

## IV: COLONIALISM AND REVOLUTION: FANON MEETS BOURDIEU

But above all I wanted to get away from speculation – at that time [1960s], the works of Frantz Fanon, especially *The Wretched of the Earth*, were the latest fashion, and they struck me as being false and dangerous.

Pierre Bourdieu, Interview, “Fieldwork in Philosophy” (1990 [1986]: 7)

What Fanon says corresponds to nothing. It is even dangerous to make the Algerians believe the things he says. This would bring them to a utopia. And I think these men [Sartre and Fanon] contributed to what Algeria became because they told stories to Algerians who often did not know their own country any more than the French who spoke about it, and, therefore, the Algerians retained a completely unrealistic utopian illusion of Algeria... [T]he texts of Fanon and Sartre are frightening for their irresponsibility. You would have to be a megalomaniac to think you could say just any such nonsense.

Pierre Bourdieu, An interview with James Le Sueur, *Uncivil War* (2001:282)

Bourdieu’s stance toward Marxism becomes more hostile as we move from Marx to Gramsci and now to Fanon. Bourdieu is prepared to acknowledge the insights of Karl Marx, and, indeed, so many of his ideas find an echo in the writings of Marx. As I suggested in the second lecture his theory of cultural domination can be seen as an extension of Marx’s political economy from economic to symbolic goods. While Bourdieu wants to distance himself from his opposite number in the Marxist tradition, he nonetheless shows a grudging respect by turning Gramsci against Gramsci.

When it comes to Frantz Fanon the gloves are off, as we see in the rare quotes above, taken from two interviews. I have found no other explicit commentary on Fanon. As with other Marxists, once we allow Fanon to speak back, we see astonishing parallels as well as glaring divergences. The enmity of Bourdieu for Fanon – there is no evidence that Fanon even knew Bourdieu – is perhaps all the deeper because their lives in Algeria overlapped. But they were worlds apart: the one a scientific observer from the metropolis sympathetic to the plight of the colonized, attempting to give the colonized dignity by recognizing their distinctive traditions; the other, a psychiatrist from Martinique trained in France, dealing directly with victims of violence on both sides of the colonial divide. The one was attached to the university and ventured into communities as research sites, while the other worked in a psychiatric hospital before committing himself to the liberation movement (FLN).

Still, the enmity is surprising given how similar are their accounts of colonialism and its effects, namely those found in Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* and Bourdieu’s less well known works written while he was in Algeria or soon thereafter -- *The Sociology of Algeria* (1958), *Work and Workers in Algeria* (written with Alain Darbel, Jean-Pierre Rivet and Claude Seibel) (1963), *The Uprooting* (written with Abdelmalek

Sayad) (1964).<sup>1</sup> Certainly, the two writers refract their writings through different theoretical lenses – modernization theory and Third World Marxism – which reflect serious disagreements, but it surely cannot account for Bourdieu’s venomous hostility, especially as within his modernization theory there’s more than a whiff of Marxism.

We need to look elsewhere for Bourdieu’s contempt for Fanon, namely their places in the French political and intellectual scene. Bourdieu and Fanon were not only located on different sides of the color line within the political field of war-torn Algeria, but, just as significantly, they occupied opposed positions within the different, but connected, French political field. When Bourdieu moves back to France, he enters a very different intellectual world -- that of the metropolis rather than the colony. There, despite his sympathies for the colonized, he positions himself in opposition to the Third Worldism, associated with Sartre and others, and expressed most vividly in the writings of Fanon. We must not forget that the Algerian Question created a virtual civil war within France itself, with positions ranging all the way from fervent defense of the anti-colonial revolution to uncompromising support for the settler regime. Indeed, the extremes were organized militarily within France. Bourdieu vacillated in the middle, but he certainly did not take the side of Fanon and Sartre.

It is significant, then, that with immersion in the French political field Bourdieu breaks with his own “revolutionary” writings on Algeria to offer a completely different rendering of Algerian society. His best known Algerian writings are not the early ones but the heavily theorized treatises *An Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977[1972]) and the subsequent version, *The Logic of Practice* (1990[1980]). Based on a timeless, context free construction of rural Kabylia<sup>2</sup> – an anthropological mythology if ever there was one - - it is here that Bourdieu develops the concepts of symbolic capital, habitus, doxa, and misrecognition, which are then used to paint France in functionalist colors. Here lies Bourdieu’s brilliance (and one might say his limitations) – to take the elementary forms of a fabricated Kabyle social life as the building blocks for studying advanced capitalism. What differentiates the latter from the former is the coexistence of differentiated fields – a notion notably absent in his writings on the Kabyle.

*Physical* violence is, thereby, relegated to the colony while *symbolic* violence is pinned to the metropolis but, ironically, through the extrapolation of a self-reproducing, harmonious autochthonous Kabyle society. But, curiously, Bourdieu’s analysis of France exhibits uncanny parallels with Fanon’s first great work, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), which describes the symbolic violence of the French racial order. But where Fanon stresses the *psycho-analysis* of internalized oppression in the context of the French racial order, Bourdieu undertakes the *socio-analysis* of outward distinction, supported by the thin psychology of habitus. Equally important, however, is their inverse trajectory: Fanon

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<sup>1</sup> The English versions to which I will refer are *The Algerians* (1962) and *Algeria 1960* (1979) which is an abridged version of the French *Work and Workers in Algeria* (1963).

<sup>2</sup> For an important set of essays on the contradictions and paradoxes of his Algerian writings, see Jane Goodman and Paul Silverstein (2009), especially the chapter by Fanny Colonna who criticizes Bourdieu for his poor stylized fieldwork that misses the realities of daily life and for the claim that the Kabyle misrecognize what they are up to.

moves from symbolic violence to social revolution, whereas Bourdieu moves in the opposite direction from social revolution to symbolic violence.

This, then, is how I will construct Fanon's response to Bourdieu's violent denunciations. I begin with their convergent biographies -- from margin to center to margin -- and from there explore their parallel accounts of colonialism, showing how they inflect those accounts with different theories, before finally comparing their reverse trajectories between critical pessimism with regard to symbolic violence in France and revolutionary optimism with regard colonial violence in Algeria.

### ***Convergent Biographies: From Margin to Center to Margin***

Bourdieu and Fanon overlapped in Algeria, during the period of intensive struggles for National Liberation (1954-1962). Bourdieu arrived in 1955 to do his military service whereupon he becomes absorbed by the fate of the Algerian people. He stays on, taking a position at the University of Algiers, turns from philosophy to ethnology and sociology, dives into research on all facets of the life of the colonized. Wading into war zones with his research assistants, he becomes a chronicler and witness to colonial subjugation and the evolving struggles. By 1960 his presence becomes politically untenable and he leaves Algeria for France where he embarks upon his illustrious career as a sociologist, but indelibly marked by his Algerian experiences.

Fanon arrives in Algeria in 1953, two years before Bourdieu, also from France where he had recently completed a degree in medicine and psychiatry. In Algeria he is appointed head of the Blida-Joinville Psychiatric Hospital and through his patients he vicariously experiences the traumas of colonial violence. He concludes that psychiatry is no solution to the suffering and so he becomes involved in the liberation struggle, leading to his expulsion from Algeria in 1956. He goes to Tunis where he continues his psychiatric work and then to Accra where he becomes a roving ambassador for the FLN (The Algerian National Liberation Front) in different parts of North and West Africa. He dies of leukemia in 1961, just before Algeria achieves independence, but not before he finishes *The Wretched of the Earth*, the bible of liberation movements across the world.

In their different ways, both Bourdieu and Fanon were well prepared to develop original interpretations of their Algerian experiences. They both made the uncomfortable journey from periphery to center. Bourdieu grew up in a small village in the Béarn, where his father graduated from sharecropper to postal employee. Only Bourdieu's brilliance and the support of his teachers took him all the way to *École Normale Supérieure*. Fanon grew up in Martinique in a Creole family, with middle class aspirations, before entering the Free French Army in 1943. He served in North Africa, witnessing colonial oppression of a sort he had never seen before, and then in Eastern France where he discovered the meaning of metropolitan racism. He was back in France in 1946, studying to be a doctor in Lyon. Both Bourdieu and Fanon had bitter experiences of marginalization in France: the one based on class which Bourdieu describes in *Sketch for a Self-Analysis* and the other based on race that Fanon exposed in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Both were well-equipped to be horrified by the abominations of settler colonialism, although their race and political propensities would position them differently within the colonial order.

The transition from center to periphery, from France to Algeria, demanded a wholesale reorientation of the schemes of understanding they had acquired in their formal training in France. They both converged on a sociology of colonialism – Bourdieu from philosophy that was far too removed from what he saw in Algeria, and Fanon from psychiatry that couldn't grasp the structural features of colonial domination. Their accounts of colonialism are remarkably similar.

***Seven Theses on Colonialism: Bourdieu Equals Fanon***

Notwithstanding their convergent trajectories from periphery to center to periphery, given their divergent positions and dispositions one would expect Bourdieu the French normalien and Fanon the Martiniquan psychiatrist to have clashing understandings of the colonial condition. Such an expectation of divergence is only intensified, if one takes into account Bourdieu's later denunciation of Fanon's writings as "speculative," "irresponsible," and "dangerous." It is all the more surprising, therefore, to discover striking parallels in their analysis of colonial domination, anti-colonial struggles and the supersession of colonialism. As evidence let me draw on two texts, both written in 1961, one year before Algeria's independence – Bourdieu's "Revolution Within the Revolution"<sup>3</sup> and Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*.

1. *Colonialism is a system of domination held together by violence.* In his familiar evocative way, Fanon writes:

Their first encounter was marked by violence and their existence together—that is to say the exploitation of the native by the settler-- was carried on by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannons. (Fanon, 1963 [1961]:36)

Bourdieu is equally clear:

Indeed, the war plainly revealed the true basis for the colonial order: the relation, backed by force, which allows the dominant caste to keep the dominated caste in a position of inferiority. (Bourdieu, 1962 [1961]: 146)

Bourdieu avoids the concept of race, reluctant to use it not only in his analysis of colonialism, but also of French society where he is far more comfortable deploying class as his critical concept.

2. *The colonial situation is fundamentally one of segregation of colonizers from colonized.* In Fanon's terms, colonialism follows the principle of "reciprocal exclusivity," admitting of no compromise.

The zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers. The two zones are opposed, but not in the service of a higher unity. Obedient to the rules of pure Aristotelian logic, they both follow the principle of reciprocal exclusivity. No conciliation is possible, for of the two terms, one is superfluous. (Fanon, 1963 [1961]: 38-9)

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<sup>3</sup> First published in *Esprit* 1, January 1961. English translation appeared in *The Algerians* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), chapter 7.

Bourdieu continues to use the term “caste” to better grasp the structural character of colonialism, but this misses out on the experiential moment of race which remains central in Fanon’s writings.

In short, when carried along by its own internal logic, the colonial system tends to develop all the consequences implied at the time of its founding – the complete separation of the social castes. (Bourdieu, 1962 [1961]: 146)

*3. Colonialism dehumanizes the colonized, demanding its reversal.* Parallels in their description of colonial domination are echoed in their accounts of the subjective experience of colonialism. Fanon writes:

[Colonialism] dehumanizes the native, or to speak plainly turns him into an animal... [The native] knows that he is not an animal, and it is precisely at the moment he realizes his humanity, that he begins to sharpen the weapons with which he will secure its victory. (Fanon, 1963 [1961]: 42-3)

Similarly, Bourdieu writes that “respect and dignity” are the first demand of the dominated because they have experienced colonialism as “humiliation or alienation” (p.151). Echoing Fanon he writes:

The colonial situation thus creates the “contemptible” person at the same time that it creates the contemptuous attitude; but it creates in turn a spirit of revolt against this contempt; and so the tension that is tearing the whole society to pieces keeps on increasing. (Bourdieu, 1962 [1961]: 134)

*4. Colonialism uses its domination to dispossess the peasantry of their land.* Both Fanon and Bourdieu concentrate on the destruction of the peasantry through the expropriation of land, the very foundation of their existence. Fanon writes:

For a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity” (Fanon, 1963 [1961]: 44).

Here is Bourdieu’s parallel assessment of the centrality of land:

The peasant can exist only when rooted to the land, the land where he was born, which he received from his parents and to which he is attached by his habits and his memories. Once he has been uprooted there is a good chance that he will cease to exist as a peasant, that the instinctive and irrational passion which binds him to his peasant existence will die within him. (Bourdieu, 1962 [1961]: 172)

While the land is key in both, Bourdieu and Sayad’s analysis in the *Uprooted* is far richer. There they study the resettlement camps created during the Algerian war, the result of forced removals conducted in the name of protecting the colonized from the national liberation movement, but clearly aimed at flushing it out of the rural areas.

*5. Only through revolution can the colonial order be overthrown.* Fanon here stresses the importance of violence, absolute violence. The order is held together by violence and, therefore, has to be overthrown through violence. This is how Fanon puts it:

The native who decides to put the program into practice, and to become its moving force, is ready for violence at all times. From birth it is clear to him that this narrow world, strewn with prohibitions, can only be called into question by absolute violence. (Fanon, 1963 [1961]: 37)

While Bourdieu's idea of a caste system perhaps implies a more harmonious order than Fanon's racial order, he also has no doubt that the colonial system sows the seeds of its own destruction, a "great upheaval," in which "the great mass of peasants ... have been carried along in the whirlwind of violence which is sweeping away even the vestiges of the past" (1962 [1961]: 188). Only revolution can achieve the end of colonialism.

That only a revolution can abolish the colonial system, that any changes to be made must be subject to the law of all or nothing, are facts now consciously realized, even if only confusedly, just as much by members of the dominant society as by the members of the dominated society... Thus it must be granted that the primary and indeed the sole radical challenge to the system was the one that system itself engendered; the revolt against the principles on which it was founded. (Bourdieu, 1962 [1961]: 146)

*6. The Anti-Colonial revolution transforms consciousness, liquidating all forms of localism to build a national solidarity.* For Fanon violence has a cathartic and unifying effect.

We have said that the native's violence unifies the people... Violence is in action all-inclusive and national. It follows that it is closely involved in the liquidation of regionalism and of tribalism... At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect. (Fanon, 1963 [1961]: 94)

In Bourdieu's language the war dissolves "false solicitude." Attempts at conciliation and all forms of concession are so many tactics of the dominant to hold on to their power: "...attempts at trickery or subterfuge are at once revealed in their true light. The war helped to bring about a heightened awareness." (1962 [1961]: 153) Repression and war leads to the spiraling of hostilities, the deepening of the schism between the two sides. The war becomes a cultural agent, dissolving resignation, replacing symbolic refusal of colonial domination, for example in the insistent wearing of the veil, what Bourdieu calls traditional traditionalism, with aggressive demands for rights to welfare and education. Pride, he says, replaces shame.

The feeling of being engaged in a common adventure, of being subject to a common destiny, of confronting the same adversary, of sharing the same preoccupations, the same sufferings and the same aspirations, widened and deepened the sentiment of solidarity, a sentiment which was undergoing at the same time a veritable transformation as the idea of fraternity tended to lose any ethnical or religious coloration and became synonymous with national solidarity. (Bourdieu, 1962 [1961]: 162)

This is the "revolution within the revolution," the revolutionary transformation of consciousness, the substitution of an assertive solidarity for a resentful deference. How

different is this revolution within the revolution from Fanon's account of the national liberation struggle?<sup>4</sup>

*7. The Anti-Colonial Revolution leads either to socialism or barbarism.* Fanon recognizes two paths out of colonialism: either National Liberation based on peasant revolution leading to a socialist participatory democracy or National Bourgeois road that will bring progressive degradation to the political order, ending in dictatorship and repression.

The bourgeois leaders of underdeveloped countries imprison national consciousness in sterile formalism. It is only when men and women are included on a vast scale in enlightened and fruitful work that form and body are given to that consciousness. ... Otherwise there is anarchy, repression, and the resurgence of tribal parties and federalism. (Fanon, 1963 [1961]: 204-5).

Bourdieu, too, discovers a fork in the postcolonial road, not Fanon's struggle for socialism or dictatorship, but an indeterminacy of immediate outcome -- socialism or chaos.

A society which has been so greatly revolutionized demands that revolutionary solutions be devised to meet its problems. It will insist that a way be found to mobilize these masses who have been freed from the traditional disciplines and thrown into a chaotic, disillusioned world, by holding up before them a collective ideal, the building of a harmonious social order and the development of a modern economy capable of assuring employment and a decent standard of living for all. Algeria contains such explosive forces that it could well be that there now remains only a choice between chaos and an original form of socialism that will have been carefully designed to meet the needs of the actual situation. (Bourdieu, 1962 [1961]: 192-3)<sup>5</sup>

Both allow for the possibility of socialism, but for Fanon it is a long historical project whereas for Bourdieu it is a spontaneous occurrence.

The two critics of colonialism converge to a surprising degree in their assessment of the colonialism and its denouement. If Fanon was "speculative" "dangerous" and "irresponsible," then surely Bourdieu was no less so. The main difference, one might surmise, is that Fanon did not live to change his mind. Investigating further, however, we can see that their common understandings are located within very different theoretical-political frameworks – the one is a dissident within modernization theory and the other a dissident within Marxism.

### ***Bourdieu: Between Tradition and Modernity***

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<sup>4</sup> Bourdieu (2000[1998]) writes of the difficulty of changing the habitus, calling for all sorts of bodily retraining. Fanon is saying the same, the internalization of oppression is so deep that the colonized can only transform themselves through violence.

<sup>5</sup> Writing with Sayad in 1964, Bourdieu analyzes the possibilities of socialism, very much in terms familiar from Durkheim and Mauss. They cast doubt on the feasibility of self-organized, decentralized socialism based on autonomous peasant organization of the farms vacated by colonialists just as they fear the possibility of a centralized authoritarian socialism imposed from above. Like Fanon they hope for an educative leadership responsive to needs from below. They easily fall back, however, on the cultural legacies of tradition to explain economic and political regression.

Perhaps it is surprising to place Bourdieu in the camp of modernization theory, given his concern with colonial domination. Nonetheless, there are close parallels with Durkheim's Manichean worlds of mechanical and organic solidarity. At one extreme Bourdieu constructs a harmonious order of self-reproduction through rituals of gift-exchange and life-cycle, the unconscious reproduction of masculine domination as expressed in the division of the Kabyle house. This order, unsullied by colonialism, is dominated by a strong collective consciousness. This romantic redemption of ethnic culture has been defended by Bourdieu and his followers as reversing the contempt of colonialism for the culture of its subjects. Paul Silverstein (2004) refers to this as a structural nostalgia that can be a weapon in an anti-colonial struggle.<sup>6</sup> More curious, it is from this vision of "traditional" society that Bourdieu draws many of his concepts – habitus, symbolic domination, misrecognition – to analyze French society.

Very different from this harmonious order was modern Algeria, beset by colonialism which created a stable but potentially revolutionary working class, a disoriented subproletariat, and a dispossessed peasantry. Here we find Durkheim's abnormal forms of the division of labor that generate disorganization and conflict. On the one hand, there is the forced division of labor, the imposition of unequal conditions on the colonized, depriving them of opportunities for advancement, and indeed leading to the anti-colonial struggles. On the other hand, there is the anomic division of labor expressed in the confusion of those caught between two opposed worlds – what Bourdieu later calls the "split habitus" -- generating outbursts of irrational, messianic behavior.

All these contradictions affect the inner nature of "the man between two worlds"—the intellectual, the man who formerly worked in France, the city dweller—is exposed to the conflicts created by the weakening of the traditional systems of sanctions and by the development of a double set of moral standards... [T]his man, cast between two worlds and rejected by both, lives a sort of double inner life, is a prey to frustration and inner conflict, with the result that he is constantly being tempted to adopt either an attitude of uneasy overidentification or one of rebellious negativism. (Bourdieu 1962[1958]: 142-4)

These ideas of cultural lag, incomplete adaptation to modernity, being caught between the old and the new lie at the core of 1960s modernization theory of Clifford Geertz, Alex Inkeles, and Edward Shils not to mention Talcott Parsons' pattern variables.<sup>7</sup> To explain the plight of so-called "new nations" and the impediments to "modernity" they invoked the heavy weight of tradition and primordial attachments (kinship, tribe, religion).

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<sup>6</sup> We find this vision laid out in the earliest writings of Bourdieu (1962[1958]) a secondary account of the cultures of different ethnic groups., and then in the self-consciously theoretical works written in France, most notably *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977[1972]).

<sup>7</sup> Bourdieu does try to mark his distance from one of the modernization theorists of the day – Daniel Lerner (1958) – by criticizing his psychological characterization of modernity as recognition of other, the expression of empathy, and as a rationality freely chosen. As orientations to the world, "tradition" and "modernity" are not freely chosen, says Bourdieu, but spring from specific material contexts, the clash of unequal civilizations under colonialism (Bourdieu, 1962 [1958]: 117, 119-20). But the concepts of tradition and modernity are never called into question, simply redefined.



Bourdieu, no less than they, provides precious little evidence to back up his claims about this state of anomie.<sup>8</sup>

More original is Bourdieu's adaptation of Weber's, *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Drawing on Husserl's philosophy of time Bourdieu (1979 [1963]) argues that modernity is an orientation to a rationally planned future whereas tradition is encased by repetition of the same patterns. He pins modernity onto the Algerian working class that has the stability to think rationally and imaginatively about future alternatives as opposed to the peasantry, stuck in the eternal present, what he calls a *traditional traditionalism*. The unstable, marginal, semi-employed or unemployed urban "subproletariat" and the rural proletariat displaced from their lands into resettlement camps live from hand to mouth. They exhibit a *traditionalism of despair*, oriented to the here and now but cognizant of alternative futures that they are denied.

Curiously, this leads Bourdieu, via Durkheimian notions of anomie, to the orthodox Marxist position that the Algerian working class, because it is rooted in stable employment, is revolutionary -- in contrast to the uprooted peasantry or urban subproletariat that can only break out into spontaneous, senseless revolt.

On the one hand, there is the revolt of emotion, the uncertain and incoherent expression of a condition characterized by uncertainty and incoherence; on the other hand, there is revolutionary radicalism, springing from the systematic consideration of reality. These two attitudes correspond to two types of material conditions of existence: on the one hand the sub-proletarians of the towns and the uprooted peasants whose whole existence is constraint and arbitrariness; on the other hand the regular workers of the modern sector, provided with the minimum of security and guarantees which allow aspirations and opinions to be put into perspective. Disorganization of daily conduct prohibits the formation of the system of rational projects and forecasts of which the revolutionary consciousness is one aspect. (Bourdieu, 1979 [1963]: 62)

The uprooted may be a "force for revolution" but not a "revolutionary force," that self-consciously promotes and rationally organizes the transformation of society. The latter possibility is reserved for the working class.

To those who have the "privilege" of undergoing permanent and "rational" exploitation and of enjoying the corresponding advantages also belongs the privilege of a truly revolutionary consciousness. This realistic aiming at the future (*l'avenir*) is only accessible to those who have the means to confront the present and to look for ways of beginning to implement their hopes, instead of giving way to resigned surrender or to the magical impatience of those who are too crushed by the present to be able to look to anything other than a utopian future (*un futur*), an immediate, magical negation of the present. (Bourdieu, 1979 [1963]: 63)

What a contrast to the French working class depicted in *Distinction or Pascalian Meditations* as driven by necessity, symbolically dominated, misrecognizing their

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<sup>8</sup> Bourdieu (2000) relies on his famous case of the Kabyle cook – a man who moves from one job to another. There is little evidence that this is a sign of anomie or that he is beholden to some traditional habitus. Instead the cook shows great entrepreneurial adroitness in adapting to the exigencies of urban life under colonialism.

conditions of existence. Not one to be disturbed by contradictions, Bourdieu never explains this most obvious inconsistency. What is the source of the difference? Does it lie in the political structures of the two countries – the effects of symbolic as opposed to colonial violence – or does it lie in Bourdieu’s positions in the political-intellectual fields of the two countries? A comparison with Fanon sheds light on both these possibilities.

***Fanon: Between Capitalism and Socialism***

If Bourdieu analyzes Algeria with the Manichean categories of modernity and tradition, Fanon sees Algeria through the bifocal lens of capitalism and socialism. If Bourdieu analyzes Algeria from the standpoint of a romantic past, Fanon see Algeria from the vantage of a romantic future. They meet on the terrain of the present.

For Fanon colonialism was a space of struggles. National independence is a struggle against the colonial power, Gramsci’s *war of movement* conducted with violence, but it is also a struggle over postcoloniality, a *war of position* within the colonized between, on the one hand, the followers of the National Bourgeoisie who fight to *replace* the colonizers and, on the other hand, the militants of the National Liberation movement who fight to also *transform* the class structure.<sup>9</sup> The war of position for the future exists uneasily alongside the anti-colonial war of movement, but if the former is displaced by the latter and the denouement of colonialism is left to look after itself, democratic socialism will never be victorious. So argues Fanon.

Bourdieu not only failed to separate the two moments of the anti-colonial revolution, but he also did not pay sufficient attention to the idea of class as a potential political force. Fanon, again following Gramsci, examined the balance of class forces behind the reformist National Bourgeoisie and the revolutionary National Liberation Movement. At the heart of the National Bourgeoisie lay traders, merchants, and small capitalists, together with their intellectuals recruited from teachers civil servants, lawyers, nurses and other professionals. The National Bourgeoisie also had the support of the albeit-small colonial working class, which in Fanon’s view was pampered and parasitic. It is here that Bourdieu and Fanon diverge dramatically: relative stability of the working class for Bourdieu meant revolutionary potential, for Fanon it meant reformism.<sup>10</sup> As we know from South Africa, in reality, the situation is rather more complex -- different fractions of the working class become revolutionary at different times.

For Fanon, the revolutionary struggle depended on the dispossessed peasantry because it had nothing to lose. Bourdieu considered this to be “pretentious foolishness”

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<sup>9</sup> Gramsci seemed to think that the war of position either preceded the war of movement (in the West where civil society was strong) or followed the war of movement (in the East with its undeveloped civil society where socialism would be built after the revolution). Fanon understood the dangers of postponing the struggle for socialism until after independence.

<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, Fanon and Bourdieu held opposite views about the working class in advanced capitalism: for Fanon it was potentially revolutionary for Bourdieu it was not. Although there is no sign that Fanon had read Gramsci, he had a very Gramscian view of the West with a developed civil society, a bourgeoisie able to make concessions, all of which was absent in the periphery. (Fanon, 1963 [1961]: 38, 108-9, 165, 175).

(cited in Le Sueur, 2001: 284). The peasantry was “overwhelmed by the war, by the concentration camps, and by the mass deportations,” and so to claim that it was revolutionary was “completely idiotic” (Le Sueur, 2001: 284). Bourdieu attempted to put the picture right with his book, *The Uprooted*, written with Abdelmalek Sayad, which dealt with the crisis of the displaced. Fanon was not as ignorant as Bourdieu made out, as he had done his own field work among the Kabyle (Macey, 2000: 234-36). He considered the instinctive rebelliousness to come precisely from the expropriation of their land, which Bourdieu had himself recognized as the source of “revolutionary chiasm and magical utopias” (1979 [1963]: 70).

The more substantial difference between them comes with the next step in Fanon’s argument. For the peasantry to be a revolutionary force its volcanic energy had to be disciplined by intellectuals. They would be in plentiful supply -- radicals expelled from the towns for exposing the venality of the native elites. Opposed to the bourgeois road, they join the peasantry to forge a revolutionary movement. To Bourdieu the idea of symbiosis between intellectuals and peasantry is a fantasy of the intellectual that not only cannot work, but is also dangerous and irresponsible. It is the very different from Bourdieu’s own position as an engaged intellectual, supporting the colonized from a healthy, objective distance.

Be that as it may, Fanon continues his analysis of the balance of class forces. There are two projects vying for the support of the colonized classes: the National Bourgeois Road centered on the native bourgeoisie and the working class, and the National Liberation Movement centered on the peasantry embracing and embraced by radical intellectuals. Fanon asks which of these two projects will succeed in winning the support of vacillating classes: traditional leaders in the countryside who are reformist by nature, a screen for the colonizers, but who are also accountable to their ever-more militant people, and the urban lumpenproletariat, recently uprooted from their villages, a volatile group easily manipulated by leaders who grant them the smallest concessions. The colonizers play their own role in shaping the balance between these two tendencies, and when they see the writing on the wall, they throw their weight behind the less threatening National Bourgeoisie.

This analysis of the future, so alien to Bourdieu’s backward looking sociology, continues with Fanon’s pessimistic but prophetic anticipations. Should the National Bourgeoisie win the struggle for leadership of the anti-colonial struggle, and come to power, they will not be able to build a true hegemony, which would require resources they do not possess. They will become a dominated bourgeoisie – dominated by the international bourgeoisie – only capable of becoming an imitative and parasitical class, making up for its backwardness by conspicuous consumption and the reversion to tribalism and racism.

Because it is bereft of ideas, because it lives to itself and cuts itself off from the people, undermined by its hereditary incapacity to think in terms of all the problems of the nation as seen from the point of view of the whole of that nation, the national middle class will have nothing better to do than to take on the role of the manager for Western enterprise,

and it will in practice set up its country as the brothel of Europe. (Fanon, 1963 [1961]: 154)

The National Bourgeoisie starts out by copying Western institutions – political constitutions and outward manifestations of its economy – but degenerates from a multi-party democracy to a one party state, to a one man dictatorship. Fanon expressed vividly what would indeed come to pass in postcolonial Africa. This was no empty speculation. It was how things turned out.

By painting the National Bourgeois road in such dire colors, Fanon hopes to convince us that the only progressive road is National Liberation, the revolutionary transformation of the class structure and the realization of democratic socialism. But how feasible was this? Even if the revolutionary forces won hegemony could they bring about democratic socialism? Leaving aside colonial legacies that cannot be simply swept aside – the argument of Bourdieu and others – what about international forces? Fanon rather optimistically argued that postcolonial Africa can insist and enforce reparations from Western capitalism because the latter need Africa's markets, not just its natural resources but also its consumer markets. Fanon was naïve about the possibilities of democratic socialism, but the naiveté sprung from a desperation that saw the pitfalls of the national bourgeoisie.

Both Bourdieu and Fanon have a fascination for the peasantry, and deploy that fascination for a critical analysis of contemporary societies. Bourdieu creates a romantic anthropology of the Algerian peasantry that becomes the basis for his functionalist analysis of symbolic domination in French society. Fanon projects the peasantry as a revolutionary class that will usher in democratic socialism, formulated to highlight the degeneration of postcolonial Africa if it follows the national bourgeois road.

### ***Between Revolutionary Optimism and Critical Pessimism***

The conversation between Fanon and Bourdieu shows how theoretical influences circulate between colony and metropolis, but especially the influence of the colony on the metropolis. Nor are these isolated examples. Some of the great French intellectuals were shaped by experiences in colonial Africa – Foucault spent two formative years in Tunisia, Derrida and Camus grew up in Algeria – and the Algerian question continues to exert a powerful influence on French intellectual life, even now almost 50 years after independence.

Thus, the conversation between Fanon and Bourdieu becomes more interesting if we extend it backwards and forwards in time beyond the Algerian experience, to examine the theoretical effects of their personal trajectories between colony and metropolis. Here we see a striking and unexpected convergence in their understandings of French society, especially if placed in the frame of colonialism. The very notion of symbolic violence, at the center of Bourdieu's corpus on France, implies a contrast with the physical violence of colonialism, especially Algerian settler colonialism. Symbolic violence works through the habitus -- cumulative introjection of social structure into the human psyche and the inscription of social structure onto the body.

The parallels with Fanon are uncanny. *Black Skin, White Masks*, written about Fanon's experience of metropolitan racism, is a psychoanalytical understanding of the internal dynamics of racial domination in which the colonized internalizes the social structure and wrestles to find his or her place in that structure. It is a futile struggle of inter-racial sexual liaisons and exaggerated efforts to be the perfect Frenchman/woman that only further endorses their inferiority. This is not the physical violence of colonialism, but the deeper symbolic violence of metropolitan racial domination. For Fanon, as indeed for Bourdieu, there is simply no effective response to symbolic violence, and so both end up with a critical pessimism with respect to France, which contrasts so vividly to the revolutionary optimism they both exhibit in Algeria.

The parallels become more even intriguing if one probes Bourdieu's great book of symbolic domination – *Distinction*. Here the dominant classes are blessed with cultural capital, some more than others, and the dominated classes are bereft of such capital, but the middle classes, the petite bourgeoisie, are the great pretenders, aspiring to legitimate culture, over-conforming in their attempt to emulate the class to which they don't belong. The petit bourgeois is indeed the bourgeois "writ small".

Even his bodily hexis, which expresses his whole objective relation to the social world, is that of a man who had to make himself small to pass through the strait gait, which leads to the bourgeoisie: strict and sober, discreet and severe, in his dress, his speech, his gestures and his whole bearing, he always lacks something in stature, breadth, substance, largesse. (Bourdieu, 1984 [1979]: 238)

Bourdieu's contempt for the petite bourgeoisie who seeks admission to an inaccessible world is strikingly parallel to Fanon's contempt for blacks who try to enter white society, trying to make themselves less black. Although he is never explicit, Fanon is not writing about the working class, but about members of the black middle classes, like himself, who emigrate to France to become professionals of one sort or another. It is as if, their own histories of exclusion, seared into their psyches, lead the one (Bourdieu) to be a self-hating petit bourgeois and the other (Fanon) a self-hating black. This might also explain the venom behind Fanon's denunciation of the colonial national bourgeoisie as an imitative bourgeoisie, just as it might also explain Bourdieu's hostility to Fanon, whose revolutionary ardor is the intellectual's attempt to escape his habitus, to jump out of his skin.

There is, however, a profound asymmetry in the trajectories of these two intellectuals. Whereas Fanon starts out, in France, as a critical pessimist to become a revolutionary optimist in Algeria based on a romantic radical vision of the peasantry, Bourdieu starts out, in Algeria, as a revolutionary optimist to become a critical pessimist, in France, by drawing on a romantic conservative vision of the peasantry. Each reacts against their previous experience. Fanon leaves behind the symbolic violence of racism in France primed to participate in revolutionary catharsis against colonial violence. Equally, Bourdieu is all too ready to abandon his equivocal revolutionary optimism, so that when he enters France he rejects Third World Marxism and adopts a critical pessimism based on a new form of violence, symbolic violence. Toward the end of his life he breaks out of his critical pessimism by joining the calumniated working class, attacking the symbolic

order associated with neoliberalism, forging new bonds with African intellectuals, a return of the repressed but without theoretical warrant.