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A Geography Animated with Intentions: Reclaiming Indigenous Vitality through Land-Based Decolonial Struggles in Frantz Fanon's Algeria Writings

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In the wake of resurgent engagement with Frantz Fanon's oeuvre through the recent publication of Jean Khalfa and Robert J. C. Young's collection of his previously unpublished writings titled *Alienation and Freedom* (2018), we must acknowledge the relevance of Fanon's political and psychiatric writings to our neocolonial present. Since their publication, *Black Skin, White Masks*[1] as well as *Wretched of the Earth*[2] have received much critical and scholarly attention, with the latter having become a touchstone text for revolutionary movements such as the Black Panther Party, among others. However, despite these radical engagements Fanon's work has been unevenly canonized with certain parts of the aforementioned texts gaining great traction and other works such as *A Dying Colonialism*[3] and *Toward the African Revolution*[4] remaining relatively obscure. One of the results of this unevenness is that we stand to lose the nuances that emerge only from proleptic readings of these earlier texts. This paper argues that Fanon's observation of the Manichean divide between colonizer/colonized as that between life/death or mobility/immobility must be understood specifically as a critique of settler colonialism through a reading of *Wretched of the Earth*, *Toward the African Revolution*, and *A Dying Colonialism*. In particular, it meditates on Fanon's argument around geology, geography, and infrastructure in colonial and revolutionary Algeria to demonstrate that self-determined land-based sovereignty is fundamental to Fanon's vision of radical decolonization. In order to fully mobilize Fanon's thought in our neocolonial present, one in which structural adjustment, economic liberalization, and corporate-

[1]Editor's Note *(hereafter referred to as Ed. N.)*: Originally published in French as *Peau noire, masques blancs* in 1952.
[2]Ed. N.: Originally published in French as *Les Damnées de la Terre* in 1961.
[3]Ed. N.: Originally published in French as *L'An V de la révolution algérienne* in 1959.
[4]Ed. N.: Originally published in French as *Pour la révolution africaine: Écrits politiques* in 1969.

led land grabs are displacing millions from their indigenous lands all over the Global South, we must pay heed to his observation that a decolonial discourse of national development emerges out of the anticolonial revolution and enables the re-establishment of relationality between the land and the native population of Algeria.

In order to be successful, contemporary anticolonial efforts must pay attention to the uneven geographies of neocolonialism and capitalist imperialism which Fanon signals in his Algeria writings. Our efforts at decolonization must be informed by a critical understanding of the geopolitics of global capitalism. Global capitalist expansion is informed by the drive to possess land and resources by undermining indigenous peoples' sovereignty, survival, and humanity. While on the one hand global capitalism has enabled voluntary mobility of the middle and upper classes across the Global South, it has also forced a far larger percentage of the earth's population into poverty and non-voluntary refugee migration. We must, therefore, frame the emergent discourse on cosmopolitanism and world citizenship within a recognition of the large disparity between voluntary and forced migration. Additionally, in the wake of the 20th century, which saw a wave of anticolonial nationalist revolutions give way to young independent nation-states across the Global South, much critique is laid upon nationalism in view of the failure of the nation-state model to fully secure economic or political sovereignty in many post-independence nations.[5]

These intellectual and economic preoccupations (in)form the selective applications of Fanon's revolutionary thoughts such that his globalisms are elevated at the expense of his geographically- and nationally-specific analyses are obscured. Gautam Premnath, in his piece "Remembering Fanon, Decolonizing Diaspora," powerfully critiques

[5]In the field of postcolonial studies, some foundational critiques of nationalism and anticolonial national discourse include Homi Bhabha's *Nation and Narration* (1990) and Gayatri Spivak's *Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999). Homi Bhabha critiques nationalist discourse for maintaining the authoritarian tendencies characteristic of the project of modernity. In response, he hails Fanon's claim that "national consciousness, which is not nationalism, is the only thing that will give us an international dimension" to make a case for an internationalist idea of the nation which resides in the margin and is ambivalent, or "Janus faced" regarding its borders and polity. In so doing, however, Bhabha divorces the geographical situatedness and distinctly anti-colonial basis of Fanon's idea of the nation which is unambivalently opposed to colonization (4). Spivak, on the other hand, critiques the discourse of nationalism for consolidating the figure of the "third world woman" as an instrumentalized stand-in for the developmental needs of the nation, and as the terrain and symbol of national authenticity to be shielded from "western" influence (244–248).

the deployment of Fanonian thought for the defense of notions of diaspora and hybridity that vacate the crucial role of nationalism in anticolonialism. Premnath observes that one of the effects of canonizing *Black Skin, White Masks* is that "…such work tends to marginalize the complex understanding of 'national consciousness' derived from the experience of decolonizing Algeria" (66). He demonstrates that these pre-revolutionary pre-Algerian texts are quickly taken up by Western critics because "...the narrative of racialization coincides neatly with the narrative of modern individuation" and that such deployment ultimately "…breaks off the dialectical drama of Fanon's perpetual questioning, and the manner in which his writings on Algeria respond to the dilemmas voiced in earlier writings" (Premnath 67). It is, therefore, only by paying attention to the dialectical development of his thought across texts, especially in his Algeria writings, that we can responsibly and fully understand his philosophy.[6]

This paper, in particular, engages with the question of decolonization and nationalism and builds on Premnath's work to argue that we must take into account Fanon's discussion of the crucial role geography and land play in fomenting a revolutionary nationalism and national consciousness in Algeria before, during, and after the Algerian revolution. The primary conceit of this argument is that by contextualizing Fanon's work within this line of inquiry, we may be able to counteract previous deployments of his thought that have abstracted his very specific critique of French settler colonialism in Algeria. This paper will demonstrate that Fanon prioritizes decolonizing the relationship to land and developing a land-based nationalism as necessary steps in the anti-colonial struggle. For Fanon, this approach emerges as imperative to the development of a nation that can break out of both the immobility imposed by colonialism as well as the enduring eco-

[6]Both Neil Lazarus (1993), and Benita Parry (1987) have written against the blanket repudiations of nationalist discourse that emerged in the 80s and defended the need to pay attention to the affordances and capacities of nationalist thought in the radical anticolonial vein. In "Disavowing Decolonization," Lazarus argues that much recent critique of nationalism as an ideological paradigm takes post-45 nationalisms as their object of critique. In turn, Lazarus makes a case for "think[ing] differently about nationalism-above all in the ongoing context of anti-imperialist struggle" (71). Benita Parry, whose argument is cited in Lazarus' paper, positions Bhabha and Spivak's deconstructive approach towards colonial discourse as in tension with Fanon's designificatory approach and argues that we question "the politics of projects which dissolve the binary opposition colonial self/colonized other, encoded in colonialist language as a dichotomy necessary to domination, but also differently inscribed in the discourse of liberation as a dialectic of conflict and a call to arms?" (30).

nomic shackles imposed by neocolonial infrastructures of trade and production.[7]

Frantz Fanon begins "Colonial War and Mental Disorders" by demonstrating that contrary to popular justifications, the colonizing power takes no interest in the humanity of the colonized:

> We must remember in any case that a colonized people is not just a dominated people. Under the German occupation the French remained human beings. Under the French occupation the Germans remained human beings. In Algeria there is not simply domination but the decision, literally, to occupy nothing else but a territory. The Algerians, the women dressed in haiks, the palm groves, and the camels form a landscape, the *natural* backdrop for the French presence. (*Wretched of the Earth* 182)

Fanon utilizes theatrical vocabulary to demonstrate that during colonial conquest, Algerian actors become merely the stage upon which the colonizers act. As "the backdrop" of French colonial activity, the colonized lose all agentive capacity as they are objectified and territorialized. The land as well as the people are deemed wild, uninhabitable, and in need of cultivation. For the colonizer, "…cutting railroads through the bush, draining swamps, and ignoring the political and economic existence of the native population are in fact one and the same thing" (*Wretched* 182). The colonized people and the colonized land, when rendered indistinguishable, become the *terra nullius* upon which the colonizing power establishes its institutions and infrastructure. Throughout his oeuvre, Fanon demonstrates how the colonized, by virtue of being denied their vitality, are immobilized in manifold ways. This immobilization takes on the form of a social death, "a death on this side of death, a death in life" (*African Revolution* 13). Reading across Fanon's work, on the one hand, one encounters the death of the colonized in varied registers—biological, intellectual, psychosomatic, temporal—as well as the arrest of social life in Algeria. On the other hand, however, we find deep webs of dynamic and developing institu-

[7]This paper reads Fanon's work as theorizing a form of anti-colonial revolutionary nationalism which is founded upon a decolonized relationship between the indigenous body and indigenous land. While Fanon's work is based in Algeria and takes the French colonization of Algeria and the Algerian anti-colonial revolution as its subject of analysis, his theories are applicable beyond this geopolitical location. As such, this paper makes a claim for a reading protocol for Fanon's theory of decolonization rather than a reading protocol for Algerian history. To that degree, any biases that inhere in Fanon's depiction of colonial Algeria and the anticolonial revolution may be duplicated in this reading and should be subject to critique.

tions that work together to defend and develop the colonial project. Across his work, therefore, Fanon can be read as charting the matrix of fixity/mobility, arrest/frenzy, and death/vitality to demonstrate how colonial logics of 'progress' and 'innovation' depend on the production of social death and fractured temporalities, not to mention the death of the colonized body, as the necessary condition for colonial advancement.

The colonized are immobilized, both physically and temporally, by being imagined as coterminous with their land. Although the initial image of Algeria presented by Fanon holds the potential for lively co-existence between "the women," "the palm groves," and "the camels," these vital possibilities are negated by colonial conquest as they are relegated to the "*natural* backdrop" (original emphasis) of "French *presence*" (*Wretched* 182; emphasis added). Unlike "French *presence*," which is dynamically active in time, the colonized are as unmoving and unchanging as the land itself. Vital indigenous networks of cross-species relations are interpreted by the colonizer as untamed nature, laying in wait to be transformed by human labor from raw material into civilization. In the image described above, the (hallucinated) visual fixity of life in Algeria gives it the temporality of geologic time, outside of modern human temporality. In other words, the colonizer imagines the colonized as no different than the occupied land – just like the Earth, the colonized provide stable ground for building upon; just like the Earth, the colonized don't immediately show the effects of these colonial renovations. In the beginning to "Colonial War and Mental Disorder," Fanon draws an environmental metaphor to explain the process of decolonization: "…imperialism […] sows seeds of decay here and there that must be mercilessly rooted *from our land and from our minds*" (*Wretched* 181). In doing so, Fanon recognizes that the forms of violence enacted upon the colonized land and the colonized mind are inseparable, and emphasizes that the process of decolonization must therefore happen for both simultaneously. The stakes of this project emerge through the realization that if the land and the body are not dialectically decolonized, the effects of colonization will continue to unravel not only for the human lifespan but, in the measure of geologic time, for generations to come.

In marking Algeria as undeveloped *terra nullius* where organic life unfolds in the measure of geologic (as opposed to human) time, colonization causes the arrest of Algerian national time. Fanon develops this argument in *Toward the African Revolution* in the chapter titled "Mr. Debre's Desperate Endeavors" where he states that the "…new time inaugurated by the conquest, [...] is a colonialist time be-

cause [it is] occupied by colonialist values" (158). He establishes that colonialist values come to define colonial times thereby negating Algerian values and Algerian time. In order to fully grasp this claim regarding national versus colonialist time, we must read proleptically and pay attention to his arguments around geography. The colonizer spatializes the question of temporality by determining that certain spatial locations inhabit premodern temporalities.[8] From this it follows that the project of bringing these locations into the time of modernity must needs be a process of spatial restructuring. In this same piece, Fanon argues that the colonial conquest of Algeria, "…since it can be neither sentimental nor intellectual, [...] will be geographic" (*African Revolution* 159). The colonialist is not interested in appealing to the sentimentality or the intellect of the colonized and proceeds on a primarily geographic basis. The colonized human now emerges as another element of the geographic that requires taming and integration. This process denies the humanity of the colonized and, in doing so, erases the fact that this society functions within its native and dynamic temporal structure. Instead, in the colonial period, the human and the land are understood as raw materials to be acquired and developed. Fanon calls this form of colonial territorializing "a geography animated with intentions," and argues that it is this framing of the nation as untamed land which enables France to claim that "…the authority of France in Algeria is a requirement of nature" (*African Revolution* 160). For the French, this empty land must be enfolded into the New World, made habitable for (ostensibly Enlightenment era definitions of) Man, and infused with the temporality of future-oriented development and progress.[9]

French colonialists, therefore, establish territorial claims by framing humans as coterminous with territory and thereby disavowing

[8]Dipesh Chakraborty, in his book *Provincializing Europe* (2000), argues that so-called third-world nations were seen to inhabit the "waiting room of history" which he calls 'Time 2' in opposition to 'Time 1' defined as the "time of modernity" inhabited by the first-world nations of the Western world. It is this same colonial logic that Fanon brings to our attention which fractures temporality by spatializing (8).

[9]For more work which attends to the "overrepresentation of Man" and the European colonial settlement of land in the interest of civilizing the "savage," see Sylvia Wynter (2003), Katherine McKittrick (2006), among others. In particular, Wynter's exploration in "Unsettling the coloniality of Truth/Power/Being" of the colonial invention of the category of rights-bearing Man as engendering a definition of the Human which carried within it definition of non-Human others draws on and extends Fanon's idea that decolonization would give birth to a new concept of human (pp 267–270). Katherine McKittrick, in her book *Demonic Grounds*, also reads Fanon (among others) to argue that "deep space" and "a poetics of landscape" are crucial to understanding colonial spatial infrastructures as active sites of contestation (23–35).

the possibility of an Algerian humanism. Algeria, replete with all its inhabitants (human and nonhuman), becomes the stilled geographic foundation upon which colonial infrastructure is established. Fanon's choice of terminology for explaining the immobilization of the Algerian is reflective of this process of stilling. In the phase of colonial settlement, Fanon describes Algeria as "…a world compartmentalized, Manichean and *petrified*, a world of statues" (*Wretched* 15; emphasis added). He describes the arrest of the colonized subject in geologic terms: petrifaction, a process which involves "…the replacement of the soft organic parts of plant or animal remains by inorganic material, esp. calcium carbonate or silica, often preserving the original structure of the organism" ("petrifaction, n."). Petrifaction, the process whereby life sediments into rocks, which are then mined to yield raw materials for colonial infrastructure. Thus, colonial infrastructure extracts not only labor but also vital energy from indigenous life.

It is important to note, however, that Fanon does not claim that native life is entirely fossilized in the process of conquest. He tactically maintains that colonized life presents "a *virtually* petrified background" (*Wretched 15)*. For Fanon, the stillness of the native can be read as a sort of crouching in preparation; he notes that for the colonized "…the impulse to take the colonist's place maintains a constant muscular tonus [...]" and that "…it is not that he is anxious or terrorized, but he is always ready to change his role as game for that of hunter" (*Wretched* 16, 17). Fanon hereby preserves the existential potential for action and mobility by limiting his claim to say that "…on the inside the colonist achieves only a pseudo-petrification" (*Wretched* 17). It is, however, still important to meditate on this petrification, incomplete as it is, in order to understand its undeniable implications: the immobilized bodies of the colonized are unable to fight the feverish development of colonial infrastructure in the initial phase and subsequently become locked into their interiority ("on the inside") while remaining frozen as rocks on their land. No authentic mobility can be achieved unless this interiority is translated into material action carried out in physical space. Frozen bodies must regain their lost dynamism in order for decolonization to take effect.

This possibility of the native enacting his desire in public space is eradicated by the colonizer who demobilizes not only the natives but also their culture. For Fanon, the term 'culture' partly describes the interactions between people and their land-based infrastructure. In "Racism and Culture," he defines culture as "…certain constellations of institutions, established by particular men, in the framework of precise geographical areas" (*African Revolution* 31). By providing this

particular definition, he clarifies culture as that which is both socially- and geographically-specific to the lifeworld of the native. Most strikingly, the cultural apparatus articulated by the people is dynamic and open to change; he states that it is "…characteristic of a culture [...] to be open, permeated by spontaneous, generous and *fertile* lines of force" (*African Revolution* 34). The colonizer, however, is set to deny this sort of dynamism to the colonized. The colonized peoples' culture is therefore taken to be as static as they are thought to be. Producing effects similar to Edward Said's theory of orientalism, Fanon describes that when approached and (re)formulated by the colonizer, the native culture becomes ossified, static, and resistant to change and dynamism.

By being ascribed the form of so many discovered artefacts, native ways of living are not imagined to be constantly evolving to serve the indigenous population. As a result, "…the [native] culture [...] both present and mummified, [...] testifies against its members" (*African Revolution* 34). The colonized are therefore fixed in their totality and placed into a framework of meanings that is foreign to them, to the degree that "…concern with "respecting the [indigenous] culture of the native populations" […] betrays a determination to objectify, to confine, to imprison, to harden" (*African Revolution* 34). Given that native life is understood as less-than-human, the colonizer's approach to native culture is always already archaeological, rather than anthropological; it proceeds in a taxonomic rather than dynamic fashion. The colonizer is similarly unable to preserve the vitality and dynamism of indigenous institutions which necessarily share a dialogic relationship with indigenous culture.

During the colonial period, therefore, the dynamism of indigenous culture and infrastructure is frozen to make way for the colonizer's mobility. By the way of facetious claims of respect for the culture, the colonizer also deadens those living institutions "…in which qualities of dynamism, of growth, of depth can be recognized" and replaces them with "…archaic, inert institutions, [...] patterned like a caricature of formerly fertile institutions" (*African Revolution* 34). These new institutions are "archaic" and "inert" precisely because they are driven by the colonizer's fixed definition of the indigenous culture – a definition which does not imagine this culture as living, adaptive, or dynamic. Fanon argues that as a result of this refusal to acknowledge the vitality of indigenous life, even though colonial institutions mimic the indigenous ones that they have replaced, they are incompetent to fulfill the needs of native population by failing to recognize and respond to their changing needs. In so doing, this colonial infrastruc-

ture levels deep psychosomatic injury on indigenous people's minds and bodies.[10]

Across his works, Fanon pays special attention to this form of psychosomatic harm weathered by indigenous people in their encounters with colonial institutions. In "the North African Syndrome," he explores how the western doctor is unable to provide meaningful diagnoses to the North African in Europe. Although this piece is not set in Algeria, it helps contextualize Fanon's insistent attention to geography and infrastructure with respect to indigenous psychology. He explains that European medical professionals go about their diagnostic process with an "a priori attitude"—that they expect specific symptoms to appear as markers of certain illnesses in order to warrant the appropriate treatment. This approach assumes that the patient will be able to evaluate his/her psychological response to the environment and report the harrowing symptoms in an appropriately legible manner. Fanon disturbs these assumptions and argues that the North African, however, is unable to have any stable experience of the French environment because it "…does not come with a *substratum* common to his race, but on a foundation built by the European" (*African Revolution* 7; emphasis added). This loss of 'substratum,' of common racial ground disables his phenomenological experience of his environment such that "…without a family, without love, without human relations, without communion with the group, the first encounter with himself will occur in a neurotic mode, in a pathological mode" (*African Revolution* 13). Fanon employs poetic language to demonstrate how the North African repeatedly experiences death in every colonial space he traverses in his everyday existence in the metropole:

> A daily death.
> a death in the tram,
> a death in the doctor's office,
> a death with the prostitutes,
> a death on the job site,
> a death at the movies,

[10]For a compelling exploration of Frantz Fanon's arguments regarding the harms produced by colonial psychiatry through the institution of the colonial hospital, refer to Gibson and Beneduce's *Frantz Fanon, Psychiatry and Politics (2017).* In particular, Gibson and Beneduce explore Fanon's argument regarding the failure of Western psychiatry in the colonial context and corroborate that colonial infrastructures not only fail to provide care to the colonized subaltern but also trap them in medical diagnoses that pathologize them: "Late colonial society, in other words, could produce only files—official versions of the colonized, masked in the discourse of an ethnopsychiatry that presumed to understand the Arab mind and then quickly pathologized it as defective and subject to "North African syndrome"" (181).

> a multiple death in the newspapers,
> a death in the fear of all decent folk of going out after midnight,
> a death. (*African Revolution* 13)

Fanon employs the formal poetic elements of repetition and parallel structure to denote how the North African experiences these diverse colonial infrastructures as all enacting upon him a similar and persistent violence. No matter their intended utility, the North African encounters only death in various registers in these European institutions. Because these institutions are built by the colonizer with no regard to the colonized, these men feel alienated by these institutions precisely because "…by the very fact of appearing on the scene, [they enter] into a pre-existing framework," one which was designed to be hostile to them (*African Revolution 7*).

If we keep this analysis in mind while reading Fanon's commentary on Algeria, we are able to observe the extent to which the Algerian is alienated by the loss of their native infrastructure. Cut off from their land, trapped in the colonizer's definition of their culture, and robbed of their indigenous institutions, native life is both physically and psychically immobilized. Over this fossilized foundation, the colonizer begins setting up new institutions that serve their own needs. Unlike the fixity endured by the Algerian, Fanon demonstrates how the European enjoys immense social and economic mobility in the colony:

> The European individual in Algeria does not take his place in a structured and relatively stable society. The colonial society is in perpetual movement. Every settler invents a new society, sets up or sketches new structures. The differences between craftsmen, civil servants, workers, and professionals are poorly defined. Every doctor has his vineyards and the lawyer busies himself with his rice fields as passionately as any settler. (*Dying Colonialism* 134)

It is important to read these descriptions of mobility and potential in the colonizers alongside the descriptions of arrest and living-death in the colonized to fully grasp the dynamic Fanon identifies. In the space of the colony, the colonized are ontologized as land, their cultures are overdetermined, and their institutions are rendered obsolete. Meanwhile, the colonizer "invents," "sets up," and "sketches"; their social roles are "poorly defined." In violent contrast to the native's embodied death, Fanon states that "…in the heart of every Euro-

pean in the colonies there slumbers a man of energy, a pioneer, an adventurer" (*Dying Colonialism* 133). By drawing these contrasts, Fanon clarifies that the colonized and the colonizer are not just in a position of ideological opposition but that the immobilization of the colonized is the necessary precondition for colonial activity. Colonial institutions are built through the negation of the vitality of the native and the destruction of their active relationship with their land.

No aspect of infrastructural modernization and development enacted by the colonizer can truly benefit or serve the native until and unless they acknowledge their humanity. In "Letter to a Frenchman" Fanon charges the most liberal of Frenchmen, who are ready to leave Algeria, with being "…concerned about Man but strangely not about the Arab" (*African Revolution* 48). He urges them to open their eyes to their complicity in Algeria's destruction. He powerfully describes the utter abjection felt daily by the Algerian *fellah* (peasant) in language that mirrors his description of the North African in France:

> Motionless *fellah* and your arms move and your bowed back but your life stopped. The cars pass, and you don't move. They could run over your belly and you wouldn't move.
> Arabs on the roads.
> Sticks slipped through the handle of the basket.
> Empty basket, empty hope, this whole death of the *fellah*.
> Two hundred fifty francs a day.
> *Fellah* without land.
> *Fellah* without reason. [...]
> On your face despair.
> In your belly resignation...
> What does it matter *fellah* if this country is beautiful. (*African Revolution* 50, 51)

The psycho-affective similarities between this excerpt and the one from "The North African Syndrome" animate the core of Fanon's argument about geography and decolonization. In his account, French colonization has not only settled on Algerian land, it has infrastructurally transformed it to the degree that it is unrecognizable as Algeria. This colony operates entirely in a French framework and the experience of the North African, despite being on his native land, is that of being in a foreign nation. As a result, "…in this petrified zone, not a ripple on the surface, the palm trees sway against the clouds, the waves of the sea lap against the shore, the raw materials come and go, legitimating the colonist's presence, while more dead than alive the colonized subject crouches forever in the same old dream" (*Wretched* 14).

In order to break from this dream-like pseudo-petrification, the colonized population must shatter this infrastructure that keeps them captive and build the institutions that will support their mobility.

Fanon argues that it is absolutely impossible, during the anticolonial revolution, to preserve the colonizer's institutions while establishing national sovereignty. He categorically states in "On Violence" that "…to dislocate the colonial world does not mean that once the borders have been eliminated there will be a right of way between the two sectors" (*Wretched* 6). Instead, effective decolonization "…means nothing less than demolishing the colonist's sector, burying it deep within the earth or banishing it from the territory" (*Wretched* 6). In other words, the colonizer's territorial claims must be negated, and their infrastructure flattened to the ground.[11] The decolonized nation must be built upon Algerian soil and its institutions devised in accordance with the emerging national culture and indigenous needs. For Fanon, the peasantry emerges as a key actor both during the revolution and post-independence precisely because "…the rural masses have never ceased to pose the problem of their liberation in terms of violence, of *taking back the land from the foreigners*, in terms of the national struggle and armed revolt" (*Wretched* 79; emphasis added). Unlike the urban population who are at the heart of the colonial metropole, the peasantry in the interior "…survive in a kind of petrified state but keep intact their moral values and their attachment to the nation" (*Wretched* 79). These peasants as "…veritable exiles in their own country and severed from the urban milieu where they drew up the concepts of nation and political struggle…" clarify to the intellectuals that the primary objective is to reclaim the land (*Wretched* 78). The urban movement, led by the nationalist intellectuals, must therefore establish a close, dialectical relationship with the rural masses for they "…take a global stance from the very start. Bread and land: how do we go about getting bread and land?" (*Wretched* 14).

The importance of land does not merely inform the spirit or symbolism of the Algerian revolution. Land materializes as central to both insurrectionary strategy in the revolutionary stage and economic strategy in the post-independence phase. In the revolutionary phase,

[11]In a recent article titled "Concerning Maoism: Fanon, Revolutionary Violence, and Postcolonial India" (2013), Priyamvada Gopal reads Fanon's famous claim from "On Violence" where he argues that "decolonization is always a violent event" as suggesting that the destruction of institutional imperialism is necessarily violent in the manner that it restructures society in a radical way. We can similarly read this call for the destruction of the colonist's sector as signifying the oppositional modality in which decolonization apprehends colonial infrastructure.

guerilla warfare becomes the way in which the Algerian revolutionary army makes up for its lack of military instruments and technology. In "On Violence," Fanon claims "…guerrilla warfare [as the] instrument of violence of the colonized" (*Wretched* 26). It is, however, not only because it compensates for the lack of arms that guerilla warfare becomes a primary weapon in the anticolonial revolution. Guerrilla warfare, as that which is performed in relation with the land, remobilizes settled land and uses it to indigenous advantage. As Fanon observes,

> The national liberation army is not an army grappling with the enemy in a single, decisive battle but travels from village to village, retreating into the forest and jumping for joy when the cloud of dust raised by the enemy's troops is seen in the valley. The tribes begin to mobilize, the units move their positions, changing terrain. [...] Now it is we who are in *pursuit*. Despite all his technology and firepower, the enemy gives the impression he is floundering and *losing ground*. (*Wretched* 86; emphasis added)

Drawing upon the native knowledge of the land, especially in the interior, the masses reform their relationship with the land so that it no longer works against them. Moreover, it is a form of attack that is deeply mobile and active; in which "…you no longer fight on the spot but on the march [and] every fighter carries the soil of the homeland to war between his bare toes" (*Wretched* 85). Fought in dynamic relation with "…muscular the land, guerrilla warfare mobilizes the petrified colonized subject and their dreams, dreams of action, dreams of aggressive vitality" (*Wretched* 15). While Fanon finds this militant form of action necessary during the revolutionary phase, he does argue that it is important that it be developed around a sound intellectual agenda. He states that in order to "…transform the movement from a peasant revolt to a revolutionary war," the national leaders must "…rediscover politics, no longer as a sleep-inducing technique or as a means of mystification, but as the sole means of fueling the struggle and preparing the people for a clear-sighted national leadership" (*Wretched* 86). A truly mobilized national politics therefore emerges as that which guides and is guided by the militant land-based insurrection of the masses.[12]

[12]Fanon's emphasis on the importance of land as both symbolic and material resource in the anticolonial struggle must be read within the particular context of the French settler's colonial conquest of Algeria. In other postcolonial locations, nationalist ideology's use of land as symbolic resource has been critiqued for being a particularly gendered and gendering construction of land-as-woman or woman-as-land.

In the post-independence phase, once the revolutionary war is over, this land-based politics must expand in order to (in)form the foundation of the new nation. Fanon declares that after independence any national leader "…must first restore dignity to all citizens, furnish their minds, fill their eyes with human things and develop a *human landscape* for the sake of its enlightened and sovereign inhabitants" (144; emphasis added). Even though the colonizer brings modern technology and infrastructure to the colony, he ultimately dehumanizes the native. Upon his departure, therefore, the process of modernization must be preceded by an evaluation of indigenous infrastructural needs. In this process, Fanon argues, it is important to pay attention to the relationship with land and soil. He points out that "…the colonial system, in fact, was only interested in certain riches, certain natural resources, to be exact those that fueled its industries" (*Wretched* 56). As already discussed in the paper, the Algerian people, in being made coterminous with their land, became another natural resource for the colonizer and did not participate in the development of their land as agentive actors. As a result,Fanon notes that "…no reliable survey has been made of the soil or subsoil" (*Wretched* 56). In order to set up their national industries such that they do not merely fulfil the needs established by the colonizer and to thereby avoid effective neocolonization, "…everything needs to be started over again: the type of exports needs to be changed, not just their destination, the soil needs researching as well as the subsoil, the rivers and why not the sun" (*Wretched* 57). Both production and trade must therefore be thoroughly informed by the native's self-directed study of the land in order to develop a fully sovereign national economy.

Fanon's insistence on research-based development perhaps stems from his commitment to invention and creativity. As early as in *Black Skin, White Masks* he claims that the only way to repair the traumatic effects of the "split imposed by the Europeans" involves no less than "restructuring the world" (*Black Skin* 63). In the conclusion to *Black Skin, White Masks,* he again emphasizes the importance of sovereign self-development when he states,

> I am not a prisoner of History. I must not look for the meaning of my destiny in that direction.
> I must constantly remind myself that the real *leap* consists of introducing invention into life.

For more, see "Legacies of Departure: Decolonization, Nation-Making and Gender" by Urvashi Butalia and "Nations in an Imperial Crucible" by Mrinalini Sinha in Levine's *Gender and Empire* (2004).

> In the world I am heading for, I am endlessly creating myself. […]
> The density of History determines none of my acts.
> I am my own foundation.
> And it is by going beyond the historical and instrumental given that I initiate my cycle of freedom. (204, 205)

Decolonization, for Fanon, emerges as an opportunity not only to be free from the material rule of the colonizer but also to escape the historical constrictions placed upon the colonized. It is an opportunity to undo the colonial petrification of mind and body, and invent radically new ways of living in the world. Most importantly, it must be seized as an opportunity to embody a form of critical mobility which does not merely depend on the given historical forms of the human but which constantly interrogates them and invents new ones. In the last sentence of *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon proclaims "O my body, always make me a man who questions!" (*Black Skin* 206). This call to the body, rather than the mind, suggests that the decolonizing process is as organic as it is intellectual. The colonized body is that which had been petrified; whose muscles had slowly atrophied; which had been turned to rock. Decolonization must not only rehabilitate these atrophied muscles but also create the conditions for their regular use and development. This requires the setup of infrastructure that is responsive to the needs of the newly mobile society.

Since the petrification of the colonized was achieved through the destruction of their native infrastructure and the mummification of their once-living cultures, decolonization must maintain a sustained focus on revamping its cultural and infrastructural core. Fanon is cognizant of this when he states that "…it is not possible for a man to evolve otherwise than within the framework of a culture that recognizes him and that he decides to assume" (*African Revolution* 34). It is imperative to develop a cultural identity that facilitates the growth of the decolonized society. This cultural identity, however, cannot be merely mined from the precolonial past. Given that conquest causes irrecoverable damage and introduces entirely new conflicts into the colonized world, any cultural identity needs to be formed with respect to the terms of the present and not just the past. While the colonizer asserts a fixed cultural identity onto the colonized, the decolonizing nation must re-assert an open, dynamic cultural identity that breaks from the exotified colonial version.

Moreover, it is important to develop a new cultural identity not only for aesthetic or intellectual but material-economic reasons as

well. This, for Fanon, is the only way to escape the clutches of neocolonialism where the newly independent country still functions with colonial institutions and fulfills the colonizer's trade needs. He warns that in the post-independence period, "[the] cult for local products, this incapacity to invent new outlets is likewise reflected in the entrenchment of the national bourgeoisie in the type of agricultural production typical of the colonial period" (*Wretched* 100). Much like in the revolutionary period, the intellectual must look not towards the urban national bourgeoisie but towards the people, the masses, for a glimpse of the new national culture. He argues that "the culture with which the intellectual is preoccupied is very often nothing but an inventory of particularisms. Seeking to cling close to the people, he clings merely to a visible veneer. This veneer, however, is merely a reflection of a *dense, subterranean life in perpetual renewal*" (*Wretched* 160). It is significant that his dynamic cultural life is subterranean because the underground is the zone of operations of the colonized body which was previously made coterminous with territory. It is, therefore, in this zone that the national spirit is conceived and reared. The colonized intellectual and the national bourgeoisie, mired in urban colonial life, are ignorant of this mass activity precisely because of their proximity to the colonizer. Therefore, for the nation to truly break from the clutches of the colonizer, these intellectuals and national bourgeoisie must meet the masses in the underground and join them "…in the process of dirtying [their] hands in the quagmire of [their] soil" (*Wretched* 140).

Decolonization, therefore, demands that the colonized society re-establish a dynamic relationship with their land and build institutions that are reflective and supportive of this relationship. Without gaining a decolonized knowledge of their geography and geology, the colonized will remain fixed within the economic and cultural forms imposed by the colonizer. Moreover, as has been established above, these forms are built with the purpose of alienating the colonized and will continue to do so. In order to build a society that is truly sovereign and hospitable to the indigenous needs of the people *and* the land, the new nation must let go of extractive colonial infrastructures. For Fanon, this disavowal of colonial infrastructures does not foreclose modernization, it decolonizes the process of assimilating modern technology by refusing to preserve the dehumanizing technologies imposed by the colonizer. Most importantly, the relationship between man and nation is one in which both are constantly re-defining each other dialectically. He concludes *Wretched of the Earth* by stating that "when the nation in its totality is set in motion, the new man is not an a posteriori creation of this nation, but coexists with it, matures with it, and triumphs with it" (*Wretched* 233). In order to break the fixity im-

posed by colonial contact, the colonized must re-establish a dialectical and dynamic relationship with the nation.

Reading across Fanon's works enables us to understand the various nuances of his theory of anti-colonial nationalism. As a proponent of self-determined inventiveness, his argument welcomes cosmopolitan trans-nationalisms and discourses of hybrid identity. One must, however, be careful not to ignore the geographically-specific nature of his writings. This paper demonstrates that Fanon is deeply invested in articulating a land-based de-colonial national culture. The model of nation that he envisions for Algeria is articulated in direct relation with Algerian land and Algerian people. It is clear that, for him, true sovereignty is achieved only once the people have re-established an authentic relationship with their land and collectively set up the infrastructure needed to support their society, in terms of their ever-unfolding decolonizing present(s). It is only by reading proleptically that we can therefore take political lessons from *Black Skin, White Masks* in a manner that is responsible to Fanon's entire oeuvre. By vacating the geopolitical specificities of Fanon's work, we not only miss the opportunity to most effectively mobilize his thoughts in our political present, we also do a disservice to his most politically informed writings. The psycho-affective is only one element of a larger process of invention that begins at the level of small nations but reverberates globally. Throughout his work, Fanon argues that only by truly breaking away from colonialism and envisioning radically new ways of existing in symbiotic relationships with the Earth and with each other can the process of decolonization develop a new definition of Man.

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