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## **Reclaiming History: Dehumanization and the failure of Decolonization<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

Two events served to accelerate and accentuate the process of decolonisation. First, the rise of Fascism and Nazism in Europe leading to the Second World War, and the establishment of the United Nations and its emphasis on human rights. Both of which served to heighten the sense of injustice felt by colonised peoples who had themselves been denied the rights that Europeans fought the Nazi's to preserve, and which were, emboldened in the UN Charter. Using the writings of some of the foremost anti-colonial national liberation theorists and activists of Antilles and African origin this article seeks to demonstrate the disingenuousness of western European powers in their championing of human rights, while at the same time they denied the very humanity of the peoples in their colonies. One of the ways in which such rights were denied was to take control of the historical narrative of the colonies, portraying them as barbaric, backward and savage, awaiting the arrival of Europeans to precipitate their emergence from the dark ages. Although Marx was a source of inspiration in the liberation struggles his theory, for protagonists, was deficient in theorising colonialist race and racism, and was as guilty as the colonisers in denying African history. The history of Africa, for him, was a mere extension of European history. However, decolonisation, far from delivering liberation, merely heralded neo-colonialism, namely, the collaboration and complicity of

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their very helpful comments, and the participants at the first and second conferences on colonization at the Johannesburg Institute of Advanced Study. In particular, its then Director, Peter Vale, was immensely supportive in entrusting myself and Ayesha Omar to stage a series of three, to which he contributed many formative ideas. The papers in this special issues were workshopped at a conference in Cardiff, May, 2019, and all of the contributors benefitted immensely from the comments. I had the opportunity to present this paper at Tariq Modood's Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship, Bristol University. I am extremely grateful for the comments received on that occasion.

native elites in perpetuating the structures and historical narratives of colonialism which persist in contemporary debates that demand the decolonisation of the mind.

## **Introduction**

On the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations Nelson Mandela addressed the General Assembly, paying tribute to the support it had given to the liberation movement in his country. This was a very different United Nations from that of its inception, during which another South African Head of State played a prominent role in shaping the preamble to the Charter of 1945 with its strong endorsement of human rights. The hypocrisy of J. C. Smuts championing freedom and human rights on the international stage, whilst introducing racist policies at home did not go unnoticed,<sup>2</sup> nor indeed was the irony lost on leaders of the liberation struggles of colonial and former colonial states in the Charter's reaffirmation of faith 'in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women, and of nations large and small.'<sup>3</sup> All five permanent members of the Security Council had significant imperial interests, which they were not to relinquish without a struggle.

Colonialism has rightly come to be reviled as one of the most insidious crimes perpetrated by one people upon another. With its accompanying racism it constituted for a severe critic, Fanon, the 'systematised oppression of a people' which destroys ways of life and cultural values, demeans language, cultural practices and dress.<sup>4</sup> Colonialism is a collective relationship between peoples, or nations, and not between individuals. It is, Fanon argues, 'the conquest of a national territory and the oppression of a people: that is all'.<sup>5</sup> A significant aspect of that oppression was to seize control of the colonized nation's sense of

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<sup>2</sup> Saul Dubow, 'Smuts, the United Nations and the Rhetoric of Race and Rights', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 43 (2008), 43-72.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/un-charter-full-text/>

<sup>4</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Towards the African Revolution* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 33.

<sup>5</sup> Fanon, *Towards the African Revolution*, 81.

the past, reinterpreting, distorting and dehumanizing it as a dark and sordid episode in the prelude to colonization and civilisation with accompanying religious and intellectual 'enlightenment'. Aimé Césaire, for example, a fellow Martinican with Fanon, exhorts us to agree on what colonialism is not. It is not the introduction of the rule of law in places of lawlessness, neither is it evangelism nor philanthropic paternalism pushing back the frontiers of ignorance, disease and tyranny for the glorification of God. The harbingers of colonialism are pirates, adventurers, gold diggers, merchants, ship owners and wholesale grocers compelled by the shadow their civilization casts to extend to a 'world scale the competition of its antagonistic economics'.<sup>6</sup>

Amilcar Cabral, the anticolonial theorist from Portuguese Guinea-Bissau, agrees with Jean-Paul Sartre, the French Existentialist philosopher, that colonialism is partly economic and that imperialism, in general, is a consequence of the profit motive and the accumulation of surplus value. It is a necessary stage of capitalism just as national liberation and the advent of socialism necessarily follows. Imperialism, for him, is piracy migrated to dry land, reorganised and consolidated to plunder the natural and human resources of colonised peoples. Imperialism is in effect the perversion of the colonised culture, distorting and subverting the capacity of individuals to express themselves to each other and collectively to other cultures. Self-determination is not only the liberation of the individual but also the transformation and creation of 'a New Man, fully conscious of his national, continental and international rights and duties'.<sup>7</sup>

### **Decolonization and neo-colonialism**

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<sup>6</sup> Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 32-3.

<sup>7</sup> Amilcar Cabral, 'Presuppositions and objectives of national liberation in relation to social structure', in Cabral, *Unity and Struggle: Speeches and Writings* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), 119.

In the aftermath of the Second World War decolonization, of necessity, advanced rapidly. The colonial powers had either been defeated in the war (Japan, Italy, Germany) or were severely weakened (Britain, France, the Netherlands). Many of the struggles for independence were violent and traumatic, and the strategies for holding on to territories a combination of conciliation and coercion. Decolonization was not, however, the complete severing of the demeaning relationship in which the colonized stood to the colonizer. The colonial powers sought to consolidate durable systems of clientage with the colonized elites who were readily compromised by promises of political privilege and robust support for the suppression of radical dissidents by means of counterinsurgency measures, which included summary executions, torture, detention without trial and involuntary relocation of native populations.<sup>8</sup> Decolonization was not, however, the prelude to the end of imperialism, but instead the facilitator of neo-colonialism. Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana after independence, argued in 1965 that the old type of colonialism was on the retreat in Africa, and while some bastions remained it was unlikely that new colonies would be created. Instead, 'in place of colonialism as the main instrument of imperialism we have today neo-colonialism'.<sup>9</sup> Neo-colonialism is the worst type of imperialism because those who practise it exercise power without responsibility, while those who are subjected to it suffer exploitation without redress.<sup>10</sup>

Neo-colonialism is perceived to be a significant problem in contemporary Africa, despite United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1514 which proclaimed in 1960 that

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<sup>8</sup> Dane Kennedy, *Decolonization: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 47; Frantz Fanon, *Towards the African Revolution* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 120-26; Emanuele Saccarelli and Latha Varadarajan, *Imperialism Past and Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 119-64; Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 230-340.

<sup>9</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (London: Panaf, 2004), ix.

<sup>10</sup> Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism*, xi.

‘colonialism in all its forms and manifestations’ should be brought to a swift and ‘unconditional’ end on the grounds that the alien ‘subjugation, domination and exploitation’ of people constituted a fundamental violation of human rights, contravening the right of all peoples to the self-determination of their own political status and freely to pursue ‘their economic, social and cultural development’.<sup>11</sup> Despite such explicit condemnation of colonialism its persistence in the form of neo-colonialism has continued to shape the landscape of modern Africa, and this is not only because of complicity between elites, but also because subjection to colonialism and its re-presentation of their histories, degraded, dehumanized and penetrated the psyche of the colonized. This was the danger Fanon identified more than sixty years ago. Fanon’s stated aim was ‘the liberation of the man of colour from himself’,<sup>12</sup> a self that had acquired an inferiority complex, which has been internalised, by what Fanon called the ‘epidermalization – of this inferiority’.<sup>13</sup> Colonialism gets under the skin of the colonised. Decolonization did not free the former colonies from the yoke of their colonizers, on the contrary, the preponderance of national liberation theorists argued, that the appearance of the attainment of state sovereignty was no more than the disguised suzerainty of the former colonialists operating through a native elite bourgeoisie which had vested interests in maintaining close relations.

Colonialism, then, transmuted into neo-colonialism under the guise of decolonisation. Kwame Nkrumah, the first postcolonial president of Ghana, contended that the essence of neo-colonialism is that the State appears to have international sovereignty, but control is exercised over it by economic and monetary means, most often but not invariably, by its former colonial ruler. In South Vietnam, for example, France was the former imperial power,

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.un.org/en/decolonization/declaration.shtml>. Accessed 9 February 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 2.

<sup>13</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 4.

but neo-colonial control was exercised by the United States of America to avert the spread of communism.<sup>14</sup>

The legacy continues to reverberate. In February of 2019, for example, the International Court of Justice ruled that the British acted illegally in separating the Chagos Islands from Mauritius in 1965 as a condition of independence. 1,500 people were deported by the British from Diego Garcia, the largest of the Chagos Islands, in order to lease it to the Americans for an airbase in 1971.<sup>15</sup> The ruling was reinforced by a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly in May 2019.

### **Human Rights and Dehumanization**

The European Allies who fought against Fascism and Nazism in the name of freedom and human rights saw no contradiction in their denial of such essentials of humanity to colonized peoples. Liberation theorists agree that the colonisers demoted the 'native' to the status of sub-human. Rejecting Fascism in Europe, the Allies practised its methods and subscribed to its ideology in their colonial territories. Decolonisation in Africa was characterised by persistent and brutal tactics, involving levels of violence that flouted the precepts of international law which the colonizers themselves had constructed. Such tactics encouraged violence in return. Martial law was a common strategy in resisting opposition. It was antithetical to colonialism's claim to have a civilising mission by bringing the rule of law to 'barbaric' places.<sup>16</sup> Detention without trial was prevalent; torture; mass executions and collective punishment. Because they regarded the peoples of Africa uncivilised and savage, the colonisers were not constrained by moral standards of conventional warfare.

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<sup>14</sup> Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, ix-x.

<sup>15</sup> *The Guardian*, 25 February 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/25/un-court-rejects-uk-claim-to-sovereignty-over-chagos-islands>. Accessed 1 March 2019.

<sup>16</sup> Margaret Kohn and Keally McBride, *Political Theories of Decolonization: Postcolonialism and the Problem of Foundations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 11.

On the eve of the Second World War and in its aftermath several Black African Americans drew parallels between European fascism, white racism and imperialism. W. E. B. Dubois, a black American civil rights activist, argued that fascism was not an aberration, but a logical consequence of Western civilisation, emerging out of slavery and imperialism, entrenched in a global system driven by capitalist political economy and racist ideologies. He equated the colonialism of France and Great Britain with the use of race prejudice and exploitation by Hitler and Mussolini.<sup>17</sup> No atrocity that the Nazis perpetrated in concentration camps, in defiling women, and corrupting children had not already been practiced by Christian civilization against black people in the name of a superior race destined to rule the world.<sup>18</sup> Ralph Bunche, an African American who was to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1950, argued that fascism with its exaltation of the state and ‘comic-opera glorification of race’ gave new and added impetus to imperialism with its exploitation of the non-white races of the earth.<sup>19</sup> The racism of the colonialists, Sartre maintained, functioned to compensate for the universalism of bourgeois liberalism by, in the case of France, for example, demoting the Algerians to the status of subhuman and excluding them from the enjoyment of universal human rights.<sup>20</sup> Sartre contended that ‘no one is unaware that we have ruined, starved and massacred a nation of poor people to bring them to their knees.’<sup>21</sup>

From the West Indies to Africa these sentiments were echoed. The movements for national liberation throughout the world exposed the contradiction inherent in liberal imperialism. In fighting for the very principles of freedom and self-determination advocated

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<sup>17</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois, A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century* ed. Herbert Aptheker (New York: International Publishers, 1968), 305-6.

<sup>18</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa* (New York: Internal Publishers, 1947), 23.

<sup>19</sup> Ralph Blunche, ‘French and British Imperialism in West Africa’, *Journal of Negro History*, 21 (1936), 31.

<sup>20</sup> Sartre, ‘Colonialism is a System’, in *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*, 51.

<sup>21</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, ‘The Sleepwalkers’ (1962) in *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*, 148.



by the Allies in their fight against the Axis powers, the Allies continued to deny the same freedoms to their colonies. The immediate and pre-eminent priority and concern for Africans, Fanon urged, must be the eradication of genocide by the French in Algeria, and of apartheid in South Africa.<sup>22</sup>

Albert Memmi, born in Tunisia in 1920 under the French Protectorate, contended that every colonial nation is nascently fascist because the whole of the administrative and political machinery has no other goal than systematic oppression for the benefit of the few. The relationships which hold between the colonizer and colonized 'have arisen from the severest exploitation, founded on inequality and contempt, guaranteed by police authoritarianism.'<sup>23</sup> In other words, a civilization that colonises, is 'already a sick civilization, a civilisation which is morally diseased'.<sup>24</sup>

Aimé Césaire argued in 1955 that the Allies in Europe, before they were the victims of Nazism, closed their eyes and absolved the Nazis of their sins. In that year Fanon compared the struggle against colonialism with the Allied resistance to Nazism. African peoples, he argued, must emulate the actions of the Allies and fight against the form of Nazism imposed by France, Britain and South Africa which was a form of physical and spiritual liquidation of African and Caribbean peoples. Césaire maintained that the Europeans legitimated Fascism because until they themselves were the victims they were the perpetrators.<sup>25</sup> What the European 'cannot forgive Hitler for is not *the humiliation of man as such*, it is the crime against the white man, and the fact that he applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the "coolies" of India, and the "niggers" of Africa'.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Towards the African Revolution* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 171-2.

<sup>23</sup> Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 106.

<sup>24</sup> Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 21.

<sup>25</sup> Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 36.

<sup>26</sup> Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 36.

French liberalism with its emphasis upon human rights and democratic institutions is alien to their own colonists who in the colonies are compelled to deny those rights and institutions enjoyed by Frenchmen to those peoples they have colonised. Jean Paul Sartre, the anti-colonial French Existentialist philosopher, argued that mainland France was ensnared by colonialism because of her assertion of sovereignty over Algeria. The system that produced colonialists from afar repudiated French institutions. Colonialism compelled France to send democratic Frenchmen to risk their lives to protect the tyranny that the colonial repudiators of democracy imposed upon the Algerians.<sup>27</sup> Sartre argued: ‘Colonialism denies *human rights* to people it has subjugated by violence, and whom it keeps in poverty and ignorance by force, therefore, as Marx would say, in a state of “subhumanity”. . . . since the natives are subhuman, the Declaration of Human Rights does not apply to them’.<sup>28</sup> The rights discourse of the west excludes most of the world’s population from the category of being human. Indeed, the petrified ideology of the colonizer dehumanises man to an animal that talks, with no rights, not even the right to live.<sup>29</sup> Césaire indicts pseudo-humanism for diminishing the rights of man. It has reduced the concept to something ‘narrow and fragmentary, incomplete and biased and, all things considered, sordidly racist’.<sup>30</sup>

Paradoxically, Césaire maintains that the barbarism into which the colonisers sank in their subjugation and hatred of the ‘natives’ in the name of civilisation ‘dehumanizes even the most civilized man; that colonial activity, colonial enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based on contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it; that the colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as *an animal*,

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<sup>27</sup> Sartre, ‘Colonialism is a System’, in *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*, 52-3.

<sup>28</sup> Jean Paul Sartre, ‘Albert Memmi’s *The Colonizer and the Colonized*’ (1957) in *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*, 58-9. This essay appears as the Foreword to Memmi’s book (London: Souvenir Press, 2016). The discussion appears on page 20 of that book.

<sup>29</sup> Sartre, ‘Memmi’s *The Colonizer and the Colonized*’ in Sartre, *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*, 61-2. Also, in Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 23-4.

<sup>30</sup> Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 39.

accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends objectively to transform *himself* into an animal.<sup>31</sup> He claims that the barbarism of Europe has reached incredible heights, surpassed only by the United States.<sup>32</sup> The colonizer subversively instils in the colonized an inferiority complex.<sup>33</sup> Césaire contends: ‘The hour of the barbarian is at hand. The modern barbarian, The American hour. Violence, excess, waste, mercantilism, bluff, conformism, stupidity, vulgarity, disorder.’<sup>34</sup>

Fanon concurred that racism degraded and relegated colonized subjects to the status of subhuman.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, for Memmi, racism was a consubstantial element of colonialism. It established the relationship which supported discrimination and provided the foundation for claiming the immutability of that way of life.<sup>36</sup> In this respect, however generous of spirit the colonizer’s gifts, all he, or she, gave to the colonized peoples were gestures of charity and not of duty. If the colonizers acknowledged duties, they would have to concede that the colonized have rights.<sup>37</sup>

### **Retrieving History**

Dehumanization and the denial of human rights were accomplished, in part, by depriving the colonized of their histories. In imposing its own narrative on African history, emphasising the collapse of traditional societies in the face of European progress, colonialists and imperialists incorporated their malicious historical and anthropological myths into their ideologies as

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<sup>31</sup> Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 41. First Published in 1955.

<sup>32</sup> Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 47.

<sup>33</sup> Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 43

<sup>34</sup> Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 76.

<sup>35</sup> Young, Preface ‘Sartre; the “African Philosopher”’, in Sartre, *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*, xvii.

<sup>36</sup> Memmi, *Colonizer and the Colonized*, 118-9.

<sup>37</sup> Memmi, *Colonizer and the Colonized*, 120.

instruments of oppression.<sup>38</sup> Sartre maintained that the French left nothing for the Muslims in Algeria and forbade them everything. They were denied the use of their own language, and their civilization was liquidated while at the same time they were denied the civilization of the French. The Algerians were refused integration and assimilation and denied the same rights as the colonizers in order to legitimize colonial over-exploitation. Colonization counts among its successes the cancelling out of the colonized, the destruction of their history.<sup>39</sup>

One of the most insidious features of cancelling-out the colonised is taking control of African history, reinterpreting and distorting it as primitive, barbaric, desolate and underdeveloped awaiting the arrival of the superior European civilizations to elevate it to a place in world history, not in its own right but as an extension of, or adjunct to, European history.

History, Nkrumah argues, is one of the subtle instruments of social coercion. The representation of African history by Europeans is permeated by ‘malicious myths’ such as the inherent inertia of Africans manifest in their failure to shape history and propelled into the present only through their contact with Europe. African history was therefore conceived as an extension of European history.<sup>40</sup> ‘Our history’, Nkrumah contended, ‘needs to be written as the history of our society, not as the story of European adventurers’.<sup>41</sup>

Being forcibly deprived of one’s history, Fanon argued, is one of the greatest evils of colonialism because it is not only satisfied with tightly controlling a people and emptying the brain of the native of form and content, but also, ‘by a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it.’<sup>42</sup> The native is

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<sup>38</sup> Nkrumah, *Consciencism*, 62.

<sup>39</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, ‘A Victory’ (1958) in *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*, 85.

<sup>40</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for De-Colonization and Development with Particular Reference to the African Revolution* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2009), first published 1964, p. 62.

<sup>41</sup> Nkrumah, *Consciencism*, 63.

<sup>42</sup> Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 169.

indoctrinated into believing that colonialism brought light where there was darkness, and if the settlers were to leave ‘they would at once fall back into barbarism, degradation and bestiality’.<sup>43</sup>

Cabral maintained that one of the ‘inalienable rights’ of a people is to possess its own history. In his second address before the United Nations in 1972, ten years after his first, he maintained that foundational to national liberation is the ‘inalienable right of every people to have their own history; and the aim of national liberation is to regain this right usurped by imperialism, that is to free the process of development of the national productive forces’.<sup>44</sup>

How was history stolen from native peoples? A theme that proliferates throughout anti-colonial literature is that the oppressor is responsible for creating the oppressed and hence their history. Memmi is emphatic that colonization creates both the colonizer and the colonized, usurping the freedom of the colonized, the colonizer removes them from history, depriving them of every decision that contributes to their destiny in the world, and of all social and cultural responsibility.<sup>45</sup>

The oppressors project their fears and resentments onto the objects of their hate, portraying the native as sub-human and beneath contempt. Taking his lead from Richard Wright’s contention that the perceived Negro problem in the United States is in fact only a white problem, Jean-Paul Sartre observed that anti-Semitism is not provoked by the Jewish character, but instead it is the anti-Semite who creates the Jewish character and the same principle applies to colonial racism. Too often the oppressed seek to escape their predicament by aspiring to become accepted by the group from which they have been excluded, but in the process unwittingly submit to their own transformation into objects of derision, without a

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<sup>43</sup> Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 169.

<sup>44</sup> Cabral, ‘Presuppositions and objectives’, 130.

<sup>45</sup> Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (London: Souvenir Press, 2016, first published in French 1957), 135.

history and deprived of the freedom to take personal responsibility for their own self-transformation back into agents of history. In doing so they renounce acting authentically, and instead act inauthentically, always remaining the stranger or intruder denied assimilation by the dominant culture.<sup>46</sup>

Fanon echoes Sartre in maintaining that ‘it is the settler who has brought the native into existence and who perpetuates his existence’,<sup>47</sup> and in the process subverts and perverts the psychology of the ‘native’.<sup>48</sup> White civilization and European culture have, in Fanon’s view, precipitated an existential deviation in the Negro, whose ‘black soul’ is the creation of white men.<sup>49</sup> Fanon denies that being a Negro is congenital. There is, he says, prior to 1945 an African world and a West Indian world,<sup>50</sup> with Africans and West Indians denied their history and who were socially constructed by Europeans: the West Indian was authenticated by Europe in his contempt, for the Negro, and had been elevated to ‘a quasi-metropolitan’.<sup>51</sup> From 1945, in the light of European racism, and the occupation of much of the lesser Antilles by representatives of the French Vichy Government, West Indians discovered themselves as not only black, but also Negro, looking to the African continent for affirmation. The West Indian was rejected by both white and black cultures. They were rejected by the white culture to which they aspired, , a fragile, absurd and alienating aspiration, constituting ‘the great white error’. The West Indian was also rejected by black Africans who considered themselves more authentic in their toil,

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<sup>46</sup> Jean Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew* [1946] (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), 40-41, 143 and 152.

<sup>47</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* [1961], with a preface by Jean-Paul Sartre (London: Penguin, 2001), 28.

<sup>48</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks* [1952] (London: Pluto Press, 2008).

<sup>49</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 6.

<sup>50</sup> Fanon, *Towards the African Revolution*, 18.

<sup>51</sup> Fanon, *Towards the African Revolution*, 20. Cf. 167

suffering and struggle.<sup>52</sup> In this respect West Indians, were ‘now living the great black mirage’.<sup>53</sup>

Amid the conflict and violence between the colonisers and popular masses a growing sense of frustration and marginalisation emerges among the native petite bourgeoisie, and the only place they can turn to satisfy their need for liberation and gain a sense of identity is culture, which has been retained and has flourished in the masses. The urgency of returning to one’s origins becomes all the more immediate the more acute the complexity of its frustration, particularly for the ‘African diasporas in the colonial or racist metropolises’.<sup>54</sup> This explains the emergence of such theories and movements as Pan-Africanism and negritude, exemplifications of the phenomenon of returning to one’s origins premised on the idea of a cultural identity between all black Africans, conceived in places remote from Black Africa.<sup>55</sup>

Sartre argued that to belong to a given society inescapably binds its members to the elocutions of its language that are untranslatable, and make substantive its peculiar traits. Because the idea of negritude is diasporic in character, its disciples are compelled to articulate its philosophy in the French language, the only lingua franca available to them through which to communicate. Paradoxically, in doing so they expressed the very culture they sought to reject. Nevertheless, Sartre believed that it is a necessary stage in the process of liberation because negritude is the Negro’s consciousness of race, of his deprecation by the white, and they speak French in order to destroy, or de- Gallicize, the language of the oppressor. Sartre’s resolution of the problem of racism lay in a Marxist dialectic which finds its synthesis in a classless society in which whites and blacks come to together. White

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<sup>52</sup> Fanon, *Towards and African Revolution*, 24.

<sup>53</sup> Fanon, *Towards and African Revolution*, 27.

<sup>54</sup> ‘The Role of Culture in the struggle for Independence’, 165.

<sup>55</sup> Cabral, ‘The Role of Culture in the Struggle for Independency’, in *Resistance and Decolonization*, 168-9.

supremacy in both theoretical and practical terms constituted the thesis, the reaction of negritude provides the antithetical moment of negativity which is necessarily only the preparatory to the synthesis. Negritude, for Sartre, 'is dedicated to its own destruction, it is a passage and not objective, means and not the ultimate goal'.<sup>56</sup>

Fanon takes exception to Sartre's analysis because it attributes value to blackness only in relation to being white, a negative stage in a dialectical movement, a potentiality of something unrealised. Fanon retorts: 'I am not a potentiality of something, I am wholly what I am. I do not have to look for a universal. No probability has any place inside me. My Negro consciousness does not hold itself out as a lack. It *is*. It is its own follower.'<sup>57</sup>

### **The Deficiencies of Marx**

Marx, who provided inspiration for most liberation thinkers, embodied major deficiencies for liberationists. Sartre argued in *Black Orpheus* that the white man's gaze creates the Negro in a antagonistic relationship which precipitates the racism of the white against the black.

Marxism in this respect is unable to explain the existential condition of the black person. For the European worker Marxism tries to awaken a sense of class consciousness inextricably linked to the idea of profit and unearned increment, based on the conditions of ownership under capitalism. It is, in Sartre's view, an objective characteristic of the position of the proletariat. The missing element in Marxian analysis is the scorn that whites display towards blacks. There is no equivalent in the attitude of the bourgeoisie towards the working class.

This racism penetrates deeply beneath the skin and must be opposed with a heightened

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<sup>56</sup> Cited in Addour, 'Remembering Sartre', in Sartre, *Colonialism and Neo-Colonialism*, 13.

<sup>57</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 103.



subjective race consciousness based ‘on a certain quality common to the thoughts and conduct of negroes which is called *Negritude* [sic]’.<sup>58</sup>

As well as depriving Africa of its blackness, Marxism also deprived Africans of their history. African nationalist leaders such as Frantz Fanon, Julius Nyere, Kenneth Kaunda, Kwame Nkrumah, and Léopold Sédar-Senghor maintained that socialism in modern Africa could be built upon the foundation of pre-colonial village life, and this necessarily entailed taking control of African history in its characterisation, understanding and representation.<sup>59</sup>

While Marx provided insights into Capitalism the leaders of national liberation believed that he was limited in his understanding of Africa, and hence one had to be selective and not treat his philosophy as a religion. The most significant problem was that Marxism, in common with imperialism, denied that Africa and its peoples had a history and rich culture, and that Africans had been alienated from them. As Fanon suggested: ‘Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem. Everything up to and including the very nature of pre-capitalist society, so well explained by

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<sup>58</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, ‘Black Orpheus’, *The Massachusetts Review*, 6 (1964-65), 19. ‘Orphée Noir’ was first published as the preface to Leopold Sédar-Senghor, ed., *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie et malgache de langue française* (Paris, 1948). Robert J C Young has written extensively of the Eurocentric focus of Marxism and its inability to recognise race and gender oppression. He is also critical of the European Left, as Ho Chi Minh had been, for complicity in colonialism and neo-colonialism. See *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, second edition (London: Routledge, 2004), 4. The problem, as far as Ho was concerned, was that the proletariat in the colonizer countries viewed the colonies as alien, exotic and having little affinity to themselves. Without the realization that the colonial natives were exploited by the same people who exploited them, and only together could they achieve liberation, and cast off the common oppressor, they would remain under the iron fist of capitalism. Ho Chi Minh, ‘The Counter Revolutionary Army’ (1923), *Selected Works* (New York: Prism Key, 2011), 54. My purpose here is to emphasise that Marxism was complicit in the dehumanization process and hence the denial of human rights to the colonised.

<sup>59</sup> Robin D. G. Kelley, ‘The Poetics of Anticolonialism’ in Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 21.

Marx must here be thought out again'.<sup>60</sup> Césaire contended that Marx needed to be completed.<sup>61</sup> Césaire emphasized that the first thing to admit in retrieving and establishing identity was that Africans are black, have a past and culture of great value, despite being written out of the history of world civilizations like 'some sort of blank page in the history of humanity'.<sup>62</sup>

Cabral questions the efficacy of Marx's philosophy of history by critically alluding to the opening section of the *Communist Manifesto*. Cabral rhetorically asks can it really be the case that history begins only with the emergence of class and class struggle? If so, not only whole periods in European history would be excluded, but also various peoples in Africa, Asia and Latin America would stand outside history at the very time they were subjected to the burden of imperialism.<sup>63</sup> The common feature of both colonialism --direct domination -- and neo-colonialism -- indirect domination -- is 'the denial of the historical process of the dominated people, by means of violent usurpation of the freedom of the process of development of the productive forces.'<sup>64</sup> Cabral contended that from the moment Europeans colonized Africa 'our history, our freedom, and the freedom of our productive forces were taken and stifled by the colonists'.<sup>65</sup> In all respects Cabral wants to challenge European narratives of colonial history.<sup>66</sup> The masses, Cabral contends, are the repository of their own

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<sup>60</sup> Reiland Rabaka, 'The Weapon of Critical Theory' in Amílcar Cabral, *Resistance and Decolonization*, Trans Dan Wood with an introduction by Reiland Rabaka (London, Rowman and Littlefield, 2016), 25 citing Fanon 1968 *Wretched of the Earth*, 40.

<sup>61</sup> Césaire, 'Interview conducted by René Depestre' in *Discourse on Colonialism*, 86.

<sup>62</sup> Césaire, 'Interview conducted by René Depestre' in *Discourse on Colonialism*, 92.

<sup>63</sup> Cabral, 'Presuppositions and objectives of national liberation in relation to social structure', in *Unity and Struggle*, 124.

<sup>64</sup> Cabral, 'Presuppositions and objectives of national liberation in relation to social structure' (1966) in Cabral, *Unity and Struggle*, 129-30.

<sup>65</sup> Cabral, *Analysis of a Few Types of Resistance*, 144.

<sup>66</sup> Dan Wood, 'Imbrications of Coloniality: An Introduction to Cabralist Critical Theory in Relation to Contemporary Struggles', in Cabral, *Resistance and Decolonization*, 52.

cultures and it is they who create and preserve it. They are the only ones capable of making their histories, not the colonisers.<sup>67</sup>

History does not begin for these peoples with the advent of European imperialism, but on the contrary imperialism subverts, stagnates and paralyses local histories by stifling and suppressing the plurality and diversity of pre-existing histories.<sup>68</sup> It is not class that provides the motive force of history, in each social group it is the mode of production, which means the system of ownership and the level of productive forces, which themselves give rise and content to class struggle that are the underlying impetus to history, providing continuity before classes arise and after they disappear.<sup>69</sup>

With the appearance of socialist states and the prevalence of imperialism the possibility arises of liberated societies, which have been exploited and underdeveloped, reflecting a new stage in the historical process at a higher level of economic, social and cultural existence. National liberation, for Cabral, is necessarily ‘the regaining of the historical personality of a people’.<sup>70</sup> This re-establishment of continuity gives peoples the reassurance that after classes are eliminated they will continue to have a history. The formation of classes, Cabral contended, is not uniform within the diversity of human groupings, and their emergence depends on two variables. The first is the level of productive forces and the second is the system of ownership of the means of production.<sup>71</sup> These variables operate before the formation of classes and will continue after classes disappear:

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<sup>67</sup> Cabral, ‘The Role of Culture in the Struggle for Independence’, in *Resistance and Decolonisation*, 164.

<sup>68</sup> Cabral, ‘Presuppositions and Objectives’, 128.

<sup>69</sup> Cabral, ‘Presuppositions and Objectives’, 124

<sup>70</sup> Cabral, ‘Presuppositions and Objectives’, 130.

<sup>71</sup> Cabral, ‘Presuppositions and objectives of national liberation in relation to social structure’ (1966) in Cabral, *Unity and Struggle*, 123.

‘Man will outlive classes and will continue to produce and to make history, since he can never free himself from the burden of his needs, of hand and brain, which are the basis of the development of productive forces.’<sup>72</sup>

### **The need for ideology**

For Fanon, Cabral and Nkrumah, ideology, that is a theory of revolutionary insurrection, was imperative in transforming the historical reality of colonial imperialism into free societies, but they all realised that Marx had to be adapted to their own peculiar circumstances. Cabral emphasises the need for detailed knowledge of the circumstances in the process of transforming the lived reality of the colonised. While each revolution may have much to be admired ‘national liberation and social revolution are not exportable commodities.’<sup>73</sup> There is, nevertheless, a need for a theory, or ideology in the struggle against imperialism, and without which there has been no successful revolution. Ideology, or theory, which incorporates a sense of historical and national consciousness is necessary in order to guide, or help to improve the practice of revolutionary movements, as essential, in Cabral’s view, as financial, military and political support.<sup>74</sup> No one, he claimed, had successfully ‘practised Revolution without a revolutionary theory’.<sup>75</sup> At the heart of this theory needs to be the recognition that ‘the motive force of history is class struggle’, but its understanding needs to be deepened by being more inclusive of the lived experiences of colonised peoples.

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<sup>72</sup> Cabral, ‘Presuppositions and Objectives’, 125.

<sup>73</sup> Amilcar Cabral, ‘Presuppositions and objectives of national liberation in relation to social structure’ (1966) in Cabral, *Unity and Struggle*, 122.

<sup>74</sup> Cabral, ‘Presuppositions and objectives of national liberation in relation to social structure’ (1966) in Cabral, *Unity and Struggle*, 123.

<sup>75</sup> Amilcar Cabral, ‘Presuppositions and objectives of national liberation in relation to social structure’ *Unity and Struggle: Speeches and Writings of Amilcar Cabral* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), 122.

In sum each people has a right to self-determination to shape its own destiny by national liberation,<sup>76</sup> which is nothing less than ‘the regaining of the personality of that people, it is their return to history through the destruction of imperialist domination to which they were subjected.’ This is what Cabral refers to as the ‘inalienable right of every people to have their own history’.<sup>77</sup> He contends: ‘we want our people to direct its own destiny through its children in Guinea and Cape Verde’.<sup>78</sup> In essence, history and culture are inextricably integrated. Imperialist domination denies a people its own historical process while at the same time denying its cultural process.<sup>79</sup>

### **Complicity and Collaboration**

The major obstacle to decolonisation and the retrieval of history is the continuing presence of the colonizer in the form of complicity and collaboration with the native petite bourgeoisie.

The perceived failure of decolonisation, especially in Africa, was attributed to the complicity of the petite bourgeoisie with the colonisers, resulting in different forms of neo-colonialism.

In the 1969 preface to his book *Consciencism*, Nkrumah argued that the succession of recent military coups in Africa had exposed the close ties between neo-colonial interests and the indigenous bourgeoisie. Foreign monopoly capitalists, he maintained, are inextricably tied to local reactionaries who are complicit with officers in the armed forces to frustrate the aims of the African Revolution.<sup>80</sup> Cabral maintains: ‘Our objective is to break with the colonial state

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<sup>76</sup> Amilcar Cabral, *Unity and Struggle: Speeches and Writings of Amilcar Cabral* (New York: Monthly Review Press), 63.

<sup>77</sup> Amilcar Cabral, *Unity and Struggle: Speeches and Writings of Amilcar Cabral* (New York: Monthly Review Press), 130.

<sup>78</sup> Amilcar Cabral, *Analysis of a Few Types of Resistance* in Amílcar Cabral, *Resistance and Decolonization*, Trans Dan Wood with an introduction by Reiland Rabaka (London, Rowman and Littlefield, 2016), 76.

<sup>79</sup> Cabral, *Unity and Struggle*, 29.

<sup>80</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism*, i. The period between 1952 and 2012 witnessed 88 successful military coups. Prior to 1990 military coups were the principal method of regime change in most African countries. Issaka K. Souaré, ‘The African Union as a norm

in our land to create a new state – different, on the basis of justice, work, and equality of opportunity for all the children of our land, in Guinea and Cape Verde’.<sup>81</sup> The struggle is against Portuguese colonialism, not Portugal or the Portuguese people, nor against ‘Salazarism’ or fascism.<sup>82</sup>

Sartre, for example, reports that Fanon once told him that even though the whites are leaving Africa their accomplices who they have armed remain: ‘The last battle of the colonized against the colonizers will often be that of the colonized among themselves’.<sup>83</sup> Fanon recognised that no contemporary colonial power had the capacity to engage in protracted conflict in order to retain their privilege, by ‘the prolonged establishment of large forces of occupation’.<sup>84</sup> The danger was not so much resistance to decolonisation, but collective complicity by the new bourgeoisie and traditional leaders in the values ideals and governmental structure of the former colonisers, and the immense difficulty of individual psychological liberation from the inferior and subservient identities imposed on the colonised, and manifest in neuroses, sexual fantasies, irrational phobias and sexual ambivalence.

While he is critical of those Africans who before the collapse of colonialism maintained the absolute necessity of Europe to African development, he did not regard them as traitors because to a large extent they had been psychologically manipulated by their colonisers. They exhibited tendencies towards fawning in their exhibition of dependency and inferiority complexes. There could be no excuse, however, at the height of decolonisation, for African

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entrepreneur on military coups d’état in Africa (1952-2012): an empirical assessment’, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 52 (2014), 69-94. From 1965 to 1969, the period to which Nkrumah refers, there were coups in the following African countries: Algeria, Congo, Central African Republic, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Mali, Libya, Sudan and Somalia.

<sup>81</sup> Cabral, *Analysis of a Few Types of Resistance*, 82.

<sup>82</sup> Cabral, *Analysis of a Few Types of Resistance*, 83. António de Oliveira Salazar (1889–1970), the prime minister of Portugal from 1932 to 1968, after whom the politics of Salazarism derives its name.

<sup>83</sup> Jean Paul Sartre, ‘The Political Thought of Patrice Lumumba’ (1963), in *Colonialism and Neocolonialism* (London: Routledge, 2006), 177.

<sup>84</sup> Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 58.

leaders, such as Mamadou Dia, the first Prime Minister of Senegal (1958-62), who was complicit in continued French domination and who supported French resistance to decolonisation in Algeria. Fanon is at his most caustic in his condemnation of such counter revolutionaries, branding them traitors, ‘odious creatures’ and ‘stooges of imperialism’. Of Dia, who ‘defended colonialist theories with ardour’, he venomously remarks that he is a ‘miserable puppet, disavowed by History and waiting to be sent to the Chamber of Horrors’.<sup>85</sup>

Nkrumah maintains that traditional African society posits man as primarily a spiritual being, endowed with inward dignity, and therefore at variance with the Christian belief in the Fall and original sin. On the African understanding of man, the common welfare is paramount, and no sectional interest could be elevated as supreme. Colonialism destroyed this because of the necessity to rely on a cadre of Africans to administer the system. A minimal education was provided designed to infect them with European values, for which they attain a degree of prestige, rank and wealth.<sup>86</sup> Memmi maintains that the representatives of the colonizers, recruited from among the colonized, constitute a category that attempts to escape from the subjugation of colonialism and in placing themselves in the colonizer’s service to protect their own interests adopt the colonizer’s ideology including its values.<sup>87</sup>

Cabral warns of the dangers of complicity with the *tugas*, the white Portuguese, and those delusional blacks who collaborate out of vanity, ambition and vice, unwilling to submit to the rigours and exigencies of the Party’s work.<sup>88</sup> Under neo-colonialism, indirect

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<sup>85</sup> Frantz Fanon, ‘The Stooges of Imperialism’ in *Alienation and Freedom*, ed. Jean Khalfa and Robert J. C. Young (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 662-66

<sup>86</sup> Nkrumah, *Consciencism*, 69.

<sup>87</sup> Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 60. The author of the introduction disagrees. She argues, from a South African perspective, that There were a minority of mainly Left-wing colonizers who concurred with the view that colonialism was racist, unjust and inhuman, and that as well as psychologically damaging to the colonized it has also distorted the colonizer through its privileges. Nadine Gardiner, ‘Introduction’, Memmi, *Colonizer and the Colonized*, 40.

<sup>88</sup> Cabral, *Analysis of a Few Types of Resistance*, 77.

domination, the political power is predominantly comprised native agents, a local bourgeoisie or pseudo-bourgeoisie subordinate to the ruling class of the colonising country.<sup>89</sup> The native petite bourgeoisie over a few generations become moulded by colonization and cease to identify with the masses. It is a new class, driven by ambition, comprising civil servants, employees of economic enterprises, especially commerce, members of liberal professions, and a small number of people with urban and rural landed interests. Despite its efforts at full acceptance and integration it fails to surmount the institutional barriers. Cabral contends that this social stratum ‘is a prisoner of the contradictions in the social and cultural reality in which it lives, for it cannot flee, in the colonial peacetime, its condition of a *marginal* or marginalised social layer or class.’<sup>90</sup>

The impact of the colonial culture, Cabral contends, is almost non-existent on the horizontal structure of society outside of the capital and urban centres, but its effect is much greater vertically at the apex of the colonial pyramid, which the colonial regime has itself created, influencing the “native petite bourgeoisies” and a few workers in urban centres.<sup>91</sup> It is these native colonial elites which have been moulded by colonization and which live materially and intellectually in the coloniser’s culture, aspiring more and more to assimilate its social behaviour, including contempt for the values of indigenous cultures.<sup>92</sup>

Because the petite bourgeoisie is never fully accepted, and at the same time alienated from its native culture, it constitutes a marginalized social layer, that individually, not collectively, experiences the drama of sociocultural dislocation and the pressing desire to contest its marginality and discover its own identity. The cultural domain is the only refuge in

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<sup>89</sup> Cabral, ‘Presuppositions and objectives of national liberation in relation to social structure’ (1966) in Cabral, *Unity and Struggle*, 129.

<sup>90</sup> Cabral, ‘The Role of Culture in the struggle for Independence’, 165.

<sup>91</sup> Cabral, ‘The Role of Culture in the Struggle for Independence’, *Resistance and Decolonization*, 163.

<sup>92</sup> Cabral, ‘The Role of Culture in the Struggle for Independence’, *Resistance and Decolonisation*, 164.



which to satisfy its desire for liberation and identity. Hence the need among the petite bourgeoisie and African diasporas to return to their origins amid their acute sense of frustration.

Sartre shows how retreating colonialism in the Belgian Congo, for example, became superseded by rampant imperialism. Sartre contends that the colonial administration urged the Belgian Government to grant independence to the Congo, motivated by the intention of replacing the colonial regime with neo-colonialism. Sartre highlights the example of Patrice Lumumba, the first Prime Minister of the newly independent Congo from June to September 1960. Sartre argues that Lumumba failed to see that the former colonial countries sought to extend only nominal power to the black bourgeoisie which would continue its close ties with imperialism and to govern in the interests of the former colonizers. The party Lumumba founded, the MNC comprised the *évolué*, class of native aspirants dispersed throughout the urban areas of the Congo, and created by the Belgium bourgeoisie and Administration.<sup>93</sup> In failing to understand and in being complicit with their interests Lumumba's fate was sealed.<sup>94</sup> Sartre argued that the significant point is that Lumumba manoeuvred his class, the *évolué*, into power then proceeded to govern against it, and that the proletariat during the final years of colonialism did nothing to persuade the petite bourgeoisie to concede that the proletariat was a legitimate interlocutor.<sup>95</sup> Lumumba's pan-Africanism drew the ire of his most vindictive adversaries, the whites of Rhodesia and South Africa, and British conservatives. He was assassinated in January 1961. Indeed, Nkrumah argues that in the days of old-fashioned colonialism the imperial power at the very least had to justify its actions at home

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<sup>93</sup> Sartre, 'The Political Thought of Patrice Lumumba', in *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*, 188-9, and 192.

<sup>94</sup> Sartre, 'The Political Thought of Patrice Lumumba', *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*, 186 and 195.

<sup>95</sup> Sartre, 'The Political Thought of Patrice Lumumba', *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*, 197.

for what it was doing abroad and those who served the ruling imperial power were assured of protection against violent reactions, but under neo colonialism there is neither accountability nor protection.<sup>96</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The charge of complicity in colonial practices persists. Take, for example, South Africa, regarded by many in the west as the exemplar of a successful transition from colonial apartheid to democratic self-determination. The liberation forces in South Africa succumbed to the classic inducements about which Fanon warned; they became complicit in the intricate ways of their former oppressors, and from which they personally stood to gain.<sup>97</sup> The South African elite, both white and black, inextricably attempted to emulate the world capitalist economy by maintaining the capitalist state, its institutions and communities, as well as honouring the debts of the Apartheid regime, and giving considerable concessions on land ownership. Indeed, in contemporary debates on Africa and decolonisation, Fanon's and Cabral's voices resound as Mandela's star fades under accusations of complicity in perpetuating the injustices of colonialism under the banner of freedom for all. Fanon warned that the current beneficiaries of past colonial exploitation, deeply entrenched in practices of domination will not relinquish power willingly. Fanon suggests that petite bourgeoisie, 'will prove themselves incapable of triumphantly putting into practice a programme with even a minimum humanist content, despite fine-sounding declarations which are devoid of meaning since the speakers bandy about in irresponsible fashion phrases that come straight out of European treaties on morals and political philosophy'.<sup>98</sup> Perhaps the starkest illustration of

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<sup>96</sup> Nkruma, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, xi.

<sup>97</sup> Lawrence Hamilton, *Freedom is Power: Liberty Through Political Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 164-5.

<sup>98</sup> Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 131.

the continuing complicity of African elites with their former colonizers's practices and principles was the massacre of 34 Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) at Marikana, South Africa which raised immediate comparisons between the African National Congress and the apartheid governments. Both were accused of being equally insensitive to, and uncaring about the predicament of poor Africans.<sup>99</sup>

Recently Ihron Rensburg, the former Vice Chancellor of University of Johannesburg, echoed the Martinican in believing that colonialism gets under the skin of the colonised and therefore decolonisation of African culture and society requires more than adding a few non-white authors to the curriculum of the university syllabus. Instead, Rensburg argues, it demands self-decolonisation. He argues that 'we carry the myths and misrepresentations propagated by colonialism within us, whether you are African or English, and we have carried them for generations'.<sup>100</sup> What this means, of course, is that the vestiges of colonial misrepresentation and degradation, the historical narratives it projected, persist. Academics, Rensburg maintained, must resurrect and critically re-engage with suppressed, denigrated and dismissed African philosophies, sciences and histories, and this may take generations to achieve. Decolonisation of the mind is a two-way process integrally involving both the metropole and the former colony.

The identification of the problem in a contemporary context was recently reinforced by Slavoj Žižek. He argued that the miserable life of the poor in South Africa has hardly changed since the fall of Apartheid, and the illusion of civil rights is eclipsed by insecurity, violence and crime. The principal change has been that 'the old white ruling class, is joined by the new

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<sup>99</sup> R. W. Johnson, *How Long Will South Africa Survive? The Looming Crisis* (London: Hurst, 2015), 82-4. Lawrence Hamilton describes the massacre as an 'event that shocked the world and every South African, especially given its overtones of the infamous 1960 apartheid massacre at Sharpeville. *Are South Africans Free* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 2.

<sup>100</sup> Ihron Rensburg, 'Decolonise Your Mind Before Your Curriculum', *Times Higher Education*, 6 December 2018, p. 19.

black elite'.<sup>101</sup> Žižek argued that once the initial wave of euphoria to change is over, the question becomes how the next steps may be taken without succumbing to the prevalent totalitarian tendency to move beyond Mandela while avoiding becoming Mugabe. Ironically, in speeches made in Harare on 27 August and 4<sup>th</sup> September 2017 Mugabe accused Mandela of making too many concessions to the white minority, and of preferring his personal freedom to the freedom of most South Africans.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Slavoj Žižek, 'If Nelson Mandela really had won, he wouldn't be seen as a universal hero', *The Manchester Guardian*, 9<sup>th</sup> December, 2013, p. 12.

<sup>102</sup> His successor, Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, in the dramatic events of November 2017, has explicitly made overtures to the former colonial oppressors to return with capital investment.