

The Wretched of the Earth



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF FRANTZ FANON

Fanon was born in Fort-de-France on the Caribbean island of Martinique to Eléanore Médélice, a shopkeeper of Afro-Martinican and European descent, and Felix Casimir Fanon, a customs agent and descendent of African slaves and indentured Indians. Fanon was one of eight children, and he lived a comfortable middle-class life and attended Lycée Schoelcher, a respected private high school in Martinique. Fanon enlisted with the Free French forces when he was 18 and joined an Allied convoy during World War II. He was wounded during combat in Colmar, France, in 1944, and in 1955, he was repatriated back to Martinique. Fanon attended university and earned a bachelor's degree, and then relocated to France for medical school, during which time he began writing and penned three original plays. Fanon became a psychiatrist in 1951, and during his medical residency in 1952, he wrote and published [Black Skin, White Masks](#), which, like *The Wretched of the Earth*, explores the psychological effects of colonial racism on the black individual. In 1953, Fanon relocated to Algeria, where he also worked as a psychiatrist. He was deeply sympathetic to the Algerians' fight for liberation from French colonialism during the Algerian War of Independence, and in 1954, he joined the Front de Libération Nationale, fighting on behalf of the Nigerians. He wrote and published *The Wretched of the Earth* in 1961, which was heavily censored by the French government. Around this time, Fanon was diagnosed with leukemia. He sought treatment in the Soviet Union early in his illness, but he later traveled to the United States for continued medical management. Fanon died on December 6, 1961, at the National Institutes of Health facility in Bethesda, Maryland, at just 36 years old. He left behind a wife, Josie, and a son, Oliver, as well as a daughter, Mireille, from a previous relationship. During his short life, Fanon was an important voice in the fields of postcolonialism and Marxism, and his work has been invaluable to the development of critical theory. He advocated tirelessly for the decolonization of the Third World, and was particularly interested in the psychological impact of colonialist oppression on the colonized individual.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Fanon supported the Algerians during the Algerian War of Independence, known simply as the Algerian War, and he mentions the conflict several times in *The Wretched of the Earth*. The Algerian War of Independence was a decolonization war fought between France and the Algerian National Liberation

Front from 1954 to 1962. The war is known for the Algerians' use of guerilla warfare, including marquis fighting—a type of guerilla warfare that utilized rural guerillas—and widespread torture. It progressed into a civil war, as well, as fighting broke out among many conflicting tribal communities. The Algerian War began on November 1, 1954, during the Toussain Rouge, a series of armed conflicts that unfolded during All Saints' Day celebrations in French Algeria. The fighting led to massive social and political unrest in both Algeria and France, and in 1958, the Fourth French Republic—the republican government of France since 1946—completely collapsed. The fighting dragged on for years until the signing of the Évian Accords, a compromise treaty, on March 18, 1962. The withdrawal of France from Algeria resulted in complete social, political, and economic chaos, including several attempted military coup d'états by rebel forces. Algeria finally gained independence on July 5, 1962, but deep and lasting damage continues to be felt in the region to this day. Nearly 2,000,000 Algerians were displaced during the Algerian War of Independence, and over 300,000 Algerians were killed, compared to just over 25,000 French and other Europeans.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Fanon's books, *The Wretched of the Earth* and [Black Skin, White Masks](#), are important works of early postcolonial theory, an area of critical theory which explores the effects of colonialism—both during occupation and through the fight for independence—on the colonized people. Postcolonialism as a field of academia was founded by Edward Said, a Palestinian American and public intellectual, whose book, *Orientalism*, first identified and put a name to the racist representation of those from the East by those from the West. Other important works of postcolonial theory include *The Location of Culture* by Homi Bhabha, which explores the unique cultural identity emerging from the colonial world; and "Can the Subaltern Speak?" by Gayatri Spivak, which is also concerned with the issue of representation within the colonial and postcolonial space. There are numerous other works that explore the colonial situation as well, including the novels [Midnight's Children](#) by Salman Rushdie and [Things Fall Apart](#) by Chinua Achebe, and the short story "Girl," by Jamaica Kincaid. *The Wretched of the Earth* also closely interacts with the theory of Marxism, which is based on [The Communist Manifesto](#) by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Other books that also interact with Marxist themes include [Fight Club](#) by Chuck Palahniuk, Richard Wright's [Native Son](#), and [A Streetcar Named Desire](#) by Tennessee Williams.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *The Wretched of the Earth*
- **When Written:** 1961
- **Where Written:** Algeria
- **When Published:** 1961
- **Literary Period:** Postcolonial
- **Genre:** Nonfiction
- **Setting:** The Third World
- **Antagonist:** European colonialism
- **Point of View:** First Person

EXTRA CREDIT

Racism Abroad. As a soldier during World War II for the Free French forces, Fanon was forced to endure cruel and endless racism. After Fanon and a group of black soldiers liberated a group of white European women, the women refused to dance in celebration with the black men who saved them and chose instead to dance with white enemy prisoners.

Lost in Translation. Fanon's work was originally written in French, and English translators have long since disagreed on the translation of his work. Some early translations are riddled with errors, and some scholars believe that Fanon's work has been misrepresented because of these mistakes. This misrepresentation has led to Fanon's image as a proponent of violence, while his true message of decolonization and unity is lost.



PLOT SUMMARY

The Wretched of the Earth begins with Frantz Fanon's explanation of violence within the "colonial situation." According to Fanon, the act of decolonization will always involve violence. Decolonization cannot occur with merely a "gentleman's agreement," as colonialism itself is steeped in violence. The colonists took control of the colonized through violent means with military tanks and rifles with bayonets, and they maintain control in the very same way. The colonial world is divided by military barracks and police stations, and it constitutes two very different spaces: the colonists' world is impeccably maintained with modern conveniences and opportunity, whereas the world of the colonized is "a disreputable place inhabited by disreputable people," which is saddled with poverty, famine, and illiteracy. Fanon refers to the colonial world as "a Manichaean World" that is divided into light and dark, in which the white colonizers are seen as the light, and the black colonized individuals are viewed as darkness and the epitome of evil. The colonial world keeps the colonized individual continually on edge with their **muscles tensed** in violent anticipation. There is a constant "atmospheric violence" in colonial society, and the colonized seem to inherently know

that their liberation can only be achieved through violent means. During the Cold War, both the socialist Eastern Bloc (the Soviet Union and their allies) and capitalist Western Bloc (the U.S. and their allies) try to sway underdeveloped Third World countries to their respective causes, and while Fanon argues that nation building is an inherently capitalist venture, the Third World remains politically neutral. They will not support the capitalist West, which, through colonialism, has grown rich through the exploitation of the people and natural resources of the Third World.

The masses of a colonized country and the country's nationalist political parties are usually not on the same page, Fanon claims. Such political parties are comprised of the colonized intellectuals—the urban proletariat—and they represent less than one percent of the actual population. The urban proletariat is the most privileged of colonial society, and they stand to lose everything through decolonization. They constitute the national bourgeoisie, and they live Western lifestyles, espouse Western ideas, and work Western jobs. The peasant masses—which an undeveloped country is primarily composed of—live traditional lives in outlying villages, and they are at complete odds with the national bourgeoisie and approach them with a general mistrust. While the peasant masses are usually neglected by the nationalist political parties, these people are "the only spontaneously revolutionary force in the country," and they are crucial in the fight for liberation and decolonization. The lumpenproletariat, the absolute lowest rung of society—criminals, prostitutes, juvenile delinquents, and the like—are the most valuable, Fanon argues, and are the "urban spearhead" of the rebellion. While several countries are fighting and winning independence, they cannot rest, Fanon warns, as new forms of oppression are always brewing in the underdeveloped nation.

In a newly independent nation, the national bourgeoisie takes political control, and they slide right into the place of the exiting colonial power. Underdeveloped like their nation, the national bourgeoisie know nothing about actual economics, and they run a limited economy and keep all the profits. Under this system of neocolonialism, the peasant masses continue to suffer in much the same way they did under colonial rule, and conflict between the classes grows. This leads to building tensions among ethnic and religious groups, as well as continued racism and persecution from the ruling class. Politics often turns to a single-party system, and the nation is transformed into a dictatorship, with a single leader driving the nation in the favor of the national bourgeoisie. In order to avoid this, Fanon says, government must be decentralized, moved to rural areas, and run by the peasant masses. The national bourgeoisie is the single most destructive thing to a developing country, and a new nation cannot possibly progress until the national bourgeoisie is removed from power.

After independence, the formerly colonized intellectual—the

cultural class—fights for “the recognition of a national culture and its right to exist.” Colonial racism has long since assumed that black nations are devoid of culture and intellect, and the colonized intellectual toils tirelessly to prove this isn’t true. The colonized intellectual turns to past pre-colonial culture and reclaims black culture on a “continental scale.” They advocate for the creation and acceptance of “Negro” culture, especially “Negro” literature, which encompasses the entire continent of Africa and all the black individuals of the African diaspora. This “black world” stretches from Africa, to the Caribbean, and through the United States; however, Fanon says, they have little in common other than the fact that they all “[define] themselves in relation to the whites.” Culture, Fanon argues, is national, not continental, and it cannot be combined into one large cultural representation. Furthermore, Fanon asserts, culture is not something that can be isolated to pre-colonial times. Rather, culture is created through the developing national consciousness of a struggling and newly independent nation.

Colonialist oppression and the violent struggle for liberation leads to, perhaps not surprisingly, a slew of mental disorders. Fanon, a practicing psychiatrist, includes several case files from former patients he treated during the Algerian War of Independence. Fanon includes assessments and notes from Algerians, as well as Europeans, and he describes the ways in which the colonial situation has negatively affected their mental health and well-being. Fanon’s case files range from anxiety, depression, and anorexia, to major psychotic breaks and homicidal tendencies—each case with trauma stemming directly from the French colonization of Algeria and subsequent war. Fanon examines the psychological impact of prolonged brainwashing and excessive torture, especially through electrocution. He touches on the use of truth serum, considers those Algerians sent to internment camps, and even debates the antiquated theory of Algerian criminality as a product of an underdeveloped Algerian brain and nervous system. For Fanon, Algerian criminality is rooted in the same cause as all the other problems plaguing Algeria: the colonial situation.

Fanon concludes his book with a call to action. He calls to end all colonialism and neocolonialism once and for all, and urges developing nations not to look to Europe as an example. Another developing nation looked to Europe centuries ago, Fanon warns, and now that nation—the United States of America—is “a monster” where the “flaws, sickness, and inhumanity of Europe have reached frightening proportions.” Developing African nations must not look to the past, or to Europe, but instead should start a new history, with a “new man” and “a new way of thinking.”



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

The Colonized – The members of a Third World nation who have been taken over by an outside colonial force with the intention of exploiting them economically and politically. The colonized are oppressed, neglected, and abused by the colonists, and they have been stripped of their precolonial culture and way of life. They are forced to endure endless racism and maltreatment, and their **muscles** are in a constant state of flexion waiting to revolt. The colonized live a life of violence under the control of the colonists, and they understand that their liberation can only be achieved through violent means.

The Colonists/Colonialists – The members of a colonial country who take a weaker Third World nation over by force with the intention of exploiting them economically and politically. The colonists are exceedingly violent, and they oppress and neglect the colonized at every turn. They spread racist assumptions about the colonized, and systematically strip them of their nation, their culture, and their dignity.

The National Bourgeoisie – Made up of the urban proletariat, the national bourgeoisie is the ruling class of colonial society and the developing nation. The national bourgeoisie live Westernized lives, and they are in constant conflict with the peasant masses, with whom they have nothing in common. After the exit of a colonial power, the national bourgeoisie slips into the place of the colonists and exploits the peasant masses politically and economically. The national bourgeoisie have limited experience and little political wherewithal, and they stand to lose everything through decolonization. They support dictatorships and have zero intention of helping the peasant masses to rise from poverty, widespread hunger, and illiteracy. The national bourgeoisie are wholly damaging to a developing nation, which cannot expect to progress and prosper until the national bourgeoisie are stripped of their ruling power.

The Lumpenproletariat – A class within the peasant masses that is the absolute lowest rung of the social strata. The lumpenproletariat are the criminals, the unemployed, the prostitutes, and the juvenile delinquents, and they represent a serious security threat to society. They are also “the most spontaneously and radically revolutionary forces of a colonized people,” and Fanon refers to them as the “urban spearhead” of the liberation struggle. The lumpenproletariat are crucial in the fight for independence, and Fanon believes that any national liberation movement would do well to utilize them their advantage.

The Peasant Masses – The largest social class of the Third World. The peasant masses are largely made of rural farmers, and they live traditional lives that still resemble precolonial culture. The peasant masses are “the only spontaneously

revolutionary force in the country,” and, Fanon contends, they are exceedingly important to the revolutionary cause. The peasant masses are the first to be oppressed and neglected when systems of neocolonialism take over, and they are generally mistrusting of the national bourgeoisie.

The Young Frenchwoman – One of Fanon’s patients while he is working as a psychiatrist in Algeria during the Algerian War of Independence. The young Frenchwoman presents with anxiety after her father, a civil servant, is killed in an ambush. She is deeply ashamed of her father’s involvement in the oppression of the Algerian people, and before his death, she finds it difficult to look him in the eye. After her father’s death, the French government offers her restitution, but she refuses. The Young Frenchwoman claims that she would fight on behalf of the Algerians if she could, and she serves to illustrate Fanon’s contention that the colonist is negatively affected by colonialism as well.

The Algerian Man – One of Fanon’s patients in the psychiatric hospital in Algeria during the Algerian War of Independence. The Algerian man is arrested for a “terrorist attack” after suffering a psychotic break. He is not involved with the rebellion in any way and is dedicated to his career in data processing. As a result, he begins to feel guilty for not participating in the national struggle and grows depressed and increasingly withdrawn. He begins to hallucinate and finds himself in the European sector of the city where Algerians are being harassed and arrested by police. He runs up to an officer screaming “I am an Algerian!” and attempts to take his gun. The Algerian man is beaten and sent to the hospital. After several weeks he begins to improve and is discharged.

The 13-year-old Algerian Boy – A patient of Fanon’s at the psychiatric hospital during the Algerian War of Independence. Along with the 14-year-old Algerian boy, the boys kill their European friend because they heard that the Europeans want to kill all the Arabs. They couldn’t kill an adult, the 13-year-old boy says, so they killed their young friend instead. The 13-year-old boy is further proof of the psychological effects of colonialism on the colonized.

The 14-year-old Algerian Boy – Another patient of Fanon’s at the psychiatric hospital in Algeria during the Algerian War of Independence. Along with the 13-year-old Algerian boy, the 14-year-old kills a young European friend after hearing that the Europeans want to kill all the Arabs. The 14-year-old boy refuses to talk, other than to ask why the Europeans are not arrested for killing the Algerians. The 14-year-old boy again underscores the psychological effect of colonialism on the colonized, but he also raises a valid point: the Europeans often killed the Algerians with impunity, and they were not held accountable.

R – A 30-year-old European police officer and another patient of Fanon’s during the Algerian War of Independence. R is tasked with torturing Algerians for the French, and he has

taken to beating his wife and children as well. R won’t quit his job, but he is hoping that therapy will allow him to stop abusing his family and do his job without guilt. R is an example of the rampant violence of colonialism and the mental disorders that plague those who are involved.

A – One of Fanon’s patients during the Algerian War of Independence. A is a 28-year-old European police officer, who suffers from depression after the French order him to start torturing Algerians. A feels immense guilt and wants to quit his job, especially after he runs into an Algerian he had previously tortured, who is also at the hospital being treated for post-traumatic stress. A is yet another example of the mental disorders that plague the colonial situation, and he is further proof that colonialism negatively affects the colonist as well.

B – One of Fanon’s patients in the psychiatric hospital in Algeria during the Algerian War of Independence. B is 26 years old and is suffering from impotence, migraines, and insomnia after the rape of his wife by a French soldier. B is a militant in the Algerian Liberation Front, and his wife is raped when she won’t give up information on him. B finds it difficult to be with his wife after her assault, and he wonders if he will ever get over it. B and his wife are another example of the widespread violence of colonialism and the lasting psychological impact of such violence.

S – Another one of Fanon’s patients in Algeria during the Algerian War of Independence. S is a 37-year-old man from an outlying village. He had nothing to do with the war until the French ambushed his village and shot 29 men at point-blank range. S sustained two gunshot wounds, and after his injury when he was recovering in the hospital, he suffered a psychotic break. He was sent to the psychiatric hospital for treatment, and he is discharged after one month. S also represents the psychological effects of violence on the colonized individual.

D – One of Fanon’s patients in the psychiatric hospital in Algeria during the Algerian War of Independence. D is a 19-year-old man who joins the liberation movement, and after he kills a European woman at a white settlement, he suffers a psychotic break and begins to dream that his victim is haunting him. D remains in the hospital until his nightmares subside and he is discharged. Again, D’s symptomology is directly related to colonialism and the war in Algeria, which also underscores the psychological effects of colonialism.

MINOR CHARACTERS

The Urban Proletariat – The most privileged of colonial society and the developing nation, making up less than one percent of the total population. They are the tradesmen and civil servants, such as doctors and lawyers, and they constitute the national bourgeoisie.

TERMS

Algerian War of Independence – A war fought between France and the National Liberation Front from 1954 to 1962, which ended in Algeria’s liberation from French rule. Fanon joined the National Liberation Front after moving to Algeria in 1954, and he mentions the war several times in *The Wretched of the Earth*, often using Algeria and the war as an example of the effects of colonialism.

Bourgeoisie – The ruling class of a capitalist society. They own most of society’s wealth, and in the case of the **colonized** in *The Wretched of the Earth*, the bourgeoisie drives the national politics.

The Cold War – A prolonged period of political tension from 1946 to 1991 between the Soviet Union and its allies (the Eastern Bloc) and the United States and its allies (the Western Bloc) concerning the growing conflict between socialism and capitalism. The Cold War comes into play in *The Wretched of the Earth* when both the Western and Eastern Blocs try to sway the Third World to their respective causes. Despite being inherently capitalist, the Third World remains politically neutral during the Cold War. Fanon claims that while socialism may be the existential threat of the time to the West, for much of the Third World, the existential threats of the time are European colonialism and the oppression and theft of culture, dignity, and wealth that come with it.

Colonialism – The practice of taking full or partial control of a country for the purposes of establishing a colony of settlers and economically exploiting the indigenous people, land, and resources. Colonialism as a practice began during the 15th century, and it still exists in some parts of the world today. By the early 1900s, Europe had control of 84 percent of the world through colonialism.

Decolonization – The act of undoing colonialism, and for some of the countries mentioned in *The Wretched of the Earth*, the act of becoming an independent nation. Fanon is particularly concerned with decolonization, which he argues is always a violent endeavor that is driven by the **peasant masses**, especially the **lumpenproletariat**.

Manichaeism – A major religion founded in Persia during the 3rd century, which is primarily concerned with the struggle between light (good) and dark (evil) forces. Fanon uses Manichaeism as an analogy for colonialism. The colonial world is a “Manichaean World,” he claims, that is divided into the **colonist**—or the light and good—and the **colonized**—or the dark and evil. This basic belief in the evil of Africans is the basis for the rampant racism that plagues colonial society.

National Consciousness – The shared identity of a nation. According to Fanon, national consciousness is developed during the struggle for independence and the building of a nation, and it is “the highest form of culture.”

Negritude – An attempt to raise black identity and culture throughout the African diaspora. Negritude and other frameworks and movements to elevate and legitimize black culture rely on a unifying African culture, which Fanon argues is impossible and counterproductive to the fight for legitimacy in the postcolonial world. Culture is national, Fanon argues, not continental, and the only thing that different black cultures and nations have in common is that they all “[define] themselves in relation to whites.”

Neocolonialism – The act of using capitalism or imperialism to control another country much like colonialism, despite the official absence of the colonial power. There are several forms of neocolonialism discussed in *The Wretched of the Earth*, including lingering colonial influence, capitalism, and the political control of undeveloped nations by the **national bourgeoisie**.

The Third World – The developing countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, which did not align with either side during the First and Second World Wars. During the Cold War, both the Eastern and Western Blocs pressured the Third World to join their respective causes, but the Third World remained politically neutral. The colonized nations mentioned in *The Wretched of the Earth* are Third World countries.



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



COLONIALISM, RACISM, AND VIOLENCE

Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* is a critical look at colonialism, the practice of taking political control of another country with the intention of establishing a settlement and exploiting the people economically. Colonialism began in Europe around the 15th century, and it is still practiced today in some parts of the world. Fanon, a French West Indian from Martinique, a French colony located in the eastern Caribbean Sea, had a personal interest in colonialism, and his book focuses on the ways colonialism historically sought to oppress and subjugate much of the Third World through blatant racism and repeated violence. At the time Fanon wrote his book in 1961, many colonized nations were struggling for independence, and the damage of hundreds of years of racism and exploitation was acutely felt by many. *The Wretched of the Earth* serves as a sort of guidebook for understanding the colonized and their struggle, and in it, Fanon ultimately argues that colonialism, an inherently racist and violent practice, can only be overcome by using violence in return.

Fanon maintains that colonialism divides the world into light and dark—or in this case, black and white—in a process he refers to as Manichaeism. Manichaeism is a Persian religious practice from the 3rd century that is based on the basic conflict of light and dark, and, Fanon claims, it serves as the basis for the racist practice of colonialism. Since “the colonial world is a Manichaean world,” Fanon says, the colonized individual is seen as the “quintessence of evil” and is considered void of any morals or ethics. Manichaeism assumes that light—the white settler—represents good, whereas dark—the black colonized individual—represents evil. To Fanon, colonialism is rooted in this basic racist belief. Based on the same Manichaean concept, the colonial world is likewise divided into the civilized and the savage. In keeping with the themes of light and dark, the white colonist is considered civilized, and the colonized is a savage. The colonized individual is “reduced to the state of an animal” and is referred to in “zoological terms.” Under the racist practice of colonialism, the colonized individual is completely dehumanized. According to Fanon, colonial countries are further divided into two separate “sectors”: the “colonist’s sector” and the “native’ quarters.” The colonist’s sector is clean and well maintained; but the “native” quarters, which are crowded and neglected, are “disreputable place[s] inhabited by disreputable people.” At the very foundation of colonialism, Fanon thus argues, is a basic principle that seeks to separate and oppress people based on the color of their skin.

In addition to a system of racism, Fanon argues that colonialism is also a system of violence, which seeks to control and oppress the colonized through violent means. From the beginning, Fanon claims that the colonial situation “was colored by violence and their cohabitation—or rather the exploitation of the colonized by the colonizer—continued at the point of the bayonet and under canon fire.” Colonial control was taken by violence and is maintained in much the same way. The colonized world—which again is separated into the colonizer and the colonized—is divided by military barracks and police stations. In a colonized country, Fanon says, “the spokesperson for the colonizer and regime of oppression, is the police officer or the soldier.” The mere presence of the dividing border between the worlds maintains order through intimidation and the threat of violence. Fanon argues that for the colonized, “all he has ever seen on his land is that he can be arrested, beaten, and starved with impunity.” Thus, Fanon implies, there is no end to the violence of colonialism—it doesn’t stop once power is established. Rather, violence is a constant presence that is front and center in lives of all colonized individuals.

Fanon refers to the widespread violence in colonial countries as “atmospheric violence,” which he claims is perpetually “rippling under the skin.” To Fanon, this constant violence is proof that colonialism cannot be overcome through peaceful or passive means. The colonized masses, Fanon asserts,

“intuitively believe that their liberation must be achieved and can only be achieved by force.” For the colonized, “violence is a cleansing force,” and it also rids them of the “inferiority complex” forced upon them by the racist ideology of colonialism. As a practice rooted in violence, Fanon thus argues that colonialism must be answered in kind.



OPPRESSION AND MENTAL HEALTH

Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* is an examination of the psychological effects of colonialism. Fanon was a practicing psychiatrist in France, and later in Algeria during the Algerian War of Independence—a war fought between France and the Algerian National Liberation Front between 1954 and 1962, which resulted in Algeria becoming an independent nation. Fanon was particularly interested in the psychological impact of colonialism on the colonized individual. The colonial situation, Fanon contends, is rooted in racism and violence, and it keeps the colonized living in a constant “state of rage.” Fanon explores this rage and its role as a cause of Algerian criminality, and he looks more specifically at other forms of psychological stress, such as brainwashing and physical torture, including electrocution. In Algeria, Fanon treated both Algerian torture victims and the French soldiers and officers who tortured them, and he reflects on such cases in his book. Through *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon effectively argues that the practice of colonialism is psychologically damaging to both the colonized and the colonist.

Fanon includes several cases of Algerian patients he treated for mental illness during the Algerian War of Independence. Fanon argues that their various illnesses are “psychotic reactions,” which are directly related to the stress of colonialism. Fanon includes the case file of an Algerian man known only as B, who was treated for impotence, migraines, and anorexia after his wife was raped by a French soldier. Each of B’s symptoms and conditions are in response to the violence of colonialism and the trauma of his wife’s rape. Fanon also includes the case of S, another Algerian man who was treated for “random homicidal impulses” after surviving a massacre in his small Algerian village perpetrated by the French military in 1958. Twenty-nine Algerians were killed in the massacre, and S suffered two bullet wounds. Since the massacre, S has the urge to “kill everybody,” a desire that only began after the violent attack on his village by the French soldiers. Fanon also includes notes on a group of young Algerian children, each under the age of 10, whom he treated for adjustment disorders. The children, whose parents had been killed in the war with France, suffered from bedwetting, sleepwalking, insomnia, and anxiety, and like both S and B, their pathologies were also directly related to the psychological stress of colonialism.

Fanon also includes case notes relating to his work with colonial soldiers and officers, as well as their families, which

suggests that colonialism has a negative psychological effect on both the colonized and the colonizer. Fanon includes notes on A, a young European police officer whom he treated for depression and anxiety, which began after he was expected to begin torturing Algerians on behalf of the colonial police. Like the Algerians Fanon also treated, A was likewise psychologically impacted by colonialism. Fanon, too, treated a young Frenchwoman who suffered from an anxiety disorder after her father, a civil servant, was killed during an ambush in Algeria. The Frenchwoman was disgusted and embarrassed by her father's involvement in the oppression of the Algerian people, and she found it impossible to be proud of him. This shame is directly related to colonialism, and it has a negative effect on the young Frenchwoman's psychological wellbeing. Lastly, Fanon includes his notes on R, a European police inspector who, after his involvement in colonialism and the oppression of the Algerian people, tortures his wife and children just as he tortured the Algerians. Like all of the patients mentioned in Fanon's book, R suffers from a "psychotic reaction" that is directly related to colonialism.

Fanon argues colonialism "sows seeds of decay here and there that must be mercilessly rooted out from our land and from our minds." In addition to being a moral stain on the history of Europe, Fanon underscores the psychiatric phenomena emerging from the colonial situation and advocates for colonialism to stop. Of course, at the time Fanon wrote his book in 1961, there was little evidence to suggest the colonial situation in Algeria would resolve anytime soon. "The truth is," Fanon claims, "that colonization, in its very essence, already appeared to be a great purveyor of psychiatric hospitals." In other words, there is no shortage of mental illness within the colonial situation.



CAPITALISM, SOCIALISM, AND THE THIRD WORLD

While Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* is primarily focused on the fundamental confrontation of colonialism and anticolonialism, the book is also concerned with the confrontation of capitalism and socialism. When Fanon wrote his book in 1961, the Cold War was in full swing, and it further complicated the colonial situation and the struggle for independence in the colonized world. The Cold War was an extended period of political tension between the socialist Soviet Union and their allies—the Eastern Bloc—and the capitalist United States and their allies—the Western Bloc. The Cold War divided the world into either socialist or capitalist countries, and even the Third World—the developing countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, who did not align with any nation or side during either World War I or World War II—was pressured to pick a side. Through *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon at once argues that while socialism is more conducive to the needs of a developing nation, nation-building is an

inherently capitalist venture, and he further argues that most of the wealth and capital of the West rightfully belongs to the Third World.

Fanon explains that the Third World was neutral during the Cold War, meaning they did not align with either the Eastern Bloc or the Western Bloc. By claiming neutrality, a Third World country was given protection under the law of war, although this protection was not nearly enough to account for years of oppression and economic exploitation. Neutrality, Fanon says, consists basically "of taking handouts left and right," and it allows Third World countries to receive economic aid from countries on both sides of the conflict. However, Fanon maintains, neutrality does not ensure that either side aides the Third World in "the way they should." The developed world owes much to the Third World after hundreds of years of colonialism, and the sparse aid given with neutrality is simply not enough. Despite not having any money or troops, Third World countries were "wooed" by both sides during the war. "To be frank," Fanon says, "everyone wants a piece of them. And that is what we call neutrality." Being neutral during the Cold War was simply another reason to entice an underdeveloped country to one of the conflicting sides and continue to exploit them through political and economic means. Third World countries remained neutral, since, Fanon asserts, "underdeveloped countries have no real interest in either prolonging or intensifying this cold war." According to Fanon, for the amount of money spent on arms and nuclear research alone during the Cold War, the living conditions in the Third World could have been improved by 60 percent in just 15 years. The Cold War, it seems, was just another excuse to neglect the Third World.

While the Third World was tirelessly pursued by both the Eastern Bloc and the Western Bloc, Fanon argues that neither economical model entirely fits the needs the underdeveloped nation. "Capitalist exploitation," Fanon says, including the cartels and monopolies, "are the enemies of the underdeveloped countries." The people and natural resources of underdeveloped countries have been exploited by capitalist colonists, and the Third World is not prepared to join forces with a capitalist cause. Socialism, Fanon explains, more closely benefits the developing nation, as it is concerned with "human investment" and is based in the belief that people are a nation's "most precious asset." However, Fanon argues, nation building needs "something other than human investment." Like capitalism, socialism is not entirely suited to the needs of the developing country. According to Fanon, socialism "cannot be sustained for long," and the effort "will not produce the results expected" for a new and developing nation. It would take centuries, Fanon argues, to right the economical wrongs of colonialism and put the Third World back to a prosperous place.

Nation building, Fanon asserts "requires capital," thus, it only

makes sense for the Third World to follow a capitalist economic model. However, Fanon argues that this choice should come with a caveat. The Cold War and capitalism versus socialism, he says, is not “the fundamental issue of our time.” Instead, the fundamental issue of the time as Fanon sees it is colonialism, and the reparations due to the Third World for the systematic theft of their people, land, culture, and wealth. Europe, Fanon says, “was built on the backs of slaves,” and it is time that the Third World is paid back.



DECOLONIZATION, NEOCOLONIALISM, AND SOCIAL CLASS

The Wretched of the Earth follows the struggles of the colonized nation and its move to independence in a process known as decolonization, which, plainly put, is the undoing of colonialism and the oppression that goes along with it. The primary way in which a new nation is built is through the development of national consciousness, a shared national identity that identifies people as collective parts of an independent nation. However, the problem with national consciousness, according to Fanon, is that building a collective identity that encompasses all members of a nation is nearly impossible. The national consciousness of a newly emerging nation revolves around the national bourgeoisie, or the ruling class, but this same national identity does not fit everyone and it leaves much the nation unaccounted for. Furthermore, Fanon argues that a nation built solely on the needs of the ruling class will quickly lead to neocolonialism, and colonial methods of oppression will remain largely intact, even in the official absence of the colonial power. Through *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon ultimately argues that the only way to avoid neocolonialism in the developing nation is to incorporate rural populations into government and to involve the lumpenproletariat—the very lowest social class, but also the most important—into the process of decolonization.

Political parties of the emerging nation are run by and for the national bourgeoisie, which is made up of the urban proletariat and includes tradesmen and civil servants. They are a small part of society and account for less than one percent of the nation’s total population. The national bourgeoisie, Fanon says, are the taxi drivers, doctors, nurses, and lawyers, and they “are indispensable for running the colonial machine.” They stand to lose the most through decolonization, and their politics closely resemble that of colonists. The national bourgeoisie and those who run the nationalist unions “represent the most well-to-do fraction of the people” in a colonized country, and, according to Fanon, they are the most “pampered by the regime” of colonialism. It is better for the bourgeoisie if colonial channels of oppression are maintained, despite the negative impact on the rest of the nation. The national bourgeoisie conflicts with the feudal rulers of a nation, such as witch doctors and other cultural roles, like *djemaas*, the legal and tribal leaders of

outlying tribes. The bourgeoisie, which includes medical doctors and lawyers, for example, must eliminate such feudal barriers to grow in an independent nation, even if it is to the detriment of the rural masses and feudal rulers.

Decolonization and the formation of a new nation, Fanon argues, therefore cannot be obtained without the peasant masses, particularly the lumpenproletariat, who are crucial to revolution. According to Fanon, the peasant masses “are generally the least politically conscious, the least organized as well as the most anarchistic elements,” and in the act of rebelling against a foreign power during revolution, they are invaluable. National politics tend to ignore the peasant masses and consider them unimportant, but Fanon warns that is a mistake. The lumpenproletariat “constitutes one of the most spontaneously and radically revolutionary forces of a colonized people,” Fanon says, and overcoming the colonial power is not possible without them. The bourgeoisie, who live in the cities and are steeped in colonial culture, are often hesitant to rebel against the same economic system that benefits them. Fanon claims that any national liberation movement should give “maximum attention” to the lumpenproletariat. The lumpenproletariat will always answer a call to revolt, Fanon says, but if they are ignored, they will pick up the side of the oppressor and “join the colonialist troops as mercenaries” instead and actively work against decolonization. The lumpenproletariat must be recruited before they jump to the other side, and decolonization cannot hope to be accomplished without them.

Fanon ultimately argues that the act of decolonizing “concerns the entire nation.” The classes must come together in fighting colonial power, or they are destined to fall right back into colonialist practice. The national struggle, Fanon further argues, must involve the peasant masses, especially the lumpenproletariat, who are always “prepared to make sacrifices, willing to give all they have, impatient, with an indestructible pride.” When the classes come together, Fanon says, it “can produce an explosive mixture of unexpected power,” which is just what is needed to decolonize a country and build a new nation.



CULTURE AND THE EMERGING NATION

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon argues that one of the ways in which colonial forces oppress colonized individuals is through the erasure of black culture. Racist colonial powers claim that colonized countries, especially those on the continent of Africa, are devoid of culture and meaningful artistic expression. The absence of culture is considered the height of barbarism, and colonialism assumes that in the precolonial period, Africa “was akin to a darkness of the human soul.” An important step in decolonization, Fanon therefore maintains, is proving the existence of one’s culture and exerting it on a world stage. “The

recognition of a national culture and its right to exist” is crucial in building a new nation, and with the widespread decolonization of the continent of Africa came the establishment of “Negro” culture, a unifying black culture that recognized all cultures of the African diaspora. Fanon, however, contends that establishing a universal black culture is not possible, nor is it helpful to decolonization, because black culture is not universal. Instead, Fanon argues that the individual struggle for nationhood is the unifying black culture, and that this can’t be expressed or appreciated on a continental level.

Fanon explains negritude, an affirmation of African culture and heritage, which attempts to bring a unifying black culture to the world stage. For example, colonized literature in Africa has not historically “been a national literature but a ‘Negro’ literature.” Thus, colonized literature examines the continent of African as a whole rather than the individual countries and cultures that make it up. Negritude reached even America, where “the ‘black world’ came into being,” and it includes all black cultures affected by colonization, including those in Ghana, Senegal, Mali, and even those in the United States. Negritude considers these cultures collectively as black culture, not individually as independent nations. However, Fanon argues, a blanket African culture rather than an individual national culture “leads African intellectuals into a dead end.” One unifying African culture can’t possibly reflect the cultural importance of the entire African diaspora, and, Fanon contends, it shouldn’t even try. To do so is to further marginalize and oppress true black culture, and this is counterproductive to decolonization.

Fanon contends that a unifying black culture cannot be established because it ignores crucial aspects of individual black culture and actively works against the process of decolonization. Fanon mentions black American writers, including Richard Wright and Langston Hughes, who were ultimately unable to build a collective black culture in the United States. Black Americans like Wright and Hughes, Fanon says, quickly “realized that their existential problems differed from those faced by the Africans.” As each black experience is wildly different, it cannot possibly be represented by one single culture. The culture of Richard Wright and Langston Hughes, Fanon says, is “fundamentally different” from those faced by Jomo Kenyatta, an anticolonial activist and the prime minister of Kenya, and Léopold Senghor, a Senegalese poet, politician, and the founder of negritude. These conflicting histories again suggests that one unifying black culture is impossible. In fact, Fanon claims, “the only common denominator between the blacks from Chicago and the Nigerians or Tanganyikans was that they all defined themselves in relation to the whites.” In every other way, black culture as a whole is completely unique and unrelated.

Fanon argues that black or “Negro” culture eventually “broke up because the men who set out to embody it realized that

every culture is first and foremost national.” A unifying “Negro” culture attempts to express black culture on a continental scale, which, Fanon says, is wholly impossible and detrimental to the cause. According to Fanon, “culture is the expression of national consciousness,” which also means that “national consciousness is the highest form of culture,” and it is automatically established during the building of a nation.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



TENSE MUSCLES

Fanon repeatedly mentions the tense and contracted muscles of the colonized throughout

The Wretched of the Earth. These muscles are symbolic of several things, including the immense frustration and anger of the colonized, as well as the violence that plagues the colonial situation. Tense muscles, however, also represent the colonized individual’s desire for liberation, and their tenacity in regaining nationhood and dignity. Fanon claims that whenever Western values and ethics are mentioned within the colonial situation, “the colonized grow tense and their muscles seize up.” The colonized are tense with anger at the implication that Western values—the same values that bred colonialism and the exploitation and erasure of entire nations and cultures—are considered superior to their own. According to Fanon, the only thing that can ease the tense muscles of the colonized is participation in their traditional cultural practices, which are robbed from them under colonialism. Thus, “The muscles of the colonized are always tensed,” Fanon says. Not because the colonized are anxious or afraid, but because they are alert—always ready for whatever may come their way next.

In a newly independent nation, the previously colonized intellectual takes to finding and legitimizing a new national culture. To do so, Fanon says, the intellectual must commit wholeheartedly to the national struggle, and “muscle power is required.” Colonial racism has for hundreds of years maintained that African nations and people are completely devoid of culture and intellect, and as such, the formerly colonized intellectual has their work cut out for them. As more Third World nations are liberated from colonialism, and more and more still fight for their freedom, Fanon encourages developing nations not to follow in the footsteps of Europe. “Let us decide not to imitate Europe,” he says, “and let us tense our muscles and our brains in a new direction.” While decolonization and independence mean the death of colonialism, Fanon suggests that it is best to remember—deep within the muscle memory, as it were—the oppression and struggle for nationhood, as that is where the national culture lives and thrives.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Grove Press edition of *The Wretched of the Earth* published in 2005.

Chapter 1: On Violence Quotes

●● Decolonization, therefore, implies the urgent need to thoroughly challenge the colonial situation. Its definition can, if we want to describe it accurately, be summed up in the well-known words: “The last shall be first.” Decolonization is verification of this. At a descriptive level, therefore, any decolonization is a success.

Related Characters: The Colonists/Colonialists, The Colonized

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 2

Explanation and Analysis

This quote occurs at the very beginning of *The Wretched of the Earth*, and it is important because it reflects Fanon’s aim in writing his book: “to thoroughly challenge the colonial situation.” Fanon maintains throughout his book that in order to truly decolonize and undo colonialism and the system of oppression and racism that goes along with it, the entire situation must be dismantled, which he proceeds to do throughout the book. Decolonization isn’t simply something that should be done eventually. Decolonization is “urgent,” Fanon says, and is not something that can be ignored.

To challenge the colonial situation in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon turns colonialist assumptions and prejudice on its head, and in essence, the “last” becomes the “first.” For example, the colonial situation assumes that the colonized are immoral “savages,” who are inherently born to be criminals. Fanon rejects this, and by the end of his book, it is the colonists who are the immoral savages, steeped in violence and sadism. Each time the colonial situation is challenged, even in the smallest way, it is an act of decolonization. By making the last—in this case, the colonized—the first, the colonized rise up from the oppression of colonialism and push the colonists to the end of the line, resisting and denying their supposed superiority.

●● In its bare reality, decolonization reeks of red-hot cannonballs and bloody knives. For the last can be the first only after a murderous and decisive confrontation between the two protagonists. This determination to have the last move up to the front, to have them clamber up (too quickly, say some) the famous echelons of an organized society, can only succeed by resorting to every means, including, of course, violence.

Related Characters: The Colonists/Colonialists, The Colonized

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 3

Explanation and Analysis

This passage also occurs in the beginning of *The Wretched of the Earth*, and it is important because it underscores Fanon’s primary argument that decolonization cannot be achieved without violence. In describing decolonization as something that “reeks of red-hot cannonballs and bloody knives,” Fanon implies the violence that is inherent to the practice of colonialism, and therefore, to the process of decolonization as well. Colonial power is assumed through violent military means, which is reflected in the “cannonballs,” and it must be overcome with similar means.

Notably, the Algerians, whom Fanon mentions several times as an example of decolonization in the book and even joined forces with during the Algerian War of Independence, famously used knives in their guerilla warfare tactics. In mentioning “bloody knives,” Fanon not only alludes to the violence of the colonized, he alludes to the violence of the Algerians specifically, people with whom he has a special connection. This quote furthermore reflects the racist assumptions of colonialism, which assume that the colonized belong in the lowest echelons of organized society. In claiming that some think the colonized have climbed the societal rungs too quickly implies that they still belong at the bottom, even if they have taken the front of the line by force.

Chapter 1: Violence in International Context

Quotes

☝ And when we hear the head of a European nation declare with hand on heart that he must come to the aid of the unfortunate peoples of the underdeveloped world, we do not tremble with gratitude. On the contrary, we say among ourselves, “it is a just reparation we are getting.” So we will not accept aid for the underdeveloped countries as “charity.” Such aid must be considered the final stage of a dual consciousness—the consciousness of the colonized that *it is their due* and the consciousness of the capitalist powers that effectively *they must pay up*.

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 59

Explanation and Analysis

This passage occurs in Fanon’s chapter on violence, and it is important because it underscores Fanon’s primary claim that the wealth of the West in fact belongs to the Third World, which further reflects the oppression and exploitation of the Third World through European colonialism. The European nation who declares “with hand on heart” that they will help the Third World implies they are doing something kind that they otherwise are not expected to do. This is one of the “handouts” Fanon speaks of, only he doesn’t see it that way. To Fanon, this assistance is a “reparation”—something that is owed to the Third World in the first place, not “charity.”

As the West became rich exploiting the Third World, Fanon argues that wealth in fact belongs to the Third World. Fanon’s reference to “dual consciousness” is a reference to W. E. B. Du Bois, who coined this term in his book, *The Souls of Black Folk*. Du Bois’s idea of dual consciousness means that people of color are forced to look at themselves through a white perspective and context, but here Fanon redefines this well-known term. For Fanon, double consciousness means that both the West and the Third World know that the Third World was wronged and is owed recompense. Fanon implies that all literature, including black or “Negro” literature like Du Bois’s, is situated in the colonial context. By modifying this concept and applying it to his own needs, Fanon is again challenging the colonial situation.

☝ It is clear therefore that the young nations of the Third World are wrong to grovel at the feet of the capitalist countries. We are powerful in our own right and the justness of our position. It is our duty, however, to tell and explain to the capitalist countries that they are wrong to think the fundamental issue of our time is the war between the socialist regime and them.

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 61

Explanation and Analysis

This quote appears at the end of the Fanon’s chapter on violence, and it is significant because it underscores the oppression of the Third World and the disregard with which the rest of the world treats them. Fanon explains that during the Cold War, both the Eastern Bloc (the Soviet Union and its allies) and the Western Bloc (the U.S. and its allies) clamor for the support of the Third World. Fanon admits that the developing nations of the Third World are inherently capitalist, but this doesn’t mean that he believes they should join in with the other capitalist countries.

Even though the capitalist countries of the Western Bloc pursue the Third World during the Cold War, they still believe that the Third World has relatively little to offer. Alliance means that the developing countries open themselves up to be exploited by the larger capitalist countries, but beyond that, it is thought that the Third World brings relatively little to the table. Fanon, however, insists that the Third World has much to offer. Thus, they shouldn’t “grovel,” he says, and their number one task should be explaining to the capitalist countries that the real issue of the time is not the fight against socialism, but the need to the right the right of colonialism. Of course, the fact that the capitalist nations must be convinced of this illustrates the disregard with which the Third World is treated, as their grievance is outright ignored, and they are expected to abandon it to fight the cause of the West instead.

Chapter 2: Grandeur and Weakness of Spontaneity Quotes

☝ The great mistake, the inherent flaw of most of the political parties in the underdeveloped regions has been traditionally to address first and foremost the most politically conscious elements: the urban proletariat, the small tradesmen and the civil servants, i.e., a tiny section of the population which represents barely more than one percent.

Related Characters: The National Bourgeoisie, The Peasant Masses, The Urban Proletariat

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 64

Explanation and Analysis

This quote is near the beginning of Fanon's chapter on newly independent nations, and it is important because it begins to explain how previously colonized countries are vulnerable to neocolonialism and continued oppression even after the colonial power exits, but it also introduces the "mistake" that leads to the national bourgeoisie. Here, Fanon explains in no uncertain terms one of the main reasons as to why a developing country might fail to grow and prosper. In the building of the political parties in the new nation, Fanon claims there is a "great mistake," an "inherent flaw," which implies the developing nation is doomed from the beginning.

The political parties are made up of the urban proletariat, who happen to be the most privileged of society and not at all representative of the body politic, yet they are the ones who drive society. Most of an underdeveloped society is made up of the peasant masses, and they do not share the same political interests as the urban proletariat.

Furthermore, the urban proletariat and the political parties give birth to the national bourgeoisie, the ruling class of society who steer everything in their favor and ignore the peasant classes. This inevitably leads to the peasant classes being neglected just as they were under colonial rule. Fanon argues that the national bourgeoisie is the number one enemy of a developing nation, and the political parties and urban proletariat represent the "fatal flaw" that brings them about.

☞ It is among these masses, in the people of the shanty towns and in the lumpenproletariat that the insurrection will find its urban spearhead. The lumpenproletariat, this cohort of starving men, divorced from tribe and clan, constitutes one of the most spontaneously and radically revolutionary forces of a colonized people.

Related Characters: The Peasant Masses, The Lumpenproletariat

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 81

Explanation and Analysis

This quote also appears in Fanon's chapter about the developing nation, and it is important because it identifies the lumpenproletariat as the most valuable members of the revolutionary forces. The lumpenproletariat constitute the very bottom of rung of society, and they are below even the peasant masses. The lumpenproletariats live in "shanty towns"—the crude makeshift homes constructed on the very edge of society—and they are made up of criminals and juvenile delinquents. They are avoided by the other members of society and given a wide berth, but Fanon insists they play a crucial role in the revolution.

The lumpenproletariat is the "urban spearhead," Fanon says, which both reflects their importance and the inherently violent nature of rebellion and decolonization. The lumpenproletariat are "starving" because they live in absolute poverty. Most leave country clans and tribes to find work in the city and end up turning to petty crime instead. Thus, they are "divorced from tribe and clan." Still, Fanon insists that this group of people can be easily motivated and are "the most spontaneously and radically revolutionary forces of a colonized people." Fanon later claims that spontaneity is needed to achieve liberation, and the lumpenproletariat are the most spontaneous of all.

☞ The struggle for national liberation is not a question of bridging the gap in one giant stride. The epic is played out on a difficult, day-to-day basis and the suffering endured far exceeds that of the colonial period.

Related Characters: The Colonized

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 90

Explanation and Analysis

This quote appears near the end of Fanon's chapter about the developing nation, and it is significant because it reflects decolonization and liberation as part of a longer process that last much longer than the actual liberation struggle. National liberation is not achieved "in one giant stride," Fanon says. Rather, it is achieved through a series of small steps, of which the liberation struggle is just one. The battle is "epic," which reflects its importance within the colonial space, as well as its scope and the violence involved in the struggle.

This also lays the foundation for Fanon's upcoming chapter

on the nation and culture. The existence of culture is proof of the nation's existence, but this step cannot be taken in one long stride either. Those who try to claim a single unifying African culture will find, according to Fanon, that they do not capture the national consciousness. A nation's consciousness—the collective identity of an entire nation of people—cannot be built this way. Like the nation itself, it is built “day-to-day” and played out over an extended period of time. Of course, this means that suffering continues until this sense of national unity can be established, but as Fanon claims, this is to be expected in the process of decolonization.

☛ The people who in the early days of the struggle had adopted the primitive Manichaeism of the colonizer—Black versus White, Arab versus Infidel—realize en route that some blacks can be whiter than the whites, and that the prospect of a national flag or independence does not automatically result in certain segments of the population giving up their privileges and their interests.

Related Characters: The Colonists/Colonialists, The Colonized

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 93

Explanation and Analysis

This quote, too, appears near the end of Fanon's chapter on the developing nation and it is important because it reflects the racism present in colonial society, but it also implies that the previously colonized are not safe from oppression simply because the colonial power has exited. The concept of Manichaeism divides the world into white and black (good and evil, respectively), and Fanon points out how ridiculous this blanket understanding of good and evil really is. The rules of Manichaeism stipulate that black people are evil simply because they are black, but the decolonized nation has flipped this understanding on its head, and now the white people are considered evil.

The newly independent nation soon discovers that even black people are capable of oppressing other black people, which makes them “whiter than the whites.” These black people are engaged in oppressive behavior, and they have not abandoned their “privileges” or their “interests” in the name of the new nation. Furthermore, as those black people who have turned their back on their nation for their own interests have “adopted the primitive Manichaeism of the colonizer,” this means they have also adopted the colonizer's

racist assumptions as well. This is further evidence of neocolonialism, as the same systems of oppression are operating even though the colonial power has officially left.

Chapter 3: The Trials and Tribulations... Quotes

☛ Since the bourgeoisie has neither the material means nor adequate intellectual resources such as engineers and technicians, it limits its claims to the takeover of businesses and firms previously held by the colonists. The national bourgeoisie replaces the former European settlers as doctors, lawyers, tradesmen, agents, dealers, and shipping agents. For the dignity of the country and to safeguard its own interests, it considers it its duty to occupy all these positions. Henceforth it demands that every major foreign company must operate through them, if it wants to remain in the country or establish trade.

Related Characters: The Colonists/Colonialists, The Urban Proletariat, The National Bourgeoisie

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 100

Explanation and Analysis

This quote occurs in Fanon's chapter about the developing nation and neocolonialism, and it is significant because it highlights how dangerous the national bourgeoisie really is to the developing nation. The bourgeoisie in an underdeveloped nation is not the same as in an established capitalist nation. In a developing nation, the bourgeoisie are inexperienced and generally uneducated, and they do not have the means nor the skills to fill this role. The national bourgeoisie, however, which is made up of the urban proletariat—the privileged, educated masses that represent one percent of the population—is qualified, at least on the surface, to hold the positions of the exiting colonists.

Like the exiting colonial power, the national bourgeoisie believes they are superior to other colonized individuals because they are steeped in Western culture and tradition. Thus, they think it their “duty” to take control of the nation, and of the people. However, their intentions are not pure, and they are driven only by self-interests and greed. In this position of power, the national bourgeoisie begin to make demands and oppress the people economically and politically just as the colonialists did. Thus, Fanon argues, the channels of colonialism are still in place and capable of oppressing the people, even after independence is achieved.

●● The struggle against the bourgeoisie in the underdeveloped countries is far from being simply theoretical. It is not a question of deciphering the way history has judged and condemned it. The national bourgeoisie in the underdeveloped countries should not be combated because it threatens to curb the overall, harmonious development of the nation. It must be resolutely opposed because literally it serves no purpose. Mediocre in its winnings, in its achievements and its thinking, this bourgeoisie attempts to mask its mediocrity by ostentatious projects for individual prestige, chromium-plated American cars, vacations on the French Riviera and weekends in neon-lit nightclubs.

Related Characters: The National Bourgeoisie

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 120

Explanation and Analysis

This passage also occurs in Fanon's chapter about the developing country and neocolonialism, and it is significant because it highlights the utter uselessness of the national bourgeoisie. Moreover, it suggests that the national bourgeoisie isn't merely useless, but also dangerous to the developing nation. Fanon claims these problems with the national bourgeoisie aren't "simply theoretical," meaning they represent real problems with real implications and consequences. The national bourgeoisie has not just been handed a negative reputation or bad name from unfair or biased history. No, Fanon says, the national bourgeoisie is absolutely worthless.

The national bourgeoisie shouldn't just be rejected, it should be "resolutely opposed," which suggests it should be resisted with strength and resolve. It is only "mediocre" and offers nothing of any real value, yet the national bourgeoisie has assumed all the power within society. The national bourgeoisie hides its "mediocrity" behind smoke and mirrors, Fanon implies, like conceit and fancy cars and vacations. Indeed, the national bourgeoisie has nothing to offer to the developing society. Instead, they simply take from the people and run the country into the ground, which, Fanon insists, must be resisted and stopped at all costs.

●● A country which really wants to answer to history, which wants to develop its towns and the minds of its inhabitants, must possess a genuine party. The party is not an instrument in the hands of the government. Very much to the contrary, the party is an instrument in the hands of the people. It is the party which decides on the policy enacted by the government. The party is not and never should be merely a political bureau where all the members of government and dignitaries of the regime feel free to congregate. Alas all too often it is the party which makes up the entire political bureau and its members reside permanently in the capital. In an underdeveloped country the leading party members should flee the capital like the plague. With the exception of a few, they should reside in the rural areas. Centralizing everything in the capital should be avoided. No administrative pretext can justify the bustle of the capital already overpopulated and overdeveloped compared with nine tenths of the territory. The party must be decentralized to the limit.

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 127-8

Explanation and Analysis

This quote appears in Fanon's chapter about the developing nation and neocolonialism, and it is important because it underscores Fanon's argument that the government of a developing nation should be decentralized and established in rural areas. Fanon offers numerous ways in which a developing nation can fail and fall to the oppression of neocolonialism, but this quote outlines how to avoid such a fate. Fanon implies that the government often fails to work for the people because it doesn't actually reflect the people and their needs. However, by turning into "the hands of the people," the government can effectively work for, not against, the people.

In Fanon's attempt to challenge the colonial situation and dismantle it, he rejects the idea that a nation's government must be centralized in a metropolitan area. The importance of capitals, Fanon says, is a myth. Since most of the people ("nine tenths") don't live in metropolitan areas, the government shouldn't be located there either. Fanon doesn't just suggest governments move to rural areas, he tells them to avoid cities and capitals "like the plague," which implies that to centralize the government is a dangerous, and potentially life-threatening move to the developing nation.

Chapter 4: On National Culture Quotes

Within the political parties, or rather parallel to them, we find the cultured class of colonized intellectuals. The recognition of a national culture and its right to exist represent their favorite stamping ground. Whereas the politicians integrate their action in the present, the intellectuals place themselves in the context of history. Faced with the colonized intellectual's debunking of the colonialist theory of a precolonial barbarism, colonialism's response is mute.

Related Characters: The Colonists/Colonialists, The Colonized

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 147

Explanation and Analysis

This quote occurs in Fanon's chapter about culture and the emerging nation, and it is important because it underscores the desire and importance for the emerging nation to exert a national culture on the global stage. Racist colonial assumptions have long since contended that the colonized, especially the black colonized from Africa, are void of any culture or intellect. By denying the colonized's cultural identity and essentially stripping it from them, the colonial power denies the colonized identity while simultaneously proclaiming their lack of culture as proof of their savage nature. Only those who are completely uncivilized don't have culture. Thus, the colonized are therefore uncivilized, according to racist colonial beliefs.

This stripping of national culture is why the colonized intelligentsia are intent on exerting a national identity. To do so, in their eyes, is to finally exist. If they have a national culture, then that means they also have a nation in which they each belong. To find this national culture, the colonized intellectual goes back in time to precolonial times to uncover their culture as it was untouched by oppression and colonialism, which is why the intellectuals "place themselves in the context of history." In uncovering a history of national culture, the intellectuals effectively prove that the colonialists were wrong to call them cultureless savages in keeping with the colonists' "theory of a precolonial barbarism," but the colonists are "mute" and will not admit they were wrong. Fanon's point is that the colonists will never admit they have been wrong in colonizing the Third World, so it is futile to wait for an apology or even acknowledgment.

But gradually the black Americans realized that their existential problems differed from those faced by the Africans. The only common denominator between the blacks from Chicago and the Nigerians or Tanganyikans was that they all defined themselves in relation to the whites. But once the initial comparisons had been made and subjective feelings had settled down, the black Americans realized that the objective problems were fundamentally different.

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 153

Explanation and Analysis

This quote also occurs in Fanon's chapter about culture and the nation, and it is significant because it highlights Fanon's central claim that a single, unifying black culture will not adequately reflect the African people. This black culture, Fanon says, stretches all the way to the United States and includes all the people of the African diaspora, which is millions and millions of people spread all over the world. Black Americans, however, have nothing in common with the Africans. Their "existential problems"—those problems deeply affecting their lives—are different from their African counterpart.

The only thing all black people have in common, Fanon says, whether they are from Chicago, Nigeria, or Tanganyika (modern-day Tanzania) is "that they all define themselves in relation to the whites," meaning they each define themselves as an "other" compared to white people. These differences are exactly why Fanon argues there cannot be unifying African culture to encompass all the world's black people. The scope is simply too large, and it can't possibly represent all of Africa's culture. Fanon ultimately argues that culture is national, not continental, and to place each culture under the same umbrella is to deny countless cultural identities and perpetuate stereotypes.

The colonized intellectual should not be concerned with choosing how or where he decides to wage the national struggle. To fight for national culture first of all means fighting for the liberation of the nation, the tangible matrix from which culture can grow. One cannot divorce the combat for culture from the people's struggle for liberation. For example, all the men and women fighting French colonialism in Algeria with their bare hands are no strangers to the national culture of Algeria. The Algerian national culture takes form and shape during the fight, in prison, facing the guillotine, and in the capture and destruction of the French military positions.

Related Characters: The Colonized

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 168

Explanation and Analysis

This quote also occurs during Fanon's chapter on culture and the struggling nation, and it is significant because it further implies that culture is national, not international, and it also highlights Fanon's central claim that national culture is formed during the struggle for nationhood. Here, Fanon implies that the colonized intellectual should not look for national culture in any place other than the struggle for nationhood. In this way, Fanon effectively argues that the colonized's struggle for nationhood is their national culture. Fighting for nationhood, Fanon says, is "the tangible matrix from which culture can grow." In other words, the struggle for nationhood is the location of their culture.

Fanon uses the country of Algeria, who, during the writing of Fanon's book, were locked in a prolonged struggle for nationhood. The men and women of Algeria "are no strangers to the national culture of Algeria," because they are building it "with their bare hands" during their fight for independence. Their culture is represented in this struggle for nationhood—in the armed battles, in the prisons where the Algerians are kept, and even the guillotine, which undoubtedly executed countless Algerians. The Algerian culture is in their struggle for nationhood, and it cannot be formed, or found, anywhere else.

Explanation and Analysis

This quote occurs in Fanon's chapter on culture and the nation as well, and it is significant because it underscores the racism and oppression of colonial society, but it further underscores Fanon's central argument that one's culture is found in their struggle for nationhood. The colonial power seeks the "destruction" of the national culture of the colonized and "systematically" destroys it. This not only undermines the colonized population as whole, but it is also an assault on their collective identity. Furthermore, stripping one of their national culture also denies their existence as part of a nation. Under colonialism, the colonized is nationless, as their nation has been absorbed by the colonial power. In this way, the colonial power has taken the nation of the colonized both literally and metaphorically.

Fanon's claim that colonial domination means that the colonized is "condemned to clandestinity" implies that the colonized has to express any remaining national culture in secret or risk having whatever culture remains stripped as well. Still, the colonized will not abandon their culture, even when it is forbidden, and the colonial power sees this as a form of resistance. Fanon implies that this resistance and refusal to fully yield to the colonial power is in itself a struggle for nationhood, which means it also builds national culture. Fanon claims this resistance "is already a demonstration of nationhood," which suggests that the struggle for nationhood is not always an armed conflict. Regardless of how this struggle unfolds, however, Fanon asserts that it builds national culture all the same.

Chapter 4: Mutual Foundations... Quotes

☞☞ National culture under colonial domination is a culture under interrogation whose destruction is sought systematically. Very quickly it becomes a culture condemned to clandestinity. This notion of clandestinity can immediately be perceived in the reactions of the occupier who interprets this complacent attachment to traditions as a sign of loyalty to the national spirit and a refusal to submit. This persistence of cultural expression condemned by colonial society is already a demonstration of nationhood.

☞☞ A culture is first and foremost the expression of a nation, its preferences, its taboos, and its models. Other taboos, other values, other models are formed at every level of the entire society. National culture is the sum of all these considerations, the outcome of tensions internal and external to society as a whole and its multiple layers. In the colonial context, culture, when deprived of the twin supports of the nation and the state, perishes and dies. National liberation and the resurrection of the state are the preconditions for the very existence of a culture.

Related Characters: The Colonists/Colonialists, The Colonized

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 171-1

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 177

Explanation and Analysis

This is another quote from Fanon's chapter on culture and the nation, and it is significant because it directly defines

culture and further asserts that culture and the struggle for nationhood are one and the same. The national culture is the embodiment of the nation as whole, which again is why culture cannot be expressed on a continental level. The national identity is continually building as new struggles and conflict break out. According to Fanon, culture is “the sum of all these considerations,” and it thus goes much deeper than one’s race or ethnicity.

Fanon again draws attention to the demise of culture under the power of colonialism. Culture is “deprived of the twin supports of nation and state” under colonialism because the nation and state have been taken by the colonial power. Without a nation, there cannot possibly be a culture, Fanon asserts. Thus, national culture is uncovered not by returning to the past to precolonial culture but by “resurrecting” the nation and state. The existence of the nation ensures that culture can be had in the first place, and the struggle this colonial fight implies, once again, is what builds this culture.

Chapter 5: Colonial War and Mental Disorders Quotes

☛ When colonization remains unchallenged by armed resistance, when the sum of harmful stimulants exceeds a certain threshold, the colonized’s defenses collapse, and many of them end up in psychiatric institutions. In the calm of this period of triumphant colonization, a constant and considerable stream of mental symptoms are direct sequels of this oppression.

Related Characters: The Colonists/Colonialists, The Colonized

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 182

Explanation and Analysis

This quote occurs in Fanon’s final chapter about colonialism and mental disorders, and it is important because it underscores the constant stress and violence the colonized are forced to live under, but it also implies that mental illness is a direct result of colonialism and the violence and oppression that stems from it. Under colonization, Fanon claims that the colonized is under constant stress of “harmful stimulants,” until the colonized individual simply “collapses,” or snaps, under the pressure. This is the point of no return, Fanon implies, at which they can take no more.

Fanon claims there is a “constant and considerable stream of mental symptoms” within the colonial situation, and he

further says that psychological symptoms are “direct sequels of this oppression.” In other words, this psychological unrest is directly related to colonialism and the stress, oppression, and abuse that goes along with it. Notably, Fanon claims that this mental break only occurs when the colonial power is “unchallenged by armed resistance.” In this way, Fanon suggests that the armed resistance, in a way, helps to cleanse the colonized of the “harmful stimulants” of colonialism, or at least that resistance or rebellion has a way of making such stimulants more bearable.

Chapter 5: Series A Quotes

☛ Today I can tell just which stage the interrogation has reached by the sound of the screams. The guy who has been punched twice and given a blow behind the ear has a certain way of talking, screaming, and saying that he is innocent. After he has been hanging by his wrists for two hours, his voice changes. After the bathtub, a different voice. And so on. But it’s after the electricity that it becomes unbearable. You’d think he was going to die at any moment.

Related Characters: A (speaker), The Colonists/Colonialists

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 195

Explanation and Analysis

This quote also occurs in Fanon’s final chapter about colonialism and mental disorders, and it is important because it highlights the extreme violence of colonialism, but it also underscores the extreme mental disturbances that come along with colonialism. This quote is spoken by A, one of Fanon’s patients at a psychiatric hospital in Algeria during the Algerian War of Independence, and it illustrates the extreme torture that was forced on the Algerians during the war. Historically speaking, the Algerian War is well remembered for the horrendous torture doled out by the French officers, and A’s description of the torture he was involved in fully illustrates the scope of this torture.

This quote also suggests that A partakes in torturing Algerians frequently. In fact, he tortures Algerians so frequently, that he can tell which type of torture they have had based on how the victims scream. He does not need to see anything or ask any questions. Simply by listening, A knows where in the torture process they are in. He is a specialist in human torture, which again speaks to the violence of colonialism, especially in Algeria. This quote also

draw attention to the use of electricity as a means of torture. While the Algerian War was known for all types of torture, it was particularly infamous for the widespread use of electricity during torture, which even A agrees is “unbearable.”

Conclusion Quotes

●● We must abandon our dreams and say farewell to our old beliefs and former friendships. Let us not lose time in useless laments or sickening mimicry. Let us leave this Europe which never stops talking of man yet massacres him at every one of its street corners, at every corner of the world.

Related Characters: The Colonized, The Colonists/Colonialists

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 235

Explanation and Analysis

This quote occurs in Fanon’s conclusion, and it is important because it again reflects the widespread violence and oppression of colonialism. Fanon claims that “we”—the colonized, that is—must “abandon [their] dreams and say farewell to [their] old beliefs and former friendships.”

During colonial times, before the struggle for independence, the colonized wanted to be the colonized, or at least have Europe’s wealth and power. Here, Fanon implies that the colonized must let go of this desire. Fanon even implies that he had friends who were colonialist, whom he now must let go of if he is to live a free and liberated life.

Fanon again mentions “mimicry,” which implies that he had previously want to be like the colonists, or that he at least wanted to act like them from time to time, but has since realized that he does not wish to emulate Europe in anyway. The final sentence of the quote underscores the scope of European colonialism and how far their oppression has reached, which Fanon claims has been “every [...] street corner,” and “every corner of the word.” There was no end to the colonial power, it seems, and Fanon is not looking to “mimic” such terrible violence.

●● Let us decide not to imitate Europe and let us tense our muscles and our brains in a new direction. Let us endeavor to invent a man in full, something which Europe has been incapable of achieving.

Two centuries ago, a former European colony took it into its head to catch up with Europe. It has been so successful that the United States of America has become a monster where the flaws, sickness, and inhumanity of Europe have reached frightening proportions.

Related Characters: The Colonized, The Colonists/Colonialists

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 236

Explanation and Analysis

This quote, too, occurs in Fanon’s conclusion, and it is significant because it again underscores the violence of European colonialism, but it also highlights the dangers, such as prejudice and discrimination, of following Europe as an example. According to Fanon, it was not unheard of for a colonized individual to want to follow in Europe’s footsteps. This desire, however, is lessening, especially since the atrocities of colonialism are more openly recognized now than they have been. Here, Fanon claims the colonized must tense their “muscles and our brains in a new direction.” This implies that the colonized’s muscles, once tense from the stress of colonialism, can finally relaxing.

Fanon underscores the dangers of following in the footsteps of Europe, and he offers the United States as a prime example of what happens when a nation wants to “catch up” to Europe. The United States is a “monster,” Fanon says, and it is much worse than Europe. “[T]he flaws, sickness, and inhumanity of Europe have reached frightening proportions.” The United States is plagued with war and is tainted by a history of slavery, and, Fanon implies, all of these unspeakable acts of violence are rooted in the example set by Europe hundreds of years ago.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1: ON VIOLENCE

Decolonization—the liberation of a nation and the restoration of that nation to the people—will, according to Fanon, always involve violence. In the act of decolonization, one “species” of humankind is substituted by another, and the desire for decolonization is always present in the minds of the colonized. Conversely, fear of decolonization is always present in the minds of colonists. Decolonization cannot be accomplished through a “gentleman’s agreement,” as colonization itself occurred and continues to occur only through the use of violence. To decolonize a nation is to create new men and dismantle the “colonial situation.”

The colonial world is divided into two different and separate worlds, and these worlds are separated by soldier barracks and police stations. Using “rifle butts and napalm,” military soldiers and police officers make sure that the colonized are kept out of the colonists’ world. These two worlds, Fanon writes, are not equal. In the colonists’ world, the streets are impeccably maintained, and no one ever goes hungry. The world of the colonized, however, “is a disreputable place inhabited by disreputable people,” where the people are hungry for food, clothes, light, and warmth. Thus, the colonized are envious people, and there is not one among them who does not wish to take the place of the colonist.

These two different worlds are likewise inhabited by two different “species,” and what divides these two “species” is race. The “ruling species”—the colonists—are white foreigners. These white people are “the others,” and they come from a different land than the colonized, who are the indigenous population. This colonial world, Fanon says, “is a Manichaeian world,” where the colonist makes the colonized into the epitome of evil. To the colonists, the colonized have no values or ethics and their culture and traditions are the mark of evil. This mark of evil has been answered with Christianity—the “white man’s Church”—which, instead of calling the colonized to God, has called them to the ways of their oppressors. Manichaeism serves to dehumanize the colonized; they are reduced to animals and referred to by the colonists in “bestiary” terms.

Right away, Fanon makes it clear that liberation cannot occur without violence, which is one of his major arguments throughout the book. The use of the word “species” harkens to the animal terms colonists use to describe the colonized, who the colonists believe are savage and bestial. Decolonization cannot occur through a “gentleman’s agreement,” or handshake, as it absolutely did not start this way. The expectation that the colonized must achieve liberation through nonviolent means reflects the double standards that plague colonialism.



The division of the colonial world highlights the oppression of the colonized people. Control is taken by violent, military means, and there are frequent casualties among the colonized. The colonized people are further oppressed through the poor conditions in which they are forced live. They are completely neglected while the colonists live the high life. This passage also reflects the basic prejudice of colonialism: the colonized are considered “disreputable” simply because they are oppressed.



Fanon again uses the word “species,” which further reflects animal terms such as “bestiary” used to dehumanize colonized people. Of course, by referring to the colonists as a “species,” too, Fanon implies that the colonists are in fact the animals. Fanon’s use of the word “other” here also upends traditional use of the word. Typically, the colonized are viewed as “other,” because they are something other than the colonist. But here, Fanon makes the colonist the “other,” which effectively dismantles the colonial situation. Fanon’s description of the colonial world as a “Manichaeian world” reflects the absolute racism of colonialism, and Christianity, the “white man’s Church,” further perpetuates this racist worldview.



During decolonization, Fanon writes, whenever the colonized begin to resist the colonists and rise up, they are always told to “be reasonable.” The colonized are cited morality and ethics, and they are told that their revolution should not be one of “regression.” The colonized are forced to embrace white morals, but for colonized subjects, to be a moralist means only to break with the violence of the colonialism. After decolonization, the colonists are welcome to coexist with the colonized, but the colonists usually leave once they discover that “the last [has] become the first.”

During decolonization, many colonized intellectuals have modified the demand that the last become the first and have rushed to fill important positions, such as administrators and experts. The colonized masses see this move as nepotism, and it causes them to question the very point of independence. The colonialist bourgeoisie has convinced colonized intellectuals that Western values are supreme, Fanon says, but those values have nothing to do with the actual struggles of the colonized. During true decolonization, the superstructure that the colonized intellectuals have borrowed from the colonialist bourgeoisie is destroyed.

The colonialist bourgeoisie has convinced the colonized intellectuals that they must exert individualism and that there is wealth and power in thought; however, Fanon says, this theory is false. Comradery and brotherhood are forbidden by the colonialist bourgeoisie for a reason: during decolonization, the colonized intellectual will find power in the people and the notion of meetings and assemblies. The interest of *all* colonized people, Fanon asserts, is in the collective—either everyone is saved, or no one is. When decolonization occurs where the struggle for independence has yet to make sufficient impact, colonized intellectuals hold fast to the values of the colonialist bourgeoisie, creating anger and violence among the colonized.

To assimilate to the culture of their oppressors—the colonists—the colonized intellectuals have had to assimilate to colonialist bourgeoisie thinking and are thus always in danger of becoming “demagogues.” The colonized intellectual is a “mimic man,” but the masses do not recognize colonialist bourgeoisie thought. The colonized intellectual easily forgets the purpose of decolonization—to defeat colonialism—and they forget the main question fueling it: “Bread and land: how do we go about getting bread and land?” This question, Fanon says, may seem limited and narrow, but it is the best working model for decolonization.

Fanon frequently describes decolonization as “the last becom[ing] the first,” which again dismantles the colonial situation. In overcoming oppression, the colonized are no longer at the mercy of the colonists. Fanon’s use of words such as “reasonable” and “regression” are highly ironic, as they highlight the fact that there is nothing “reasonable” about colonialism and that regressing beyond the violence and immorality of it seems quite impossible.



As the colonized intellectuals often take the place of the colonialist bourgeoisie after decolonization, the channels and oppression of colonialism remain intact, even in the official absence of the colonial power. This is known as neocolonialism, and Fanon argues that it is just as bad as colonialism. He goes deeper into the implications of neocolonialism later in the book, arguing that it is the absolute enemy of decolonization despite initially seeming like progress in the right direction.



Fanon ultimately argues that true decolonization can only occur if the people band together and, most importantly, strip the bourgeoisie of their power. Just as the best interests of the colonists have nothing to do with the best interests of the colonized, the bourgeoisie do not accurately represent the people, and what is in their best interest is not in the best interest of the nation as a whole. A nation must be driven by and for the majority—in this case the peasants—not the minority bourgeoisie.



Decolonization is simple: get back the nation and find a way to sustain the people. “Bread and land” are the absolute bare bones of this struggle. A “demagogue” is a political leader who uses exploitation and prejudice (like the colonists) to rule. By becoming demagogues, the colonized intellectuals become the oppressors in more ways than one. Thus, the intellectual is a “mimic man,” following suit after the example set by the colonialists.



The Manicheanism of colonial society is left intact during decolonization, only the colonists are the evil ones. The colonized are “penned in” by colonial society, and the only place they are free is in their dreams. Each night the colonized run and jump freely, building **muscles** and aggressive energy, but the only place they can release this aggression during waking hours is on their own people. This aggression pits black against black, Fanon says, and places the colonized subject in a continual state of tension. The colonized must always be on guard and be careful not to step out of line, and they are always presumed guilty by the colonists. Yet the colonized do not believe they are guilty and do not accept the colonists as an authority, so they are, understandably, always tense.

In the colonial world, Fanon says, the emotions of the colonized are “kept on edge like a running sore flinching from a caustic agent,” and their bodies respond with spastic **muscles**. To understand the colonial world, one must understand dance and possession, which is the way in which the colonized relax their tense muscles. The dance circle brings the people together, and liberation and a sense of community are expressed in their movements, which releases the aggression stored in the muscles. In addition to dance, muscular tension is also released during deep possession—organized séances that include stories of vampirism and zombies—but these rituals are lost during decolonization.

During the colonial period, political parties and the intellectual and business elite offer ways for the colonized to express the aggressiveness stored in their **muscles**. But, Fanon says, while their principles may be strong, they refrain from actually doing anything. Their attempts to express their aggressiveness amount only to talk. Political parties of the colonized ask the colonists for more power but get nothing. Nationalist political parties are supported mostly by urban voters—like teachers, tradespeople, and store owners—and they profit from the colonial situation. The colonized intellectual wants to assimilate to the colonizer’s world and compete with the colonists, Fanon writes, but the colonized masses don’t want to compete with the colonist. Instead, the colonized masses want to take the place of the colonists.

The peasantry is most often left out of nationalist political parties, but according to Fanon, only the peasantry is truly revolutionary. In a colonial situation, the colonist bourgeoisie convince the colonized intellectuals and business elite that nonviolence is in everyone’s best interest, but nonviolence is ineffective in decolonization. Colonialism “is naked violence,” Fanon says, and it “only gives in when confronted with greater violence.”

Again, Fanon’s use of the word “penned in” connotes a racist and dehumanizing colonial interpretation of the colonized, as it hearkens to animals and cages. The colonists believe the colonized are savages, thus they pen them in. Fanon repeatedly mentions the tense muscles of the colonized individual, and these muscles are a symbol of the stress and violence of colonialism, but they also represent the colonized people’s dedication to and readiness for decolonization. They are tense, which obviously suggests anger, but they are also ready to rise and fight for their dignity and right to exist.



Fanon contends that much of the preexisting culture is lost during decolonization. Nation building drastically changes the national consciousness, which means that culture will change radically as well. Fanon is a medical doctor—a practicing psychiatrist—and medical lingo is frequently incorporated into the book, such as his description of the emotions of the colonized like a “running sore flinching from a caustic agent.” Fanon again mentions the muscles, where these emotions seem to be stored.



In order to completely dismantle colonialism and challenge the colonial situation, colonial thinking must be eliminated. The new nation cannot be realized in a Western image and ideal, as it does not exist in the West and the same rules don’t apply. In taking the place of the colonists, instead of competing with them, Western thoughts and ideas are eliminated by the colonized masses. To maintain the colonial situation as the colonized intellectuals want (according to their Western education and political views) does not challenge the colonial situation, it merely modifies it, allowing it to continue in another form.



Fanon again draws attention to violence and the fact that colonialism cannot be overcome in a peaceful way. His argument is simple: that which is violent only responds to violence. Fanon’s theories on decolonization and overcoming oppression were quite popular during the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. during the 1960s. Notably, Malcolm X and the Black Panthers were proponents of Fanon’s theories.



When colonization began, one military power could occupy large stretches of land, but the struggle of the colonized today is a different fight. Capitalism in the early days viewed the colonies as a source of raw materials to be processed and sold on the European market; however, the colonial population today has become a consumer market. Moderate nationalist political parties of the colonized try to come to a solution with colonists that protect the interests of both sides, and their methods are generally peaceful. They utilize work stoppages, demonstrations, and boycotts that put pressure on colonists and allow the colonized to expend some of their pent-up aggressiveness, but, Fanon says, they are still ultimately under the control of the colonists.

The colonist bourgeoisie calm the colonized with religion, and the colonized are given saints who forgave trespassing as examples of heroes. The colonized elite, who run the nationalist political parties and themselves come from freed slaves, appeal to the slaves but do not mobilize them. There are some rebels in the nationalist parties, Fanon says, but they upset the party as a whole and are usually rejected and hounded publically until they move to the country. There, the rejected politician has no trouble gaining the support of the peasant masses. Political leaders give speeches using national language, like “We blacks, we Arabs,” and this gives the people the idea that it is time to do something, but the rise of a new nation and the removal of the colonial system are only possible if the colonized violently rebel against the colonists.

Colonized people know that violence is “atmospheric,” Fanon writes, and that it breaks out from time to time, so they identify their enemy—the colonists—and focus all their hate and anger on them. The isolated colonists, like those on farms, become worried and demand the authorities do something to ensure their safety. The colonial authorities arrest a few nationalist leaders and demonstrate military power to intimidate, and all of this makes everyone “trigger-happy.” Oppression strengthens national consciousness, and violence is the only solution. The colonized masses believe that independence can only be achieved through violent means because the people of the Third World “are in the process of shattering their chains.”

However, the masses of developing countries who have achieved independence believe “they have been robbed.” In fact, Fanon claims, for over 90 percent of the population of developing countries, independence does not bring change immediately. In newly liberated countries, those in power spend most of their time defending their borders from threats, and the “atmospheric” violence of colonial times is thus still felt in national politics.

The demonstrations and boycotts are ultimately unsuccessful because they are peaceful. Violence is needed for successful decolonization, Fanon insists, and anything less basically amounts to a waste of time. Fanon implies several times that capitalism is needed in a developing nation. While it is most certainly damaging—the colonized people have been used as slaves to satisfy capitalist greed—capitalism is much like violence as it is wholly necessary to decolonize and grow as a nation.



The colonist giving the colonized examples of heroes who forgave trespassing is subtle brainwashing. Of course the colonists want the colonized to be forgiving people, especially in terms of trespassing, since the colonizers quite literally trespass on the land of the colonized. Again, Fanon implies that liberation will not be won with talk. There is no way to convince the colonialist power with language, even if that language strongly represents the nation and its people.



The people of the Third World are “shattering their chains” because they will not be slaves to the West anymore. For centuries Europe has taken those from the Third World, shackled them in chains, and sold them into slavery against their will. This atrocity is the epitome of violence, and it can't be overcome with anything less than violence. This violence is also reflected in Fanon's language. The violence is “atmospheric,” meaning it is in the air—essentially everywhere—which makes the people “trigger-happy” and ready to fight at all times.



Fanon later implies that the colonized have been “robbed” by the West, particularly Europe. Europe is exceedingly wealthy, especially when compared to the Third World. But that wealth, Fanon contends, was essentially stolen from the Third World in the form of people, culture, and national resources.



The colonized, who are completely supported by socialist countries, will use any weapon to fight the colonists, including the Cold War. The Americans closely guard international capitalism, and they recommend that Europe decolonize. But the greatest threat, according to the colonists, is socialism, and the colonized masses can be easily infiltrated and contaminated by socialist propaganda. Therefore, capitalism has everything to lose if there are national conflicts, and the colonized people know all about the imperatives of international politics.

Violence does not intimidate the colonized. They have been overtaken and subsequently held by violent means, and they perfectly understand violence. The colonized have adapted to a world of nothing but violence, and they are not frightened by violence on a global scale. The colonized, Fanon says, is “a political creature in the most global sense of the term.” Independence may have given colonized countries freedom and dignity, but there has not yet been time for them to build a new society or establish new values. Newly independent colonized countries are in an “indeterminate state,” which is why political leaders in such countries maintain neutrality.

Neutrality, Fanon says, “consist of taking handouts left and right,” and it is a system that has been created by the Cold War. With Neutrality, an underdeveloped country can receive economic aid from either of the two Blocs, but it cannot expect that either Bloc will come to their aid in any other way. Thus, underdeveloped countries have no real interest in the Cold War.

Neutrality makes the citizens of Third World countries behave defiantly. They refuse to compromise in any way, and this makes Western countries nervous. Third World countries have no money and no troops—it makes sense that they would be ignored in a global war, but instead they are flattered. “Everyone wants a piece of them,” Fanon says.

Returning to the violence between the colonists and the colonized, Fanon says, this violence is an armed conflict, and it can break out wherever colonialism is practiced. An armed struggle means that the colonized have put their faith in violence alone, and it is the same language they have learned from the colonists. The colonists have long since used violence as the only way to communicate with the colonized, and the colonized respond in kind. The colonized have always known that colonialism can only end in a violent way, and they are completely prepared for it.

America wants Europe to decolonize not because it is the right thing to do, but because decolonizing is better for the current global economic climate. Politically speaking, it is better for Europe to keep the Third World under control and away from socialism. The colonized individuals know that they are little more than pawns for the rest of the world, and they use this knowledge to their benefit whenever possible.



The colonized individual is a “political creature in the most global sense of the term” because they have been created by everyone else’s politics. Newly independent nations are “indeterminate” because it is not yet known what they will be. The postcolonial situation is an entirely new situation to which old precolonial views and thoughts cannot be applied. Everything must be born anew in the postcolonial period, Fanon argues, which takes time. Thus, Fanon implies that the suffering of colonialism will be felt for years to come.



Neutrality during the Cold War was often seen as “taking handouts,” but Fanon argues this isn’t the case with the Third World, since the West owes the Third World more than could ever be repaid. Still, the West begrudgingly gives to the Third World and believes that they should just be thankful for the “handout.”



Both the East and West want to gain the support of the Third World so they can just continue to exploit them in a slightly different—but essentially the same—way. “Everyone wants a piece of them,” Fanon says, which is ironic because the West, namely Europe, already has most of them.



Fanon repeatedly hammers home how important violence is to the struggle for nationhood. He doesn’t just imply it; he explicitly says it time and time again. This gained Fanon a bit of a reputation among intellectuals—especially white intellectuals—as a proponent of violence. However, Fanon does imply that since those white intellectuals have not experienced the violence and oppression of colonialism firsthand, they can’t possibly understand the absolute and ever-present threat of violence that is colonialism.



To the colonized, violence is the only response. For instance, in Algeria, nearly all the men who rallied support for the national struggle were wanted by the French police, and some were even sentenced to death. The national struggle itself is rooted in and works toward the death of the colonist. The colonized are liberated only through violence. The violence of the colonists and the counterviolence of the colonized have a reciprocal relationship, and once the colonized engage in counterviolence, they must expect police and military reprisals. These reprisals, however, are incredibly unequal, and the colonists' violence outweighs any violence exerted by the colonized.

During any armed struggle there is what is known as "the point of no return." In Algeria, this point was reached in 1955. This is the point when the colonists realize that things cannot continue to go on and must change, but the colonized are prepared to keep going. To the colonized, any reciprocal violence they are forced to suffer at the hands of colonists is to be expected. Whenever the colonized are beaten or their wives are raped or killed, they do not complain. They know that there can be no real justice in a colonized country, and they do not expect it. With the colonist came the death of indigenous culture and society, and for the colonized, life can only be realized through the death of the colonist.

After the armed struggle comes nation building, and it, too, is steeped by violence. During colonial times, the colonized had to fight against oppression; after independence, the formerly colonized must fight poverty, illiteracy, and other problems of underdevelopment, like hunger and illness. It is a never-ending struggle, and the violence of the colonized unifies them. Violence has a cleansing power on an individual level. It rids the indigenous people of the inferiority complex imposed on them by the colonists, and it gives them confidence.

The Algerian War of Independence, which Fanon mentions several times, lasted eight years. By the end of the war, Algeria was free, but they had lost nearly 300,000 Algerians, and another 2,000,000 had been displaced or fled the country. Conservative numbers of French and other European losses during the war are around 25,000. Clearly, the force and violence are incredibly unequal, but the viewpoint of the Manichaeic world is that the colonized is automatically evil and in the wrong.



Again, Fanon's assessment is very bleak and violent. Algerians are killed every day under colonial rule. So, Fanon therefore asks, shouldn't violence be expected in overcoming that rule? The fact that the colonized expect violence and don't complain speaks to the dire nature of their position. Their everyday lives are unimaginable to many Europeans or Westerners, who would likely be the first to react in a profoundly violent way if their own existence and dignity were threatened in the same way.



Here, Fanon implies that viewing violence as a wholly bad thing is a Western ideal. To the Third World, after independence is won through violent means, this violence serves a positive purpose. Fanon later writes about the mental health issues associated with colonialism, and this "cleansing" violent uprising is a way to treat and quell this psychological stress. In many, if not all, of the medical cases Fanon presents, colonialism is the direct cause of symptoms. Here, that causative agent is removed.



CHAPTER 1: ON VIOLENCE IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Political leaders of underdeveloped countries expect their people to fight colonialism, poverty, and other devastating conditions, and these newly independent countries have to both contend with this fighting and manage to keep up with other countries on the world stage. They are told that European nations became wealthy because of their labor, and that wealth can be obtained by anyone who works for it. However, posing the problems facing newly independent nations in this way is incorrect and unreasonable.

Fanon implies that the idea that Europe became wealthy through hard work is ridiculous. Europe exploited and stole their wealth from the Third World; therefore, it isn't really theirs. Underdeveloped countries are still at an incredible disadvantage, even with their freedom. There was nothing fair about the global distribution of wealth, and now the Third World has to start from scratch.



The national unity of European countries was developed when their bourgeoisies had most of the wealth. With the exception of England, European nations were in about the same economic position, and not one was above the other. The building of the nation in an underdeveloped country, on the other hand, is entirely different. In addition to poverty and little infrastructure, there are no doctors or engineers. Compared to underdeveloped countries, European nations are lavish. But this “opulence,” Fanon argues, has been “built on the backs of slaves” and “owes its very existence” to the underdeveloped world.

Independence to a colonized country automatically comes with a fair amount of suffering, and some Third World countries, not wanting to suffer so badly, agree to the terms of the colonial power. Under the terms of the Cold War, the formerly colonized become economically dependent on the same colonists who occupied them. The conflict that was colonialism versus anticolonialism has now turned into capitalism versus socialism.

Capitalist exploitation, Fanon says, is the enemy of Third World countries. Conversely, socialism—which is dedicated to the people and promotes the idea that the people are the most important assets of a nation—helps underdeveloped nations grow. However, Third World countries need more than “human investment.” The newly independent will agree to become “slaves of the nation,” but this cannot be sustained indefinitely. The formerly colonized must keep open the economic channels created by the colonists, otherwise the results will be disastrous. Developing countries need capital, and they admit that mere “human investment” is not enough.

When Nazism made all of Europe a colony, the governments of European nations demanded reparations, and “moral reparations” will not suffice for the formerly colonized. The wealth of the former colonists also belongs to the formerly colonized. Europe was made rich by colonizing Latin America, China, and Africa, and as such, they have been created by the Third World. Thus, when a European nation helps a Third World country, they should not respond with gratitude. Such aid should not be considered “charity.” Rather, it should be part of a “dual consciousness,” Fanon says. The colonized must recognize that such aid is owed to them, and the capitalist powers must recognize that they have to pay.

Here, Fanon outright says that Europe stole its wealth from the Third World. Fanon later talks about reparations given to European countries after Nazism destroyed their nations, cultures, and people during World War II. Attempts were made to make them whole again, but the same attempts are not made in regard to the Third World. Europe isn't just doing okay, they live in “opulence” and luxury, while their victims suffer.



This is another form of neocolonialism in a sense. Fanon implies that the colonial power is still in control of the Third World regardless of whether the colonized countries gain independence or not. Whether it is an outright occupation or economic or political control, even the independent nation is still held below a European power on some level.



Fanon doesn't advocate for keeping much of the colonial situation after decolonization, but he does argue that Western channels of economics must remain. The Third World must be able to manufacture and sell goods in some way. To do so is the very basis of a capitalist society, which, Fanon argues, the Third World definitely is. Socialism will only turn the people back into “slaves,” putting them right back where they started.



Plainly put, Fanon implies that simply apologizing isn't sufficient for the Third World. They want to be properly compensated for what they have lost and not made out to be a charity case when assistance is needed. After all, they probably wouldn't need any assistance had their wealth not been stolen in the first place. Fanon's use of the phrase “double consciousness” nods to a concept coined by W. E. B. Du Bois that assumes that black individuals see themselves through the racist eyes of their society. Fanon turns this concept on its head: his idea of dual consciousness involves both parties recognizing that the Third World has been wronged, and Europe actually righting that wrong.



Third World countries should not have to beg at the feet of capitalist nations, Fanon argues. The formerly colonized are strong in the justness of their plight, and it is their responsibility to tell the capitalist nations that the central issue of the times is not a war between capitalism and socialism. Instead of fighting the Cold War, all money and efforts should be put into rehabilitating underdeveloped countries. The Third World does not want to destroy Europe; what it wants is to be assisted back to economic and social good health by the same countries who kept them as slaves.

Fanon's argument is again clearly articulated here. For the Third World, it is simple: Europe must right the wrong of colonialism. Fanon and the Third World believe this deeply, and this is reflected in Fanon's repeated mention of it. Decolonization is the most important issue of Fanon's time, and he says it every chance he gets. However, the repetition of this message also reflects just how much the Third World is ignored.



CHAPTER 2: GRANDEUR AND WEAKNESS OF SPONTANEITY

The masses of a colonial country and the nationalist political party are usually not on the same page. The colonized intellectuals, who make up most of the political parties, are dedicated to their parties, and they often hold politics above what is actually best for colonial society. The colonized intellectuals that make up the political parties are the most politically-conscious of colonial society. They are the tradesmen and civil servants—the urban proletariat—and they make up less than one percent of the actual population of a developing country.

In short, one percent of the country dictates how the other 99 percent live. This system is rooted in unfairness, and it will have important implications after independence. Once the colonial power leaves, the urban proletariat is still in power, and they continue to exploit the masses, leading to another form of neocolonialism. The urban proletariat operates with Western politics, which, Fanon maintains, must be discarded.



The urban proletariat is the most privileged of colonial society, and they have everything to lose by dismantling the colonial power. They are the taxi drivers, nurses, doctors, lawyers, and they are the “bourgeois” of colonial society. This national bourgeoisie is in conflict with the masses. They live Western lives and work Western jobs, and they see traditional native life as a barrier to growth. The national bourgeoisie also has Western political views, and they see the peasant masses as a barrier as well. They believe the masses are not politically conscious and generally disorganized.

The national bourgeoisie looks at the peasant masses exactly as the colonialists do. They barely acknowledge their existence and nothing that they do is for the benefit of the peasants. The national bourgeoisie lives a very Westernized life, which can't remain if the nation is truly decolonized. The bourgeoisie know this, and so they keep the peasants at arm's length and try to maintain their own way of living.



The peasant masses are “staunch defender[s] of tradition,” and they distrust those who live in cities. They believe city dwellers to be morally bankrupt, and the city dwellers likewise look at the masses with suspicion. The colonialists know this, and they fan the flames of discontent by mobilizing the peasants against the city dwellers and fueling tribal identities. The political parties make no effort to reach out to the peasant masses, and they even ignore and publically ridicule traditional chiefs.

The peasant masses live fairly traditional lives and do not, as a general rule, live by Western standards as those in the cities do. The colonialists, Fanon implies, are always looking for ways to oppress and control. By playing the masses against one another, the colonialists get what they want (control of the nation) and the colonized move further away from independence.



The nationalist parties, as a general rule, are not against a revolt, but they wait for the peasant masses to do it for them. Nationalist parties don't get directly involved in revolts, and they do not organize them in any way, but they are not averse to a sustained uprising. They avoid the revolting peasant and tell the colonial police they have nothing to do with rebellion. There are no meetings or talks between any of them, and this serves to reinforce the existing distrust between the masses and the nationalist parties.

The distrust between the peasant masses and the nationalist parties in the colonial period extends into the national period. Therefore, the nationalist parties are tempted to keep "firm control" of the masses, as their opinion of the masses is much like the view of the colonists. They aren't sure how the masses will react, and they approach them with extreme caution.

During the liberation struggle, the colonial country usually creates a national labor movement, which is another way for those in the cities to put pressure on the colonial power. Like the urban proletariat, the labor unions are made up of the same privileged workers who do not represent the population as a whole. In the colonial phase, the labor unions have the power to enforce strikes, which cripple the local colonial economy. But even during all this upheaval, the peasant masses remain completely unaffected by such political and economic happenings.

Therefore, Fanon says, the labor unions aren't exactly in step with the rest of the nation, either. The labor unions are completely isolated from the peasant masses, and they make little headway. Once depression and anxiety set in, in response to the realization that the new nation is going nowhere, the labor unions decide that politics must involve the whole nation, and they move to educate the peasant masses politically. The peasants are not immediately receptive. They are, after all, "the only spontaneously revolutionary force in the country," and they have thus far been ignored.

The nationalist parties see the peasant masses as tools at their disposal. They will use the peasants to man their revolution, but they make no effort to help them. Fanon repeatedly implies that the nation must come together to become independent, and he does so here as well. There are many chances to join forces between the peasants and the political parties, but they are not taken.



Again, the political parties look at the peasant masses as if the parties are colonialists, not nationalists. The parties want "firm control" of the masses, which again hearkens to neocolonialism. The peasants are not free, even after the colonial power is gone.



Again, the peasant masses are unaffected because they do not live Western lives. If the economy crashes, they don't feel the strain. They will eventually, Fanon argues, but initially it makes little difference to them. As Fanon points out, the political parties of the developing nation often act in ways that are counterproductive to the developing nation and beneficial to only the small urban proletariat.



The key to independence, Fanon argues, is using the peasant masses in the right way. Fanon argues that government should be decentralized and moved closer to the peasant masses, and this passage reflects the reasons why. The peasants are easily ignored because they are removed from the cities. This, too, harkens to Fanon's argument regarding mental health: colonialism is damaging to everyone involved.



Yet the peasant masses are crucial to the struggle for national liberation. For instance, when the rebels, who have been persecuted by the colonial police, begin to make waves and noise about liberation, they become the targets of colonial repression. They are arrested, convicted, tortured, and released; then they retreat to the countryside, where the peasant masses welcome them. The peasant masses are easily excited by the rebels' talks of freedom, and the rebels are pleasantly surprised to find that the peasants look at their national struggle in much the same way. They, too, believe their revolt must be violent. They are ready to sacrifice, and, along with the rebels, they "can produce an explosive mixture of unexpected power."

Rebellion upends political parties. Some political parties in colonial countries secretly align with the colonists and hope that rebellion fails. They see a rebellion ending only in bloodshed, and this causes the political parties to isolate. Before long, the leaders of the rebellion decide to take their fight to the cities, and they are largely successful because of the peasant masses who had been earlier forced into cities. Peasant life is tough, and it is not unheard of for some peasants to relocate to the cities looking for an easier life.

Peasant masses who relocate to the cities often find it hard to fit in, so when the rebellion comes to town, they are more than ready to join in the fight. Some of these peasants move from town to town, unable to find a place, living in makeshift shantytowns. These masses are the lumpenproletariat, and they are the "urban spearhead" of the rebellion. The lumpenproletariat are starving men who have no family or tribe, and they are "the most spontaneously and radically revolutionary forces of a colonized people."

In Kenya, during 1950 and '51, the British colonial police increased their tactics against the lumpenproletariat. During this time, there was a massive inflow of Kenyans from outlying rural areas, and they began to steal and debauch. Juvenile delinquency is usually associated with the lumpenproletariat, Fanon says. They are the "hooligans," and they are a serious threat to the safety of colonial society. They believe in violence, guns, and hand grenades, and there are women among their ranks, too. Prostitutes and domestic workers are all part of the lumpenproletariat.

The rebels are revolutionaries who advocate for freedom and independence. When they start to express ideas of freedom, the colonial power arrests and tortures them, which again underscores the complete control and oppression of colonial rule. This "explosive mixture of unexpected power" is what Fanon says is necessary to win the struggle for nationhood. This again reflects Fanon's central claim of the importance of violence in decolonization, as both the rebels and the peasants know their revolution will involve violence.



Bloodshed is not the only reason why the political parties don't want a revolution. Decolonization will threaten their comfortable, Westernized lives, so they would prefer that the colonial power stay put, and their lives go on as usual. Of course, this sentiment isn't shared by the peasant masses (99 percent of the population), and the nation is deeply divided by this paramount difference.



Revolution, Fanon implies, cannot be accomplished without the lumpenproletariat. His description of them as the "spearhead" again points to the violence of revolution and colonialism. Again, the urban proletariat looks at the peasant in much the same way the colonialists do, which is why the proletariats do not easily accept the peasants into their society and why the lumpenproletariats must sleep in shantytowns.



These "hooligans" are whom Fanon says will win the revolution. The lumpenproletariat is the lowest level of society. They are the violent criminals, which is precisely why they will be useful in the revolution. Revolution will take guns and hand grenades, Fanon says, and it is best to enlist the help of those who have experience using them.



The rebellion, with “a hatred for ‘politics’ and demagoguery,” mobilizes. The revolt grabs the attention of the colonial regime, which also mobilizes and threatens to diffuse the rebellion. But the rebellion cannot be swayed. They are driven forward by a belief that the nation must exist and that all foreigners must leave. In this heightened state of anxiety, the national cause strengthens and gains traction. “[S]pontaneity rules,” and the people are drawn together against the colonial force. If a nation lives anywhere, Fanon says, it must be here. During this time, there is a sense of unity. Old feuds are resolved, quarrels squashed, and political consciousness is infused with faith in the nation. There is solidarity among tribes and villages, and this unity spills over to the national level as well. Pretty soon, everyone is standing up.

Still, despite this optimism, losses to the rebellion are extensive, and those who live feel a massive sense of guilt. The rebellion, it seems, is destined to fail. The rebellion sees their members taken down by colonial machine gun fire, and they begin thinking that maybe rebellion isn’t such a good idea. In 1961 in Angola, Fanon says, the Angolan peasants were attacked by the Portuguese. Countless Angolans engaged the Portuguese, but the Angolans were littered with machine gun bullets. In the end, the Angolan National Army resorted to guerrilla warfare techniques. Guerrilla warfare, Fanon says, is fighting on the move. Guerrilla soldiers move from town to town, sneaking up on their enemy in the dark. There is no strategy and no position, and just when the colonial police think that they are close to apprehending the guerrilla soldier, he comes from behind and ambushes the colonial forces.

The rebellion soon discovers that they must formally form into an army and establish a central authority. They transform the rebellion into a revolutionary war and establish a clear set of objectives. The newly organized rebellion goes about fighting in a controlled and well-thought-out way, but this does not win national wars, Fanon says.

Colonialism has historically found ways in which to use the lumpenproletariat. Any national liberation movement, Fanon says, would do well to pay increased attention to the lumpenproletariat. They can always be convinced to revolt, and they have also been known to take up arms with the colonialists, who are more than willing to exploit the lumpenproletariat.

Fanon puts the word “politics” into quotations as if to imply that this form of politics shouldn’t really be considered as such. Again, he refers to politicians as “demagogues,” which means that their politics are rooted in their personal interests rather than what is in the best interest of the nation as a whole. Fanon frequently refers to “spontaneity” as the force needed for revolution, and he claims that the lumpenproletariat and the peasant masses are the only social classes who possess it. Even though they may be the only ones who initially have spontaneity, they do seem to be able to spread it.



In the Algerian War of Independence, which Fanon was affiliated with and mentions several times in the book, guerrilla warfare was a major part the Algerian strategy that won the war. Fanon argues that guerrilla warfare is indispensable in the struggle for nationhood. The rebellion does not have the best weapons, or even enough people, by guerrilla tactics prove to be effective. This massive sense of guilt felt by survivors is more deeply explored in Fanon’s chapter on mental health, which implies that this guilt is a very real, and very destructive, force.



Fanon lays out several scenarios that won’t lead to independence, such as forming an army in the Western sense of the word. The Europeans can easily wipe out a centralized army and authority. Thus, such ideas should be avoided.



Essentially, the colonialists are more than happy to exploit the lumpenproletariats. They know what this social class is capable of, and they don’t want the lumpenproletariat to be utilized by the rebellion, either. Fanon portrays the lumpenproletariat in a way that suggests they will fight anyone if given the chance.



Racism and defending one's skin are perfectly good reasons to join a struggle for liberation, but racism and hatred will not sustain a revolutionary war. The struggle for nationhood is not one that can be bridged with one step. It is a daily struggle with suffering that lasts far after the exit of the colonial power. Strength and rich reserves are needed, Fanon says, because "the reserves of colonialism are far richer and more substantial than of those of the colonized."

Those who embrace the Manichaeism of the colonizer and believe in black against white realize that "some blacks can be whiter than whites, and that the prospect of a national flag or independence does not automatically result in certain segments of the population giving up their privileges and their interests." There are those who will profit considerably from war at the expense of those who sacrificed so freely. While a revolution may banish colonial oppression, there is still another system of oppression building. The people of the nation must abandon their simple view of the oppressor, Fanon says, as it is changing right in front of them.

The revolutionary war, Fanon implies, is deeper than anger and racism. It must be rooted in the struggle for the nation as a whole, which transcends race and is indifferent to anger. Racism and anger can give a boost to revolution, but in the end, it must be a desire for nationhood and nothing else that leads the struggle.



Here, Fanon implies that being "white" isn't necessarily the color of one's skin, but the desire to subjugate and exploit those one feels are inferior. In this way, even the formerly colonized can behave in a way that is traditionally "white" or Manichaeism. In this way, independence is not in the name of the flag or the nation, but in personal interests, and this cannot sustain a revolution or a new and developing nation.



CHAPTER 3: THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

National consciousness, Fanon says, is not "the coordinated crystallization of the people's innermost aspirations." Rather, it is "a crude, empty, fragile shell." There are cracks in national consciousness, and it can quickly degrade from nation, to ethnic groups, to the state, and then to tribe. This deterioration, according to Fanon, is harmful to the developing nation. The problems with national consciousness can be overwhelmingly attributed to the national bourgeoisie.

In a newly independent nation, the national bourgeoisie takes power after the exit of the colonial power, but the bourgeoisie is underdeveloped and inexperienced. The business elite and university graduates who make up the national bourgeoisie are small in number and concentrated in cities, but they are not industrialists, nor are they financiers. They don't produce anything or invent anything, and they do very little actual work.

The main job of the national bourgeoisie in an underdeveloped country is to reject their status as bourgeois and dedicate themselves to the peasant masses they represent. An authentic national bourgeoisie should leave their city vocation and go to the masses to learn from the people, and they should in turn teach the masses what they have learned in Western universities. This "heroic and positive path," Fanon says, is the best way for the national bourgeoisie to remain helpful to the nation as a whole.

The national consciousness is not one stable, crystalized thing—it is pliable, impressionable, and rapidly building in a developing nation. The national consciousness must reflect the nation, not a single ethnic group, state, or tribe. To degrade the national consciousness to any one of these things is to destroy it.



In Fanon's view, the national bourgeoisie does nothing productive for the nation, yet they are driving the politics and the economy. In developed nations, the bourgeoisie still drives society, but they are more experienced. The newly colonized, however, do not have this experience, and they quickly run the new nation into the ground.



Of course, the national bourgeoisie does not do this, because to do so would mean to abandon their cushy Westernized lives. In this way, Fanon implies that the national bourgeoisie are neither "heroic" nor "positive," and are therefore a completely destructive part of society and serve no real, useful purpose.



As they are underdeveloped like their nation, the national bourgeoisie knows nothing about actual economics. Their knowledge is purely theoretical, and the economy they support is limited and based on local products. Under such economic plans, the national bourgeoisie make substantial profits while the people suffer. As the national bourgeoisie has limited skills, they are restricted in which colonial businesses they can take over after the exit of the colonial power. However, they take over every position they can, and they work capitalism and economics to their own best interest, creating a system of neocolonialism. At a psychological level, the national bourgeoisie identifies more with the Western bourgeoisie than with their own people. The national bourgeoisie mimics the Western bourgeoisie, sliding right into their place. However, nation building, Fanon says, is not about “taking short cuts.”

The national bourgeoisie, like the Western bourgeoisie, develops an economy based on tourism, including “exoticism, hunting, and casinos.” There are resorts and playgrounds, and soon tourism is a national industry. Casinos, like in Havana and Rio, saturate the landscape, and young Brazilian and Mexican girls are sold as well.

Landowners behave in much the same way as the national bourgeoisie. Soon after independence, the large farmers call for the nationalization of all agricultural holdings. They take over the farms that had been owned by the colonists, and they gain control over the region. The landowners exploit farm workers and are not interested in increasing their production or integrating into a national economy.

Soon after independence, the national bourgeoisie, having struggled against the racism of colonialism, call for the jobs of white lawyers, doctors, and landowners, claiming that such white workers insult the nation. They move to Africanize the managerial classes and demand all the jobs. The urban proletariat agrees with this nationalist viewpoint, but whereas the national bourgeoisie singles out white Europeans, the urban proletariat fights with other African nations. Race riots break out between indigenous tribes, and just like that, Fanon says, nationalism has changed to “ultranationalism, chauvinism, and racism.”

Here, Fanon implies that the national bourgeoisie's attempt to slide into the colonial power's place and run the nation in the exact same way is a “short cut.” Decolonizing is to dismantle the entire colonial situation, Fanon argues, not to keep what suits them and get rid of what doesn't. Of course, since Fanon argues that nation building does involve keeping open Western channels of economics, this weakens his argument a bit. However, Fanon's argument is clear: the power of the national bourgeoisie mimics that of the colonists, and thus, it is still colonialism and is not progress.



Tourism is a huge trade in formerly colonized nations, and it, too, is another form of neocolonialism. Cities are still full of foreigners, and the indigenous are exploited in the process, as they are frequently placed in service positions to white people.



Ironically, the landowners want agriculture nationalized, meaning they want the nation to own and control it. Yet, they keep all the profits and do nothing for the nation, just like the national bourgeoisie. This, again, is more neocolonialism, only this time it is the landowners who are in control.



Ultranationalism holds importance of one tribe or state over another, which often brings out racist arguments, and this, too, is neocolonialism. In this way, whichever tribe or ethnic group holds the majority power, controls the nation, leaving all other tribes, races, and states behind. Again, Fanon argues that the nation and national consciousness must reflect the entire nation, not simply a portion of it.



Africanization and Arabization by the national bourgeoisie is not based in true nationalism. Rather, it is chiefly concerned with transferring power previously held by foreigners, which leads to “a depressing return to the most heinous and virulent type of chauvinism.” The national bourgeoisie, underdeveloped and inexperienced, is unable to enlighten the people or build the vision of the nation, and this leads to a return to tribalism and the rise of ethnic tensions. Colonialism, Fanon argues, does not exploit an entire nation. It focuses its efforts in urban areas and lets the peasant masses fall into complete poverty.

As conflict builds between ethnic groups, religious rivalries begin to surface as well, and the two major religions—Islam and Catholicism—begin to clash. Now, Fanon claims, colonialism is “back on its feet,” as it “shamelessly pulls all these strings” and keeps a nation divided and fighting. Africa, for instance, is divided into a white and black region. White Africa is considered rich in culture and civilization, while Black Africa is “wild, savage, [and] uncivilized.” This is much like the racism imposed by the colonist, and it is rooted in the same racist philosophy.

The inadequacies of the national bourgeoisie are not limited to only economics. They achieve power through biased nationalism and incite race wars to weaken and divide the people. According to Fanon, the national bourgeoisie preach human equality and freedom, but then they demand that others rise with them to the level of the West. Therefore, true African unity can only be accomplished through the people, and with complete disregard for the bourgeoisie.

The national bourgeoisie is also inept in areas of domestic politics. They have no real power, so they believe the best approach is a single-party political system. This decision doesn’t inspire confidence in the people, and the State begins to oppress and harass the masses. The national bourgeoisie continues to ignore the peasant masses and focuses only on cities. They pander to foreign capitalists and do not share any profits with the people.

Soon, a popular leader is selected to both steady the regime and placate the national bourgeoisie. This “bourgeois dictatorship” is fueled by the presence of a beloved leader, and as he makes his way across the nation speaking about the oppression of colonial power, the people immediately place their trust in him. He speaks of independence and freedom for all, but he is really just looking to “be the CEO” of the national bourgeoisie and their profits. The new leader combines the interests of the national bourgeoisie with the interests of ex-colonial companies, and he is a knowing accessory in the corruption of the national bourgeoisie.

The “depressing return to the most heinous and virulent type of chauvinism” is a reference to colonialism. As only one race—African or Arab—or one tribe within a single race is being represented here, this, too, turns to neocolonialism, and the nation is right back where they started. Fanon implies that the nation needs to be brought together by a single unifying force; however, the national bourgeoisie are not able to facilitate this coming together.



Religion is a major way in which colonialism exerted its power around the globe. Christian missionaries were sent to Third World nations to civilize and bring God to the people they perceived as savages, and with the religious clash seen here, the very same thing is implied. Those who support religion, especially Catholicism, will automatically see the other nonreligious individuals as innately evil and uncivilized.



Fanon points out that the national bourgeoisie believes in equality, but they also believe that the West is superior to the East in every way, which is counterproductive to their claims. Disregarding this need to rise to the Western standard can only be accomplished, Fanon argues, if the national bourgeoisie are stripped of their power.



A single-party political system is essentially a dictatorship, which again places the new nation in a state of neocolonialism. One person, with the interests of the national bourgeoisie in mind, has absolute power over the nation. Under this model, the peasant masses are again oppressed and exploited.



Again, the dictator has no interest in building the nation, only the national bourgeoisie, and the peasant masses are again made to suffer. This system also closely resembles the colonial system, and is therefore, by definition, not decolonization. In this way, Fanon implies that true decolonization cannot be achieved in any form as long as the national bourgeoisie are in power.



In the meantime, the former colonial power takes less trouble trying to hide the fact that they still have a hold over the national government. The new leader puts a divider between the people and the national bourgeoisie, and then he takes to supporting the bourgeoisie and hiding his efforts from the masses. Still, through his impassioned speeches, the people are fooled. Many nations have implemented such rulers, Fanon says. They usually come from the country, and they swear they speak for the black masses. The leader placates the people and refuses to break up the bourgeoisie, and each time he talks to the masses, he calls on them to remember colonial times and think about how far they have come.

Of course, Fanon says, the peasant masses aren't able to assess how far they have come since colonialism. Their lives are much the same as they have always been—impoverished and hungry—and there has been little to no change. The police, who are now Africans, still harass them, and they are not particularly convinced that things are going that well for the nation. The rebellion, in the meantime, is losing patience. After becoming relatively immobile after independence, the rebellion is only needed for festivals and parades on Independence Day. The rebellion has done their part and helped the national bourgeoisie come to power, and now they are no longer needed.

Inside the new regime of the State, corruption abounds, and morals are nonexistent. The nationalist party helps to keep the State in power over the people and society is increasingly antidemocratic. The police hold everything together, and they are trained by foreign experts. The national bourgeoisie are trained by foreign experts as well, and they take concessions and kickbacks from foreign companies.

Opposition to the nationalist party becomes more apparent, and hostility toward the national bourgeoisie grows, but this affects the national bourgeoisie very little. They are concerned only with Europe and will not invest time or money into their own nation. Dissent grows in the nation, and the army is dispatched to keep order, turning society even more authoritarian. The national bourgeoisie, Fanon says, “has learned nothing from history.” To move the nation forward, the masses “should bar the way to this useless and harmful bourgeoisie” that only serves to transform into a “caricature” of Europe.

Fanon argues that it makes little difference if the colonial power is pulling the strings of oppression from abroad or from directly within the nation. In both scenarios, he implies, it is still colonialism, and it must be dismantled just like the practice of colonialism was for so many. Like the colonial power, the dictator manipulates the formerly colonized and banks on their history of struggle and war to drum up support. Furthermore, they haven't actually come very far if they are still under a colonial system, Fanon implies.



Those in the rebellion are completely used and thrown away when they are no longer needed, like many others under the colonial system. The rebellion was once crucial in the fight for independence, but now they man parades and festivals. Absolutely nothing has changed for the nation, except for who is in the role of oppressor, and the peasant masses are still being exploited. Again, Fanon implies that the national bourgeoisie is the enemy of the developing nation and must be removed if the nation is to progress.



Again, this is a colonial system in place in even the absence of the colonial power. The State is run like a colony, and the police still have a tyrannical hold over the people. There is still no equality, and the national bourgeoisie are stealing from everyone, just like the colonialists.



Here, Fanon clearly asserts the harmfulness of the bourgeoisie, who seem content to impose a new system of colonialism on their people. Fanon's use of the word “caricature” to describe the new nation implies that not only is the nation not Europe, but it is some distorted image of Europe that is essentially a joke. By trying to adopt European ways, Fanon thus implies, the new nation is destined to fail.



From the beginning, the national bourgeoisie is concerned with intermediate activities. So, in order to lift the nation toward progress, the tertiary sector must be nationalized, which has been bombarded by the young national bourgeoisie. The tertiary sector is the most important by far under colonialism, and after independence, the civil servants sabotage the national economy and institutions, falling back on corruption and fraud. Buying and selling must be organized democratically in order to nationalize the tertiary sector, and all the people of a nation must be educated politically. This education should be given using plain language, and one that does not hide bourgeoisie leadership.

The role of the political party in the developing nations is often a dictatorship used only to hold up the national bourgeoisie. The party is gradually transformed into an intelligence agency, and all opposition parties are rooted out, silenced, and banished. The nationalist party, which claims to work for the people, will send the people “back to their caves” as soon as the colonial power exits. Furthermore, this political party is damaging to national unity and works on a tribal basis. In many ways, it is a party made up of one ethnic group, which then claims to be national and speak the language of the people. This amounts to a “genuine ethnic dictatorship,” and instead of a bourgeoisie dictatorship, it is a tribal one. Jobs are given to those of the leader’s ethnic group, even members of his own family, and this quickly results in separatism and regionalist thinking.

On the other hand, if a nation really wants to progress, they will need an honest party that is working for the people, not the government. The party should not be dedicated to politics, and they should not be centralized in the cities. All politicians should live in rural areas, and every effort should be made to decentralize the government. Doing so, Fanon says, is the only way to breathe life into struggling, and at times dying, regions.

Rural areas should be given absolute priority in the new nation. The importance of the capital is a myth, Fanon says, and every effort should be made to increase contact with peasant masses. National policies to that affect must be implemented, as one should never neglect those who fought for independence and improved life. It is not enough just to stay in contact with the peasant masses; rather, the political party should live in close proximity to them. In order to do all of this, however, the national bourgeoisie must be taken from power.

The tertiary sector, or the service sector of society, is important during colonialism because the colonized are in service to the colonists in a way that closely resembles slavery. By nationalizing the tertiary sector and turning control of it over to the nation—to the people—they, too, can profit from it. Of course, civil servants aren’t needed as much after the colonial power exits, which is why the sector has become corrupt in the postcolonial era. Understanding all these nuances, Fanon implies, is only possible with a political education.



Fanon’s language that the people will be sent “back to their caves” again suggests that the people are animals or savages, and this, too, reflects the racist thinking of colonialism. The transformation of the political parties into an intelligence agency illustrates just how corrupt postcolonial society can be. Any party that might potentially upset the status quo is silenced, which suggests that the free and independent nation really isn’t so free. Once again, Fanon claims that for all the fighting, suffering, and struggling, the newly independent nation really hasn’t moved that far away from colonialism.



In completely dismantling the colonial situation, Fanon suggests changing everything, including the idea of a government capital in a metropolitan area. As most of the people don’t live in metropolitan areas, Fanon implies, neither should the nation’s political leaders.



By definition, the national bourgeoisie will not relocate to the country, as their Westernized lifestyle cannot be supported there. But, Fanon argues, this is exactly the point. As the Third World is not a Western society, it cannot be structured in such a way. Fanon further implies that to effectively lead the people, one must know the people, and that can only happen if one lives with the people.



The peasant masses are capable of governing themselves, Fanon argues, and they do understand the political issues at hand. While it may be common for an individual to misunderstand certain issues, the masses as a whole, easily understand. Of course, political education should include plain language that is not at all technical. People become more vigilant the more they understand, Fanon argues, and they understand that wealth is made from corruption, not their hard work. In an underdeveloped country, it is not important that *some* understand political implications and processes, it is imperative that *everyone* does, even if it takes twice as long to teach. The people must know what is going on, Fanon says, and the development of their national consciousness depends on it.

Racist colonial assumptions dictate that the peasant masses are not smart enough to grasp these political concepts, but Fanon exposes how ridiculous this assumption is. Of course the people understand—they are simply given little to no credit by the Western-minded national bourgeoisie. As the national consciousness is the identity of the entire nation, one part of the country cannot be ignored to favor another. Fanon repeatedly advocates for a political education to be given to all members of a new and struggling nation, and he favors simple language that is free from jargon and bourgeoisie influence.



The young people of an underdeveloped nation must be addressed, too. Young people are often idle and illiterate, and they are vulnerable to all kinds of corruptive forces, such as alcohol and R-rated movies. Thus, the government should stabilize this population as well. Young people must be kept occupied, and instead of encouraging sports, school and work should be encouraged. The people should not be looking for a hero or leader. Instead, they should be looking to elevate the people.

Fanon rejects the idea of sports because they often offer up one member or player as the most important or the most heroic. Everyone is important in a developing nation, not just one person, and this egalitarian viewpoint should be fostered instead. Fanon earlier implies that young, vulnerable kids often turn into the lumpenproletariat, a trend that could also be remedied with education.



A political education does not mean a series of long speeches. To educate one politically is to open one's mind and introduce it to the world, and it has nothing to do with speeches. Again, to make these approaches work, government must be decentralized and have the peasant masses on their side. The masses must be politicized, which will lead to making the nation a reality to everyone. If a government wants to declare itself national, then it must equally represent the entire nation.

Nation-building is a political process, Fanon implies, and the people must be educated accordingly. By educating the masses and relocating the government to the countryside to be near where the people actually live, Fanon argues that a new nation has a better chance of growing and prospering.



The peasant masses should be mobilized in a developing nation, and outdated traditions that favor women over men should not be given priority. The army must be nationalized as well, and the militia should be strengthened. Professional soldiers, too, are a bad idea, and career officers should be kept to a minimum. People should be placed in jobs and professions where they are needed, not put into the army to wait for a war to start. Nationalism is not political, and to foster the nation, national consciousness must take priority over social and political consciousness.

Building the nation should be first priority, Fanon claims, not building an army, which he implies is given far too much priority in Western societies. People are valuable to the nation in other ways, and those ways must be nurtured for the betterment of the nation. The nation is all about the people, and to Fanon, that is not a political idea.



In an underdeveloped country, the national effort must always involve the people. The national bourgeoisie will inevitably fail the people, and national politics most often lead to a “dead end.” The collective national consciousness is the “living expression of the nation,” and without it, there is chaos and oppression.

In short, Fanon claims that the way of the national bourgeoisie is a “dead end.” If the nation does not exist for the people, it is not truly a nation, which, again, only leads to neocolonialism and continued oppression.



CHAPTER 4: ON NATIONAL CULTURE

The mission of underdeveloped countries has been to resist colonialism and clear the path for new struggles. In a post-colonial world, the colonized have fought heartily. If their struggle failed to grace the international stage, it is not because they are not champions, but because the international situation is different. This chapter, Fanon says, is concerned with legitimacy, and it has little to do with political parties.

Parallel to the political parties, Fanon claims, are the colonized intellectuals. They are a cultured class, and “the recognition of a national culture and its right to exist” is their favorite issue. Politicians situate themselves in the present, but the colonized intellectual positions themselves in history. The colonized intellectual is aware that they run the risk of being trapped in Western culture, so they return to the time that is furthest away from colonialism. They are unable to come to terms with the oppression of recent history, so they reclaim the past to restore the national culture.

Colonialism was not content to merely exploit and abuse the people, the colonial power stripped the indigenous people of culture and history as well. Colonial power turns to the past of the colonized and “distorts it, disfigures it, and destroys it.” The result was like a “hammer to the head of the indigenous population.” In this way, it is not difficult to understand why the colonized intellectual sought to return to precolonial times and culture.

The quest of the colonized intellectual to reclaim the past is not a national endeavor; it is done on a “continental scale.” The past is brought back, but not the cultural past. Under colonialism, the continent of Africa is seen as a “den of savages” that is cursed, evil, and hated on a continental scale. The colonized intellectual’s attempt to right this wrong must then be continental, too, and they embrace African, or “Negro,” culture. As colonialism places white culture opposite other “noncultures,” “Negro” culture, especially “Negro” literature, must encompass the entire continent.

The struggle of underdeveloped nations failed to make the global stage because colonialist racism has guaranteed that the people of the Third World are not seen as legitimate in the eyes of the developed world. It is through national consciousness, Fanon argues, that the struggling nation is legitimized.



Fanon ultimately argues that precolonial culture cannot be reclaimed. Colonialism has largely erased it, and the world it initially existed in is no longer. Culture and intellect have long since been a way for oppressed individuals, especially those of color, to exert their right to exist. Colonialist racism assumes that the Third World does not have a culture, so the intellectuals badly want to prove that they do.



In claiming that the colonized have no culture, the colonial power denies the colonized their history and humanity, effectively destroying their indigenous culture. This metaphorical death makes them cultureless and nationless, and therefore more vulnerable to the oppressive power of colonialism.



By taking culture to a continental level, it becomes overly simplistic and vague, where the only identity represented is a black, or “Negro,” identity. But this leaves scores of people out, most notably Arab Africans. Fanon’s language again reflects colonial racism, as Africa is seen as a “den of savages,” reducing African people to animals stripped of their humanity.



“Negro” literature, Fanon says, is an example of negritude, and its writers do not hesitate to go beyond the continent of Africa. Negritude has stretched all the way to America, where the “black world” is formed by those from Ghana, Senegal, and Chicago. Those in the “black world” share similar ties and thoughts. However, African culture instead of a national culture is a “dead end” to African intellectuals. Take for example the African Society for Culture, which was created to establish the existence of African culture. The African Society for Culture quickly turns to the Cultural Society for the Black World, and they include *all* of the black diaspora, including the millions of black people in the Americas.

White Americans treat black Americans much in the same way that the colonists treated the Africans, but it does not take the black Americans long to discover that the only thing they have in common with black people from Africa is that they all “define themselves in relation the whites.” Thus, the negritude movement is seriously limited. “Negro” culture is breaking up because those who represent it have discovered that culture is national. Even Richard Wright and Langston Hughes must admit that their experiences are completely different from Léopold Senghor or Jomo Kenyatta. Through the insistence that Africans have no culture, the colonial power has led the cultural phenomena to be racialized and understood in continental terms rather than national terms.

Those without a nation are faced with serious psychological effects. They are “without an anchorage, without borders, colorless, stateless, rootless,” Fanon claims, and they are forced to assume two identities. For instance, a colonized individual is both Algerian and French or Nigerian and English. The colonized intellectual wants to escape white culture and identity, and he will look anywhere, as long as it gets him away from his oppressor.

Colonized writers typically go through three stages of development. In the first stage, the colonized must prove that they have assimilated to white culture. This stage is full of Symbolists and Surrealists. Then, in the second stage, the colonized writer goes back to precolonial culture. However, they are an outsider to their people and can’t really remember precolonial culture. In the third stage, the colonized writer turns into a fighter for the people and writes combat literature, revolutionary literature, and national literature. They soon discover that a nation does not exist because of culture, but because of the people’s struggle against colonial oppression.

Fanon again uses the term “dead end” to describe postcolonial efforts, like he does with the national bourgeoisie. A unifying black culture, in many ways, has the same problems as the national bourgeoisie. A unifying black culture that encompasses all black people can’t possibly be reflective of the culture as a whole, since black individuals from different nations are simply too different to fall under a single category. In this way, black culture becomes just another misrepresentation, which is counterproductive to establishing a genuine culture in the first place.



Richard Wright and Langston Hughes, both 20th-century African American writers, have little in common with Senghor, the first president of Senegal, or Kenyatta, the former prime minister of Kenya. Their experiences are simply too different—except, Fanon points out, that they each suffer from the racism of white Western culture and define themselves as “other” to white culture. Thus, black culture cannot exist on a continental scale. Rather, it must exist on a national scale, which offers a true representation of black culture on a much smaller, and more authentic, scale.



This is an example of “double consciousness” in the way that W. E. B. Du Bois saw, as colonized Algerians and Nigerians are forced to see themselves through white, European eyes. Without an independent nation to “anchor” them, it is impossible not to define themselves in relation to another, which impacts their mental health and sense of identity.



Of these three stages, only the last actually expresses the national identity. The first stage is merely regurgitated white culture, while the second attempts to embrace a native culture that no longer exists in the postcolonial world. By turning to the people, the writer more accurately captures the struggle of the people, which Fanon argues is where black culture actually lives. Their national culture is in the struggle for said nation.



The very language the colonized intellectual uses to appreciate a piece of art is that of the oppressor. The intellectual talks of African art in terms of nationality, but it ends up sounding of exoticism. What's more, when the intellectual returns to their culture through art, they are a like a foreigner. The intellectual is "mesmerized by these mummified fragments," which, all bunched together, are negated. Culture cannot be simplified, Fanon says, and this is why the intellectual is "out of step."

Looking at Africa and other parts of the Third World as exotic has long been a form of colonial racism, as it focuses solely on the ways in which the Third World is different from the West. The intellectual stares at the exotic culture like a zoo exhibit, "mesmerized" by it. But they only see parts or "fragments" of the culture, which dehumanizes, degrades, and erases it. Again, the intellectual is "out of step," just like the national bourgeoisie.



In the visual arts, the colonized creator, in an attempt to make art of national importance, ends up working in stereotypes. They search for genuine national culture and want to represent a national truth. Under colonial rule, the colonized painter did not paint the national landscape; he or she instead chose still life or nonrepresentational art. In an independent nation, the painter returns to the people and wants to represent national reality, which is often "reminiscent of death rather than life."

Society in a newly independent nation, as Fanon has already said, is exceedingly violent, which is why this art is "reminiscent of death." The colonizer didn't paint the national landscape during colonial rule because it was littered with the colonial presence, and still life paintings offered them more control over subject matter.



Poetry is much the same. The colonized poet, too, wants to pen a poem of national significance; but when he writes of his people, he or she comes up short. The poet must first define his or her subject in order to write, but he must first understand his or her "alienation." The poet cannot just reconnect with a past where people no longer live. Rather, he or she must connect with the people as they live now.

Due to colonialism, the colonized are "alien" in their own nation and among their own people. Even though the nation is independent, it has splintered and fractured under colonial rule, and a unifying national culture must be established before the poet can write about it.



If the colonized intellectual is to write for their people using the past, they must also plan to open the door to the future to plant hope. The intellectual must commit wholeheartedly to the national struggle, and "muscle power is required." The intellectual is not solely responsible to national culture, but to the nation as well. Fighting for national culture is also to fight for the nation's liberation. The people of Algeria, for instance, are fighting for liberation, and Algerian national culture takes shape in that fight. Thus, the formerly colonized should not turn to the past to prove that their national culture exists. National culture is not folklore, nor is it gestures or words. National culture is the "collective thought process of a people to describe, justify, and extol" the struggles of liberation.

Plainly put, the fight for liberation is the culture of a developing nation. Thus, the intellectual cannot return to precolonial times to isolate their culture. Again, Fanon mentions the muscles of the colonized, which are always ready to take on the next challenge, and here it is building the nation. Fanon does not mean to say that there is not value in precolonial culture. On the contrary, Fanon argues, it is rich and valuable, but it must be modified for the future of the changing nation and its culture.



There is no connection between the national cultures of Senegal and Guinea, other than that they are controlled by the same French colonialism. Two identical cultures do not exist. The creation of a unifying black culture forgets that "Negros" are disappearing, Fanon says, under the weight of cultural and economic supremacy.

Again, a unifying "Negro" culture will, by necessity, not encapsulate everyone on the African continent. Those cultures, Fanon points out, will disappear, and the nonexistence of African culture introduced by colonialism is further perpetuated.



CHAPTER 4: MUTUAL FOUNDATIONS FOR NATIONAL CULTURE AND LIBERATION STRUGGLES

It is not enough for the oppressor to conquer nations and convince the world that nation's culture does not exist—the oppressor also tries to make the colonized believe that the culture of the colonized is inferior. There are varied responses to this by the colonized. The colonized intellectual dives headlong into the oppressor's culture and accepts their own as inferior; or, they make a long and detailed list of their indigenous culture and defend it. National culture under colonialism is “a culture under interrogation whose destruction is sought systematically.”

Any persistent cultural expression that is condemned by the colonial power is in itself an example of nationhood. After hundreds of years of oppression, however, there is very little national culture left. After just one hundred years of colonial oppression, culture “becomes rigid in the extreme, congealed, and petrified.” This tension, however, has ramifications on culture. Production of literature goes into overdrive, and there is much diversity in it. As the national consciousness changes, so does the writing of the colonized intellectual. From this point, one can now speak of national literature.

This national literature is like “combat literature” because it builds the national consciousness. Oral literature, too, begins to change. Battles are updated and modernized to recent struggles, heroes, and weapons. Storytellers respond to people's expectations, and while they make mistakes, they are constantly searching for new national models. Comedy and farce are nearly nonexistent, as is drama.

As the national consciousness awakens, music changes. The new jazz coming out of the United States is a certain response to the defeat of the South during the Civil War, Fanon says. It is not unreasonable to believe, Fanon continues, that in 50 years that same jazz music will be defended by whites who believe in a “frozen image” of a specific type of negritude.

According to Fanon, “culture is first and foremost the expression of a nation.” The nation is necessary for the existence of culture, as it is the struggle for the nation that encourages the creation of culture. However, the struggle for freedom does not mean that the national culture of the past is restored. Once the struggle is over, Fanon says, colonialism is dead, but so are the colonized. “If culture is the expression of national consciousness,” Fanon continues, “I shall have no hesitation in saying, in the case in point, that national consciousness is the highest form of culture.”

This, too, reflects the racism of European colonialism. Black culture was considered inferior by the West, and it was erased, suppressed, and destroyed at every turn. The absence of art and intellect is considered the height of savagery, and by erasing the culture of the Third World, Europe could thereby declare those from the Third World savages.



Cultural expression that is condemned by colonial power represents resistance, which thereby represents the struggle for nationhood. This struggle for nationhood, Fanon says, is the very definition of culture. Fanon frequently uses the word “petrified” and his description here of culture as “rigid” and “congealed” harkens to the tense muscles of the colonized. This overproduction of literature is also in response to oppression—another form of resistance—which again represents the national struggle.



Fanon's reference to national literature as “combat literature” again reflects this art as a form of resistance, which makes it part of the struggle for nationhood and the very definition of culture. Writing and storytelling respond to the nation; thus, they accurately reflect it.



Fanon implies that colonialism and the need to decolonize reaches the U.S. as well and includes everyone in the African diaspora. Of course, this also leads to stereotyping and “frozen image” of negritude that doesn't accurately represent anyone.



The fact that both the colonist and the colonized are dead after decolonization again reflects the inherent violence of the process. Of course, the death here is largely metaphorical, but it still serves the same purpose. Precolonial culture is dead, Fanon says, just like the people. Struggling for nationhood, which builds the national consciousness, is the national culture in the postcolonial world.



CHAPTER 5: COLONIAL WAR AND MENTAL DISORDERS

As the liberation war goes on, the people will suffer many wounds. This chapter, Fanon says, explores the mental disorders suffered during the Algerian War. The reader may find it strange that this book involves psychiatry case files. "There is absolutely nothing we can do about that," Fanon says. Colonialism is "a great purveyor of psychiatric hospitals." As it sought to completely negate the humanity of another, colonialism has caused many colonized individuals to question who they are.

When colonialism exists without armed rebellion, and the violence and oppression hit a specific limit, "the colonized's defenses collapse." As a result, many are admitted to psychiatric institutions. Algeria, where a liberation war has been raging for seven years, is "a breeding ground for mental disorders." This chapter includes both Algerian and French patients, and most of them are suffering from a "psychotic reaction," which means a specific situation triggered the psychotic event. In this case, the trigger is the Algerian War.

It is of note, Fanon says, that most of the cases of psychotic reaction in this chapter are "relatively benign." Cases in which one's entire personality is dislocated are rare. However, Fanon still contends that each of these cases as "pathological processes" are "malignant." These mental disorders are chronic, they attack the mind and ego, and leave the patient vulnerable. While these disorders are "benign," the patients' futures are completely "compromised," Fanon says.

CHAPTER 5: SERIES A

This is a collection of five cases of severe reaction disorders. The first case, B, is a 26-year-old Algerian suffering from impotence after the rape of his wife. He complains of migraines and insomnia. He is a taxi driver and has been a militant in the nationalist party since he was 18. At times, he has used his taxi to deliver propaganda or political leaders. He had been driving near a point of attack and was forced to abandon his taxi. He went underground with the liberation front, and after two years, received a letter from his wife telling him to forget her. After B's taxi had been found by the French authorities, French soldiers went to his house and questioned his wife. They took her to headquarters and kept her for days, and that is where a French officer raped her.

Fanon's comment that there is nothing to be done about the fact that his book contains case files reflects their importance. For Fanon, the psychological effects of colonization are the most significant and lasting effects of colonialism. There is no shortage of mental disorders in the colonial situation, Fanon implies, as colonialism is a "great purveyor" of hospitals.



Here, Fanon implies that colonialism places so much mental stress on the colonized, they reach a point when they just snap. Algeria's war has been raging for years, which means the people have had plenty of time to snap (hence it is a "breeding ground for mental disorders"). Fanon's use of the medical term "psychotic reaction" effectively places the blame for such disorders on colonialism, where, in Fanon's opinion, it rightfully belongs.



Here, Fanon explains that even though the medical field considers such psychological problems relatively harmless, Fanon argues that they are not so "benign." The people suffering from them are horribly afflicted, and there is no reason to believe that such illnesses will ever completely resolve. Thus, the patients' lives will always be "compromised."



This is obviously another example of the abject violence of colonialism. B's wife is raped in an attempt to get to B, and it underscores the absolute power that the French colonists have over the Algerian people. B doesn't go home for over two years because he knows that the French soldiers will be looking for him. This also reflects the psychological and physical ways in which the stress of colonialism manifests in the colonized. B's impotence is a physical response to his psychological stress, both of which are a direct result of colonialism.



B is pleasant, Fanon says, but his smile is “forced.” On his second day at the psychiatric hospital, he refuses to get out of bed and is suffering from anorexia and depression. He claims that he is unable to have sexual intercourse, no matter how he tries. He claims that his young daughter has “something rotten inside her,” and he fights the impulse to shred her picture. “She got a bit of French meat,” B says.

B admits that he doesn’t love his wife. In fact, he never did. But when the French soldiers came for her and questioned her, she refused to talk, B says. She would not give up her husband, and she took all of the abuse that they leveled at her. In the end, she did not blame B for what had happened. Instead, she told B to leave her. Thus, B feels obligated to take her back despite the rape, although he doubts he will ever get over it.

Case number two is S, a 37-year-old man, who survived a massacre in his village. S has never been concerned with politics, until the French army ambushed his village and killed 29 men at point-blank range. S took two bullets and survived, but the hospital personnel thought his behavior odd. He demanded a gun and was extremely paranoid. He had even taken a soldier’s gun and fired on some sleeping soldiers. He repeatedly told the doctors that he wasn’t dead, and he displayed mood swings and violent shouting. Over the course of his hospitalization for the gunshot wounds, he attacked eight patients. After three weeks in the psychiatric hospital, he is sleeping better and is less agitated. After a month, he is discharged.

Case number three is D, a 19-year-old liberation fighter, suffering from a major depressive disorder. D is intensely depressed, experiences constant insomnia, and has attempted suicide twice. He presents with auditory hallucinations and incoherent thoughts. He speaks constantly about his blood spilling, and he begs the doctors not to let the hospital “suck the lifeblood” from him. He complains of nightmares, in which a woman is haunting him.

D knows who the woman is haunting him, he says, because she is the one whom he killed. After D’s mother was killed by French soldiers, he joined the liberation front and was sent to an estate owned by white settlers. The estate manager was known to have killed two Algerians, but he wasn’t there. The man’s wife was there and begged for her life, but D stabbed her with his knife. Now, she comes to him at night and demands her blood back. After several weeks, D’s nightmares subside, and he is discharged.

B is pleasant, but it is obviously a lie. He is clearly worried that his daughter has been raped, too, as he fears “something rotten” is inside her, which he further implies is “a bit of French meat.” This underscores the extreme hate the colonized feel for the colonists, as it is even enough to make B question his love for his daughter.



This, too, shows the damage to B’s psyche, as well as his wife’s. He will never forget what has happened, and it will always plague him. Despite being devastated, neither B nor his wife seem particularly surprised that the colonists have treated them so violently, which suggests this type of treatment is common among Algerians.



It seems unlikely after only a month of treatment, S is ready to be discharged after such extreme and violent behavior. This, too, underscores the widespread violence and mental illness present during the Algerian War. As soon as S is discharged, there are likely two more patients waiting to take his spot. Thus, patients are discharged as quickly as possible, knowing full well that it is likely they will have another psychotic break in the future.



D’s hallucinations that someone will “suck the lifeblood” from him or spill his blood reflects his violent experiences in the Algerian War. He violently killed another; thus, he expects to be violently killed as well. This is an example of the reciprocal violence Fanon talks about throughout the book.



D’s reaction to kill the estate owner’s wife was quick, and her pleas for her life meant nothing. Clearly, this does not mean he isn’t consumed by guilt. The woman’s ghost visiting him suggests that he is deeply affected mentally by his actions in the war, which again underscores the psychologically damaging effects of colonialism.



Case number four is A, a 28-year-old European police officer suffering from depression. He is pleasant but complains of difficulty sleeping due to hearing screams. A few months back, he began working at police headquarters and has since been involved in numerous interrogations, many of which were violent. "They scream too much," A says, and the screams change depending on the torture. After hanging someone by the wrist for a couple of hours, they scream differently than the one who is electrocuted in the bathtub.

A is sick of his job and wants to resign. One day, while walking on the hospital grounds, A runs into a patient (an Algerian being treated for post-traumatic stress). A had previously interrogated and tortured the man at police headquarters, and the man is convinced that A has come to arrest and torture him. After weeks of therapy, A begins to make progress, but the Algerian cannot be convinced that the police have not infiltrated the hospital.

Case number five is R, a 30-year-old European police officer who tortures his wife and children. He complains of loss of appetite and disturbed sleep, as well as his self-described "fits of madness." He feels like punching everyone and is sensitive to noise. R violently beats his wife and kids, including his baby, who is 20 months old. He claims that he has never abused his wife until he had been sent to Algeria to "restore law and order." He claims that some days, he tortures for 10 whole hours. The torture is exhausting, R says, but he is most worried about beating his wife.

CHAPTER 5: SERIES B

This section includes cases in which the trigger is the actual war in Algeria. The first case examines two Algerian boys, one 13-year-old and one 14-year-old, who killed their European friend. The boys admit their crime, and the 13-year-old swears they were not angry with the boy. They had played with the young European on many occasions, but when they heard that Europeans wanted to kill all the Arabs, they decided to kill they boy. They can't kill adults, the 13-year-old says, so they killed their young friend. The 14-year-old Algerian boy, who looks much older than his friend, doesn't answer questions, but he doesn't deny that he killed the boy. He only asks why there aren't any Europeans in jail for killing Algerians.

A's description of the different screams he encountered while torturing Algerians underscores the abject violence of colonialism, as well as the effects that violence has on him physiologically. A clearly doesn't want to be involved in such violence, but the nature of the colonial situation is such that he doesn't think he really has a choice. Such violence is expected of him.



This illustrates how damaging colonialism is for both sides, although the Algerian man definitely is more afflicted. A can't apologize for what he has done or take it back, and the Algerian can't live in a place where he isn't constantly afraid of being tortured.



Ironically, the extreme violence doled out by the European police is considered "law and order" in the colonial situation, which, Fanon implies, is the overwhelming problem. This type of law and order isn't just, and it is only when R treats his family in the same way that it becomes a "fit of madness." Otherwise, such abuse is simply R's job and is completely normal to him.



The 13-year-old boy approaches the murder of his friend with complete nonchalance, which reflects how common violence and death are in the colonial situation. He is completely emotionally removed from what he has done, as if it was a necessity and therefore less traumatic. The 14-year-old boy's question as to why no Europeans are in jail is certainly appropriate, since Algerians are killed daily by Europeans with absolutely no repercussions.



Case number two is a 22-year-old Algerian man, suffering from paranoid delusions and suicidal behavior after a “terrorist attack.” He is emaciated and confused, and since his jaw is broken in two places, he is fed by an intravenous line. After two weeks of being nearly comatose, he begins to talk. He had been involved in the Muslim scout movement many years ago but had since turned to his career in data processing, which he is passionate about. He got the feeling that his family was disappointed in him for not joining the liberation front. He grew increasingly depressed and anorexic, and he began to have auditory hallucinations of being called a coward and traitor.

One day, the Algerian man went outside without a jacket or tie. He must have looked like a “madman” because of his “beard,” he says, and he wandered into the European sector. He wasn’t arrested or harassed, but all around him other Algerians were assaulted and handcuffed by police. He grew agitated and then found himself in front of French headquarters, where he tried to grab a soldier’s machine gun, screaming: “I am an Algerian!” He was arrested and interrogated for the names of his rebel connections. Of course, he knew nothing.

Case number three is a young Frenchwoman with anxiety. Her father, a civil servant, was recently killed during an ambush. She claims that her father had been on a “frenzied manhunt for Algerians,” and he constantly worked against the rebellion. He would bring Algerians home and torture them in the basement looking for information about the rebels. The young Frenchwoman was deeply affected by their screams and had difficulty looking her father in the face afterward. One day, her father was seriously injured in a raid and died shortly after. She was disgusted by his funeral, where he was hailed a hero. The French government has offered her financial support, but she has refused. She admits that if she could, she would join the Algerian resistance, too.

Case number four looks at young Algerian children under 10 whose parents have been killed by the French. The children are very attached to parental images, and they are afraid of noise. They become instantly upset with even a small reprimand, and they suffer from insomnia, sleepwalking, and bedwetting. They also have “sadistic tendencies,” and they poke holes in paper, chew pencils, and bite their nails.

Even those who try to avoid the war are negatively affected, which implies that the war cannot possibly be ignored and that the psychological effects are inescapable. Clearly, the man has been severely beaten, and the fact that Fanon puts the words “terrorist attack” in quotes suggests that this was not, in fact, an actual terrorist attack. Indeed, the man had a psychotic break and was falsely labeled as a terrorist because of the colonial situation.



This passage implies that the Algerian man looks like a “madman” simply because of his ethnicity, which is clearly lessened if he wears a jacket or tie—the clothing of Western culture. Without Western clothing, and sporting a beard (which as a Muslim is part of his religious culture), the man is assumed to be a “madman,” which again reflects the racism of the colonial situation.



The young Frenchwoman is only associated with the war tangentially, yet she is still affected by it. Her father bringing Algerians home to torture them underscores the widespread use of torture during the war, as it implies that the Frenchwoman’s father simply brings Algerians home at will and tortures them whenever he feels the need or finds the opportunity. She is clearly ashamed of what her father has done and does not at all agree with the colonial situation, although there is little she can do about it.



The “sadistic tendencies” exhibited by the children reflects the widespread violence they have been exposed to within the colonial situation. Sustained violence and war are all children under 10 would know at this time, and they accept it as a normal part of their lives.



Case number five is concerned with puerperal psychoses—mental disorders during pregnancy—in refugees. Such disorders are thought to be caused by either a disruption of the glands in the endocrine system, or a “psychological shock.” Since the French government has established a buffer zone along the borders of Tunisia and Morocco in their “scorched earth policy,” 300,000 refugees have been displaced. They live wherever they can, in poverty and substandard conditions, and psychotic disorders in pregnant women are common. The refugees live in constant stress, and the French troops reserve the constantly harass them. Symptoms range from agitation to depression, multiple suicide attempts, as well as delirium and delusions.

The “psychological shock” in this situation is obviously the colonial situation. The “scorched earth policy” is literally burning everything useful in order to make the land uninhabitable. Obviously, the people already living there were given no thought or a new place to live and were simply turned out to wander and manage, including pregnant women. The stress of such a situation—to have one’s land violently burned with the intention of rooting them out—is immense and leaves people hopeless, hence the multiple suicide attempts.



CHAPTER 5: SERIES C

This section deals with mental disorders suffered by those after torture. Group number one is a group of patients who were tortured indiscriminately as a “so-called precautionary measure.” Police had beaten the victims, burned them with cigarettes, and struck the soles of their feet with sticks. Water was forced through the mouth and soapy enemas injected using high pressure. Bottles were rammed into their rectums, and they were tied down and beaten with billy clubs. Those who are tortured and know something are almost never seen in the hospital. Usually, it is only those who are tortured and don’t know anything. Symptoms of those tortured include depression, anorexia, and restlessness, as well as an overwhelming sense of injustice and indifference to morals.

Presumably, the people tortured here have done nothing to warrant such treatment. Their torture is a “precautionary measure” meant to keep them terrified and in line, not to uncover any information or rebel plans of action. The violence they are subjected to for the sake of violence and terror is unspeakable. Such violence not only physically breaks a victim, it destroys their dignity as well. Furthermore, the torture is quite sexual and is akin to rape, a complete invasion of personal space and bodily autonomy, which totally subjugates the Algerians.



Group number two includes those who have been tortured with electricity. Prior to 1956, torture by electricity was one of many methods of torture; however, after September of 1956 electricity was used exclusively for certain interrogations. Victims suffer delusions, apathy, and a fear of electricity.

It would be bad enough if electricity was reserved for only certain cases, but this unspeakable violence is a first response, which again underscore the widespread torture used in the Algerian War.



Group number three are those who have been tortured using truth serum. They were injected with Pentothal, an effective method sometimes used instead of electricity. It is administered intravenously by a doctor. “I am a doctor, not a policeman. I’m here to help you,” they say before injecting the Algerians. Symptoms include repeatedly denying having said anything to the interrogators. They suffer from permanent anxiety and have poor sensory perception. One-on-one conversations are feared, and they suffer from inhibition.

Fanon seems to take special offense to the use of doctors in the capacity of torture. The doctors’ comment, “I am a doctor, not a policeman. I’m here to help you,” is an outright lie. This blatant dishonesty destroys one’s trust in doctors over time, Fanon implies, and undermines the real work he is doing now as a psychiatrist.



Group number four is concerned with those patients who have been brainwashed. Brainwashing practices of the French can be divided into two categories: brainwashing the intellectual and brainwashing the nonintellectual. For intellectuals, role playing is used. Victims are forced to collaborate with the French, as well as give lectures on the value of French culture and dismiss Algerian people and culture. After such brainwashing, symptoms include fear of large discussions and the inability to explain or defend viewpoints.

In brainwashing practices for the nonintellectual, the body is beaten in hopes that the national consciousness will dissolve. They are forced to confess that they are not with the liberation movement and that the Algerian fight is wrong. They are forced to declare Algeria's future is France and recognize the benefit of colonialism. The Algerian is forced to say they are French and say: "Long live France." The symptomology here is not overly serious. Brainwashed subjects are bruised and crying out for quiet.

CHAPTER 5: SERIES D

Along with mental illnesses, the Algerian War also causes "a pathology of the entire atmosphere in Algeria." This widespread trauma leads to psychosomatic disorders, which are physical illnesses developed in response to some sort of conflict. These types of disorders are particularly common in those sent to internment camps, and are called psychosomatic because they are rooted in psychology. Psychosomatic symptomology includes stomach ulcers, renal colic, disrupted menstrual cycles, hypersomnia, premature grey hair, paroxysmal tachycardia, and **muscle** stiffness.

CHAPTER 5: FROM THE NORTH AFRICAN'S CRIMINAL IMPULSIVENESS TO THE WAR OF NATIONAL LIBERATION

During the colonial era, Algerians were known for their horrendous criminality. The colonist agreed that the Algerian criminality was a widespread problem, and it was believed that the Algerian was simply born a criminal. This theory was taught in universities for years, and it was assumed that the Algerian was "a habitual killer," "a savage killer," and "a senseless killer." This reputation spilled over to Tunisia and Morocco as well, and they were known for a lack of emotion, and for their stubbornness and gullibility.

Again, no one is able to escape the violence and oppression of the colonial situation. The intellectuals, who are likely not involved in the rebellion (they are the one percent of the population that is isolated from the masses), yet they are still targeted. By brainwashing the intellectual, the French can make sure their message gets out in universities and other educational settings.



In hoping the national consciousness dissolves, the French hope to again strip the Algerians of their national identity and culture, which lives in their national consciousness and their struggle against colonial oppression. They are forced to embrace French nationality and deny their own, which is reflected in the saying "Long live France."



This section of the book proves that the effects of colonialism are not just psychological—they manifest in physical ways as well. This brings the effects of colonialism to a whole other level, as also it has the power to affect one's physical health.



This, too, is rooted in the racism of colonialism, as the Algerian brain is considered less developed than the white brain. In this way, the Algerian is made into an automatic criminal and a killer who murders people for sport. This is obviously a false representation—a human brain is a human brain—but it was assumed that the colonized was automatically less than their white counterpart.



It was thought during colonial times that the North African brain was underdeveloped, and the nervous system was lacking, which accounted for the criminal behavior of the Algerians. But Algerian criminality was focused nearly entirely on other Algerians, and in France, Algerian criminality was focused mainly on the French. After 1954, there was a shift, and the criminality decreased. The Algerians stopped fighting amongst each other, and even the French had to admit this.

Thus, it is fair to say that the colonial context allows Algerian criminality a chance to be reexamined. Under colonialism, the Algerians were exposed to daily murder, famine, and abuse, and, as a result, had turned on each other. Therefore, it is not the Algerian's brain or nervous system that leads to criminality—rather, it is the colonial situation.

CONCLUSION

“Now comrades,” Fanon writes, “now is the time to decide to change sides.” We must leave Europe, he says, a country that has massacred men all over the world. Europe has halted the progress of man and enslaved others for nothing but their own greed and glory. They have taken over the world's leadership with violence, and, Fanon says, “we have better things to do than follow in Europe's footsteps.” Africa must not be concerned with competing with Europe or emulating it.

“Let us decide not to imitate Europe,” Fanon says, “and let us tense our **muscles** and our brains in a new direction.” Two hundred years ago, a former European colony known as the United States took it upon itself to compete with Europe and now the country is “a monster” where the “flaws, sickness, and inhumanity of Europe have reached frightening proportions.” In light of this, Fanon says, Africa must start a new history and “create a new man,” one that is developed with “a new way of thinking.”

Here, Fanon implies that there is nothing underdeveloped about the Algerian brain. If there was, they would kill indiscriminately, but they don't. Their targets change with their location, and even decrease, which suggests it is an outside factor—colonialism for example—that is really to blame.



Again, Fanon comes right out and makes his argument clear. He doesn't imply or hint around; he challenges the colonial situation, and in doing so, is doing the active work of decolonization.



This is Fanon's call to action. He wants to thoroughly challenge the colonial situation in the hope of ending colonialism entirely. This also identifies Europe as the immoral savages, not the colonized as is usually assumed, and this, too, upsets the colonial situation. In claiming they have better things to do than follow Europe, Fanon denies Europe's supposed superiority. After all, Europe isn't even worth following, he implies.



To break the colonial situation means to stop Western mimicry as well, and Fanon's words highlight this. Plus, following Europe has proved dangerous for others, and Fanon gives the United States as an example. To imitate Europe is to commit such violent atrocities, Fanon implies, and it is not behavior to which the Third World should aspire.





HOW TO CITE

To cite this LitChart:

MLA

Rosewall, Kim. "The Wretched of the Earth." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 31 Oct 2019. Web. 21 Apr 2020.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Rosewall, Kim. "The Wretched of the Earth." LitCharts LLC, October 31, 2019. Retrieved April 21, 2020. <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-wretched-of-the-earth>.

To cite any of the quotes from *The Wretched of the Earth* covered in the Quotes section of this LitChart:

MLA

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Grove Press. 2005.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press. 2005.