

# Frantz Fanon and Emancipatory Social Theory

*A View from the Wretched*

*Edited by*

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# On the Possibility of a Post-colonial Revolutionary: Reconsidering Žižek's Universalist Reading of Frantz Fanon in the Interregnum

*Dustin J. Byrd*

In 2013, Santiago Zabala wrote a short essay for Aljazeera.com entitled “Slavoj Žižek and the Role of the Philosopher.” Hamid Dabashi, the Columbia University Professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Literature, dismayed by Zabala’s “lovely little panegyric” to the Slovene public intellectual, and the Eurocentric assumptions that he and Žižek make about philosophy, responded with his own essay entitled “Can Non-Europeans Think.”<sup>1</sup> Walter Mignolo, an Argentinian literary theorist, responded in-kind to Dabashi’s article, adding strength to the already bold criticisms of Žižek. Mignolo, aping a passage from Žižek’s 1998 essay, “A Leftist Plea for Eurocentrism,” wrote,

When one says Eurocentrism, every self-respecting decolonial intellectual has not as violent a reaction as Joseph Goebbels had to culture – to reach for a gun, hurling accusations of proto-fascist Eurocentrist cultural imperialism. A self-respecting decolonial intellectual will reach instead to Frantz Fanon: Now, comrades, now is the time to decide to change sides. We must shake off the great mantle of night, which has enveloped us, and reach, for the light. The new day, which is dawning, must find us determined, enlightened and resolute. So, my brothers, how could we fail to understand that we have better things to do than follow that Europe’s footsteps.<sup>2</sup>

1 Hamid Dabashi, *Can Non-Europeans Think? What Happens with Thinkers Who Operate Outside the European Philosophical Pedigree*. January 15, 2013. <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/01/2013114142638797542.html>.

2 This is a play on Žižek’s essay, wherein he wrote the following: “When one says Eurocentrism, every self-respecting postmodern leftist intellectual has a violent a reaction as Joseph Goebbels had to culture – to reach for a gun, hurling accusations of proto-fascist Eurocentrist cultural imperialism. However, is it possible to imagine a leftist appropriate of the European political legacy?” See Walter Mignolo, *Yes, We Can: Non-European Thinkers and Philosophers*. February 19, 2013. <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/02/20132672747320891.html>.

Of course, Žižek, ever the Lacanian and Marxist, responded in kind. In a lecture at the Birkbeck Institute of Humanities, on February 28, 2013, Žižek criticized Mignolo's peculiar use of Fanon against him, arguing that Mignolo engages in a "version of Baudrillard's battle cry": "forget Europe, we have better things to do than deal with European philosophy, better things than endlessly deconstructing."<sup>3</sup> Yet, Žižek retorts, "the irony here is that this battle cry did not hold for Fanon himself" as it did for Mignolo, since Fanon "dealt intensively [with European philosophy] and was proud of it. The first obscenity seems to me how dare he to quote Fanon!"<sup>4</sup>

In addition to his response to Walter Mignolo, Žižek takes on other uses (or postmodern abuses) of Fanon, including Harvard's premiere post-colonial studies scholar, Homi K. Bhabha's, and his taming of Fanon's radical revolutionary philosophy of violent emancipation. Žižek rejects Bhabha's attempt to explain away Fanon's avocation of violence in service to human emancipation, arguing that Bhabha's interpretation of Fanon "neutralizes" the Martinique revolutionary. Žižek objects to the line of thinking that would state: "he [Fanon] didn't really mean it, with killing and violence; he meant some sublime gesture where there is no blood and nobody is really hurt and so on." Žižek, rather, accepts Fanon in all his violent radicality. In other words, Žižek endorses Fanon's "reach for the gun" in the cause of human emancipation.

My task here is not to rehash the merits of this enflamed debate; all those involved had valid arguments that are worth contemplating, and in many cases I suspect there is more of an overlapping consensus on Fanon between them

3 Žižek responds to his Critics. <http://www.critical-theory.com/zizek-responds-to-his-critics/>.

4 Ibid. It could be argued that Fanon argues for a "forgetting" of Europe in the conclusion of *The Wretched of the Earth*, wherein he writes, "let us waste no time in sterile litanies and nauseating mimicry... leave this Europe where they are never done talking of Man... how is it that we do not understand that we have better things to do than to follow that same Europe... we do not imitate Europe, so long as we are not obsessed by the desire to catch up with Europe... Let us decide not to imitate Europe... we have no more to fear; so let us stop envying her," etc. However, it's clear that Fanon never meant to abandon all that Europe is, as even he worked through (and with) European philosophy all his adult life. Rather, Fanon argues against the Third World's blind mimicry of Europe, especially since Europe has forcefully argued for universal values, principles, and ideals, but has always failed to achieve them, or has made a mockery out of them with bourgeois liberalism, colonialism, imperialism, fascism, authoritarian communism, etc. As Fanon writes, "All the elements of a solution to the great problems of humanity have, at different times, existed in European thought. But the action of European men has not carried out the mission which fell to them..." (p. 314) The "new man" (pg. 316), which Fanon argues for, should not make the same mistakes as Europe. Rather, it should actualize the very "elements of a solution" for humanity's problem that Fanon himself says "existed in European thought." See Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 311–316.

than not. I set as my task rather, to rethink what it was that Žižek was trying to get at when he quoted various passages in Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, when he defended his understanding of Fanon against that of Dabashi, Mignolo, and Bhabha. I'm especially interested in the post-colonial revolutionary that Žižek depicts as being *authentically* Fanon, and why such a post-colonial, or de-particularized, revolutionary is so important in the 21st century, especially in light of the abrupt turn towards Alt-Fascism and *retrotopian* thought that is now taking place in much of the West. Juxtaposed to Bhabha's domesticated non-threatening Fanon-with-a-friendly-face, I want to use the same passages that Žižek invokes in order to clarify that which was only hinted at: The urgent need for post-colonial revolutionary theory (and praxis), which is already a constitutional part of Fanon's thought, but gets buried by those whose own pre-political foundations cause them to claim Fanon selfishly for themselves.<sup>5</sup> In this, I hope to emancipate Fanon from the petty ghettoization that so many attempt to lock him in, while at the same time avoid dispersing him to the point where he becomes meaningless.

## 1 Whose Fanon?

Clearly the work of Frantz Fanon does not belong to any one particular racial, ethnic, or religious group, be they African, North African, African America, Caribbean, Algerian, Muslim, etc. His recalcitrant, revolutionary, and emancipatory thought has fertilized the work of many important philosophers, sociologist, political figures, activists and revolutionaries around the world. Much like Che Guevara, those committed to a "universal" human emancipation discovered in their study of Fanon, regardless of their own pre-political foundations, a source of liberational theory and praxis. That Fanon's matrix of particularities includes him being Black, from Martinique, a subject of French colonialism, a soldier, a student in – and observer of – the French metropole

<sup>5</sup> I use the phrase "pre-political foundations" in the way Jürgen Habermas defines it, as those characteristics that historically define a *Volk*, i.e. race, ethnicity, shared history, language, shared religion, etc. At one point in history, nations were almost always defined by such pre-political foundations: The *Volksgemeinschaft* – the "people's community." However, since the Enlightenment, some Western nations, as well as in their former colonial territories, chose to define the nation by shared *political* foundations, i.e. those values, principles, and ideals that (ideally) any person of any pre-political foundation could ascribe to via an act of their will. This sort of nation is a *willensgemeinschaft* – a "willed community," or "intentional democratic community." See Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, trans. William Rehg. (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996), 494–495.

(including its persistent racism), a psychiatrist, an author, and a revolutionary in a North African struggle, does not stop the African, Asian, European, North, Central, or South American from learning from his thought and biography, as well as interpreting and adapting his work to their conditions, whether they were contemporaries of Fanon or activists/revolutionaries in the 21st century. Fanon is relevant in colonial Algeria, just as much as he is relevant in today's North America; he is relevant in the industrialized prisons of the United States as much as he is in the slums of Cairo, Calcutta, and Johannesburg, not to mention the de-industrialized and forgotten cities of Detroit and Flint. No one owns Fanon, for his intellect and praxis was a "slave" – to use his own word – to no *single* cause. As such, he remains an open book – an encyclopedia of revolt for all those who are committed to a *universal* cause: human emancipation.

Nevertheless, our interpretations of Fanon are wide and varied. This was so demonstrated by the rigorous defense of "my Fanon" displayed by Žižek and Dabashi. "How dare he quote Fanon," said Žižek, "Fanon is *my* hero, that's why I defend him....," to which Dabashi writes, "Žižek can have *his* Fanon all to himself. There is plenty of Fanon left for *others*," as if there are other Fanons that are reserved for only certain people with particular pre-political foundations, or as if Fanon can be segmented – parted from himself.<sup>6</sup> Our interpretations vary, but Fanon as a thinker, despite his shortcomings, is relatively consistent, is holding up through time, and is continuing to be relevant in various fields.<sup>7</sup> Yet, there is a plethora of Fanon(s) – "on the market" – to choose from. To invoke Feuerbach, Fanon seems to be the revolutionary deity into which we project ourselves. Thus, the Fanon we witness in his writing often depends on what we witness in ourselves, leading to the variety of Fanons that are then argued for amidst scholars ("my hero," "his Fanon"). This is not a novel situation, as other thinkers, activists, revolutionaries, especially figures like Jesus of Nazareth, Prophet Muhammad, Martin Luther King Jr., and Malcolm X, are subject to this kind of subjective projection. When we ensnare Fanon within our own exclusionary perspectives, especially reading him merely through our own pre-political foundations, which are not the product of our will, but rather of our "thrownness" (*geworfenheit*), we diminish the capacity for Fanon's work and legacy to contribute effectively to the very goal of Fanon: emancipation of the wretched.<sup>8</sup> This I think is why Žižek quotes the particular passages that

6 Hamid Dabashi, *Can Non-Europeans Think?* (London: Zed Books, 2015), 7. Emphasis added.

7 For a critical "reassessment" of Fanon's work, see Anthony C. Alessandrini, *Frantz Fanon: Critical Perspectives*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

8 I do not think the same is true for philosophical commitments, which I think are proper and productive to read Fanon through. How would a Marxists, a libertarian, a Catholic, a Muslim, a nationalist, etc., interpret Fanon? How can Fanon's work critique various social, political, religious, and economic systems and dogmas? How can his work contribute to other systems

he quotes in *Black Skin, White Masks* in his Birkbeck lecture; he is attempting to let Fanon define himself outside of his immediacy by reminding the reader that Fanon argues for his own transcendence beyond his pre-political foundations, especially when speaking in terms of his liberational mission.

## 2 Žižek's Universal Fanon, or Fanon's Universalism

In his Birkbeck lecture on Fanon, Žižek said, “when I read lines like Mignolo’s, I reach not for the gun but for Fanon.”<sup>9</sup> To evidence this claim, the Fanon that Žižek reaches for is the Fanon that appears most powerfully in the last chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks*. Without abandoning the reality of Fanon’s pre-political foundations, nor diminishing their significance, Žižek interconnects a narrative from Fanon’s last chapter that emphasizes the *universal* over the *particular*, the *ultimate* over the *immediate*, the *essence* over the *appearance*, as a way of restoring Fanon above the temptation to locate him merely within a given community defined by non-European pre-political foundations.<sup>10</sup> He begins by quoting a statement of Fanon that expresses his most basic *humanistic universalism*:

I am a man, and I have to rework the world’s past from the very beginning. I am not just responsible for the slave revolt in Saint Dominique.

Every time a man has brought victory to the dignity of the spirit, every time a man has said no to an attempt to enslave his fellow man, I have felt a sense of solidarity with his act.

In no way does my basic vocation have to be drawn from the past of peoples of color.

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of thought? That seems to be a justifiable exercise. However, to delineate Fanon within certain struggles because of the reader’s own pre-political foundations – the “my Fanon” perspective – I think is problematic for Fanon himself, as it distorts the *universal* element of his critique.

9 Žižek responds to his Critics. <http://www.critical-theory.com/zizek-responds-to-his-critics/>.

10 In his book *Can Non-Europeans Think*, Hamid Dabashi makes a colossal mistake. The quote of Fanon that Žižek cites in his Birkbeck lecture is attributed to Žižek himself by Dabashi. Thus, when Fanon expresses his humanistic universalism, coming directly out of *Black Skin, White Masks*, Dabashi assumes it is Žižek speaking in the first person, thus giving the impression that Žižek is rejecting concerns for people of color. This is a clear misreading of Žižek’s interpretation of Fanon. Dabashi forgets that Žižek is “reaching for Fanon” in response to Bhabha’s obfuscation of Fanon’s radicality, and thus is quoting Fanon directly. See Dabashi, *Can Non-Europeans Think*, 8–11.



In no way do I have to dedicate myself to reviving a black civilization unjustly ignored. I will not make myself the man of any past. I do not want to sing the past to the detriment of my present and my future.<sup>11</sup>

Using Fanon's own words, Žižek lays out the basic contours of Fanon's revolutionary universalism, and by consequence his appeal for what can be described as a *post-colonial revolutionary*: a revolutionary untethered to the restrictive particulars of any given struggle. Fanon argues that simply as a "man," a mere member of humanity, he must concern himself with the reality and history of oppression and human-caused unnecessary suffering, which encompasses all forms of tyranny, including slavery, indentured servitude, racism, colonialism, imperialism, and genocide, for the entire "world's past." For Fanon, he finds himself in solidarity with all those who have fought for human emancipation from such tyranny and injustice, regardless of the matrix of pre-political foundations that are relevant within such struggles. Thus, the Thracian Spartacus, who led the Third Servile War (slave revolt) against the Roman Republic, to Nat Turner, who led a slave revolt in 1831 against the slaveholders of Southampton County, Virginia, onto Ernesto "Che" Guevara, who attempted to liberate Latin America from North American imperialism, and many others, immediately conjure a sense of co-fraternity with Fanon, regardless of their particularities in time, place, race, ethnicity, or religious background. He feels a "sense of solidarity" with all of their actions against the unjust conditions they find themselves in, and in doing so, their struggles are on principle his struggles, as each struggle is an episode within the much larger project of human emancipation. As such, Fanon's sense of justice is *universally* applied; it includes Europe; it is not trapped within particularity; it is not merely a sensitivity for the suffering of his segment of humanity, for that only reproduces the idolization of "pure identity" that the philosopher Theodor W. Adorno thought Auschwitz confirmed to be "death," for it privileges one segment of humanity over another, and seeks "absolute integration" of the other via death.<sup>12</sup> Thus, Fanon's "basic vocation" need not be derived merely from only the "past of peoples of color," but from the globalized categories of the "wretched" in general, which, according to Marx, can be found throughout the history of the world, and in

11 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox. (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 201. The version of Fanon's book that Žižek quotes from is not the same as Philcox, nor is it the same as the Charles Lam Markmann translation. Thus, he most likely is using his own translation. Throughout this essay, I will use the Philcox translation unless otherwise noted.

12 Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*. (New York: Continuum, 1999), 362.

all human societies.<sup>13</sup> As such, according to Fanon, his sensitivity for the suffering of the finite individual is not racialized, ethnicized, or religionized, etc. Such particularized pasts cannot, as Fanon argued, become the narrow vision through which his revolutionary praxis is viewed. It can be the *starting point*, as it was with him in Martinique, France, and Algeria, but the struggle for human liberation in those particular territories does not reach the level of *universal* emancipation; such success would merely be a local affair if it only liberates the victims of those particular struggles. Žižek, invoking Fanon, seems to call for something much more radically profound.

In order to build his case for a *post-colonial revolutionary*, Žižek continues to further quote Fanon,

It is not the black world that governs my behavior. My black skin is not a repository for specific values.

Haven't I got better things to do on this earth than avenge the Blacks of the seventeenth century?<sup>14</sup>

Against the confining contours of identity-thought, which presumes one's pre-political foundations determine one's subjectivity and subjective values, as if *geworfenheit* is "will" or "fate," Fanon argues that his "black skin" does not automatically construct a preconceived value system, although it keenly informs him of the unjust nature of tyranny and oppression, especially in a colonized condition. He is black, and the systemic racism of the colonial situation forcefully reminds him of his blackness – and how such blackness is systematically defined and denigrated by its opposition: *white supremacy*. Yet, Fanon states, such blackness is not an intrinsic "repository" of values, as it is assumed to be by his racist opposition. As such, it doesn't lead him to attempt to redeem the Black victims of the seventeenth century, no more than white victims of class oppression in the industrialized nineteenth century. From a materialist point of view, such victims are long dead and therefore unredeemable. Unlike other revolutionary thinkers, such as Walter Benjamin, there is no sense of redemptive-messianism in Fanon's understanding in his emancipatory project. There is no

13 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party" in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1978), 473.

14 Again, reading these quotes knowing it is Fanon speaking, tilts them towards a "universalized" meaning, whereas if a reader thought it came from the white European philosopher Žižek, whom Dabashi assumed it came from, the meaning appears racially insensitive or even dismissive.

“weak messianism” that can redeem the innocent victims of history.<sup>15</sup> Thus, there is no hope for an *apocatastasis* in Fanon’s revolutionary political praxis.<sup>16</sup> With the weight of the present and the future in front of him, the dead of the past are not his immediate concern; the living – the *now-and-still-wretched of the earth* – is his primary concern.

Žižek continues to quote Fanon’s attempt to liberate himself from the ensnarement of pre-political foundations,

I have not the right as a man of color to wish for a guilt complex to crystallize in the white man regarding the past of my race.

I have not the right as a man of color to be preoccupied with ways of trampling on the arrogance of my former master.

I have neither the right nor the duty to demand reparation for my subjugated ancestors.

There is no black mission; there is no white burden.

I do not want to be the victim of the Ruse of a black world.

Am I going to ask today’s white men to answer for the slave traders of the seventeenth century?

Am I going to try by every means available to cause guilt to burgeon in their souls?<sup>17</sup>

I read these set of passages in two ways, (1) Fanon’s insistence that the reality of race does not heteronomically assign members of a given race a “basic vocation,” nor a pre-ordained “repository of values”: such matters are subjects of the autonomous will, and that will, regardless of race, acting on its own convictions, can be revolutionary, reactionary, or apathetic. (2) We can also read these passages in light of Fanon’s philosophical tendencies towards political

15 Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflection*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn. (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 254.

16 *Apocatastasis* refers to a restitution of a primordial condition – a return to the original state of being. Although it has its roots in Greek philosophy, this term became an important feature within the Abrahamic traditions. In the Vulgate Bible, the Greek was translated as “in tempora restitutionis omnium quae locutus est Deus” (the restitution of all things of which God has spoken).

17 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 203–204.

and philosophical realism. What meaningful purpose would it serve for him to insist that “white” people feel guilty about the actions of their ancestors, when they can no more redeem (or punish) their ancestors from the horror and terror they perpetrated upon Fanon’s black ancestors, than Fanon can redeem the victims of such horror and terror? Should such guilt be passed along from generation to generation like original sin, or should knowledge of the past injustices be transfigured into something more emancipatory? What purpose would it serve to attack the *arrogance* of the dead former master, other than to increase one’s dedication to negate the master’s negation, and hopefully bring about the positive: a more just and reconciled society? That dedication can be increased in much more productive ways.

As for the dead masters themselves, they are no longer subject to earthly judgment, although they cannot escape history. At best, one can long for *ultimate* justice for the innocent victim of the slave masters in an afterlife, but what concern has Fanon ever displayed for such an eschatological longing? His materialist metaphysics brooks no sensitivity for such a hopeful eschatology. Additionally, what could reparations do to redeem the “subjugated ancestors”? What meaningful recognition would that bring to the living descendants of those subjugated ancestors? It appears that Fanon rejects the idea that he’s somehow privileged, as a descendent of the *wretched* of Martinique, to speak in their name. But if not the descendent, who should speak in their name? Fanon seems to have already answered that question in a universalized way: “I am a man, and I have to rework the world’s past from the very beginning. I am not just responsible for the slave revolt in Saint Dominique.” By virtue of being a man (a human), concerned with the condition of my fellow humans, “I” am charged with speaking and acting against the continual debasement of my wretched brothers and sisters, including, but not limited to, the wretched of Martinique. It cannot be the case, Fanon is implying, that only the descendants of the wretched speak for the wretched, but the descendants of the victors must also speak for and act on the behalf of their victims, whilst not forgetting what is most important: *Jetztzeit* – time impregnated with revolutionary potential.<sup>18</sup> In light of Fanon’s universal humanism, it would not be

18 One of the most powerful examples of a descendent of the victors speaking and acting on behalf of the descendants of the victims (and the victims themselves), was the white American abolitionist John Brown, whom Malcolm X, while still in the Nation of Islam, thought to be the only redeemable white man in American history. Frederick Douglass said of John Brown, that while “I could live for the slave, but he could die for him.” Brown transcended the concerns of his own white *volksgemeinschaft* and made his concern the emancipation of the oppressed, regardless of their pre-political foundations. For his efforts, he was murdered by the U.S. government in Charles Town, Virginia, on December 2nd, 1859.

wrong to interpret the “I” in “I am charged” as being the “universal I,” meaning “all of us,” not just Fanon.

Fanon seems to resist the quicksand of reading the history of injustice through bourgeois historicism, and keeps his mind squarely on the injustice that is in front of him, for it is only through the conquering of the present injustice that makes the historical injustice meaningful. Historical injustice reveals the entrenched mechanisms of present injustices. As such, Fanon writes, I “have not the right to confine myself in a world of retroactive reparations,” especially in light of the depth of injustice that is ever-growing in the modern world.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, what universal emancipatory mission can be determined simply by *blackness*; what burden can be eternally carried simply because of *whiteness*? From his experiences of Bourgeois “freedom,” in Martinique, France, and colonial Algeria, Fanon realized that “universal emancipation” cannot be viewed (or fought) merely through the prism of race; a much more comprehensive prism is required: a distant messianic-like perspective, that reveals the full totality of history as horror, terror, suffering, alienation, and destructiveness.<sup>20</sup> The unarticulated yet powerful presence of pre-political particularities in revolutionary struggles is an abiding factor for Fanon. For example, the Bourgeois revolution, although made in the name of universal emancipation, proved only to be in the interest of a segment of humanity. Having guillotined the monarchs of Europe, the Bourgeois revolutions led only to the freedom of the shopkeepers and the oligarchs: the aristocracy of wealth. Thus, politically, the “demos” were in fact only those who *owned* the nation, not the wretched masses who toiled and fought *for* the nation. The communist revolutions, while criticizing their bourgeois forebears for their failure to realize the promised *liberté, fraternité, et égalité*, liberated the working class from material deprivation, but stripped them of their political rights and freedoms. Such a regimented existence resulted in Stalin’s “red fascism”, which deprived millions of their lives, and many millions more from their ability to actualize their potentials. These revolutions were hypocritical, in that they were in service to the few (mainly European), despite the rhetoric of “universal applicability.” As such, they perpetuated the class struggle, they perpetuated racial struggles, they perpetuated colonial domination, and they used religion, tribe, and nationhood to divide the workers, the peasants, the poor, and the colonial “subjects.” In other words, the *particularity* of the Western revolutions betrayed

19 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 205.

20 Adorno writes in his *Minima Moralia*, that in the face of history, such perspectives “must be fashioned that displace and estrange the world, reveal it to be, with its rifts and crevices, as indigent and distorted as it will appear one day in the messianic light.” Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*. (New York: Verso, 2005), 247.

their stated universality. They were frauds. The claim of universality was but the ideological cover for particular interests.

Even to the extent that it has been abused, “universality” mustn’t be abstractly negated and consigned to the dustbin of history. Rather, the *ideological fraud* perpetrated by particular interests in the name of “universal emancipation” must be identified, arrested, and expunged. By rejecting the temptation to particularize his emancipatory project, Fanon avoids the fraud that lay at the heart of the bourgeois and communist revolutions in the West, thus resuscitating emancipatory universalism. Žižek continues to quote Fanon,

I am not a slave to slavery that dehumanized my ancestors.

...it would be of enormous interest to discover a black literature or architecture from the third century before Christ. We would be overjoyed to learn of the existence of a correspondence between some black philosopher and Plato. But we can absolutely not see how this fact would change the lives of eight-year-old kids working in the cane fields of Martinique or Guadeloupe.<sup>21</sup>

Here, Fanon refuses to be continually defined by, and trapped in, the legacy of slavery and colonialism. To merely be concerned with the emancipation of the descendants of the slaves, privileged above all other victims of history simply because of his personal intimacy with that struggle, perpetuates the legacy of racism, as it continues to define Fanon and his subjective concerns merely by his Afro-Caribbean heritage and the definition thereof by white supremacy. By rejecting the privileging of this particular struggle, he consequently rejects the racism that animates this particular struggle, as from a racist perspective, Fanon’s own race should determine his concerns, thus localizing him within the struggle of his own particularity, i.e. the “black struggle” in Martinique, the Caribbean, or in metropole France. Fanon, no longer a “slave to the slavery that dehumanized [his] ancestors,” rejects such a diminishment of his humanity to mere race. “As a man,” as he stated earlier, he has to “rework the world’s past from the *very beginning*.” He is not “just responsible for the slave revolt of Saint Dominique,” but is rather, in the fullness of his humanity, concerned with all of humanity’s unjust suffering – even though that universal concern is iterated within his particular concern for the emancipation of the subjects of France’s colonial empire.

The last sentence that Žižek quotes from Fanon’s final chapter in *Black Skin, White Masks*, comes oddly enough not from the last page, but rather from the middle of the chapter. It is not Fanon’s final statement in his book, rather it

21 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 205.

is Žižek's final statement about Fanon from Fanon's closing thoughts: an exclamation point on Žižek's argument about Fanon's post-colonial universalism and his final rebuttal of the ghettoization of Fanon within certain intellectual circles. He quotes him saying, "I find myself one day in the world, and I acknowledge one right for myself: *the right to demand human behavior from the other.*"<sup>22</sup>

It is important to note that the "otherness" that Fanon invokes lacks determination; it isn't bound to any articulated pre-political particularity. He leaves ambiguous who the "other" is, thus implying that the other is by default the "universal other." Such indeterminate "otherness" implies the totality of others. This not only includes the obvious other, those who created the colonial condition, the European ruling classes, and the proletariats who faithfully served their master's needs and demands, but also the collaborators who share Fanon's own pre-political foundations. By universalizing the "other," Fanon implies that he stands with *all the wretched of the earth*, even amidst his abiding concern for those presently in front of him. Thus, in standing with the wretched, he takes sides; his universal solidarity is paradoxically particularized. It is universally with the victims of history, not the triumphant victors, who remain outside of his immediate concern. From Fanon's body of work, we can see that there is no meaningful "solidarity" with those African, Caribbean, Middle Eastern, and Asian ruling-classes, just because they belong to a pre-political foundation that has been historically mistreated, marginalized, and exploited by European empires.<sup>23</sup> Along with the European and Euro-American ruling-classes, such non-white ruling classes (the "native elite") are engaged in the oppression, suppression, exploitation, and genocidal destruction of the wretched, even though, as Jean-Paul Sartre pointed out, they too are often manufactured by the European elites.<sup>24</sup> Thus Fanon's solidarity with the other is not completely universalized, as it remains anchored in the framework of class struggle. He is, by this logic, universally concerned with the *wretched of the earth*, not the *wretched-makers of the palaces, penthouses, and parliaments*.

But by what right does Fanon have to "demand human behavior" from the other? This too can be argued within a universalistic framework, as the "human" within "human behavior" is *fully* universal, encompassing all within the species. As such, on the principle of equality, it demands something from *all* of those within the bounds of humanity, as it is prepared to reciprocate to *all*

22 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 204.

23 See Fanon's discussion of the "national bourgeoisie" or "native bourgeoisie" in the chapter "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness," in Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 148–205.

24 Jean-Paul Sartre, "Preface," in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon. (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 7.

within those bounds. Without spelling out succinctly what he means by “human behavior,” one can rightly assume from any number of sources what he means: mutual-recognition, inter-subjective respect, equal moral consideration, etc. This *demand*, which exempts no individual, group, race, or class, regardless of their pre-political foundations, is a universal demand that Fanon not only rhetorically advanced, but was willing to shed blood for, as the Algerians were not *his people* (according to pre-political foundations), but like the Argentinian Che Guevara and the Cubans, he made their liberation *his cause* as part of a broader revolutionary project. Žižek rightly includes Fanon’s statement here as his exclamation mark precisely because of this point; that final statement is Fanon’s demand for universal justice and emancipation, within which belongs the long and brutal struggle for the rights, respect, and equality of the non-European *wretched of the earth*. As such, Fanon is not *merely* a Martiniquais, a male, of African descent, or a revolutionary in North Africa, but one that represents the struggle for *universal* emancipation within the *particular* struggles in which he participated: the *post-colonial revolutionary*.

### 3 Ideological Perversion of Universalism: the Truth as Lie’s Camouflage

While we can argue that Fanon places an emphasis of universal emancipation throughout his writings, especially in his *Black Skin, White Masks*, it would be wrong to assume that all appeals to the “universal” are emancipatory. Take for example the Black Lives Matter movement. When the phrase “Black Lives Matter” is *not* countered with the phrase “Black Lives Don’t Matter” Rather, it is countered with the phrase “All Lives Matter.” Such rendering of the universal is ideological camouflage. It is clear that the former phrase “Black Lives Matter” is a particular claim, rooted in the black *erlebnis* (traumatic experience) of American history.<sup>25</sup> In essence, it means that black folk warrant moral consideration, respect, and the fullness of rights due to all citizens, and that the systematic violence of the police against young black men is an egregious violation of those values. Implicitly within the *particular* claim is the *universal* claim; black lives matter *just as much* as any other lives, and as such, black lives should be incorporated into the universal concern for human life. Nevertheless, the ideological function of saying “All Lives Matter” is to *neutralize* the reality of the particular. It is as if to say, “your suffering matters, but it matters no more than any other groups’ suffering.” This of course is true on the

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25 See Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 123, 128.



one hand; concern for the suffering of the finite individual has universal significance, regardless of time, place, race, religion, etc. However, within a given context, wherein one group is systematically oppressed, historically underserved, the subject of random violence and subjugation, denied their human and civil rights, as well as dehumanized and demonized, the secret intention of the universal claim becomes apparent: it is an attempt to bury the grotesque reality of the particular underneath the *truth* of the universal, thus denying the immediacy of black suffering. Truth itself is ideologically appropriated and functionalized, resulting in an intentional distortion of truth. It is an attempt to use the universal claim to conceal their own “negrophobia,” by distorting the particular claim into appearing to privilege the particular over the universal, which in reality it does not.<sup>26</sup>

Additionally, elevating the false-universal ideologically transforms those who are not the historical subject of imperialism and colonialism into “victims,” giving them a share in the “privilege of the victim” – the right, legitimacy, and authority to speak from the perspective of one who has been systemically and systematically wronged. From a White Nationalist perspective, the white population in the West is the victim of “modernity” (the creation of white liberals and Jews), for it has lost its own civilization, land, and culture to foreigners. Thus, in elevating the false-universal, in which the White Nationalist can claim victimhood on behalf of the entire West, they augment their ideological claim; they too can speak with authority against the crimes of their oppressors: Blacks, Muslims, immigrants, refugees, and other marginalized groups within the West.

Such functionalization of the universal must be rejected, as it fundamentally distorts and disfigures the emancipatory intention of the universal claim for the benefit of the unjust, unequal, and necrophilic status quo, while rendering the truth of the particular moot. The unifying essence of the universal claim must be preserved in its undistorted state, as it is what produces universal solidarity amongst the global wretched. As Fanon stated, “I am fighting for the birth of a *human world*, in other words, a world of *reciprocal recognitions*.”<sup>27</sup>

#### 4 Post-colonial Mind

European colonialism ideologically defined the colonial subject as merely a small conglomerate of particularities; the slave was *merely* “a black,” *merely* “a

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 193. Emphasis added.

woman" or "a breeder," *merely* "a beast of burden," a *mere* piece of "property," *merely* a "living tool." Being such, the "colonized mind," which absorbed the imposed *mere-ness*, could not escape the degradation of the *mere* particularities; they were enchained within them, both in the colonizers' law, and more painfully, in their damaged psyche.<sup>28</sup> Universalism, to be able to think beyond the immediate, beyond the given, beyond the isolated appearances, with few exceptions, was not a trait that the *merely* particular could easily ascend to, especially when they were overwhelmed by their own particular experiences of oppression. Who could fault the American slave for not concerning himself/herself with the plight of European Serfs or the Aborigines in Australia? Their world was brutally immediate and overwhelming, and they struggled to maintain their own existence on a daily basis. Universal thought, we can deduce, was the privilege of those who could afford, in time and resources, universal thought, not those struggling to survive daily whippings, rape, starvation, deprivations, and torture, both psychological and physical. Because they *appeared* to not think beyond the immediate, it was assumed the wretched were "incapable" of thinking. Thus, abstract thought, we are told by the master-class, was the work of the superior, the colonial masters, the metropole: the civilizational *übermenschen*. Yet this was merely a reflection of the way society was constructed and maintained: the masters and the slaves; the oppressor and the oppressed; the exploiter and the exploited. Fanon, by rejecting the enslavement of humanity to the pre-determined "capabilities" associated with pre-political foundations, which were ideologically created by the master-classes, also rejected the racist ideologies that attempt to chain him to the *mere-ness* of the colonized and enslaved subject.<sup>29</sup> Thus, he reclaims his full humanity

28 See Na'im Akbar, *Breaking the Chains of Psychological Slavery*. Tallahassee, FL: Mind Productions & Associates, Inc., 1996. I base my understanding of the "colonized mind" from the Malaysian scholar Syed Hussein Alatas' notion of the "captive mind," wherein the captive mind is defined as being uncritical, merely imitative, and dominated by a heteronomic source, predominately Western, and therefore lacking any internal autonomy. Alatas is primarily speaking of non-Western academics who reflexively imitate their Western counterparts, while simultaneously neglect the work of their non-Western peers. In our use of the phrase "colonized mind," we're speaking of those individuals of the former (and still) colonies that retain (or even embrace) the colonizers false-ideology within their own minds, and are thus determined by such false-ideology, therein sharing a consciousness with their masters. In doing so, they perpetuate the very damaging notions, ideas, and principles that were imposed upon them to maintain their colonized state of being for the benefit of the colonizers.

29 On racist ideologies, which were meant to legitimate self-interested policies, see Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*. New York: Nation Books, 2016.

when he, in Žižek's words, "dealt intensively [with European philosophy] and was proud of it... he dealt extensively with Hegel, psychoanalysis, Sartre, even Lacan."<sup>30</sup> To be sure, his humanity was not reclaimed because the philosophy he dealt with was predominately *European*: European philosophy has no such elevating power; it couldn't even compel Europe to realize its own humanistic ideals, values, and principles. Rather, it was because he transcended that which European colonialism defined him as – simple *mere-ness*. Such imposed *mere-ness* would not have allowed him the possibility of engaging intensely with the philosophy of the "superior civilization," for the "natural capability" for a Black man to engage such thought was denied in fact (via self-interested policies), and denied in theory (via legitimating ideologies).<sup>31</sup> That he mastered, expanded upon, and applied Europe's Marxist and existentialist philosophy, that by his race he was supposed to be incapable of, and determinately negated it into his own revolutionary philosophy, is both poetic justice and the forceful dissolution of a racist ideology that says a Black man is incapable of such thought. Thus, what helped him realize the fullness of humanity was his ascent to the universal – in his case, the universal concern for matters beyond the *mere-ness* that his subaltern status was meant to cage him in. And like Toussaint L'Ouverture's revolution in Haiti from 1791 to 1794, Denmark Vesey's rebellion in South Carolina in 1822, Nat Turner's rebellion in Virginia in 1831, Frederick Douglass and his fight with the "slave-breaker" Edward Covey, MOVE Organization's standoffs with the Philadelphia Police Department, and many other revolts against oppression, Fanon's participation in the violent struggle for a people's emancipation concretely liberated him from such *mere-ness*, as the dignity of the struggle itself relieved him of the master's dehumanizing ideology.

In transcending the *mere-ness* of the colonial mind, along with an embracing and adopting the universal concern, Fanon invented his own subjectivity: his own "post-colonial mind." He was not an imperfect Black copy of the European colonial, but rather a universal man demanding universal humanity from the rest of humanity. In such an emancipated state, he saw how the struggle for human liberation in his Caribbean island was intimately tied with the struggle for emancipation in Europe, in Vietnam, in Africa, even in the slums and prisons of North America, wherein the hypocrisy of the Liberal Bourgeois "revolution" is intimately felt every day. As such, he rejected what Žižek called "Baudrillard's

<sup>30</sup> Dabashi, *Can Non-Europeans Think*, 7.

<sup>31</sup> Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning*, 1–11.

battle cry: forget Europe,” for forgetting Europe was no more possible then forgetting any other part of the earth wherein the wretched are made.<sup>32</sup>

## 5 Reversing Fanon in the Interregnum: the New Colonial Project

In the last decade, especially with the election of Barack Obama and the “white-lash” election of his nationalist and faux-populist successor, Donald J. Trump, a virulent form of fascism, rooted in a longing for racial “retrotopia” – yet clothed in the aesthetics and technology of the 21st century – has made its loud appearance on the world-historical stage, both in the United States and in Europe.<sup>33</sup> This strain of fascism, or “Alt-Fascism” as we’re describing it here, is a re-articulation of what the British political theorist Roger Griffin describes as *palingenetic ultra-nationalism*. It is rooted partly in neo-liberal economic anxiety, post-modern nihilism, cultural alienation within multiculturalism, the fear of “white genocide,” and the assumed culture of political correctness, which, according to White Nationalists, represses obvious “truths” in the name of “cultural sensitivity.” According to Griffin, such palingenetic ultra-nationalist movements also includes the “forces [of] militarism, racism, charismatic leadership, [and] populist nationalism.”<sup>34</sup> It is determined by “fears that the nation or civilization as a whole [is] being undermined by the forces of decadence,” and is plagued with a “deep anxiety about the modern age and longing for a new era to begin.”<sup>35</sup> In addition to these ingredients, what has forcefully birthed fascism back in to the public sphere is the growing fear of *Le grand remplacement* (The Great Replacement), which is understood by far-right traditionalists, paleo-conservatives, and White Nationalists as being the inevitable outcome of the Liberal-Socialist pro-immigration agenda – one that works to the advantage of immigrants at the expense of white natives.<sup>36</sup> The xenophobic fear of being replaced has once again mutated into an irrational hatred for all things perceived to be “other” – for the other is the agent of the demise of the white “natives.”

32 Žižek, <http://www.critical-theory.com/zizek-responds-to-his-critics/>.

33 Zygmunt Bauman, *Retrotopia*. Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2017.

34 Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*. (New York: Routledge, 1993), viii.

35 Ibid.

36 Joakim Andersen, *Rising from the Ruins: The Right of the 21st Century*. (London: Arktos Media Ltd., 2018), 120; Greg Johnson, *The White Nationalist Manifesto*. San Francisco: Counter-Currents Publishing Ltd., 2018; John Tirman, *Dream Chasers: Immigration and the American Backlash*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2015.

Coined by the French polemical author, Renaud Camus, the “great replacement” theory, as it pertains to France, argues that the “ethnic French,” those belonging to the historical community of France and their matrix of pre-political foundations, will inevitably be replaced by those who lack such an ethnic foundation for their French identity, predominately the immigrants of Northern Africa and the Middle East.<sup>37</sup> Such critics argue that the Bourgeois Enlightenment’s (as well as post-colonial liberals’) preference for *jus soli* (right of the soil, or “birthright citizenship”) over the pre-political *jus sanguinis* (right of blood), which limits citizenship to those who share in the pre-political matrix of a historical “blood-bound” nation (*volksgemeinschafft*), is the Trojan Horse that allows the ethnically and culturally non-French to claim French citizenship. In obtaining *political* citizenship, these foreign “outsiders” claim that their cultural “otherness” is also rightfully considered French, for within the post-modern condition, “Frenchness” is without content, and thus merely formal. Consequently, all manner of things can find an equal home within this post-modern amorphic “French,” which renders “Frenchness” meaningless, as it has no distinguishable substance; it is just an empty form. As such, the “intentional democratic community,” the *willensgemeinschaft*, comprised of representatives of all nations and cultures claiming “Frenchness,” is the conceptual flank for these “invaders” to destroy what is left of historic French cultural and genetic particularity. Without the strength of French cultural particularity, France becomes incapable of asserting its identity against the so-called “hordes of invaders.” Thus, pre-modern traditional French culture, the basis of French identity, they believe, is dying a slow and agonizing death under the weight of multiculturalism, with the ultimate outcome of France being replaced by a cultural amalgamation: Eurabia.<sup>38</sup>

Fanon himself wrote about the process of *décolonisation* in his book *Toward the African Revolution*, when he discussed the colonial power’s ability to strip native peoples of their sense of self, their identity, their cultural patterns, and systems of reference, all through systematic racism. He writes, the “racialized group tries to imitate the oppressor and thereby to deracialize itself. The ‘inferior race’ denies itself as a different race. It shares with the ‘superior race’ the convictions, doctrines, and other attitudes concerning it.”<sup>39</sup> In the perspective

37 See Renaud Camus, *Le Grand Remplacement: Introduction au remplacisme global*. France: Chez l’auteur, 2017. Also see Renaud Camus, *You Will Not Replace Us!* France: Chez l’auteur, 2018.

38 “Eurabia” was coined by Bat Ye’or (Gisele Littman) in her book *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis*. Cranbury, NY: Associated University Presses, 2005.

39 Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 38.

of Alt-Fascists, a similar yet perverted process is happening among Whites in the West. Because of white-guilt, i.e. ethnomasochism, Whites attempt to deracialize themselves by imitating the culture of their former colonial subjects, by adopting their cultural patterns and systems of reference (*negrification*). In this case, it is not the “inferior race” that “denies itself as a race,” but rather the “guilty race” that “denies itself as a race,” for in deracializing itself, it absolves itself of the sins of its colonial forefathers, the knowledge of which is repeatedly hammered into the younger generation by ethnomasochistic educators. In this process, European *hochkultur* (high culture) is replaced by African-inspired pop culture, pushed by the power of the *lügenpresse* (lying press), resulting in the evaporation of Europe’s primordial identity and traditional culture. As Fanon knew, *déculturation*, or *Umvolkung* (“de-people-ing” in German), is a way of making space between a people and their historical culture, thus depriving them of the vital resources needed to maintain their distinct identity and resist capitulation to the colonial invader. Without such a strong sense of self, the invader can impose upon them the identity of their choosing, which is always a submissive and subservient identity. From the perspective of the anti-immigrant Far-Right, *überfremdung* (over-foreignization), leads to *déculturation*, which is a precondition for the subaltern to replace their former masters in the former masters’ own fatherland.

For the White Nationalists, it is not just the liberal-bourgeois state of France, or in immigrant friendly Germany, that are now under the threat of losing their historic (and racial) identity, but the entire West is threatened by post-modern “globalism.”<sup>40</sup> The West, it is charged, exports its nihilistic consumerist culture and neo-liberal economic system abroad while it imports its population from the *tiers monde* (third world), thus destroying both the Third World and the First World. True multiculturalism, it is argued, is the opposite of the form of multiculturalism found within the pluralist democracies of the West; it is leaving traditional cultures intact within their traditional geographical boundaries: the sovereign and “pure” ethno-states. For the Alt-Fascists, the right not to have a people’s traditional culture undermined by a foreign culture includes modern Europe. Thus, the “world of reciprocal recognition,” as Fanon so desired, is assented to by the Alt-Fascists, but it is a world wherein people do not interpenetrate each other territorially.<sup>41</sup> Rather, this imagined world is governed bi-laterally through sovereign *nation-states* (in the strict biological

40 Guillaume Faye, *The Colonisation of Europe*. London: Arktos Media Ltd., 2016. These same arguments in the American context can be found in Greg Johnson’s *The White Nationalists Manifesto*, 9–57.

41 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 193.

sense of the phrase), whose membership within the nation-state is determined by pre-political foundations. As it would be a transgression of the biologically determined nation-state for an individual to become a citizen of another nation-state, individuals do not go beyond their historical geographical borders. It is the end of the *willensgemeinschaft*. As such, mutual-reciprocity and mutual-recognition is a matter between the ethnically bound nation-states, not individuals of different ethnic, religious, and racial groups cohabitating within one state.

Being against such cultural and racial interpenetration, the Alt-Fascists criticize *neo-liberal capitalist globalization* – the economics of modernity, as it is capitalism's relentless pursuit of profit that forces cultures to interpenetrate each other, either through immigration, business partnerships, pursuit of education, and the inevitable brain-drain from the Third World to the First World. This, it is argued, undermines each peoples' *eigentlichkeit* (authenticity), and therefore it must be replaced with an economic system that allows various nation-states to remain undisturbed by the influences of foreign cultures.

In addition to neo-liberal capitalism, Alt-Fascists criticize Marxism, socialism, and other forms of Left-wing "globalist" thought, for it too diminishes Western cultural superiority to the level of the inferior others, all in the name of "egalitarianism."<sup>42</sup> From the perspective of the Alt-Fascists, equality, as such, is unjust, as it fails to recognize the genius – and thus superiority – of the West. By operating on the principle of equality of cultures, the Left gives equal space within Western societies to foreign and "degenerate" cultures, thus weakening the West's ability to stabilize, rejuvenate, and reproduce its own identity (and biology). Additionally, the insistence on equality of peoples is an affront to the psychological well-being of those who see themselves as superior, as it denies the very the uplifting yet false-consciousness that gives them a sense of superiority: "superiority" being a psychological defense mechanism against their own sense of insecurity, alienation, and isolation.<sup>43</sup>

Within the "interregnum" between modernity and the rise of post-modernity, White Nationalists, Nationalist Populists, Paleoconservatives, Traditionalists, Archeofuturists, and other Alt-Fascists, have appropriated Fanon's insights into colonialism and its psychological destructiveness. They seek to demonstrate how the descendants of Europe's colonial subjects have returned to the metropolises, and with the help of Cultural Marxists, Liberals, Jews, and non-conforming left-wing intellectuals (the "collaborators," or European "native elites" to use a Fanonian phrase), have begun to colonize liberal Europe

42 Joakim Andersen, *Rising from the Ruins*, 86–87.

43 See Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994.

under the cover of equality, tolerance, and diversity. While such a “colonization” is a catastrophe for European civilization as a distinct civilization, its death culminates in a palingenetic opportunity: the creation of a stronger and more vibrant Europe: *The Fourth Age of European Civilization*, as the New Right philosopher Guillaume Faye calls it.<sup>44</sup> In order to avoid civilization death via “involution” – the regression of civilization due to dysgenic forces – and bring about this rebirth of Europe, Europeans must, according to Faye, “unite in self-defense, expel the colonizers, throw off the American yoke, and regenerate themselves biologically and morally.”<sup>45</sup> Anything less than a *totalen krieg* (total war) against their invading foreigners will leave Europe vulnerable to complete colonization, and colonization means collapse – a dystopic and apocalyptic end to a distinctly Christian-inheritance Enlightenment civilization.

Although immigration of Muslims and Africans is seen as the primary dysgenic force in Europe, various Alt-Fascists have once again seized upon a familiar target: *Der Jude* (The Jew). The Jewish community plays a particularly insidious role in this new iteration of White Nationalism. In his essay “The Populist Temptation,” Slavoj Žižek shed light on this new formulation of anti-Semitism. First, Žižek rejects the idea that the Muslims are the “new Jews” of Europe, as some on the Left have claimed. Rather, he argues, *Der Jude* is seen now, as was before, as being the “secret master that pulls the strings.”<sup>46</sup> While it was the strings of international finance, the media, and pop culture, that the Jews pulled in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, today, his work is done primarily through immigration. Žižek writes, “if one suspects a secret plot in their [the Muslims] ‘invasion of Europe,’ then Jews have to be behind it,” since the Muslims are “too visible” and “clearly not integrated into our societies.”<sup>47</sup> By way of

44 Guillaume Faye, *Why We Fight: Manifesto of the European Resistance*, trans. Michael O'Meara. (London: Arkto Media Ltd., 2011), 178–179. The other three ages of European civilization, according to Faye, are Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and Modernity, which the latter is now coming to its conclusion. Faye has a particular disdain for American style democracy, as it is the most prominent example of a *willensgemeinschaft*. America is also the guardian of the neo-liberal world order, which imposes a multiculturalist-democratic form of political-economics on European countries.

45 Ibid.

46 Slavoj Žižek, “The Populist Temptation,” in *The Great Regression*, ed. Heinrich Geiselberger. (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2018), 186.

47 Ibid. This anti-Semitic trope was on full display when Robert Gregory Bowers, a 46-year-old White Nationalist, attacked the Tree of Life Synagogue on October 27, 2018, in the Spring Hill neighborhood in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Bowers was enraged that the Jewish community sponsored Muslim refugees, who were “invaders” and would “kill our people.” Although he was a supporter of Donald J. Trump, he criticized the President for being a “globalist, not a nationalist,” because he wasn't hard enough on the Jews. “There is no MAGA (Make America Great Again) as long as there is a kike infestation,” he wrote on



his social invisibility, “the Jew” is undetected as he makes Europe comfortable for his own existence by transforming Europe into a “multicultural dystopia” akin to the United States. Through this unseen string pulling, he slowly removes the particularity of Europe; he subjects its economy to global forces; he denigrates Europe *hochkultur* (high culture) with dysgenic pop-culture (negritification); he fills its cities with people who do not belong to Europe, cannot integrate with its people, nor assimilate its libertine (or its traditional) culture. In doing so, the Jew, who is otherwise the perpetual other, creates the conditions for his own flourishing at the expense of the native.<sup>48</sup> Additionally, through liberal institutions, he has removed Europe’s ability to remove him.<sup>49</sup>

From the perspective of White Nationalists, Jews can blend in European society, but they cannot be absorbed or integrated into the distinct *geist* of Europe, with its Christian inheritance, no matter how diminished that *geist* is. Thus, they must ally themselves with those who have the ability to deconstruct that *geist*: The Muslims. Anything outside of this complete deconstruction of European distinctiveness leaves Europe’s small Jewish community vulnerable to a new and more complete *Endlösung* (final solution): the absolute integration of the Jews via extermination of the Jews. Thus, in order to secure their own existence, Europe must become Americanized – a hodgepodge of peoples without clearly defined cultural inheritances.

Žižek is right to point out here the dangerous nature of this new form of Alt-Fascism; it successfully combines Islamophobia and traditional Anti-Semitism. The Muslims are the *weapons* used against the Europeans and the Jews are the *agents* through which the “invading hordes” accomplish their colonizing task. Through their demographics, such a Jewish-Muslim alliance will conquer Europe and colonize it under the guise of multiculturalism and cultural Marxism, which will inevitably lead to “white genocide.”<sup>50</sup> Although the legitimacy of

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a Gab post. Eleven worshippers were killed in the attack and seven more were injured. He was later hailed as a patriot by many White Nationalist groups.

48 Ibid.

49 Although White Nationalists see this supposedly friendly Jewish-Muslim alliance as being detrimental to Europe, the recent rise of anti-Semitism in Europe has mainly come from disaffected Muslim youths, who have directed their anger about their own conditions, and the conditions of the Palestinian people, against the small Jewish communities that still remain in Europe. Anti-Semitism from Muslims, most of which are not religious, but are mainly second generation sons of immigrants, have driven many Jews from Europe to Israel.

50 Using the language of the biological sciences, Johnson attributes “white genocide” to four causes: “habitat loss, invasive species, hybridization, and predation.” See Johnson, *The White Nationalist Manifesto*, 23, 17–22.

this claim is dubious, it is not unbelievable among those who've experienced the growing Muslim presence in Europe as, to use Fanon's word, an *erlebnis*.

## 6 Erlebnis as Civilizational Trauma; Retrotopia as Ersatz Utopia

In discussing the psychopathology of the Black Man in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon quotes Freud's understanding of the lasting effects of trauma on the psyche, as being the basis of an individual's neuroses.<sup>51</sup> Since here we are not speaking of one single individual, but rather a collectivity of individuals – Western society – we can philosophically appropriate this concept from Freud/Fanon and apply it to the traumatic experience of modernity and how it has contributed to the conditions from which Alt-Fascism becomes a credible alternative in the eyes of otherwise rational Westerners.

Fanon quotes Freud as saying that the symptoms associated with an *erlebnis* are the “residue of emotional experiences... psychic traumas,” that are not always caused by a “single event,” but on the contrary, arise from “multiple traumas, frequently analogous and repeated.”<sup>52</sup> Thus, says Fanon, “there is a determined *Erlebnis* at the origin of every neurosis.”<sup>53</sup> The West is currently suffering from such a neurosis. On the one hand, it publically remains committed to the values of the Enlightenment, while at the same time it doubts whether or not those values can keep an increasingly disparate people together. Those who advocate for an ethno-state, like Greg Johnson, Jared Taylor, and Wilmot Robertson, have seized on this troubling fissure. According to Greg Johnson,

ethnonationalism is contrasted with civic nationalism, in which the principle of unity is subjection to a common system of laws or the profession of a shared civic creed. Civic nationalism need not exist in a multiracial or multicultural society, but the primary reason that civic nationalist creeds are promulgated is to deal with the absence of organic, ethnic unity in a society.<sup>54</sup>

If the liberal *willensgemeinschaft* is to remain intact, it must replace what it lacks – “organic” or “ethnic unity” – with some other form of social adhesive. This is usually done with civic religion, national myths, and political institutions and

<sup>51</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 123.

<sup>52</sup> Freud, as quoted by Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 122–123.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>54</sup> Johnson, *The White Nationalist Manifesto*, 49.

ideologies. However, globalized modernity has (1) revealed the limits of such sources of social unity, (2) eroded what is left of those sources, and (3) has constructed a political-economic and cultural reality that is perceived by the Western precariat to be incapable of being solved by such liberal sources. The traumatic *erlebnis* of modernity has ruptured the modern Westerners from their “organic” and “ethnic unity”; it has severed it from its Christian cultural inheritance; the ravages of aggressive neo-liberal capitalism have undermined its own promise of working class prosperity; and its scientism, metaphysical materialism, instrumental reason, pervasive nihilism, and necrophilic consumerism as a comprehensive way-of-being-in-the-world, have ciphered any sense of inherent meaningfulness and hopefulness in life. In this existential void, many in the West have sought to overcome the civilizational *entzauberung* (disenchantment) and recover their “lost utopia” with its ersatz: *retrotopia*.

According to the Polish philosopher Zygmunt Bauman, retrotopias exist when societies abandon their confidence in future progress, when societies in decline no longer look forward to the “not-yet-born,” but begin to look backwards in nostalgia towards an imaged ideal type of the *status quo ante* (the way it used to be), before modernity brought about the polyethnic, multicultural, and dispersed society.<sup>55</sup>

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon reminds us that in “every society, in every community, there exists, must exist, a channel, an outlet whereby the energy accumulated in the form of aggressiveness can be released.”<sup>56</sup> In the 21st century post-secular and multicultural societies of Europe, such accumulated aggressiveness has been filtered through palingenetic ultra-nationalism and directed towards a singular ideologically constructed culprit: The Immigrant/Refugee, the “invading hordes” determined to colonize Europe.<sup>57</sup> Whilst retrotopia remains aspirational, a mere ersatz meant to satisfy the longing for an idealized past age, when such aspirations take concrete form in citizen groups in civil society, and metastasize into political parties determined to take power, then the retrotopian vision of a purified and authentic society becomes a great danger to those who are outside of the “in-group” dynamic: the unintegrated and unassimilated other – especially those who nevertheless claim “westernality” despite their abiding otherness. Through palingenetic ultra-nationalism, the West engages in the “collective catharsis,” which Fanon believed “every society naturally acquir[es].”<sup>58</sup> Thus, the struggle to actualize the retrotopic

55 Bauman, *Retrotopia*, 5, 9.

56 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 124.

57 Guillaume Faye, *The Colonisation of Europe*.

58 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 124.

vision of a future society is the way the West “defends” itself from the colonizing project of the immigrants and refugees. It is the bringing forth of the *Ragnarök*.<sup>59</sup>

## 7 Beyond the Flaschenpost: the Call for the Post-colonial Revolutionary

The Frankfurt School’s post-World War II critical theory of society, especially its analyses of nationalism, authoritarianism, and anti-Semitism, was meant to be a *flaschenpost* – a “message in a bottle” – for those who mistakenly believed that such forces had been defeated. According to Leo Löwenthal, one of the early members of the Frankfurt School, the *flaschenpost* arose in the aftermath of World War I, “out of the feeling that one could contribute to change, that the message would get through to the right people, that possibilities would once again arise.”<sup>60</sup> Indeed, such possibilities did arise again, as fascism, responding to the failures of liberalism and the threat of Soviet communism, brought upon World War II, the greatest of world-historical catastrophes. Yet, what people optimistically thought was finally destroyed in World War II, fascism, was only destroyed militarily. As a political philosophy, it was merely repressed, awaited the right opportunity – the right time for another “collective catharsis” – to explode back onto the canvas of history, albeit in a new “alternative” form.

In the interregnum between modernity and post-modernity, with the collapse of the socialist Left as a world-historical force, and the reemergence of virulent forms of palingenetic ultra-nationalism, it is time for the post-colonial revolutionaries, those committed to universal emancipation, to once again take their places among the barricades. The post-colonial revolutionary – those revolutionaries who’ve emancipated themselves from their pre-political foundations as limiting factors in their revolutionary politics – are uniquely qualified for this struggle. For the “colonial” and “anti-colonial” struggle is no longer happening in the *tiers monde* (at least not according to the Alt-Fascists), but rather it is happening in the West, which is comprised of numerous post-secular societies that are multiethnic and multi-confessional. Building bridges and bonds between the various marginalized communities, as opposed to

59 In Norse mythology, a *Ragnarök* is an apocalyptic sweeping away of an old order. Either through natural disaster or through a man-made cleansing of the old, a new order ascends from the ashes of the old.

60 Leo Löwenthal, *The Unmastered Past*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 257. Also See Rudolf J. Siebert, *From Critical Theory to Critical Political Theology: Personal Autonomy and Universal Solidarity*. (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 15.

defining their struggle simply on the basis of their communities' particularities, is absolutely necessary if the push to eradicate the non-integrative "other" from the society is to be halted, if Fanon's truly human world, "a world of reciprocal recognitions," is to come about.<sup>61</sup>

Liberalism has shown itself to be incapable of realizing its own "universal" creed (*Liberté, Égalité, and Fraternité*); it has shown that it will continue to produce the very political, economic, and cultural conditions that call for its own destruction – either by a reactionary retrotopian move, which comes at the expense of all those who cannot be integrated into the singular identity of the imagined community, or through a post-modernity that seeks as its goal the reconciliation of the fundamental antagonisms that currently plague humanity – class, race, gender, culture, not through the dissolution of human differences through haphazard amalgamation, but through a radical realization of humanity's oneness *within* its differences: Its *E pluribus unum*. Fanon's universalism, his commitment to the wretched of the earth, which Žižek highlighted in his Birkbeck lecture, is a prime example of what is needed in today's disfigured and distorted social relations. It is not time to retreat with Fanon into our own local struggles; rather, it is time to invoke Fanon in those struggles, and connect them with the broader struggle for human emancipation. *Divide et impera*, (divide and conquer) the Romans used to say; it would be foolish if we let Fanon be functionalized as a tool for that division.

To end with Fanon, again from his finale in *Black Skin, White Masks*:

Only conflict and the risk it implies can, therefore, make human reality, in-itself-for-itself, come true. This risk implies that I go beyond life toward an ideal which is the transformation of subjective certainty of my own worth into a universally valid objective truth.

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61 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 193.

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