulation of sociology as an autonomous discipline in Algeria and Tunisia reflected the reorganization of the social scientific disciplines in France, where sociology earned legitimacy in the late 1950s as a field of inquiry that was distinct from the other social sciences such as anthropology, ethnography, or psychology. In North Africa, a French tradition of colonial sociology dated to the 19th century, causing the line among psychology, ethnography, and sociology to remain blurry well into the 1950s. For example, their national universities offered no specific degree in sociology until the late 1950s; though the University of Algiers offered a certificate (or major) in *morale et sociologie,* this was in the framework of the philosophy concentration. At the Faculty of the Humanities and Social Sciences, students could pick one of four optional specializations, which included sociology, social psychology, political economy or the demography and ethnology of North Africa, but this was a concentration that supplemented their basic coursework.[6] Moreover, in both Algeria and Tunisia the link between psychology and sociology was particularly close. The field of "social psychology" attracted a number of students that would go on to specialize in sociology, including Abdelmalek Sayad, the Algerian sociologist and

colleague of Pierre Bourdieu, who was initially trained in psychology and philosophy. It was not until 1958 that sociology was introduced as a specialized field of study at the University of Algiers; a PhD in sociology was not offered until 1967.[7] Moreover, the University of Algiers was the only establishment to teach sociology until 1967, after which Oran and Constantine became competitors.

The creation of sociology as an autonomous discipline mirrored a similar process in the metropole and reflected the political and epistemological backdrop of decolonization. The colonial legacy of ethnology and anthropology began to attract the attention of social scientists on both sides of the Mediterranean in the 1960s and 1970s.[8] This was even more acute in Algeria where the Algiers School of psychiatry propagated a number of racist myths regarding the alleged passivity of North Africans, a body of knowledge to which Fanon was radically opposed.[9] The assertation of sociology as a separate discipline expressed a new confidence in the developmentalist state (on both sides of the Mediterranean) and posited a clean break with the disciplines of ethnology and psychoanalysis.

Michel Foucault highlights how ethnology was based on culturalist models and invited comparisons between Europe and "peoples without histories." Psychoanalysis, on the other hand, privileged the unconscious as a locus of action and therefore was also based on an alterity or extreme limit that made knowledge about man possible.[10] In this regard, rather than offer a "general concept of man," ethnology and psychoanalysis were "counter-sciences," for Foucault.[11] During decolonization, however, sociology raised in prominence, precisely because it offered the promise of being an empirical human science "where the laboring, producing, and consuming individual offers himself a representation of the society in which this activity occurs, of the groups and individual among which it is divided, of the imperatives, sanctions, rites, festivals, and beliefs by which it is upheld or regulated."[12] In this regards, charting the invention of a "sociological Fanon" in the 1960s and 1970s also speaks to how decolonization restructured the epistemological tools available to make sense of social change, as well as their institutionalization by the state.

These disciplinary shifts, and their ramifications for the organization of the social sciences, could not be ignored by those who taught at the University of Algiers. Increasingly, thinkers of different stripes hung their hat on the universalizing pretenses of sociology as a social science that could resist the epistemic violence of colonization. Take for example, Émile Sicard, one of the major references for sociology in Algeria after independence. In 1964, he wrote that social psychology was based on "what had been one of the major preoccupations in the recent past: ethnosociology."[13] In a move that reflected the discomfort with ethnology, he subsequently argued that the second term played a greater role than the first. Sicard was not the only figure to imply that previous ethnographic studies of culture had overlooked broader social transformations or to appeal to the new authority enjoyed by the social sciences after World War II. Sicard's role in Algerian sociology undoubtedly merits further attention, but his attempt to distance himself from ethnology (despite his purported sympathies for the Pétain) sheds light on the reorganization of disciplinary knowledge in the wake of decolonization.[14] The reconstitution of the human sciences – including the revolutionary promise of sociology – shaped a number of readings of Fanon in North Africa after independence.

As has been widely noted, Fanon's psychiatric practice was fundamental to the social models that he proposed in both *L'An V de la révolution algérienne* and *Les Damnés de la terre.* If Maspero sought to inscribe *L'An V* in the sociological discipline this is precisely because many of its central concerns resonated with the work being done in the 1960s: the question of women's role in society, an analysis of family structures, and a close study of how communications technology and medicine had been transformed by the revolution. As Fanon wrote about the radio, "We have witnessed a fundamental transformation in the means of perception, of the very world of perception."[15]

George Steinmetz has argued that Fanon's encounter with sociology has been overlooked because "the entire formation of French sociology of colonialism was repressed from collective disciplinary memory after the 1960s."[16] Yet seen from Algeria, this explanation overlooks endogenous political developments as well as the ways that sociology – largely dominated by the work of Pierre Bourdieu – was marked by internal tensions and remained a statist project. Fanon's writings were included in the Algerian sociology curriculum (or at least the reading list I was able to find for 1966-1967 academic year), but it is notable that the works listed were *Peau noir, masques blancs* and *Les Damnés de la terre* rather than *L'An V.* Moreover, as the chart below shows, Fanon's influence on Tunisian sociologists often occurred on the margins of the profession rather than in the officially sanctioned structures that prioritized training sociologists who could insure national development.

Indeed, one can imagine that the strong Bourdieusian tradition served to sideline Fanon's work in Algeria. Bourdieu's liberal sensibilities – which deplored the violence of colonialism while simultaneously remaining suspect of the FLN's version of Algerian nationalism, was at odds with Fanon's avowedly radical position that Bourdieu found to be "false and dangerous."[17] Bourdieu played a key role in the establishment of sociology as a discipline in Algeria, continuing to train Algerian students until the early 1970s. Yet his position, both in the academy and politically, was starkly different from Fanon, despite many overlaps in their centers of interest. Fanon studied the revolutionary creation of new subjectivities and the transformation of "traditional" social and psychological structures. Bourdieu, on the other hand, focused on French colonialism (rather than the revolution) in understanding how modernity had transformed Algerian society. It is also impossible to overstate the difference of their structural positions to the war itself: as a number of polemics have mentioned, Bourdieu's own (French) military service was the backdrop for his sociological observations in Algeria, while Fanon stayed in North Africa voluntarily in order to support the FLN.[18]

In Tunisia, however, Fanon seems to have had a clearer impact on the discipline of sociology. This can be explained, in part, by the fact that at the end of his life Fanon taught classes on "psychopathologie sociale" in Tunis for students who were in the social psychology program from 1959-1961. According to Lila Ben Salem, a Tunisian student of Fanon's at this time, he was widely admired and offered eclectic references - spanning from his older work on structural racism in Europe to an analysis of colonial violence.[19] For Stambouli, a first-year student in sociology when he attended Fanon's classes, exposure to Fanon's thought was an "unsurpassable introduction to our future specialization."[20] In a remarkable work on Tunisian sociology after independence, Tahar Labib documents how even while Fanon was not necessarily part of the official curriculum, his works (along with that of Althusser) was often referenced by Tunisian students in sociology in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

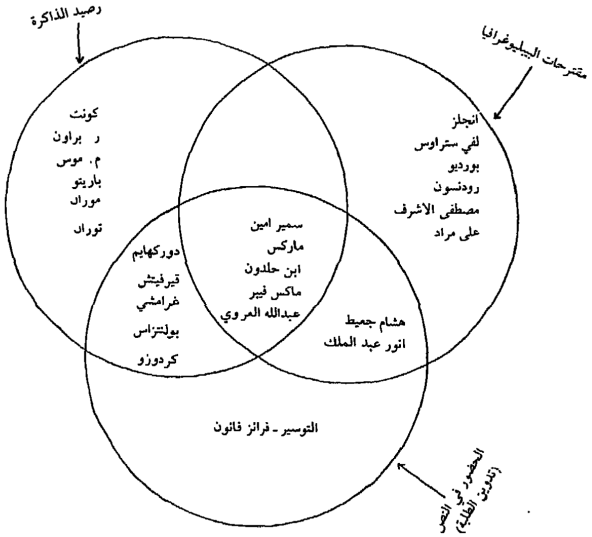

Fig. 1 – A diagram showing Fanon's marginal yet present status in the discipline of sociology in Tunisia from 1978-1982. This is based on interviews with 12 former sociology students conducted by Tahar Labib. It shows that the "heart" of the discipline included Samir Amin, Marx, Ibn Khaldun, Max Weber, and Abdallah Laroui. Fanon, along with Louis Althusser, appears in the circle that indicates intellectuals who cited by sociology students, but not necessarily found in the official academic program.[21]

While Fanon's work shaped the thinking of many Tunisian sociology in the 1960s, his work was often relegated to the margins of the academy, especially in Algeria. This was not only due to the Bourdieu's legacy, as discussed above, but also because of the Algerian regime's fraught relationship with his work. On the one hand, many of Fanon's writings presaged the revolutionary program brandished by Houari Boumediene: the heroic role of the peasantry, the adoption of developmental narratives in the service of decolonization, and the need to create a national culture. Yet paradoxically, as sociology earned the official approbation of the state, Fanon's star seemed to wane. Under Boumediene, the Algerian government faced the double challenge of constructing a modern, developmentalist state and reinforcing (often by authoritarian means) an Arabo-Islamic identity as the benchmark for Algerian nationalism. If Fanon's work could be fruitfully used for the former goal, it fit less neatly into the second.

A number of testimonies attest to the fact that after a brief moment when Fanon was regularly fêted in official circles during the rule of Ahmed Ben Bella (1962-1965), he was all but forgotten under Boumediene (1965-1978). The Algerian psychologist Idriss Terranti wrote of the "silencing" of Fanon, recounting: "As the large majority of Algerian kids, at no moment in my education had I heard, in any media or place, of Frantz Fanon. I knew the Frantz Fanon Boulevard that was two kilometers from my house at the Frantz Fanon school that was next to mine, without knowing the person for whom they were named."[22]

This is not to imply that the Algerian (or Tunisian) state ignored the importance of higher education in providing the human resources needed to run a nation-state. In Algeria, the 1971 reform of higher education placed the social sciences at the center of revolutionary aspirations.[23] Mourad Benachenhou, who played a central role in the organization of sociology in Algeria in the 1970s, wrote: "In a country like ours, it is necessary to train a corps (*cadre*) that is competent in technical matters, steeped in the Algerian personality, and conscious of national realities while also being engaged in the process of socialist development."[24] In Tunisia as well, Ahmed Ben Salah, the Secretary of Education and an architect of Tunisian socialism, introduced major reforms to the university system in 1969. These changes ensured that the university in general, and the social sciences in particular, would serve the Desturian experiment before his exist from politics that same year.[25] In both countries, the trajectory of higher education prioritized sociology, a central tool for state development, at the expense of anthropology and ethnology.[26]

There is no clearer example of the marginalization of ethnology than the International Congress of Sociology held in Algiers in 1974, At the opening speech for this event, which brought together over 500 sociologists from 70 countries, the Algerian Minister of Higher Education, Mohammed Seddik Benyahia, proclaimed that sociology was a "privileged weapon in the liberation of people in the Third World." At this same conference, he condemned ethnology for "having participated in the colonial system."[27] The official theme of the conference was "The Development of the Third World and Sociological Research," which seemed to be a *clin d'oeil* to Fanon's work. Questions of agrarian reform, neo-colonial dependence, and the role of women were among the principle themes debated by the conference. Yet, Fanon's name was all but absent from the program. According to the massive two-volume proceedings of the conference, well over 1,000 pages in total, the only paper that engaged meaningfully with Fanon's work was given by a John O'Neil, an Irish Catholic who taught at York University in Canada.[28] His intervention was dedicated to the role of language in decolonization and focused on the articulation of a national culture through education in the works of the Brazilian Paulo Freire alongside Fanon. The absence of Fanon's work in the program is all the more striking in that just a few years earlier, in 1971, Phillipe Lucas, who taught at the University of Algiers, wrote a book entitled *Sociologie de Frantz Fanon: Contribution à une anthropologie* de *libération,* that was published in Algeria.

Despite the fact that sociology was becoming one disciplinary prism for situating Fanon's work among

sociologists themselves, the 1974 Conference - with its heavy dose of state control - could not make room Fanon in the top-down project of constructing a revolutionary social-scientific discipline. This seems to conform Gellner's impression - writing in 1981 - that "Fanon (was) for export only." Indeed, in the 1970s many of the engagements with Fanon's work by Algerian scholars close to political power were openly critical, if not hostile. Fanon's oeuvre was critiqued by Marxists who were unhappy with the unscientific nature of Fanon's socialism, on the one hand, and those close to the more Islamic-leaning AUMA (Association of Algerian Muslim Ulema), on the other.

These tendencies are exemplified by the works of Abdelkader Djeghloul and Mohammed Al-Milli, both of whom wrote about Fanon in the early 1970s. Al-Milli's commentary was first published in the Arabic journal *al-Thaqafa*, which was published under the auspices of the Ministry of Information and Culture. This institution, crucially, was headed by Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi, an Algerian intellectual and revolutionary who had opposed Ben Bella's internationalist form of socialism and suffered imprisonment and torture as a result. Al-Milli had worked with Fanon at the FLN journal, *El-Moudjahid,* during the war, and ran two articles in March and May of 1971. In the first piece, "Fanon and Western Thought," Al-Milli expressed frustration at the notion that Algerian was the "theorist" of the Algerian revolution and stressed the French framework that underpinned his theories of colonization, citing the influence of Hegel, Marx, Freud, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty on Fanon's oeuvre. For Al-Milli, Fanon's claim that the Algerian nation could be a "clean break" from Algeria's past was rooted in his position as a foreigner. "We find that if Fanon had been Muslim or permeated by Arab Culture, then maybe his position on the past would have been different," he argued.[29] His conclusion was not only polemical, but it also fundamentally called into question the ways that Fanon was being "exported" in the 1970s. He asserted that "the central influence was that of the Algerian revolution on Fanon, and not the inverse." Al-Milli's remarks foreshadowed future polemics regarding the "Algerianness" of Fanon, but also expressed a genuine appreciation for his political commitments during the Revolution.

Fanon's Marxist critics, of which there were many, took take a different tack. The Algerian sociologist Abdelkader Djeghloul consecrated his dissertation, defended in France at Paris V University, to the discursive structure of Fanon's Third Worldism. While his almost 500 page dissertation makes a number of critiques, his notion that Fanon's phenomenological approach and fetishization of the peasantry failed to understand the revolutionary nature of the working class echoed a number of other Communist critiques of Fanon after independence. Even if some would claim that *L'An V* was a work of sociology, this was impossible for Djeghloul, who asserted that "[n]owhere can we find in this text a study of the social structures of colonization nor a concrete analysis of the revolutionary processes and their effects on social structures."[30] Ultimately, according to Djeghloul's dissertation, Fanon recycled the petite bourgeois ideology of the FLN and essentialized a difference between Europe and the Third world that ignored the internal divisions – namely the divisions between capitalist and socialist interests – that structured both geographical blocks.

Arguments from Djeghloul's dissertation were republished in the late 1970s in a number of Algerian publications, including a 1978 text that was likely assigned to students at the University of Oran.[31] Here, Djeghloul credits the Algerian revolution with catalyzing a break in Fanon's thought, and insists that Fanon's activities with the ALN (National Liberation Army) at the outbreak of the war resembled the support provided by progressive French individuals who also sided with the Algerian nationalists. For Djelghloul, it was only after Fanon's passing in 1961 that the "Fanon myth" was constituted at the international level.

Algerian critics of Fanon were particularly vehement, but the notion that Fanon had erred in his analysis of the peasantry was also taken up by Tunisian sociologists such as Abdelkader Zghal, who contested Fanon's

understanding of the peasantry as a revolutionary force.[32] Zghlal's approached stressed the long durée histories of revolt and the structures of Algerian society that dating to the tenth century. He contrasted the earlier peasant revolts, which relied on a series of traditional behaviors and organizations, from the more recent uprisings that consisted of an elite, which was divorced from peasant social structures, and sought to extract personal gain from anti-colonial struggle. Thus, while the peasantry could be considered an "explosive" force, but they did not have a revolutionary agenda that Zghlal identified among the Zapatistas. This critique had also been taken up by the Algerian historian, Mohammed Harbi, who also found that Fanon had overestimated the revolutionary force of the peasantry, and argued that his propensity to avoid a concrete class analysis suited Boumediene and the military organization (État Major Général de l'Armé des frontiers).[33] Yet despite Zghlal's disagreements with Fanon, the tone of his piece was less polemical than the general tenor of Algerian debates.

The project of national liberation, so powerfully described by Fanon, continued after his untimely death in 1961 and confronted a new set of obstacles after independence. Despite decolonial readings of Fanon, which stress his epistemological break with Western modernity, is hard to know how Fanon would have responded to the twin projects of developmentalism and the "decontamination" of the social sciences. Undoubtedly, Fanon would have found himself on uncomfortable ground after the introduction of Arabization, and adoption of new "indigenous" paradigms for understanding society, notably the central role attributed to Ibn Khaldun.[34] Yet my goal here has not been to speculate about a post-independence Fanon, but simply to chart how Fanon's thought circulated in different disciplinary and national contexts in the 1960s and 1970s in North Africa. This cursory analysis sheds light on how decolonization, and the concrete goals of nation-building and development, shaped not only North African readings of Fanon, but also the institutionalization of the social sciences in Algeria and Tunisia.

Endnotes

1 Frantz Fanon, *Sociologie d'une Révolution* (Paris: Maspero, 1968).
2 Fanon, 172. All translations are mine. Where they deviate from the existing English published translation I have kept the original French in parenthesis. The book is known as "A Dying Colonialism" in English, which obscures the clear link to the French revolution.
3 Frantz Fanon, *Sūsyūlūgiyyat Al-Ṯhawra*, trans. Dūqān Qurqūt, Dār al-Ṭalī'a (Beirut, 1970).
4 Frantz Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom*, ed. Jean Khalfa and Robert J.C. Young, trans. Steven Corcoran (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 678.
5 Fanon, *Sociologie d'une Révolution*, 14–15.
6 Kamel Chachoua, "La Sociologie en Algérie: L'histoire d'une discipline sans histoire," in *Les Sciences Sociales en Voyage. L'Afrique Du Nord et le Moyen Orient vus d'Europe, d'Amérique et de l'intérieur*, ed. Eberhard Kienle, Karthala (Paris, 2010), 135–55.
7 Humathèque, Fonds Bourdieu, 1 ARCH 20-1, "Recherches en cours et programme des recherches prévues," 1969.
8 Jacques Berque, "Sciences Sociales et Décolonisation," *Tiers-Monde* 3, no. 9–10 (1962).
9 Camille Robcis, "Frantz Fanon, Institutional Psychotherapy, and the Decolonization of Psychiatry," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 81, no. 2 (2020): 303–25.
10 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (London and NewYork: Routledge, 1989 (1966)), *411.*
11 Foucault, 411.
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14 Aïssa Kadri, "Pierre Bourdieu, Le Temps de l'Algérie," *Tumultes* 1, no. 58–59 (2022), 159.
15 Fanon, *Sociologie d'une Révolution*, 81.
16 George Steinmetz, "An Oblique Encounter with Frantz Fanon: Frantz Fanon's Les Damnés de La Terre," *Soziopolis* (blog), December 6, 2021.
17 Pierre Bourdieu, *Choses Dites* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1987), 17. For more on Bourdieu's liberal positioning see Amin Perez, *Combattre En Sociologues. Pierre Bourdieu et Abdelmalek Sayad Dans Une Guerre de Libération (Algérie, 1958-1964)* (Marseille: Agone, 2022).
18 See for example Aïssa Kadri, "Pierre Bourdieu, Le Temps de l'Algérie," *Tumultes* 1, no. 58–59 (2022): 139–64.
19 Lilia Ben Salem, "'Propos Sur La Sociologie En Tunisie' Entretien Avec Sylvie Mazzella," *Genèse* 2, no. 75 (2009): 125–42.
20 Frej Stambouli, "'When I Was a Student of Fanon': An Interview with Frej Stambouli," *Review of African Political Economy*, June 2, 2021, available online at: https://roape.net/2021/06/02/when-i-was-a-student-of-fanon-an-interview-with-frej-stambouli/?fbclid=IwAR0cwEZj_iSRnw866OlRp2X4asgV5ZHeTEwvksN1IRhDeDzAjy6KfoZ55Eo. Accessed 6 December 2023.
21 Tāhir Labīb, "ʿIlm al-Ijtimāʿ fi Tūnis : At-Tadrīs Naṣṣan wa Rūḥan" in *Naḥu ʿIlm al-Ijtimāʿ al-ʿArabī* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Wiḥdat Al-ʿArabiyya,

1986), p. 328.

[22] Idriss Terranti, "Un Espoir Contrarié, Un Destin à Réaliser. Que Reste-t-Il de Fanon En Algérie ?" *Politique Africaine* 3, no. 143 (2016): 154.

[23] Muḥammad Bashīr, *Madkhal li-Dirāsa 'Ilm al-Ijtimā' fi al-Jazā'ir ma bayn 1972-1982*, Diwān al-Maṭbū'āt al-Jāmi'yya (Algiers, 2004).

[24] Mourad Benachenhou, *Vers l'université Algérienne: Réflexions sur une stratégie universitaire*, Office des publicaitons universitaires (Algiers, 1980).

[25] François Siino, *Science et pouvoir dans la Tunisie contemporaine*, *Science et pouvoir dans la Tunisie contemporaine*, Hommes et sociétés (Aix-en-Provence: Institut de recherches et d'études sur les mondes arabes et musulmans, 2013), 507.

[26] Imed Melliti and Dorra Mahfoud Draoui, "Les Sciences Sociales En Tunisie: Histoire et Enjeux Actuels," *Sociologies Pratiques* 3 (2014): 271–80. Melliti and Draoui highlight the role of the CERES (*Centre d'Études et de Recherches Économiques et Sociales)* in providing expertise for development initiatives. A decree of Semptember 1973 nevertheless afforded the milieu of higher education a relative autonomy from the state.

[27] Mohamed Seddik Benyahia, "Allocation d'ouverture," in *XXIVè Congrès International de Sociologie, Tome 1* (Algiers: Office des Publications Universitaires, 1974), 32–41.

[28] John O'Neil, "Language and Decolonization," in *XXIVè Congrès International de Sociologie, Tome 2*, Office des Publications Universitaires, (Algiers, 1974), 1209–21.

[29] Muḥammad Al-Millī, "Fānūn wa al-Fikr al-Gharbī," *Al-Thaqāfa* 1 (March 1971): 17.

[30] Abdelkader Djeghloul, "Frantz Fanon: L'ambiguité d'une idéologie tiers-mondiste" (Paris, Université de Paris V, 1971), 339.

[31] Abdelkader Djeghloul, "Introduction à Une Lecture de Frantz Fanon, " *Les Cahiers de la Recherche* 1 (1978) : 72-82.

[32] Abdelkader Zghal, "La Participation de La Paysannerie Maghrébine à La Construction Nationale," *La Revue Tunisienne Des Sciences Sociales* 22 (1970): 160.

[33] Mohammed Harbi, "Marxistes et Fanonistes au Miroir de l'Histoire," in *Frantz Fanon : Une Pensée Toujours en Acte* (Paris : L'Association de Culture Berbère, 2009) : 47-50. Harbi makes a similar point in his *postface* to the 2002 editions of *Les Damnés de la Terre* published by La Decouverte.

[34] For some examples of these discussions see Murād Za'īmī and Faḍīl Dalīū, *'Ilm Al-Ijtimā' min al-Taghrīb ilā al-Ta'ṣīl* (Constantine: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1998). Abd Allāh Sharīṭ (Cheriet), *Al-Fikr al-Akhlāqī 'anda Ibn Khaldūn* (Algiers: al-Sharikah al-Waṭanīyah lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī', 1975).

Fanon and the Wretched of the Sea:
The Forbidden Mobility of Tunisian Youth

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From my experience as a clinical psychologist working with Maghrebi and Sub-Saharan migrant populations in France, and from my doctoral and postdoctoral research with undocumented Tunisian migrants and families of missing migrants in Tunisia, a return to Frantz Fanon's writings on colonized populations has illuminated my understanding of the attachment and identification of postcolonial subjects with the West, which I have termed the "desire for the West."

My hypothesis is that the West maintains its domination over Southern populations through a well-studied immigration policy—a policy that is an inheritance of colonial policies that justified their domination over people through a psychiatric discourse rooted in the principles of the School of Algiers.[1] While the colonial space is primarily an economic exploitation of local labor and natural resources, that exploitation was accompanied by the production of knowledge about colonized peoples which would become essential for modern colonialism's access to essentially "foreign" territories. Fanon criticized the practices of the School of Algiers, wherein colonial psychiatrists, convinced of the inferiority of indigenous populations, invented a classification of psychological pathologies based on a supposed psychology of the people. This colonial imaginary remains at play today in consular attitudes (visa procedures) that recall old colonial assertion such as Antoine Porot's definition of Maghreb indigenous people was something « halfway between the primitive man and the evolved Westerner».

This essay uses an archaeology of knowledge and a psycho-historical approach with a detailed review of events marking the colonial and postcolonial periods related to the mobility of populations in Tunisia.The exploration of the link between colonization and immigration demonstrates the transfer of certain colonial practices to the management of immigrants and migration flows. The political context and colonial division strategies played a significant role in the racial classification and hierarchy of populations from either the North or South of the Mediterranean. Borders have been the primary tool for demarcation and identification of this "other." Colonial strategies domination continues today in the management of migration.

It is worth noting that many internal expert reports within the colonial administration are underpinned by a conception of immigration that is overdetermined by the colonial conflict. Since the independence of colonized countries, the experience of colonial administration officials transitioned into the management of colonial migrants—not only at the state level but also in the service of major corporations entrusted with selecting and administering labor. These conversions contributed significantly to the continuation of colonial structures in contemporary immigration management.[2]

A review of the works of Frantz Fanon and the postulates of the School of Algiers allows us to grasp contemporary qualifications of the "symptoms" presented by *harraga* (clandestine migrants) and jihadists by shedding light on the colonial discourse. I argue that the thought patterns of psychiatric discourse of the colonial period continue to shape not only the administration of labor migration but also the migrant's psyche and their desire for the West. It is these thought patterns (or their avatars) that have produced a new administrative category, that of the "clandestine" migrant (*harraga*) after the creation of the European Union's Schengen area. The link between harraga and terrorists became concrete only after the September 11th attacks and the large measures reinforcing Western borders. This essay therefore studies the immobility of Tunisian subjects through the analysis of the psychological repercussions of visa refusals on people and their psyche.

Psychanalysis of the Prevented Subject

The act of migrating is marked by a process of hindrance to the realization of a wish, an identification, or a desire. In this section, I return to the most verifiable mechanism that constructs obstacles to the desire for elsewhere and otherness—the Schengen visa mechanism. The visa system is the primary obstacle to the realization of the right to free movement of people from Southern Mediterranean countries. This system sorts "good" and "bad" immigrants based on criteria that intertwine economic, social, cultural, and biological factors. Behind a bureaucratic institution that presents itself as neutral, namely the consulate or embassy, power dynamics are at play. Depending on the economic situation of the host countries, visa offices control migration flows by imposing selection criteria. These places are where « the national identity of passengers is objectified when crossing from one territory to another and from one sovereignty to another, and where discrimination between nationals of the country and foreigners occurs ».[3]

The simple desire to travel therefore requires a complex and cold visa application procedure. A young Tunisian must meet several conditions to submit an application that might be considered, accepted, or rejected. Every candidate for travel from Tunisia to Europe is suspected of illegal immigration and must prove an attachment guaranteeing their return to their home country. Thus, the nature of the documents and travel justifications required from candidates depends on the risk of illegal immigration. The visa application classification system does not follow a general law, even though the economically weakest populations are the primary targets of refusals. Beyond economic structuring, several criteria are required in this bureaucratic and sovereign visa classification: nationality, age, marital status, occupation, place of residence, property ownership, educational level, and diplomas, among others. Even individuals with a high set of resources and privileges in the social hierarchy can have their visa application denied without any explicit reason. Every visa application process induces anxiety and doubt in most applicants. Consular offices constitute the first bureaucratic line in managing the "migration risk." As Federica Infantino shows in her study on the Italian consulate in Morocco, it is upstream and during the visa granting process that most effective control procedures take place to block individuals before their departure.[4]

When a visa applicant receives their passport from the TLS Contact visa center,[5] they are given a document justifying the consular decision, especially in the case of a visa refusal. Most often, the reason for refusal is cited as "Your intention to leave the territory of the Member States before the visa's expiration could not be established." This determination by consular services that the travel candidate might prolong their stay and remain irregularly in French territory after their visa expires is based on the documents provided insufficiently demonstrating the willingness to return and an "attachment" to the home country. TLS Contact offers assistance in challenging this decision: "We can help you assemble a complete dossier justifying the purpose of your stay and contesting this reason for refusal." A vague avenue of appeal is mentioned without the cancellation of the consular decision; it involves reconstructing a dossier and advancing new fees similar to the amounts of the rejected application.[6] This appeal can be costly; many individuals subject to migration policies speak of the "plunder and theft" of migration systems. Commerce operates within policies that appear sovereign and border-related, often profiting from situations of destitution but especially from the fantasies and hopes of people aspiring to improve their situations. If this form of "looting" is indeed evident in emigration societies due to the aspiration to migrate, undocumented migrants are not spared in the host society's mercantile logic, which lies at the heart of migration management systems.[7]

Assessing Intentionality and the "Will" to Return.

A denied visa signifies that the applicant lacks the intention to return to their home country. Rather than maintaining a classical, administrative view based on evidence and law, the border mechanisms now aim to judge and ascertain the applicant's intentionality. Beyond material evidence,

the applicant must present guarantees of goodwill. In psychology, willpower is defined as the capacity to carry out an intentional act consciously. Voluntary action is based on the principle of controlling one's own actions. This attitude regards visa applicants as unpredictable and insincere individuals incapable of controlling their own actions.

Considering the "will" to return means controlling that will. According to psychoanalysis, "will" is an expression of an unconscious desire; it results from an interplay of unconscious impulses and instincts. Only when a person is in harmony with their desire does the will follow. Denying a visa to applicants who meet all objective conditions means that consular authorities make a diagnosis—a form of psychological assessment of the migrant's unconscious desire. Branding the applicant as a "potential illegal migrant" lacking goodwill amounts to an intrusion into the intention and temporality of travel based on implicit psychoanalysis carried out by administrators. This assessment is based on a random moral judgement depending on selection criteria and the judgment of visa office personnel.

To act freely, the visa applicant must be capable of consciously determining their actions and not obeying their unconscious desires. An applicant whose visa application is denied is considered to be below the full force of their psychic powers driving them to action. They suffer from a will disorder, a form of *aboulia*—they are simply deprived of willpower. Such a person represents a state of generalized psychic inhibition, similar to individuals affected by aboulia. Consular services, without the training or legitimacy for assessment or diagnosis, replace psychiatric institutions and implicitly announce a form of pathological classification, psychologizing the will of a travel candidate, thus rendering them immobile. Freedom of movement or mobility, in this case, is part of the "normal" capacities of the ego. What is at stake is a "functional limitation of the ego," linked to "a mere decrease in function. The inhibited ego perceives a barrier to its sphere of action, experiencing itself as a hindered agent."[8] According to Didier Bigo, "the granting of an individual visa is, in this regard, an exception to the exception (which is why it follows a logic of 'rarity' in the minds of those who issue them). It is a restoration of trust in the individual after the ordeal of suspicion cast on a whole nation."[9]

This deprivation of will returns us to Frantz Fanon's writings criticizing the practices of the School of Algiers. Convinced of the existence of the inferiority of indigenous populations, colonial psychiatrists invented a classification of psychological pathologies based on a supposed psychology of the people. This entire colonial imaginary remains at play in consular attitudes. An imaginary that draws from old colonial assertions, such as Antoine Porot's definition of North African Indigenous people in the following terms:

"Due to a lack of intellectual curiosity, credulity and suggestibility reach a very high degree. [...] The same fatalism exacerbates the indigenous people's lack of appetite for work, their aboulia, their whims, their impulsivity," highlighting once again "the lack of care and logic in professional activities, the tendency to lie, to be insolent." A. Porot adds: "Their psychic life is dominated by instincts and makes little use of the most developed mental faculties." He also asserts that the "Muslim Maghrebi" possesses a particular subjectivity: "boastful, lying, lazy, feeble, hysterical, criminal, etc."

So many characteristics lead to the scholarly conclusion that "these primitives cannot and should not benefit from the progress of European civilization," as affirmed by Alice Cherki, Frantz Fanon's assistant at the hospital in Tunis, in an interview conducted at her home in Paris on October 21, 2019. This thesis, which is linked to the colonial order of the 1920s, continues to exist underground through the bio-political mechanisms of borders, such as consulates, TLS Contact, Campus France, reception centers, migrant accommodation facilities, identification and expulsion centers, and so on. As a result of this logic, individuals whose visa applications are refused are excluded from access to Western civilization.

The process begins in the case of Tunisian migration to Europe at the time of the visa application. The person hoping to emigrate adopts implement strategies to adapt to the host society, represented by the consulate. The refusal of visa applications renders the process of acculturation pathological and generates frustration, often leading to pathological situations or severe states of stress, including self-aggression. According to Berry and Sam, "the individual's choice of positioning regarding their culture of origin and that of the host society will define the acculturation strategy, which remains flexible throughout the process. It seems necessary to specify that this choice will be conditioned by the behavior of the host society toward the individual." The immobility of a migration or travel candidate resembles the immobility of the colonized subject as described by Franz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*:

"The first thing the native learns is to stay in his place, to not go beyond the limits. This is why the native's dreams are muscular dreams, dreams of action, aggressive dreams. I dream that I am jumping, swimming, running, climbing. I dream that I am bursting with laughter, that I am crossing the river in a single leap, that I am being pursued by caravans of cars that never catch up with me. During colonization, the colonized never stops releasing himself between nine o'clock in the evening and six o'clock in the morning."

In this sense, the act of *harga* (illegal migration by sea) becomes the "dream space" described by Fanon. This act settles in the mind as a sublimatory "line of flight" and adapts to the political context marked by a sudden closure of borders, both external and internal. By prolonging, in different forms, the domination of colonialism, these mechanisms take the place of the ultimate enemy against which young rebels resist.

After being refused a visa by the consulate, a man pondered all sorts of "metaphysical" questions: Who am I? Why was I rejected? Why me? Confronted with a rejection of their desire to travel, facing an arbitrary act that thwarts their desire, it is not uncommon for certain individuals to experience "existential inquiries," which can lead to a heightened desire for uprooting. They often use the word "*hâjja*,"[10] which denotes a "furious desire to leave without intending to return!" Their original desire, originating from the Id, has been transformed by their Ego, reshaped, hybridized by the border visa mechanism. Like running away or pathological traveling, "*hâjja*" is both an almost delirious escape from immense distress and an attempt to reaffirm belonging to humanity, whose freedom has always been expressed through walking, traveling, and seeking unknown horizons.[11]

The Impact of Visa Refusals

Being humiliated by repressive border mechanisms has a major impact on the destinies and desires of those people affected. Another significant effect is the perpetual idealization of a space marked by the massive production of a hierarchized otherness. My interviews with *harraga* reveal that they continue to be attached to their ideas and representations of Europe, even though their experiences have resulted in visa rejections, imprisonment, marginalization, and deportation. An obsessive idea of leaving the homeland emerges from this moment of visa refusal, causing a psychic wound of being prohibited from traveling (being undesirable). According to Assoun: "The inhibited person leads a restrained life, centered around an obscurely denied enjoyment. They live a life with reduced potential, which does not go as far as the formation of a symptom (Lacan aptly states that it is 'a symptom put in a museum'). But they live in a permanent discomfort, consisting of never fully completing an action, which creates an embarrassed subject. The inhibited person is always at the starting line, as if halted on the starting block, immobilized at the beginning of their action."[12]

An effect of mobility withdrawal, a sense of longing for elsewhere and otherness, emerges among inhibited young Tunisians, prematurely obstructing their processes of cultural creation and their experiences of alterity within the emigrant society. This emotional shock can constitute a genuine existential fracture, a wound that can be termed "the trauma of immobility" or "visa refusal trauma."

Moving to another territory then becomes a means of psychological repair and recognition, a way to overcome this self-hatred and the local situation. Administrative borders are a political mechanism that creates psychological borders and leaves subjects from former colonies stuck and entirely dependent on the metropolises that prohibit them from crossing the borders legally. The prohibition then becomes desired, and racial exploitation and hierarchy are enforced through border mechanisms.

Walls and borders, or what are called "teichopolitics," have become the main tool for controlling populations in modern domination. The example of the Israeli colonization of Palestine is a striking illustration of this. The destruction of the Gaza wall on October 7, 2023, and the failure of border repression measures forced the State of Israel to revert to a form of conventional warfare to regain control of the colonized territories—the only alternative to wall policies. Subaltern peoples are trapped between two choices: living confined between walls and the sea, or facing total war with all its atrocities if they revolt against these border systems.

Endnotes

[1] The Algiers School of Psychiatry, founded in the 1920s by Antoine Porot, was a colonial psychiatric movement that pathologized North African populations by portraying them as mentally inferior. This school, focused on the "indigenous mentality" and the theory of primitivism, trained a generation of psychiatrists with racist and reductive approaches.

[2] Alexis Spire, Étrangers à la carte, L'administration de immigration en France (1945-1975), Paris, Grasset, 2005, p. 211.

[3] Abdelmalek Sayad, « Naturels et naturalisés », Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales, n° 99, sept. 1993, p205.

[4] Federica Infantino, « La frontière au guichet », Champ pénal/Penal field [En ligne], Vol. VII | 2010, mis en ligne le 12 février 2019, consulté le 06 septembre 2020. URL : http://journals.openedition.org/champpenal/7864 ; DOI : https://doi.org/10.4000/champpenal.7864

[5] Established in 2008, Tls Contact (which acts as an intermediary for visa applications) is a major partner company of the Schengen countries. Specializing in services for diplomatic representations, this company is a subsidiary of the telecommunications company Teleperformance Group, a multinational with French capital. The emergence of a "national champion," a company with a national identity but aspiring to play a global role, dates back to 2007. At that time, as the sector of services for diplomatic representations was experiencing rapid growth, French Senator Gouteyron, affiliated with the UMP party, embraced the existing momentum and encouraged it.

[6] Indeed, the fees for a short-stay Schengen visa (up to 60 days) amount to 80 euros (approximately 240 Tunisian dinars). In addition to the application fees, there is a service fee charged by the company "TLS Contact," which amounts to 27.50 euros (approximately 62 dinars). None of these fees are refundable in case the visa is not granted. This situation similarly affects Algerian and Moroccan populations. According to official reports, the visa rejection rate for Tunisian citizens was 25% of applications in 2019, doubling the rate from 2018, which was 11.5%. In the first nine months of 2019, the refusal rate was 21.12%, with nearly 137,000 applications and nearly 105,000 visas issued.

[7] Let's illustrate this point with considerations based on informal observations: According to French Immigration law, a Tunisian undocumented immigrant could obtain legal papers ten years after their initial entry into French territory. The problem is that the law is applied randomly and it is unclear in a similar way to the visa allocation policies implemented by consulates outside the national borders. I have met several harraga individuals who have engaged lawyers to initiate a residence permit procedure upon their arrival in France. The lawyer fees exceed 1,000 euros per year. One person in this situation told me, "I work day and night. Everything I earn goes to the lawyer. I dream of going back to my country and smelling the scent of family and home. I'm exhausted. Do you think I will get my papers?" This person, living in an irregular situation and aged 40, had been waiting for their papers for nine years. They changed lawyers three times without being able to clearly express their suffering or identify possible solutions. The individual I met belongs to these undocumented populations reduced to working to combat their irregular status, exhausted and overshadowed by silence. In other cases I've encountered, families in the host country sending money to their sons to help them with the process of obtaining residency papers.

[8] Paul Laurent Assoun. La jouissance entravée. Psychanalyse du sujet empêché, EC, 2013

[9] Didier Bigo, « Le visa Schengen et le recours à la biométrie », in Xavier Crettiez (dir.), *Du papier à la biométrie* : identifier les *individus*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2006, p. 237-267

[10] "Hajja" literally means to leave without returning. It's a common word in Tunisian slang. When someone is annoyed, they might say, "taw nhej mn ihalibled" (I wish to leave this country). "Hajja" comes from the verb "hâaj," which describes a person becoming angry or fleeing from injustice to a distant place. You can also find it in expressions like "hâjja aljidara," which means "he demolished the wall," or "Hâajat Annarou," which means "the fire is lit, and its sound has been heard."

[11] Antonietta Haddad et Gérard Haddad, *Freud en Italie… op.cit.,* p. 28.

[12] Paul Laurent Assoun. La jouissance entravée. Psychanalyse du sujet empêché, EC, 2013

Religion and Revolution:
Ali Shariati's Recreation of Fanon for an Iranian Audience

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In 1960, Ali Shariati, the man who would come to be known as the "architect of the Iranian revolution," returned to Paris after a summer of intense revolutionary activity.[1] He had been living there since 1959, supported by a government scholarship. Shariati registered for a doctoral degree at the Sorbonne and embarked on a course of study in Persian literature, under the direction of Iranologist Gilbert Lazzard.[2] Shariati's attention, however, was focused elsewhere: on the burgeoning political movement comprised of anticolonial activists from France's colonies. Shariati later claimed that in 1961 he struck up a correspondence with Frantz Fanon while both were living in France. Shariati proudly described himself as the "first person in Iran who has known Fanon, translated his works, spoken of him, and written and published all his thoughts."[3]

Whether or not these specific claims by Shariati are substantiated, it is clear that the two intellectuals had much in common. Shariati had every reason to be drawn to the Martinican luminary, who by that point had already published *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *A Dying Colonialism* (1959). The year of their purported acquaintance was the year when *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) was first published.

According to Shariati's testimony, Fanon wrote him three letters in total, only one of which is to our knowledge extant.[4] There are reasons to doubt the veracity of Shariati's account, and indeed to wonder whether he ever had direct contact with Fanon at all.[5] Arash Davari and Siavash Saffari, among other scholars, have recently shed new light on Shariati's dialectical appropriation of Fanon.[6] Davari and Saffari have persuasively argued that the most plausible reading of Fanon's letter is to regard it as a fictitious creation by Shariati.[7]

Davari and Saffari identify two reasons for doubting the authenticity of the correspondence. First, the original versions of Fanon's letters to Shariati have never surfaced, though Shariati quoted one at length in a "forward addressed to readers" to his treatise, *Islamology*.[8] There is no prior or independent evidence for these letters' existence. Second, Shariati has his own history of sometime deliberate dissimulation. Like many Iranian revolutionaries during this period, Shariati loved to experiment with pseudonyms and false attributions. One of his many pseudonyms was a figure named Chandal, who appeared in Shariati's writings as "a Francophone intellectual of non-European origin who engaged in revolutionary struggle against French colonialism in North Africa."[9] This alter-ego obviously closely resembled Fanon. In light of Shariati's penchant for using fictional alter egos to debate and transmute his own views, it is easy to imagine Shariati fabricating Fanon's letter as means of probing more deeply into matters of concern to him.

Contrary to what one might expect from a fabrication, Fanon's letter is emphatic regarding his disagreements with Shariati. While Shariati is often credited as the most significant ideological inspiration for the Islamic Revolution of 1979, the letter he attributes to Fanon undermines the absolute faith in the power of religion that is often associated with this legacy. Even a fictionalized Fanon could have served Shariati as a dialectical tool to stimulate debate that a more direct discussion of the issues may not have been able to achieve. Such a tool would have enabled Shariati to anticipate objections to his arguments about the role of Islam in the revolution that he hoped would transpire in Iran.

Even if the letters are not authentic, Shariati has done a remarkable job of ventriloquizing Fanon, and of capturing

the voice of a revolutionary thinker whose vision did not fully overlap with his own. We can conceptualize the dialectic introduced by the Fanon letter in terms of the long-standing distinction in Persian mystical thought between the external (*zahir*) and latent (*batin*) content of an utterance.[10] Speaking through the voice of Fanon enabled Shariati to adopt a more dialectical approach than is common in the revolutionary moment in which he found himself. It also allows him to have the last word, albeit only after subjecting his ideas to significant modification through the Fanonian prism.

The critical question for this essay is not the authenticity of the letter, but rather *why* Shariati appropriated Fanon and what work this letter did for him with respect to his creative and ideological aims. It is possible that Shariati never met or exchanged words with Fanon, but it is certain that Shariati saw himself as a propagator of Fanon's ideas within Iran, and that Fanon was one of his major inspirations. The letter that has reached us may have been based on an actual or imagined conversation Shariati had with Fanon. Whether or not it is authentic, it is clear that incorporating words he attributed to Fanon into his own discourse on the relation between religion and political mobilization was a carefully conceived strategy on Shariati's part.

In the analysis that follows, I refer to the letter Shariati attributed to Fanon as "Fanon's letter." This does not mean that I reject the hypothesis that it is Shariati's fabrication. Even assuming that the letter is a fabrication, it is instructive to follow a line of analysis that treats the letter an authentic text, because that Shariati presents it to us as if it is. Shariati does a remarkable job of ventriloquizing Fanon, and of capturing the voice of a revolutionary thinker whose vision did not fully overlap with his own. If "Fanon's letter" is a fiction, the fiction is persuasive; it represents a vital current in Shariati's own thought, and an important element in his own personal dialectic. Understanding Shariati's creative approach to the intersection of politics and religion requires taking his self-presentation at face value and understanding the reasons for his appropriation.

Shariati never shared the letter from himself that prompted Fanon's reply, but he went out of his way to publicize Fanon's letter to him. Perhaps to give his fiction more credibility, he claims to have first translated into Persian three letters from Fanon addressed to him and to have published this translation in the underground Iranian press while he was still living in Paris. Shariati stated that he then passed the original versions of the letters to the Algerian freedom fighter Zohra Drif, in the expectation that she would arrange to have them published in Tunis.

All that is now extant is the excerpt from one of the letters included in *Islamology*, a volume that brings together Shariati's lectures from the 1970s. Shariati prefaced the excerpt with a description of Fanon as his "genius friend, one of the most beautiful heroic figures in these cowardly times." He added that the letter was written "during the last days of [Fanon's] life." Whether or not the letter is authentic, the careful framing that Shariati applied to this correspondence demonstrates a skilful appropriation of Fanon for his own ends.

My modest aim here is to offer a close reading of the letter, whatever its provenance, which is attentive to Shariati's aims and to the wider context in which he appropriates Fanon. What does the Fanonian diagnosis of anti-colonial religious mobilization tell us about Shariati's own thinking with respect to the role of religion in revolutionary action? Although it is beyond my scope here, the answer to this question could prompt an inquiry into how the Fanonian traces in Shariati's dialectical theology can contribute to the movement against the authoritarian Islamic Republic in Iran today.

In the excerpt from the letter that Shariati cites, Fanon warns Shariati of the dangers of enlisting religion in the cause of the anti-colonial revolution. Although he elsewhere insisted on Fanon's hostility to religion, Shariati's quotation reveals a Fanon who appreciated the revolutionary potential of religion. He acknowledged to Shariati that "Islam harbours […] both an anticolonialist capacity and an anti-western character." Yet Fanon's appreciation stopped there; the rest of his letter is

concerned with warning of the dangers that ensue when religious institutions attain political power amid revolutionary ferment. Shariati's take on Fanon's attitude to religion is supported by works like *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), in which Fanon thoroughly examined how the Catholic Church in Martinique furthers colonial ends.

Although he expressed a common bond with Shariati in terms of their understanding of the revolutionary potential of religious mobilization, Fanon in this letter also voices his reservations. He warns that a religious revival in the Muslim world would create a counter-revolutionary situation that would do more to entrench colonial legacies than to overthrow them. In a context in which a revival of "sectarian and religious mindsets" diverted "that nation yet to come which is at best a 'nation in becoming'" onto a counter-revolutionary path, even a putatively anti-colonial revolution might, he warned, distance its citizens from a decolonial future and instead bring it "closer to its past." While there are many ways of interpreting the legacy of 1979, it is hard to deny its prophetic element. Shariati was the messenger—and perhaps the source—of this critique of religion. Whether it was inspired by or directly derived from Fanon, Shariati preserved it against the ravages of time and the frailty of uncertain archives, while also dedicating the rest of his life and thoughts to overcoming Fanon's objections by bringing about a genuine Islamic revolution.

In his letter, Fanon warns Shariati that a revival of "sectarian and religious mindsets" could potentially divert "that nation yet to come which is at best a 'nation in becoming'" onto a more treacherous and counter-revolutionary path.[11] The tenor of Fanon's letter, in which he respectfully but firmly distances himself from the views of his correspondent, implies that Shariati's initial letter expressed greater faith in religious mobilization as a revolutionary force in the struggle against colonialism. Hence a tension is established between religious mobilization and the revolutionary horizon. Shariati uses Fanon to acknowledge this tension, and then proceeds to overcome this tension dialectically throughout the duration of his book.

Returning to the context of the Algerian Revolution in which he was immersed, Fanon told Shariati openly that such fears prevented him from aligning with the Association of Maghrebin 'Ulama. By extension, we can infer that Shariati acknowledged such dangers with respect to the learned scholars (*'ulama*) of Iran. Indeed, Shariati's own vision for Islam diverged in important respects from that propagated by Khomeini and other leaders of the 1979 revolution, including with respect to the *hijab*, which was mandated by law soon after the revolution, although Shariati regarded the practice as a relic of the past.[12] Shariati was firmly persuaded of the revolutionary potential of Islam. Yet, unlike the architects of the Islamic Republic of Iran, he was sceptical of clerical power. In this respect, Fanon's suspicions resonated well with those of Shariati. Or rather, we can say that Fanon proved useful to Shariati's own efforts to develop a critique of religious authority when aligned with the state.

After praising Shariati for embarking on the path followed by African intellectuals such as Léopold Senghor, Jomo Kenyatta, Julius Nyerere, and Kateb Yacine, Fanon ends by at once embracing and distancing himself from Shariati's religious stance, stating "although my path diverges from, and is even opposed to, yours, I am persuaded that both paths will ultimately join up towards that destination where humanity lives well." The resemblances between the genealogy in which Fanon places Shariati and the genealogy Shariati claimed for himself further reveals how Fanon served as a template for Shariati's conception of himself as an anti-colonial intellectual.

What precisely was it about Fanon's approach to religion that made Shariati wish to incorporate it into his own work? In his lecture "Where Shall We Begin," Shariati sheds light on the debate between himself and Fanon in terms that mirror those found in Fanon's letter. First, Shariati aims to establish a closer personal connection between himself and Fanon. He describes Fanon as someone he "knew personally" and whose books he "translated into Persian."[13] Shariati's penchant for fictionalization is already on display in this description, for scholars have established that, although he was a prolific translator, Shariati was not

the primary translator of any work by Fanon, including Fanon's best known work, *Les Damnés de la Terre* (1961), a translation that is often attributed to Shariati.[14]

Shariati notes that Fanon "was pessimistic about the positive contribution of religion to social movement," a position that is fleshed out in this letter in a warning about the dangers of religious mobilizations. In "Where Shall We Begin," Shariati goes beyond simply quoting Fanon and proceeds to mount a critique of Fanon's position. He claims to have "convinced" Fanon that "in some societies where religion plays an important role in the culture, religion can, through its resources and psychological effects, help the enlightened person to lead his society toward the same destination toward which Fanon was taking his own through non-religious means."[15]

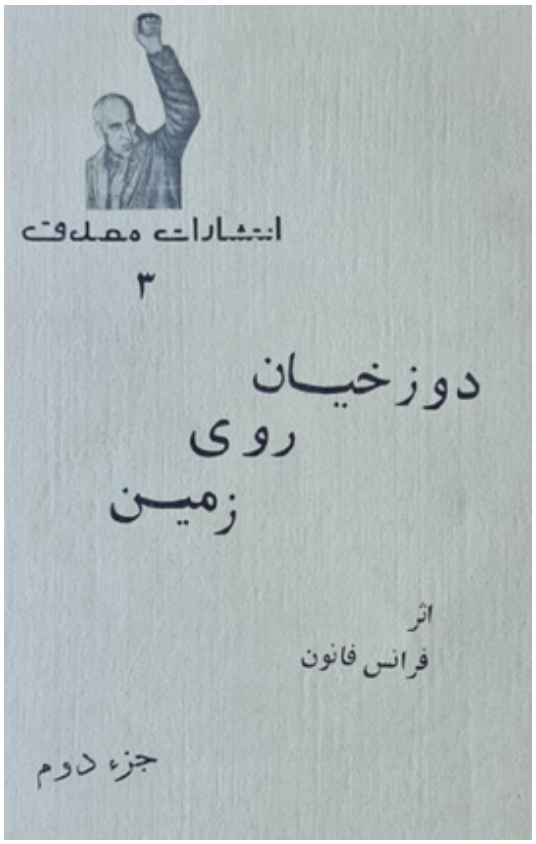
While acknowledging the limitations of relying on religion for political mobilization in 20th century Europe, Shariati saw Iran as an ideal society for fulfilling religion's political potential. After juxtaposing Fanon's view to his own and arguing implicitly for the distinctiveness of the Iranian situation, Shariati proceeds to situate Fanon in a European tradition. He argues that "Fanon's anti-religious feeling stemmed from the unique religious experience of Europe in the Middle Ages and the ensuing freedom of European society in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries." This history, which ties secularization to freedom, has its limits for the Islamic world, Shariati adds, "because the culture of an Islamic society and the tradition which has shaped that society is utterly different from the spirit which under the name of religion ruled Europe in the Middle Ages." In a certain sense, then, Shariati provincializes Fanon.[16] He situates his work within a European tradition, and thereby exposes its limits for an Iranian revolutionary movement.

To what extent was Shariati right to diagnose Fanon with "anti-religious feeling"? Commentators tend to agree that Fanon's "engagement with religious traditions is significant to the development of his anti-colonialism since it is clear that he simultaneously rejected and retained them in his analysis."[17] Fanon's assessment of the value of religion is limited to the political ends it achieves. Unlike Shariati, he does not regard religious transformation as an end in itself.

Fanon's controversial discussion of Algerian veiling practices in "Algeria Unveiled" is a case in point: the hijab is seen here exclusively as a political instrument in a guerrilla war, even though most proponents of the hijab in Muslim culture defend it on religious grounds.[18] With a similar emphasis on strategy, Fanon's letter underscores his opposition to efforts to ground anti-colonial mobilization in religious identity, because religious identity can be authoritarian in a way that mirrors colonial governance. Fanon's critique is subtle and even prophetic with respect to Iran.

While neither Shariati nor Fanon were alive at the time of the 1979 revolution, their ideas circulated widely in the post-revolutionary milieu. The first published Persian translation of *Les Damnés de la Terre* includes a preface by Shariati's friend and fellow activist Abu al-Hasan Banisadr (1933-2021), who briefly held the position of President of Iran in 1980, a year after the revolution. The preface was a major step in the integration of Fanon by leftist Iranian militants into the foundational narratives of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The first edition of this book, published in Hamburg, Germany in 1969 by the newly-formed Mosaddeq Press (figure 1), gives visual form to the genealogy that leftist militants were constructing as they integrated secularists like Mohammed Mosaddeq and Fanon into their program for a future revolution.

In 1953, just six years prior to Shariati's arrival in France, Mosaddeq had been infamously removed from power in a coup orchestrated by the CIA working in collaboration with British intelligence services. This coup fuelled anti-imperial sentiment within Iran as well as among the Iranian militants studying in Paris. After the coup, Mosaddeq would be remembered as Iran's first democratically-minded Prime Minister. On the cover of the Mosaddeq Press edition of Fanon produced in 1969 by a group of leftist militants of which Shariati was a part, we see Mosaddeq depicted with his left arm raised and clenched into a fist.



Persian translation of Fanon, Les Damnés de la Terre *(1969; image taken from Sadeghi-Boroujerdi, "Who Translated Fanon's," p.11).*

Alongside the cover, Banisadr's preface is significant because he uses the occasion to dedicate the translation to Mosaddeq, as if to suggest a kinship between Fanon and Mosaddeq, both of whom were secularists. Indeed, the translation of *Les Damnés de la Terre* was the first book released by Mosaddeq Press, a publisher that had been established in Hamburg by four Iranian activists: Abolhassan Banisadr, Hasan Habibi, Ardeshir Houshmand and Rahman Kargosha.[19] The second volume published by the short-lived press was a collection of the speeches of Mosaddeq. Yet another volume was a translation of Algerian politician Amar Ouzegane's *Le meilleur combat* (The Better Struggle), a book that sought a reproachment between Islam and socialism. The lineage of this publishing history reveals that Shariati was not alone among Iranian leftists in seeking to establish a genealogy between the religious movement of the 1970s and the secular anti-colonialism of the 1950s and 1960s.[20]

With regard to this effort to link secular anti-colonial militancy with what the participants in the events of 1979 described as "religious nationalism," Fanon served as a useful bridge. Shariati played a major role in transmitting his writings to Iran, not primarily through the translations with which he has been wrongly credited (and which he falsely attributed to himself), but by incorporating Fanon's ideas into his own speeches, including through dialectical debates and fabricated letters.[21]

Even as he provincialized Fanon, Shariati persistently operated under his shadow. His claim to have known Fanon personally, to have translated his works, and to have received a letter from him "during the last days of his life" speaks for itself. Shariati disagreed with Fanon, yet he regarded him as a genius worth emulating, and indeed as "one of the most beautiful heroic figures in these cowardly times."

In the lecture "Man and Islam," Shariati expressed the wish that "we knew Kateb Yassin instead of Brecht, Omar Mawloud, Omar Ozgan, Frantz Fanon, and Aime Cesaire instead of Jean Paul Sartre and Camus."[22] Particularly striking in this list is the juxtaposition of Fanon and Sartre, since Shariati was an admirer of both. Yet it is clear from the way the list is formed which side Shariati is on: he ties the project of an Islamicist emancipation to the gradual replacement of Sartre by Fanon. "Unless we know ourselves to the extent that we are familiar with the Western free-thinkers," Shariati adds, "we will to the same extent become alienated from ourselves."

Shariati's efforts to decolonize the canon of modern philosophical thought reveals how central Fanon was to Shariati's own project of uncovering an Iranian self free of Western influences. From its inception, Shariati's project of collective self-realization was embedded in contradiction, just like Shariati's own self. These contradictions explain at least in part Shariati's penchant for pseudonyms and why he chose to speak in voices that were not his own. Ultimately, Shariati's appropriation of Fanon demonstrates that, notwithstanding his nativist rhetoric, Shariati was deeply committed in practice to a translational and dialectical ethos.

Endnotes

[1] I would like to express my debt to Kayvan Tahmasebian and the participants of the Fanon Today workshop for their critical engagements with this work.

[For] this epithet, see Mehdi Abedi, "Ali Shariati: The Architect of the 1979 Islamic Revolution of Iran." *Iranian Studies* 19.3–4 (1986): 229–234.

[2] Ali Rahnema, *An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of Ali Shari'ati* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014), 117.

[3] Ali Shariati, *Collected Works* no.12. *Tarikh tamaddon* [History of Civilization] Vol. 2. (Tehran: [Ghalam,] 2015), 122.

[4] The letter is included in *Écrits sur l'aliénation et la liberté*, edited by Robert Young and Jean Khalfa (Paris: La Découverte, 2015) and subsequently translated from French into English in *Frantz Fanon: alienation and freedom*, edited by Jean Khalfa and Robert J.C. Young, translated by Steven Corcoran (London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 668-669.

[5] The case against the authenticity of the letter Shariati attributes to Fanon is laid out most thoroughly in Arash Davari and Siavash Saffari, "Thought/Translation and the Situations of Decolonization," *Philosophy and Global Affairs* 2:1, 2022, pp. 105–135 and in *idem*, "Mystical Solidarities: Ali Shariati and the Act of Translation," in this same issue.

[6] Davari and Saffari, "Thought/Translation"; Arash Davari, "A Return to Which Self? Ali Shari'ati and Frantz Fanon on the Political Ethics of Insurrectionary Violence," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* (2014) 34 (1): 86–105.

[7] The French volume in which the excerpt from the letter first appeared (*Écrits sur l'aliénation et la liberté*), makes no judgement concerning authenticity and simple translates the relevant section from Shariati's *Islamology*, crediting Shariati's son, Ehsan Shariati, with the Persian-English translation. The English edition of the French volume (*Alienation and Freedom*) goes further in obscuring the source by omitting to give credit to the French translator. Other commentators who follow the lead of these editions in erasing the complex textual history of the letter and the doubts concerning its authenticity, include Adam Shatz ("When Life is Seized," *London Review of Books*, 19 Jan 2017; https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v39/n02/adam-shatz/where-life-is-seized) and Christopher Lee ("Fanon's fugitive archive," *Africa is a Country*, 29 October 2017; https://africasacountry.com/2018/10/fanons-fugitive-archive/).

[8] Ali Shariati, *Collected Works* no. 17. *Islamshenasi* [Islamology] Vol. 2, 193–194.

[9] Davari and Saffari, "Thought/Translation," 126.

[10] I am indebted to Kayvan Tahmasbian, who introduced me to this method of analysis during our co-authored article: "Translation as Alienation: Sufi Hermeneutics and Literary Modernism in Bijan Elahi's Translations," *Modernism/modernity Print Plus* 5.4.

[11] All quotations from the letter are from the English translation in *Frantz Fanon: alienation and freedom*, translated by Steven Corcoran, 668-669.

[12] A.K. Ferdows, "Women and the Islamic revolution," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 15.2 (1983): 284.

[13] The translation is taken from "Where Shall We Begin," https://shariati.com/english/begin/begin5.html.

[14] See Eskandar Sadeghi-Boroujerdi, "Who Translated Fanon's 'The Wretched of the Earth' into Persian?" *Jadaliyya* (2020) https://research.gold.ac.uk/id/eprint/30630/. For an excellent overview of Shariati's translational activity, see Davari and Saffari, "Thought/Translation," 111-115.

[15] Shariati, "Where Shall We Begin."

[16] I use the term "provincializing" in the sense outlined by Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[17] Federico Settler, "Religion in the work of Frantz Fanon" (PhD, University of Cape Town, 2009), 5.

[18] See Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (New York: Grove/Atlantic, 2022), 35-67.

[19] Eskandar Sadeghi-Boroujerdi, "Who Translated Fanon's 'The Wretched of the Earth' into Persian?" 3.

[20] Through the end of his life, Banisadr was quite keen to refashion Mossadegh as a religious nationalist, although most historians regard him as fundamentally secular. See Banisadr's Facebook post from 2014: https://m.facebook.com/Banisadr/photos/a.10151193850405821/10152825658990821/?type=3.

[21] For Shariati's role in the spread of Fanon's ideas in Iran, see Abdollah Zahiri, "Frantz Fanon in Iran: Darling of the Right and the Left in the 1960s and 1970s," *Interventions* 23 (2021): 506–525.

[22] http://www.shariati.com/english/begin/begin5.html.

Theoretical Convergence and Linkages in the Colonial Class Analyses of Frantz Fanon and Mahdi Amil

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1. Introduction

In this paper, I propose a comparative reading of Frantz Fanon (1925–61) and Mahdi Amil (1936–87) with regard to their respective analyses of colonial class relations. Both Fanon and Amil were deeply concerned with the (post-)colonial question in their theoretical writings and their political activism. Both authors dedicated much attention in their works and lives to the Algerian anti-colonial struggle. Amil, a Marxist theorist and member of the Lebanese Communist Party, was, to some degree, a Fanonian thinker. His intellectual debt to Fanon is most evident in his essay *La Pensée Revolutionnaire de Frantz Fanon*, published in 1962 in the Algerian journal *Révolution Africaine*, in which he discusses affirmatively the central arguments of Fanon's *Les Damnés de la Terre* (engl. *The Wretched of the Earth*),[1] published a year earlier.

In this paper, however, I will draw on Amil's two-part essay *Colonialism and Underdevelopment* (arab. *al-Isti'mār wa-l-takhalluf*), published in 1968 in the Lebanese Communist journal *al-Ṭarīq*.[2] Through a close comparative reading of that essay and *The Wretched of the Earth*, I suggest a theoretical linkage between Amil and Fanon. For this purpose, I analyze how Amil's writings resonate with Fanon's work. In terms of his theoretical mode, I suggest that Amil adopts the Fanonian approach of *stretching Marxism* in the colonial context. I further demonstrate how Amil's conception of the colonial bourgeoisie converges with Fanon's notion of the national bourgeoisie. Yet, as I also point out, Amil diverges from Fanon's analysis in some crucial ways, in particular with regard to his analysis of the colonial proletariat and the peasantry. I conclude my paper with a brief discussion on how the ideas of both Fanon and Amil correspond with the notion of multilinear development as developed in the later writings of Karl Marx.

2. Stretching Marxism in the Colonial Context

In *Concerning Violence*, the first chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon formulates his much-quoted argument that "Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem." As Fanon further explains, "Everything up to and including the very nature of precapitalist society, so well explained by Marx, must here be thought out again."[3] Much has already been written about Fanon's notion of *stretching Marxism* in the colonial context. Sara Salem points out how Fanon *stretches* established Marxist categories to "contextualize the specificity of capitalism in the colony without completely disregarding the assumptions underpinning Marxism."[4] Fanon thus assumes that classical accounts of Marxist theory, developed to address historically specific material conditions, should not be applied without *translation* to (post-)colonial conditions. As Salem explains, Fanon thereby does not reject Marxism, but "rearticulates it to account for how capitalism and colonialism were co-constitutive."[5]

In Mahdi Amil's writings, there is much that resonates with Fanon's notion of *stretching Marxism*. In his essay *Colonialism and Underdevelopment*, Amil analyzes the structural relation between these two phenomena. His aim here is to specify "the kind of causality that links underdevelopment to colonialism."[6] For Amil, Marxism alone can provide a theory of underdevelopment. However, like Fanon, Amil argues that pre-formed Marxist thought cannot be applied to colonial reality:

> "If we truly want to establish sound Marxist thinking by and for us that is capable of perceiving reality scientifically, we must not begin with Marxism as a pre-formed system of thought that we attempt to apply to our reality. Instead, we must begin with our reality in its own process of formation."[7]

While for Marx the specific historical reality of European capitalism constitutes the starting point of his inquiry, for Amil it is the colonial relation.[8] Amil holds that Marx only deals with colonialism insofar as it helps him to explain the historical development of capitalism. Amil's approach, on the other hand, is to "treat the problem from an entirely different perspective, that of colonialism, not capitalism. Our theoretical progression in this problem is thus the inverse of Marx's theoretical progression."[9] Thus, regarding the theoretical premises for analyzing the colonial relation, Amil's approach resonates with Fanon's. While Fanon suggests to *stretch* Marxism, Amil suggests to invert its theoretical progression.

3. **The National Bourgeoisie in *The Wretched of the Earth***

In the third chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth* ("The Pitfalls of National Consciousness"), Fanon develops his well-known critique of the bourgeois class that emerges in the context of decolonization and national independence. Fanon's notion of the national bourgeoisie, as he terms this nascent class, is however distinct from the classical Marxist concept of the bourgeoisie. Fanon thus *stretches* Marxism to meet the particularity of (post-)colonial relations compared to the standard account of Western European capitalist societies.

Prior to decolonization, Fanon argues, the bourgeoisie in the colonies is a foreign or Western bourgeoisie which acts as an agent of the metropole.[10] Fanon underlines that the economy of a colony is not a national economy in a strict sense. Rather, the economy's organization serves to complete the economy of the colonialist metropole.[11] In the context of decolonization, the emerging national bourgeoisie takes control over the economic conditions inherited from the colonial period. Fanon terms this class an "underdeveloped bourgeoisie"[12] which, in contrast to the Western capitalist one, lacks economic power and "is not engaged in production, nor in invention, nor building, nor labor."[13] After national liberation, the national economy still resembles that of the colonial period. The national bourgeoisie, Fanon argues, is rather ignorant of its own economy failing to build its industrial sector: "We go on sending out raw materials; we go on being Europe's small farmers, who specialize in unfinished products."[14] Fanon emphasizes that the national bourgeoisie's ambition to nationalize the economy and the trading sectors is not to put the national economy at the service of society. For this class, nationalization means "the transfer into native hands of those unfair advantages which are a legacy of the colonial period."[15] For Fanon, the historical mission of the national bourgeoisie is its role as an intermediary. In this capacity, it constitutes a "transmission line between the nation and a capitalism […] which puts on the mask of neo-colonialism."[16] The national bourgeoisie acts as "the Western bourgeoisie's business agent,"[17] directing its attention toward the former colonialist metropole and foreign capital.[18]

In concluding his observations about the national bourgeoisie, Fanon refers to a question that had been debated already for decades in his time: is it possible for underdeveloped societies to skip the bourgeois phase of development? For Fanon, this is not a theoretical question, but one of revolutionary praxis.

> "In fact, the bourgeois phase in the history of underdeveloped countries is a completely useless phase. When this caste has vanished, devoured by its own contradictions, it will be seen that nothing new has happened since independence was proclaimed."[19]

Thus, the national bourgeoisie should be prevented from finding "the conditions necessary for its existence and its growth."[20] Fanon here envisions a combined effort of the masses, organized by a party and intellectuals with revolutionary consciousness and principles, which should block the way to the formation of this class.[21]

The bourgeois phase of development, so essential to the historical emergence of Western European capitalism, should be skipped over in the colonial context.

4. Fanon's Conception of the Peasantry and the Proletariat

Fanon's approach of *stretching* Marxism is further expressed, in a much more controversial manner, with regard to his conception of the urban proletariat and the peasantry. In traditional Marxist terms, the proletariat, that is the large-scale industrialized working class, constitutes the revolutionary subject.[22] Fanon's colonial class analysis is different. In the chapter *Concerning Violence*, Fanon writes that "in the colonial countries the peasants alone are revolutionary."[23] The urban working class, on the other hand, is assumed to benefit from the colonial system. Fanon thus shifts the revolutionary role from the proletariat to the peasantry. He deals with this question in more detail in the second chapter: "The proletariat is the nucleus of the colonized population which has been most pampered by the colonial regime. The embryonic proletariat of the towns is in a comparatively privileged position."[24] Privileged, of course, in relation to the peasantry, a class "systematically disregarded" by the nationalist parties and the urban workers.[25] While the peasant masses constitute "the only spontaneously revolutionary force of the country"[26] and "have nothing to lose and everything to gain"[27] in the revolutionary struggle for decolonization, the urban proletariat "has everything to lose."[28]

Fanon is aware of the inverted role he ascribes to the peasantry as he acknowledges that in the history of bourgeois and proletarian revolutions, they have often played a non-revolutionary, at times reactionary role.[29] The landless peasants who constitute the "Lumpenproletariat,"[30] another term borrowed from Marx, figure as "the urban spearhead" of anti-colonial rebellion in Fanon's account.[31] It is this class that will carry the anti-colonial struggle into the urban centers of the colonies as it constitutes "one of the most spontaneous and the most radically revolutionary forces of a colonized people."[32] Fanon's notion of spontaneity, however, is not to be misunderstood as referring to an unorganized or unexpected rebellion. For Fanon, spontaneity refers to the bottom-up nature of anti-colonial struggle which is not organized and controlled by the nationalist parties in the urban centers of the colonies.[33]

While Fanon's conception of the national bourgeoisie has been received with more sympathy, his analysis regarding the peasantry and the urban proletariat has provoked a more critical debate among Fanon scholars. Jack Woddis, for example, accuses Fanon of having created the myth about an "bourgeoisified" African working class.[34] The urban proletariat, Woddis argues, in no way constituted a "bourgeois fraction of the colonized people,"[35] as Fanon thought, but rather lived under "deplorable conditions"[36] of colonial exploitation of labor. Woddis further argues that workers contributed a lot more to the struggle for independence than Fanon had envisioned.[37] Adding to this line of critique, Leo Zeilig argues that Fanon's analysis conflates the colonial working class with the leadership of the nationalist parties as these two distinct classes become almost conjoined in Fanon's thought.[38] Zeilig is furthermore critical of the revolutionary role Fanon attributes to the peasantry as historically they have neither played an independent role nor led the national liberation struggle.[39]

Other authors, however, are more approving of Fanon's conclusions. Peter Hudis, for example, supports Fanon's approach of stretching the standard Marxist model by identifying the peasantry instead of the proletariat as the revolutionary class. As Hudis emphasizes, Fanon addresses the specificity of colonial class relations and thus avoids imposing a model that would only be applicable to Western capitalist societies.[40] Fanon thus recognizes that the colonial proletariat has not been socialized by capitalist industrialization, unlike the European working class. While the peasantry constitutes the majority of the colonial population, the urban working class is no majoritarian force. This is what Fanon means with the term "embryonic proletariat of the towns."[41] Moreover, Hudis argues that Fanon's analytical approach is quite close to Marx, although it differs from his conclusions as they apply to European capitalist societies.[42] Referring to social revolution, Marx writes in *The Communist Manifesto*: "The

proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority."[43] For Fanon, on the other hand, social revolution could only be identified with the peasant class since it constitutes the immense majority in colonial underdeveloped societies.

5. Class Relations in Amil's Colonial Mode of Production

In his two-part essay *Colonialism and Underdevelopment*, Amil defines the colonial relation and develops his concept of the colonial mode of production (*namaṭ al-intāj al-kūlūnyālī*). For Amil, this is a necessary theoretical step to arrive at an adequate understanding of underdevelopment in the context of colonialism. Amil defines the colonial relation as a "relation between two different systems of production."[44] These two systems of production, the capitalist and the colonial, exist within a single structural unit which defines their mutual dependency.[45] The structural relation is determined by "the domination of capitalist production over colonial production."[46] Amil elaborates on the dialectical relationship between the capitalist-colonialist metropoles and the colonies that determines their respective path of development as follows:

> "The development of Western Europe, and the development of the capitalist West generally within the colonial relation, was a historical outcome of the 'underdevelopment' of colonized countries just as the 'underdevelopment' of these countries is the historical result of Western capitalist development."[47]

In a sense, Amil's formulation here echoes Fanon's often-cited argument that "Europe is literally the creation of the Third World."[48] How, then, is Amil's concept of the colonial mode of production distinct from the capitalist mode of production? While the capitalist mode of production emerged from the specific historical development of feudal relations in Europe, the mode of production that emerged in colonized societies is not a product of the necessary internal development of pre-colonial relations of production. Amil thus identifies an organic development with regard to capitalist relations in Europe, whereas he holds that new relations of production were violently established by colonialism.[49] The colonial mode of production is further distinguished by its structural dependency in terms of both historical formation and internal development.[50] In Amil's conception, colonialism manifests itself primarily in the relations of production. Colonial domination, Amil writes,

> exists first and foremost in the class relations particular to the colonial structures in these countries and not in a direct or active colonial presence. It is embodied in the form in which classes, particular to the colonial social structure, exist.[51]

How, then, are these specific class relations determined in Amil's analysis? The basic characteristic of the colonial social structure is "the lack of differentiation between the social classes which constitute it."[52] In traditional Marxist terms, social classes are "determined by their position in the social process of production."[53] Within capitalist relations of production, "bourgeoisie and proletariat directly confront one another; the exploitation of the proletariat makes possible the existence of capital."[54] While the capitalist class differentiation seems rather clearly determined, in the colonial relation, the main contradiction is not between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat as these classes have not been differentiated or socialized in the same way. Amil explains the lack of class differentiation in the colonial context as follows:

> "The class relations of exploitation linking the exploited classes to the ruling class (the colonial bourgeoisie) are not in their essence relations of direct exploitation actualized in the framework of production."[55]

Regarding this indirect nature of exploitation, Amil further elaborates that in the colonial mode of production, colonialism itself is "the fundamental exploitative force."[56]

6. Amil's Notion of the Colonial Bourgeoisie

The colonial bourgeoisie, Amil writes, "exists as a class merely to bring the process of colonial exploitation into effect."[57] Amil's conception of the colonial bourgeoisie resonates with Fanon's notion of the national bourgeoisie. It should be noted here that Amil explicitly rejects the term used by Fanon (national bourgeoisie) to refer to this class. Yet, their conclusions concerning this class remain relatively close to one another. Like Fanon, Amil emphasizes how the bourgeois class of colonial societies is incapable of fulfilling its historical mission as it is unable to initiate an industrial phase of development.[58] Rather, the colonial bourgeoisie is determined as a mercantile bourgeoisie by its historical formation within the colonial relation.[59] In Amil's account, the colonial bourgeoisie is a class composed of two distinct social factions: "Urban merchants and landowners who direct their agricultural production towards colonial trade."[60] The colonial bourgeoisie's economic activity is thus limited to providing capitalist industry with raw materials and selling its products.

Amil emphasizes that the existence and maintenance of the colonial relation serves the interest of the colonial bourgeoisie. Accordingly, the "overexploitation" of underdeveloped countries by capitalist-colonialist production directly passes through the hands of this class. The colonial bourgeoisie, Amil writes, "is determined as a class exclusively through its connection to capitalist production within the colonial relation."[61] As it does not constitute an independent class of its own, the colonial bourgeoisie is "the representation of another class existence,"[62] namely that of the metropolitan capitalist bourgeoisie. Thus, in Amil's analysis, there are strong parallels to the Fanonian notion of the national bourgeoisie as an "intermediary" class that inherits the "unfair advantages" of the colonial period.[63]

Furthermore, in Amil's account, there is also a link to Fanon's call for "skipping" the bourgeois phase of development in the colonial context. Fanon argues that the national bourgeoisie should be prevented from finding "the conditions necessary for its existence and its growth."[64] In line with Fanon, Amil writes that a bourgeois-capitalist revolution is impossible under colonial class relations:

> "Class struggle in the colonized country is totally different from the class struggle in a capitalist country. In a colonized, underdeveloped country, the class struggle does not hold any potential for the development of production in a capitalist form, and the development of production does not allow a capitalist form of production to emerge."[65]

Since the colonial bourgeoisie is an incapable class, Amil concludes, it must be abolished as a class in order "for production to be transformed and liberated."[66]

7. Amil's Conception of the Peasantry and the Proletariat

In the colonial class relations described by Amil, the main class confrontation is that between the colonial bourgeoisie and the peasantry. In a Fanonian sense, Amil stretches the classical Marxist account of the main contradiction of capitalist social relations, i.e. that between bourgeoisie and proletariat. Since agricultural land is the basic means of production in the colonial context, the peasantry constitutes the main force of production.[67] The peasantry thus represents the main subject of exploitation, or even "overexploitation."[68] However, Amil writes, "peasants are actually confronting colonialism through their social production when they confront the colonial bourgeoisie."[69] The proletariat, on the other hand, confronts not the colonial bourgeoisie but the petite bourgeoisie, a "productive faction of an otherwise unproductive class."[70] As Amil emphasizes, these class contradictions are not separate or independent from one another. Rather, they exist within the unity of the colonial social structure.[71]

Regarding the working class, Amil derives some noteworthy conclusions from the lack of class differentiation in the colonial relation. In colonial societies, in contrast to capitalist societies, the migration of peasants to urban centers does not lead to a radical class

transformation, i.e. a transformation of the peasant class into a proletariat. The worker, Amil writes, "is a peasant whose social transformation into a worker has failed due to the colonial nature of the social structure."[72] With respect to the working class, Amil's analysis contrasts with Fanon's notion of the urban proletariat as a "privileged" class that "constitutes the `bourgeois´ fraction of the colonized people."[73] While Fanon locates the urban proletariat as a class in proximity to the national bourgeoisie, Amil does not associate the working class with the colonial bourgeoisie. Rather, Amil argues that workers retain their former class connections or peasant background.[74]

Amil's analysis further diverges from Fanon's account of the revolutionary role of the peasantry. While for Fanon, "the peasants alone are revolutionary"[75] in colonial countries, Amil suggests a revolutionary model which is more inclusive of the colonial proletariat. Accordingly, the unification of class struggles constitutes a necessary condition for the overcoming of colonialism:

> "If the peasants' struggle in colonized countries were to remain a purely peasant struggle independent from the workers' struggle, and the workers' struggle were to remain separate from the struggle of the rest of the exploited classes, then the liberation movement itself would inevitably fail. This is because the liberation movement is a class struggle against colonialism, which is the principal class enemy of all laboring classes."[76]

The struggle for national liberation from colonialism, in Amil's account, thus constitutes a class struggle. It is "a violent transition from one particular mode of production to another."[77] Amil thus envisions a transition from the colonial mode of production to a socialist mode of production.[78] For Amil, the proletariat does not have "everything to lose"[79] from the revolutionary struggle for liberation, as Fanon concludes, but rather represents an active group in the combined anti-colonial class struggle.

8. Conclusion – Towards Multilinearity

Through a close comparative reading of Fanon and Amil, we can observe a theoretical linkage between the two authors. Amil's analysis of colonial class relations resonates with much that Fanon had suggested earlier. While Amil does not refer to Fanon in the essay analyzed in this paper, we know from his earlier essay in *Révolution Africaine* that he was well familiar with Fanon's ideas and conclusions. Amil's thought converges with Fanon's on two points in particular: Firstly, Amil's theoretical starting point is quite close to Fanon's approach of *stretching* Marxist categories of class analysis to apply them to the specificity of colonial class relations. Secondly, Amil's notion of the class that he calls the *colonial bourgeoisie* is relatively close to Fanon's *national bourgeoisie*. The convergence of their respective analyses culminates in their call for skipping the bourgeois-capitalist phase of development in the (de-)colonial context. While Amil is, to some extent, a Fanonian thinker, he nonetheless developed his own thought organically through a materialist analysis of the colonial relation (above all with regard to Algeria, Egypt and Lebanon). Particularly with respect to the colonial peasantry and the proletariat, Amil's analysis diverges significantly from Fanon's conclusions. Amil attributes a more important role to the working class in the anti-colonial struggle, while Fanon mainly focusses on the peasantry in this regard.

Both Fanon's and Amil's positions on skipping the bourgeois phase of development in the colonial context correspond with the notion of multilinear development found in Marx' later writings. In his later works, Marx moved away from Eurocentric and unilinear perspectives on the development of non-Western and pre-capitalist societies. According to the unilinear perspective, all forms of society must necessarily pass through a phase of bourgeois capitalism.[80] In the *Communist Manifesto*, there is a strong Eurocentric sense of the progressiveness of the Western bourgeoisie, contrasted with the backwardness of Asia: „The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production […] draws all, even the most

barbarian nations into civilization."[81] There is also a strong sense of unilinearity in the work:

> "[The Western bourgeoisie] compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e. to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image."[82]

The unilinear perspective on the historical development of non-Western and pre-capitalist societies is furthermore expressed in Vol. 1 of *Capital* where Marx writes that "The country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future."[83] In contrast, the works of his last decade suggest that Marx eventually departed from Eurocentric and unilinear perspectives with regard to non-Western and pre-capitalist societies.[84] Marxist and Socialist movements, both in the Western and the non-Western world, often adopted an unilinear notion of development. Embracing a two-stage theory of revolution, movements and theorists held that socialism could only be reached on the basis of the material conditions created by capitalist relations of production. Socialism in an underdeveloped or colonial country therefore could only reached after an extended phase of capitalist industrialization.[85] In contrast, both Fanon and Amil, as I have shown above, adopt a model of historical development that is rather close to the notion of multilinear development, where socialism in the post-colonial context can be built without passing through a phase of bourgeois development.

Endnotes

1 In this paper, I will use the English translation, see: Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin Classics, 2001).
2 In this paper, I will refer to the English translation of the essay, see: *Arab Marxism and National Liberation. Selected Writings of Mahdi Amel*, ed. Hicham Safieddine (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2020).
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4 Sara Salem, "Stretching Marxism in the Postcolonial World. Egyptian Decolonisation and the Contradictions of National Sovereignty," *Historical Materialism* 27, no. 4 (2019): 6.
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6 Amel, *Arab Marxism*, 15.
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8 Amel, *Arab Marxism*, 17-18.
9 Amel, *Arab Marxism*, 21.
10 Fanon, *Wretched*, 143.
11 Fanon, *Wretched*, 127.
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13 Fanon, *Wretched*, 120.
14 Fanon, *Wretched*, 122.
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16 Fanon, *Wretched*, 122.
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20 Fanon, *Wretched*, 140.
21 Fanon, *Wretched*, 140.
22 See Marcel van der Linden, "Workers and Revolutions. A Historical Paradox," in *Worlds of Labour Turned Upside Down*, ed. Pepijn Brandon et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2021).
23 Fanon, *Wretched*, 47.
24 Fanon, *Wretched*, 86.
25 Fanon, *Wretched*, 47.
26 Fanon, *Wretched*, 98.
27 Fanon, *Wretched*, 47.
28 Fanon, *Wretched*, 86.

[29] Fanon, *Wretched*, 88.
[30] Fanon, *Wretched*, 88.
[31] Fanon, *Wretched*, 103.
[32] Fanon, *Wretched*, 103.
[33] Leo Zeilig, *Frantz Fanon. The Militant Philosopher of Third World Revolution* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2016), 207-208.
[34] Jack Woddis, *New Theories of Revolution* (New York: International Publishers, 1972), 114-115.
[35] Fanon, *Wretched*, 86.
[36] Woddis, *New Theories*, 108.
[37] Woddis, *New Theories*, 115.
[38] Zeilig, *Frantz Fanon*, 202.
[39] Zeilig, *Frantz Fanon*, 188.
[40] Peter Hudis, *Frantz Fanon. Philosopher of the Barricades* (London: Pluto Press, 2015), 124.
[41] Fanon, *Wretched*, 86.
[42] Hudis, *Frantz Fanon*, 125.
[43] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The Communist Manifesto," in *Marx and Engels Collected Works* Vol. 6 (New York: International Publishers, 1976), 495.
[44] Amel, *Arab Marxism*, 21.
[45] Amel, *Arab Marxism*, 32.
[46] Amel, *Arab Marxism*, 65.
[47] Amel, *Arab Marxism*, 30.
[48] Fanon, *Wretched*, 81.
[49] Amel, *Arab Marxism*, 57.
[50] Amel, *Arab Marxism*, 59.
[51] Amel, *Arab Marxism*, 66.
[52] Amel, *Arab Marxism*, 67.
[53] Michael Heinrich, *An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2012), 192.
[54] Heinrich, *Introduction*, 193.
[55] Amel, *Arab Marxism*, 72.
[56] Amel, *Arab Marxism*, 70.
[57] Amel, *Arab Marxism*, 72.
[58] Amel, *Arab Marxism*, 39.
[59] Amel, *Arab Marxism*, 67.
[60] Amel, *Arab Marxism*, 40.
[61] Amel, *Arab Marxism*, 31.
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[63] Fanon, *Wretched*, 122.
[64] Fanon, *Wretched*, 140.
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[67] Amel, *Arab Marxism*, 70.
[68] Amel, *Arab Marxism*, 70.
[69] Amel, *Arab Marxism*, 70.
[70] Amel, *Arab Marxism*, 71.
[71] Amel, *Arab Marxism*, 71.
[72] Amel, *Arab Marxism*, 73.
[73] Fanon, *Wretched*, 86.
[74] Amel, *Arab Marxism*, 73.
[75] Fanon, *Wretched*, 47.
[76] Amel, *Arab Marxism*, 49.
[77] Amel, *Arab Marxism*, 51.
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[79] Fanon, *Wretched*, 86.
[80] Kevin B. Anderson, „Marx's Late Writings on Non-Western and Precapitalist Societies and Gender," in *Rethinking Marxism*, vol. 14 (2002): 85.
[81] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The Communist Manifesto," in *Marx and Engels Collected Works* Vol. 6 (New York: International Publishers, 1976), 488.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Karl Marx, *Capital* ,Vol. 1, London Pelican (1976): 91.
[84] Anderson, „Marx's Late Writings".
[85] Peter Hudis, „Beyond Unilinear Evolutionism. Rethinking Marx's Relevance for the Non-Western World," in *Theory and Practice. Reflections on the Colonization of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2020): 31

The Portable Fanon

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In the first chapter of his final work, *Les damnés de la terre* or *The Wretched of the Earth,* Frantz Fanon writes "*le monde colonial est un monde compartimenté*" – "the colonial world is a compartmentalized world."[1] This sentence, repeated with slight variation in the paragraphs that follow, can appear as simple description. Yet as with so much of Fanon's writing, his claim is at once diagnostic and a guide for action. It offers a way of understanding colonialism itself, as a matter of geography, ideas, and material practice, that works to divide up the world, to separate it into different spheres. Throughout, Fanon's work is engaged with questions of materialism, both in the Marxist sense of historical materialism and in the more immediate and literal sense, in his attention to everyday material practices. Fanon's description points to something powerful, and seemingly profoundly intractable – and yet therefore something anticolonialism must apprehend, and work through, in order to ultimately overcome.

Fanon's explicit emphasis on geography and location, on a world divided up into compartments, already hints at the significance of how we locate him, and his work.[2] His thought is not simply portable, but engaged with the question of portability. Fanon's writing and life was part and product of the colonial world he described, even as it also, itself, defied compartmentalization. Fanon's own travel and movements were both a reflection of the colonial order, and ran contrary to it. His moves from Martinique to France and from France to Algeria were products initially of his decision to join the French military in World War II, and its patterns of military recruitment, and later of the French colonial system of education and medical training. His later transit, out of Algeria and ultimately through Accra, Cairo, Tunis, and beyond, were a reflection of transnational networks of anticolonial political actors, enabled in a straightforward material sense by the new availability of commercial air travel, and more generally by the new alliances and affiliations among revolutionary movements in the 1950s and early 1960s. As Adam Shatz emphasizes in his recent biography, their more specific geography was also a reflection of the internal politics of the Algerian resistance movement of which he was part, and where he was thought to be most useful – both diplomatically, and at times in distancing him from what others thought to be the center of the action.[3] Indeed, he was often far from what he himself had described as the source of revolutionary inspiration, the rural sites of revolutionary spontaneity he described in *Wretched*. His death in Bethesda, Maryland, and the return of his body to Algeria, facilitated by the US Central Intelligence Agency, offers a final testament to the significance attached to his body's material location.

As much as Fanon travelled, his books and ideas travelled even farther. *Wretched* in particular is written as something of a handbook for the anticolonial revolutionary movements of its moment. The national revolutionary organizations to which it was addressed were deeply interconnected, and those networks provided the material infrastructure to circulate ideas and texts. That infrastructure involved publishers and newsletters, actors moving through nodal cities like Tunis, Accra, and Dar es Saleem, and regular meetings in the form of contentious, heady conferences. This rich networking itself was a self-consciously political project, directly defiant of the very compartmentalization Fanon described. Those conference spaces explicitly debated and renegotiated the nature of these alliances – non-aligned, Third Worldist, pan-African, Afro-Asian, etc. Fanon's work should be understood as both commenting on and participating in this self-conscious negotiation over coalition building and the bases of international solidarity. His work takes his native Martinique and adopts Algeria as immediate context, while also drawing references from liberation struggles against

French and British rule more widely, and raising questions about those struggles' interconnections as well as their comparability to Black American struggles in the United States.

Fanon's work raises further questions of compartmentalization. It is written in multiple genres and addressed to different and disparate audiences. He wrote historical analysis, political theory, activist tracts, narrative prose, and clinical notes. The very chapter organization of *Wretched* reflects this fragmentation. His work offers serious contributions to distinct and often separate fields. His work engages with multiple traditions and debates, and has been read retroactively into even more: Marxism and its legacies, psychology, psychoanalysis, existentialism, anticolonialism, and postcolonial thought. It intervenes in critical questions of his moment, not just with new answers but with new modes of analysis, which yield new diagnoses and prognoses in turn.

Fanon's claim about compartmentalization and colonialism comes as part of an explicit discussion of the portability of Marxism, and of what it means to move this particular system of analysis into a different place from where it was initially conceived. Notably, his answer is not about the impossibility of portability, but instead about the importance of considering how questions appear differently in different places. This is not just because the details change, but the very structure. He writes: "Looking at the immediacies of the colonial context, it is clear that what divides this world is first and foremost what species, what race one belongs to. In the colonies the economic infrastructure is also a superstructure. The cause is effect: You are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich. This is why a Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched when it comes to addressing the colonial issue."[4] The suggestion of a slight stretching of the analysis is an understatement: his claim is that, in a colonial context, the relationships of causality are different. This confounds any orthodox view of race as somehow simply epiphenomenal to material interests; it also defies, he continues, any analysis of colonialism as simply an earlier stage of capitalism. Under colonialism, ideology itself, he suggests, works differently.

In *Wretched* especially, Fanon engages the question of how to understand the intersection of colonialism and capitalism as a problem of race, economic development, and revolutionary strategy. The book addresses longstanding intellectual debates in Marxism, as well as questions facing a transnational audience that, in 1961, was looking to the Algerian Revolution as a touchstone for anticolonial movements elsewhere. Resisting colonialism, Fanon argues, requires thinking across multiple registers. As he expounds over the course of the book, this has implications for how one might apply Marxist class analysis, changing how one thinks about the lumpenproletariat, the native intellectual, the party leadership, and the possibility of revolutionary agency. In a sense, these are questions, channeling Marx's closing formulation in the Communist Manifesto, about who has what to lose and what to gain.[5] For Fanon, this is not just a material question; the material is inseparable from the psychological. Colonialism works across multiple registers, and any viable analysis of colonialism must do the same. In a colonial world, systems of exploitation and of investment are both material and psychological; liberation, in turn, must also be both.

Crucially, this aspect of colonialism – what I have been glossing as the inseparability of the material and the psychological – is why, for Fanon, any orthodox division of base and superstructure is impossible in a colonial context. Race is not mere ideological superstructure, but has causal power as well. At the same time, it is not a part of the "base" – part of why he is so critical of any evidence of racial essentialism among authors associated with the Negritude movement.[6] Race is not natural, but historically produced by colonialism's parcelling out of the world. This is where his debts to existentialism come in as well, and in particular his insistence, most explicit in *Black Skin, White Masks*, on theorizing race as part of "l'expérience vécue" or "lived experience" – a phrase he does not exactly coin (in either the French or the English), but the contemporary popularity of which is in part indebted to him.

Fanon's understanding of race and its implications for his politics is itself among the more divisive issues in his contemporary reception, and raises questions itself about

how we might read different parts of his work together. Is there a divide between the parts of his work that are at times branded as pessimist, and those that are more insistent, even prophetic, about the possibility not just of change but of radically new beginnings? Is there a divide between the Fanon of *Black Skin, White Masks* and the Fanon of *Wretched of the Earth* – written so far apart, temporally and geographically? Is, say, the man narrating through his own tears at the end of the famous fifth chapter of *Black Skin* the same as the author invoking the need to "set afoot a new man" and begin a new history of humanity in the conclusion of *Wretched*? Reading these together requires we reconcile a certain pessimism about one's current condition with a determined hopefulness for change. After all, Fanon's hope for the future isn't without its attention the 'pitfalls' and difficulties of overcoming the legacies of past injustice. *Wretched* is as much concerned with the process of achieving true independence, or true decolonization, after the end of foreign rule as it is with the initial process of revolutionary rupture – and both are presented as profoundly difficult. His assessment of the present, and the prospects for change, are clear-eyed, but also doggedly determined. He does not suggest that victory is inevitable, or even likely. Instead, the difficulty of achieving change, it's very improbability, is part of what makes it so urgent.

Fanon's politics begin not from an ideal vision of justice, but from a clear sense of the crises of the present, their deep historical causes, and the pitfalls in any path forward. The demand for a new history is a demand based on necessity more than on anything we might call optimism. This is where his particular combination of diagnostics and dialectics has the most analytic pay off. *Wretched*'s enumeration of the stages through which certain groups must pass is not a tragic pronouncement of a necessary fate, but a diagnosis that describes the mechanisms of change – not as linear or intentional, or even strictly stadial, but as a process of repeated transformation. His treatment of violence, I would argue, is not strictly redemptive or laudatory, but diagnostic, treating it both as symptom and as, at least potentially, part of a process of change, capable of transforming material as well as psychic conditions.

The essays in this collection speak to the persistence of the problems he diagnosed, as well as the usefulness of the diagnoses. They suggest his analysis is portable, but also requires some stretching; that the forces that parcel out the world are not binary, but multifaceted and dynamic. Some of the essays speak, as well, to the way he himself may have been vulnerable to the forces of fragmentation that he depicted. If Fanon is currently in vogue, it is perhaps neither for his optimism nor his pessimism, but for the diagnostic power of his work, and the importance, as a matter of both politics and psychology, of properly apprehending one's situation for any process of working through. Fanon was attentive to the persistence of the problems he described: the reach of colonialism into different places and realms, the power of material and psychic investments, the multiple ways in which the future can be overdetermined. He was attentive to how those seeking change may reproduce the very patterns they seek to alter, to the challenges they would face, to how apparent change might just be one stage in a broader process. And he was insistent about the urgency of continuing to try anyway.

Endnotes

1 Frantz Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte & Syros, 2002), 41. Originally published by Librairie François Maspero in 1961. English translation quoted from Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox, (New York: Grove Press, 2007), 28. Alternately translated by Constance Farringdon as "The colonial world is a world divided into compartments," in Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farringdon (London: Penguin Classics, 2001), 29.

2 On the importance of reading Fanon in context, see Muriam Haleh Davis, "The US Academy and the Provincialization of Fanon," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, November 9, 2002, https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-us-academy-and-the-provincialization-of-fanon/

3 Adam Shatz, *The Rebel's Clinic* (London: Apollo, 2024).

4 Philcox translation, 29. In the original : "Quand on aperçoit dans son immédiateté le contexte colonial, il est patent que ce qui morcelle le monde c'est d'abord le fait d'appartenir ou non à telle espèce, à telle race. Aux colonies, l'infrastructure économique est également une superstructure.

La cause est conséquence: on est riche parce que blanc, on est blanc parce que riche. C'est pourquoi les analyses marxistes doivent être toujours légèrement distendues chaque fois qu'on aborde le problème colonial" (Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre*, 43). Alternately translated by Farringdon as: "When you examine at close quarters the colonial context, it is evident that what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race, a given species. In the colonies the economic substructure is also a superstructure. The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich. This is why the Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem" (30-31).

[5] See, for example, Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre*, 108.

[6] Fanon's most explicit engagement with Negritude is contained in Chapters 1 and 5 of *Black Skin, White Masks*, and in the chapter "On National Culture" of *The Wretched of the Earth*.

Fanon and Abandonment

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Frantz Fanon was survived by two children when he died at age 36, a daughter named Mireille and a son named Oliver. Mireille had no real relationship with her father in his lifetime. Fanon had left her mother soon after she became pregnant. He married another French woman, Josie Dublé, who birthed his only son, and together the Fanons adopted a homeland in Algeria. Oliver was a young child when he lost his father to leukemia, part of a whole generation whose parents were martyred by the Algerian Revolution. I highlight Fanon's relationships with women and his children because they raise an issue that I see as also central to his thought: abandonment.

Those who tell the story of Fanon's "impossible life," as Albert Memmi famously put it, from David Macey to Adam Shatz, have left this essential piece of it largely undiscussed.[1] But we can see it everywhere, if we look. In his clandestine escape from Martinique to join the French resistance against the Nazis. In his break with the negritude movement that shaped him. In his decision to leave France for Algeria and, then, to resign from his position at Blida-Joinville and assist FLN from outside the country, in Tunisia (by some accounts, he had plans to go to South Africa, and join the revolutionary struggle against apartheid). Even as disease was consuming his body, Fanon remained *on the move*, a restless militant seemingly incapable of staying still.

With more than two-thirds of his casework now available in the recently published volume, *Alienation and Freedom*, which also includes transcripts from his Tunis lectures, scholars are rediscovering Fanon's clinic and relating to it in new ways. The historical significance of his clinical project is coming into clearer focus, too. In her recent book, *Disalienation*, the historian Camille Robcis shows how the methods of institutional psychotherapy, pioneered by François Tosquelles at Saint-Alban, shaped the development of radical psychiatry in postwar France, including Fanon's practice at Blida and beyond.[2] Institutional psychotherapy challenged mainstream psychiatry by focusing on the social conditions of mental disorders and mental health, including on the built architecture and environment of the clinic. By forcing institutional psychotherapy out of the metropole and into the colony, Fanon further radicalized its methods and put them in the service of a larger political struggle. Sleep disorders were commonplace in the colony. Fanon believed this symptomology could tell us something about the structure of colonial society and the challenges of postcolonial history.

Drawing from this casework and other newly published materials, Nica Siegel has argued for a "politics of exhaustion" that links Fanon's clinical work to his philosophy and his politics.[3] As a clinician, Fanon identified persistent sleep disorders among his patients and sought various treatments to address it. As a political thinker and revolutionary, Fanon tested an exhaustive and exhausted dialectic of history, proposing armed struggle to wake the world from its slumber. In a historic lecture course he gave at the Institute des Hautes Ètudes in Tunisia in 1959-1960, the problem of exhaustion appears as part of a larger social history and structure. "In a divided society," he notes, "a behavior can be quickly observed characterized by a predominant nervous tension leading quickly to exhaustion."[4] Here and elsewhere, Fanon points to the relationship between a social order and the disorders it generates. These disorders are of the mind and body. They are both individual and collective. Politics, too, can be characterized by a predominant nervous tension leading quickly to exhaustion.

The problem of exhaustion is only one aspect of Fanon's restlessness, however. Abandonment is another. The

problem of abandonment leads us, not necessarily to Fanon's clinical case notes (though we find orphans and deserters there, too) but to his first major work, *Black Skin/White Masks*, the psychoanalytic argument of the book, and the vexing treatment of Jean Veneuse (alias René Maran) in the third chapter, on the black man and the white woman. Fanon considers Maran a classic case of "abandonment neurosis" – a diagnosis he draws from Germaine Guex's book, *La névrose d'abandon (The Abandonment Neurosis)*, published just two years prior.[5] Many scholars have noted Guex's influence on the argument of *Black Skin/White Masks*, but without giving her work much consideration in its own right, or in terms of the lessons that Fanon took from it.

Perhaps this is understandable. *The Abandonment Neurosis* remains a relatively obscure work and Guex, despite international acclaim in her own day as a researcher and clinician, is now a mostly forgotten figure in the history of psychoanalysis. Laplanche and Pontalis make passing reference to her in *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, but it is Fanon's discussion in *Black Skin/White Masks* that remains the most extensive engagement with Guex's work in the French psychoanalytic tradition.[6] Guex herself was born in France and wrote in French, but spent most of her life and career in Switzerland, far removed from Fanon's intellectual milieu. She served as an assistant to Jean Piaget in Geneva, then as a family clinician and child therapist in Malévoz, finally as a research psychoanalyst in Lausanne, where she met her partner, Charles Odier. Like Odier, she aimed to integrate Freudian psychoanalysis and Piaget's psychogenetics. For her, that meant an emphasis on the ego and its primary role in personality development.

The Abandonment Neurosis is supremely important for discerning the general project in *Black Skin/White Masks*, and not only the reading of Jean Veneuse, who Fanon says "is not representative of the black-white experience," but a single case study in alienation.[7] Veneuse is not representative of a "race relation" – a formulation that disguises the real powers at play – but an example of an abandonment that can be observed everywhere in the colony. The black children who cannot see themselves in their storybooks. The young Martinican women who vie for the attention of white men. The Antillean man who, upon arrival in Paris, seeks out sex with a white woman. This same Antillean, who cannot recognize the African as his brother. And then, of course, there is Fanon, the writer, who has long given up shouting, who writes a book nobody has asked for, least of all those who need it most. These are different figures of abandonment, none of them representative, but together they point to a psychic and social structure in the colony.

Images of abandonment also appear in his political writings on the war in Algeria, but now infused with the promise of independence and the possibility of rebirth. The lumpen-proletariat cut off from family and clan, more spontaneously revolutionary as a result. The soldier plotting his desertion from the French army. The veiled Algerian woman who moves between worlds to forge a new path for herself. The damned of the Earth, abandoned by God and Man, but poised be human, finally. And, again, there is Fanon, who submits his letter of resignation from his post at Blida, for which he is then literally banished from Algeria and declared an enemy of France. Might we say that revolution becomes Fanon's answer to abandonment, its transformation into freedom? From this perspective, abandonment is where phenomenology and psychoanalysis come together in Fanon's thinking, but also the point at which he breaks with both, in pursuit of a political project that neither prioritizes.

Abandonment has become an important term in contemporary critical theory and social science. The anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli describes neoliberalism in terms of an "political economy of abandonment" that is integral to the process of capitalist accumulation.[8] This political economy creates zones of power constituted by both extensive surveillance and extreme neglect, where a growing share of the global population are left to navigate life and death on their own. The geographer Ruth Gilmore, writing on the prison industrial complex and the carceral state, describes an "anti-statist state" that amasses power through the "organized abandonment" of entire

communities.[9] Povinelli and Gilmore are poststructuralist and marxist, respectively, but they share a sense that the "lived experience" of neoliberal government and the carceral state is profound feeling of abandonment. In political discourse from Left to Right, we speak of those "left behind" by neoliberal capitalism, abandoned by a vanishing welfare state or a coastal elite that doesn't care if they live or die. From the perspective of ontology, rather than phenomenology, the political philosopher Giorgio Agamben has argued that abandonment is the condition of modern politics, which has as its true subject not the rights-bearing individual, but "homo sacer" – bare life that can be killed without that killing being murder.[10] Homo sacer – literally, "sacred man" – is figured by law as being outside or beyond the law. For Agamben, the figure of homo sacer illustrates that sovereign power is inaugurated in the ban, and that abandonment comes before the law and anchors it in violence. In Agamben's ontology, we can hear the echoes of an older Sartrean existentialism: "To be a Jew is to be thrown into – to *be abandoned to* – the situation of a Jew."[11]

The paradigm missing from these wide-ranging reflections on abandonment is the one Fanon took as the starting point for understanding colonialism: psychoanalysis. The absence of a psychoanalytic perspective may also help to explain why the family, which I would suggest is always at stake in the concept and the experience of abandonment, is curiously absent from contemporary scholarship on abandonment. Can we consider the problem of "organized abandonment" without reflection on how we provision care and how the family has been historically redefined by the work of care? Can we talk about the politics of abandonment without also talking about the politics of the family – neoliberalism's dependence upon the family as the site of social provision and wealth accumulation, the role of the family in the theory and practice of colonization and carceral power, or the significance of the family in birthing both *bios* and *zoê*? And once we bring the family back in, must we turn back to psychoanalysis, for some account of what abandonment might mean for the political subject and how the symptoms of abandonment may manifest in politics? These are the questions I pose in turning to Germaine Guex and *The Abandonment Neurosis*, by way of Fanon. Guex was the rare psychoanalyst to put abandonment at the center of her clinical and theoretical work. Fanon is the rare clinician to see in abandonment the birth of a new political subject.

This line of inquiry would have been, in many ways, anathema to Guex. She did not discuss politics, or the social conditions of abandonment. She aimed primarily at the development of a psychoanalytic theory of the ego. The abandonment neurosis, according to Guex, is a "conflict and disturbance of the ego" in which the id plays a relatively minor part and "the superego, as Freud describes it, does not exist, because the individual never reached the developmental stage necessary for its formation."[12] In other words, she accepts the Freudian idea of the unconscious, as well as the developmental theory of personality in Piaget, but believes that both psychoanalysis and psychogenetics have said too little about how the trauma of abandonment impacts the ego. Abandonment can be real or imagined, total or partial, but in most cases, Guex argues, the ego is unable to progress to the next "stage" in its development.

I cannot rehearse the whole of Guex's study here, but do want to pull at some of the threads that help us to see Fanon's project more clearly. The most important is that she takes issue with the "excessive extension" of the oedipal framework, which left a whole range of disorders undiagnosed and untreated by psychoanalysis.[13] Part of what Fanon discovers in Guex is the same thing others have found in object-relations theory: an account of psychic life before and beyond the oedipal conflict, a framework he believed improperly imposed on the colonial situation. Guex analyzes abandonment as a pre-oedipal neurosis, meaning that it centers on the felt absence of the mother, prior to the internalization of the father. "Mother" and "father" here are symbolic and structural positions. Either parent can fill them. What is key is that the ego emerges and develops through a secure "maternal" attachment.

While this ego psychology sounds vaguely reminiscent of the work of Melanie Klein, who also theorized an

ambivalent attachment to the mother in the development of the personality, Guex explicitly distinguishes her position from the Kleinian approach. She argues that analysts like Klein and Hans Behn-Eschenberg "oedipalize" early childhood in a way that misunderstands the dynamics of attachment and abandonment, and the drives more generally. Failing to observe the oedipal onset in their patients, Klein and others push this transition back into an earlier period in life, rather than consider the possibility that oedipalization does not occur in all cases, and occurs at a fairly late stage in personality development, in any case. The problem with Klein, according to Guex, is that castration anxiety gets projected back onto a pre-genital infancy. Attachment becomes infused and confused with genital sexuality. This may explain why the mother's breast assumes outsized importance in Kleinian psychoanalysis.

Recalling that Oedipus was himself an orphan, it is perhaps surprising that classical psychoanalysis has not had more to say about the trauma of abandonment. The complex named in his honor may have more to do with the trauma of (maternal) abandonment than the presaged threat of (paternal) castration. But Guex sets the oedipal complex aside, on the authority of Freud himself, for whom "the oedipal onset marks a change of the instinctual direction in the child...and not simply a change of objects."[14] The oedipal transition is not simply a shift from the mother to the father as an object-choice. It is a transformation in the drives themselves, whatever their object. The abandonic (Guex's term) can change the object of attachment, but never changes the nature of that attachment. The father can stand in for the mother, but the "instinctual purpose" of the child's attachment remains the same: "the child of this age who fixes upon the father in search of support, consolation, and tenderness does so because these qualities, for one reason for another, are lacking in the mother."[15] In this case, the child is not trying to seduce or rival the father, but is aiming to satisfy a more basic need for security, symbolized by the mother. If the unconscious and its sexual prohibitions is born by the Law of the Father, the ego and its affective disposition is formed by the Law of the Mother.

Development is a key term for Geux. She criticizes Otto Fenichel's theory of neurosis for failing to differentiate among the ego's stages of development – security, self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-worth – and the shifting needs and drives that define them.[16] The problem was not simply that psychoanalysis had passed over the ego and its disturbances *en route* to the unconscious, but that it had generally failed to see that the ego is the more or less secure scaffolding for the unconscious, as well as the external shape of the personality. The ego that cannot develop securely will disassociate instead. Abandonment neurosis is a *dissociative disorder*, in which the ego collapses under the weight of its profound feeling of insecurity. Guex is not interested in social questions, but she is dealing with she believes is a deeply antisocial neurosis. And she is observing symptoms in a growing share of her patients.

Given her turn away from the unconscious, the risk is that Guex's ego psychology lapses into a phenomenology of affects, precisely what Freud hoped psychoanalysis could avoid and overcome. Without wishing to relitigate the status of the unconscious as a scientific concept, or the difficulties with interpreting psychoanalysis as a theory of child development, I believe Guex's theory of abandonment neurosis gives us a broader perspective on Fanon's psychoanalytic project. Guex did not discuss racism or colonialism, and *The Abandonment Neurosis* barely touches on social conditions or relations, and Fanon himself says precious little about child development or ego psychology. Nonetheless, Guex is arguably the psychologist who contributes most to his sociodiagnosis of racism in the colony. Fanon, too, criticizes the overreliance on the oedipal framework in analyzing on colonial relationship. He, too, deals with traumas that are not buried in the unconscious, but epidermalized on the surface of social relations.

David Marriott, who has gone furthest in recent years in reconstructing the psychoanalytic argument in *Black Skin/White Masks*, in the service of a psychoanalytically-oriented afro-pessimism, makes only passing references to Guex and *The Abandonment Neurosis*.[17] He reads Fanon

through Lacan and Lacanian themes, but even Dominique-Octave Mannoni's *Prospero and Caliban*, eviscerated by Fanon, receives more extensive consideration than the analyst Fanon took as his one of his few trusted sources. My own view is that Guex's theory of abandonment is essential to the psychoanalytic Fanon, but it may also be invaluable to a psychoanalytically-inflected afro-pessimism. On her patients' attitudes toward death, for example, Guex notes: "death is not feared as a fact, but as a symbol of lived experience."[18] She describes the preoccupation with death, the dissolution of the boundary between life and death, and the dreams of dying that interrupt a patient's waking life. That "zone of non-being" that Fanon describes, where Marriott and others discover a philosophy and poetics of blackness, appears from this perspective as the desert of abandonment.[19] Psychoanalysis and existentialism converge here, too, for it Sartre and Heidegger (more than Freud or Lacan) who treat abandonment as a *philosophical* problem, as the condition of human freedom or as the retreat from being.[20] This existentialist tradition was also important to Fanon, revised and radicalized to address the colonial situation. Marriott's virtuosic reading thus tends to force Fanon back into the psychoanalytic straitjacket that Germaine Guex, and others, had helped him to escape.

Fanon has been read, by Stuart Hall and others, in terms of a conventionally masculinist story, borrowed from psychoanalysis, of the (colonial) father and the (colonized) son. This is undeniably present in his work, but more often Fanon criticizes this view as reductionist and racist. The more challenging argument in *Black Skin/White Masks* centers on a story about mothers and their place in the psychic and social reproduction of the colonial order. Fanon suggests that it is the Law of the Mother that reproduces "race" in the colony, even if it is the Law of the Father that gives racism its violent supremacy. Fanon cannot do justice to this first Law, limited by his androcentricism, confessing that he knows nothing about black women, and knows white women only in their erotic aggression toward black men. But mothers are an essential piece of the psychoanalytic puzzle of *Black Skin/White Masks*. This is true for black child in the black family, but equally true for social relations between blacks and whites, mediated by mothers on both sides of the racial divide. The real risk in Fanon is not a misogyny that ignores women, but one that confuses their role in social reproduction with their responsibility for a racial order that they do not create and cannot change, but are nonetheless tasked to uphold.

Françoise Vergès has argued that Fanon found a model of manhood in the Algerian struggle, potent enough to dethrone the European father and assume his place in a new world.[21] Vergès notes a certain disavowal that comes with Fanonian independence, a refusal to be bound to the feminine world of métissage and creolization. More generously, this refusal may be taken as a practice of social non-reproduction, what Chantal Jaquet has identified with the *transclass*, the class that moves across borders and boundaries, the class of transition and transformation, the class that appears in the absence of revolution.[22] I would suggest that another image of freedom appears in Fanon's reflections on the Algerian revolution, which lies not in flight or fugitivity from the family, but in the rediscovery of its relations. Juliet Mitchell has argued for the significance of what she terms "the sibling trauma" in the making of a social order.[23] This trauma, for Mitchell, establishes the "horizontal axis" that links brothers and sisters into a collective that precedes them both. If mothers are a critical piece of the psychoanalytic puzzle in *Black Skin/White Masks*, then what he discovers in Algeria is not manhood alone, but the brothers and sisters of revolution. Where he errs is in failing to consider the "sibling trauma" that structures the relationship between brothers and sisters. He does not ask whether sisters can find real freedom in a familial and social structure that requires their willing subordination and endless self-sacrifice. A feminist and a psychoanalytic reading of Fanon today might well start, not with fathers and sons, or even mothers and daughters, but the broken sibling bond that is the legacy of the family and its disorders.

Endnotes

[1] Albert Memmi, "The Impossible Life of Frantz Fanon," *The Massachusetts Review*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1973): pp. 9–39; David Macey, Frantz Fanon: A Biography (New York: Verso, 2012); Adam Shatz, "Where Life is Seized," *London Review of Books*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (2017). Shatz's book-length biography of Fanon, *The Rebel's Clinic: The Revolutionary Lives of Frantz Fanon*, is forthcoming with Verso Press.

[2] Camille Robcis, *Disalienation: Politics, Philosophy, and Radical Psychiatry in Postwar France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021).

[3] Nica Siegel, "Fanon's Clinic: Revolutionary Therapeutics and the Politics of Exhaustion," *Polity*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (2023).

[4] Fanon Frantz, *Alienation and Freedom*, ed. Jean Khalfa & Robert Young, trans. Steve Corcoran (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), p. 525

[5] Germain Guex, *The Abandonment Neurosis*, trans, Peter D. Douglas (London: Karnac Books, 2015)

[6] Jean Laplanche & Jean-Bertrand. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Norton, 1973).

[7] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin/White Masks* trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008), p. 61.

[8] Elizabeth Povinelli, *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011). The theme of exhaustion is also key for Povinelli's account of late liberalism.

[9] Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Abolition Geography: Essays Toward Liberation* (New York: Verso, 2022).

[10] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1998).

[11] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew: An Exploration of the Etiology of Hate*, trans. George J. Becker (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), p. 89 [italics in the original].

[12] *The Abandonment Neurosis*, p. xxiii

[13] *The Abandonment Neurosis*, p. 57.

[14] *The Abandonment Neurosis*, p. 57.

[15] *The Abandonment Neurosis*, p. 58.

[16] See *The Abandonment Neurosis*, pp. 75-76.

[17] David Marriott, *Whither Fanon?: Studies in the Blackness of Being* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2018).

[18] *The Abandonment Neurosis*, p. 35.

[19] *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. xii.

[20] For his most extensive reflections on abandonment, see Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, trans. Carol Macomber (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 27-34, 49-50. Heidegger has an entirely different view of abandonment, which he describes not as the condition of human freedom, but the concealment of Being by being. See Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

[21] Françoise Vergès, "Creole Skin, Black Mask: Fanon and Disavowal," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Spring 1997): pp. 578-595. For a sensitive appraisal of Fanon's reflections on women in the Algerian struggle in light of the direct testimony of women combatants, see Aaronette M. White, "All the Men Are Fighting for Freedom, All the Women Are Mourning Their Men, but Some of Us Carried Guns: A Raced-Gendered Analysis of Fanon's Psychological Perspectives on War," *Signs*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Summer 2007)

[22] Chantal Jacquet, *Transclasses: A Theory of Social Non-reproduction* (New York: Verso, 2023).

[23] Juliet Mitchell, *Fratriarchy: The Sibling Trauma and the Law of the Mother* (London: Routledge, 2023).

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