

MAIN SECTION

Bodies, Spaces and Citizenship: the Theoretical Contribution of Frantz Fanon

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ABSTRACT

The theoretical horizon of the post-colonial city postulates the survival of the old imperial project in the structuring or production of the current European and North American space. The genealogy of this space fully incorporates Frantz Fanon's considerations on the situated form of membership produced by the colonial city.

KEYWORDS

Frantz Fanon; Camp; Phenomenology; Gillo Pontecorvo

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As is known, there is a historical link between the experimentation of internment camps in the eras and territories of colonial conquest (South Africa, Namibia, Cuba) and the appearance of camps on European soil—not only in Germany—during the early 20th century and Second World War. In Italy too, from this point of view, it was with the Libyan war that between 1911 and 1912 recourse was again made to the institution of confinement, many years before the fascist regime used it more systematically to persecute political opponents. It would also be in the places of confinement like Lipari or Ustica that the first internment camps would be built for Ethiopian and Eritrean civilians, and later “Yugoslavs”, i.e. Croats and Slovenes, the same places that in the immediate post-war period would be used as collection centres for “undesirable aliens” awaiting repatriation.¹ The post-colonial reflection is then in agreement that the extermination of the Jewish people represented a paradigm shift with respect to the forms of deportation and internment that preceded it, but this does not mean that to clarify its peculiarities it may be important to include the Nazi-Fascist *concentration camp* in a broader perspective, which evidently survives it. “Today’s camps are not yesterday’s camps—observed Georges Didi-Huberman—but they are still camps: their very structure is the result of a long history. A history that already on other occasions, without the states being too disturbed by it, began with ‘simple’ detention procedures.”²

The theoretical horizon in which I will place my contribution, therefore, will be that of the post-colonial city, which postulates the survival of the old imperial projects in the structuring or production of the current European and North American space.³ In fact, as Didi-Huberman claims, today we would still say the camps still exist in various forms in the formal and informal places that migrants pass through like Calais, Idomeni, Lampedusa, Ventimiglia, Lesbos and Misrata, or in the autonomous cities of Spain located in North Africa, not to mention all the centres designated for the administrative detention of foreigners who are still undesirable and awaiting repatriation, inside or outside Europe.

These are places that can clearly vary, assuming from time to time the form of shanty towns or tent cities, hotspots or penitentiaries, an island or an expanse of containers, but they still remain united by a rather coherent series of typological and functional constants. They often arise near ports, motorway junctions, border crossings, where moving populations seek a stroke of luck or are held back by the police or army. They generate conflicts between different diaspora cultures, natives and foreigners, authorities and voluntary associations. They are above all places that correspond to a specific form of life, both those who *are held* and those who have set

1. Costantino Di Sante, *Stranieri indesiderabili*, (Verona: Ombre Corte, 2011), 36-68.

2. Georges Didi-Huberman and Niki Gianni, *Passer, quoi qu'il en coûte* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2017), 50.

3. Brenda S. A. Yeoh, “Postcolonial cities”, *Progress in Human Geography* 25, no. 3 (2001): 457. For a first approach to the topic refer to Neera Chandoke, “The post-colonial city,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 26, no. 50 (1991): 2868-2873.

them up and administer them. The French anthropologist Michel Agier, who coordinates a research group devoted to the study of these issues at the École des hautes études of Paris, has therefore proposed to define the* camp* as every “social and spatial reality generally associated with immobility or more precisely immobilisation of people in movement.”⁴ As I will try to demonstrate, the genealogy of this contemporary form of immobilisation fully incorporates Frantz Fanon’s considerations of the colonial city.

Considerations that we could develop starting from 1954, when in an attempt to draw a lesson from the defeat in Indochina, the French army reorganised the Algerian territory according to the increasingly pressing needs of military control. It is necessary to avoid any contact between civilians and rebels, promote the logistics of repression and thus create centres for mass gatherings of the population. Thus driven out of their homes, the peasants are transferred to the so-called “new villages”, hundreds and hundreds of camps surrounded by barbed wire in which they will soon struggle to distinguish the functions of gathering from those of detention. As Joël Kotek and Pierre Rigoulot have pointed out, 19th-century literature allows us to establish how the compromise between the two functions does not represent a “last gasp of dying colonialism” but rather the very truth of the colonial system.⁵ Frantz Fanon had come to the same conclusion: “The native is a being hemmed in,” we read in the first pages of the *The Wretched of the Earth*, “apartheid is simply one form of the division into compartments of the colonial world.”⁶

The “new villages,” therefore, do nothing but intensify a more usual spatialisation, that of the “districts” in which the indigenous labour force that seeks a socio-economic integration in the *European city* is restrained and administered, “that fraction of the peasant population which is blocked on the outer fringe of the urban centres—as Fanon calls them—that fraction which has not yet succeeded in finding a bone to gnaw in the colonial system.”⁷ They are “[t]he men whom the growing population of the country districts and colonial expropriation have brought to desert their family holdings [that] circle tirelessly around the different towns, hoping that one day or another they will be allowed inside.”⁸ It seems like the history of today. But in the meantime, at that time, it is also the Casbah that turns into the place where a population is concentrated in transit towards independence, 100,000 individuals locked up in one square kilometre and fenced in. In fact, Fanon writes: “The European city is not the prolongation of the native

4. Michel Agier (ed.), *The Jungle: Calais's Camps and Migrants*, (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2018), 146.

5. Joël Kotek and Pierre Rigoulot, *Le siècle des camps. Détention, concentration, extermination, cent ans de mal radical* (Paris: CJ Lattès, 2000).

6. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. By Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 51.

7. *Ibid.*, 103.

8. *Ibid.*

city. The colonisers have not settled in the midst of the natives. They have surrounded the native city; they have laid siege to it. Every exit from the Kasbah of Algiers opens on enemy territory. And so it is in Constantine, in Oran, in Blida, in Bone. The native cities are deliberately caught in the conqueror's vise. To get an idea of the rigour with which the immobilizing of the native city, of the autochthonous population, is organized, one must have in one's hands the plans according to which a colonial city has been laid out, and compare them with the comments of the general staff of the occupation forces."⁹

But the aspect of this siege that Fanon wants to examine above all concerns the "dialectic of the body and the world,"¹⁰ that is to say the experience that individuals can have with their bodies in relation to the environments in which they are held and forced to live. In fact, it is in this dimension that the colonised continuously receives an implicit order that immediately resonates with the camp-form defined by Agier: the order not to move, to remain immobile, because in the presence of an absolute and discretionary power any movement could result in guilt and arouse the gendarme's reaction. "The native is always on the alert, for since he can only make out with difficulty the many symbols of the colonial world, he is never sure whether or not he has crossed the frontier."¹¹ Fanon calls this structural and corporal guilt of the natives "a kind of curse," but a few pages earlier he allowed himself one of the very rare annotations on the life of the metropolis that appear in the *The Wretched of the Earth*, where the existence and destiny of the European citizen are mostly ignored, as Sartre will note. Fanon writes: "In the colonies it is the policeman and the soldier who are the official, instituted go-betweens, the spokesmen of the settler and his rule of oppression. In capitalist societies," on the other hand, "the educational system, whether lay or clerical, the structure of moral reflexes handed down from father to son, the exemplary honesty of workers who are given a medal after fifty years of good and loyal service, and the affection which springs from harmonious relations and good behaviour—all these aesthetic expressions of respect for the established order serve to create around the exploited person an atmosphere of submission and of inhibition which lightens the task of policing considerably."¹² Now this is a track that would take us away from our topic, so I will limit myself to pointing it out, but in this passage there are all the conditions to start thinking about what Rosa Luxemburg might have defined the *organic link* between "being hemmed in" and the "aesthetic expressions of respect for the established order," a link that still today seems to persist in the contemporaneity of the hotspots of the policies against disorderly conduct¹³.

9. Frantz Fanon, "Algeria Unveiled," in *A Dying Colonialism*, trans. by Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 51.

10. *Ibid.*, 59.

11. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 52.

12. *Ibid.*, 37.

13. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 165.

In the same colony, moreover, in order to protect their interests, the assimilated bourgeoisie “can find nothing better to do than to erect grandiose buildings in the capital and to lay out money on what are called prestige expenses”¹³ and to mobilise the aesthetic function in the sphere of social control and class relationships. Indeed, it is the colony that establishes a more controversial relationship between cause and effect, the structure and superstructure: “you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich—Fanon writes—this is why Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem”, and “the very nature of precapitalist society, so well explained by Marx, must here be thought out again.”¹⁴ On the one hand, therefore, “the attention that Fanon paid to the logic of dominion [...] that does not take the immediate form of coercion” could motivate us to reread the work in relation to Antonio Gramsci’s reflections on the concept of hegemony,¹⁵ on the other hand the elaborations that the colonial experience allows us to carry out in the study of pre-capitalist societies would push us in the direction specified by the pages in Rosa Luxemburg’s “Protective Tariffs and Accumulation.” But let’s limit ourselves for the moment to register this: according to Fanon it is possible to make a generalisation of the Algerian exception in more or less vandalistic or persuasive forms, police or sublime, bloody or edifying, coercive or cultural, African or European that would seem to already imply the thesis of Agamben regarding the need to “to regard the camp not as a historical fact and an anomaly belonging to the past (even if still verifiable) but in some way as the hidden matrix and *nomos* of the political space in which we are still living.”¹⁶

What interests us now, however, is not a political philosophy of the camp, but rather a phenomenology. Donatella Di Cesare recently wrote: “There are many philosophical and political questions that the world of camps raises, even in its reflections on the city, questions that need to be addressed in a comprehensive study. To give just one example, there is not yet a phenomenology of life in camps, nor a reflection on the waiting”.¹⁷ Fanon’s work allows us to sketch out precisely this phenomenology of life and waiting in the specific case of the colonised, being held in an enclosure whose experience is above all that of a body exhausted by the muscular and sensorial control of the injunction to stay still. It is a command that inflames the tendons and exacerbates the burden of the external environment: it is for this reason that the colonised does not cease to achieve his freedom “from nine in the evening until six in the morning,” according to Fanon, dreaming

14. *Ibid.*, 39.

15. Hourya Bentouhami, “De Gramsci à Fanon, un marxisme décentré”, *Actuel Marx* 55 (2014): 99.

16. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Meridian, 1998), 166.

17. Donatella Di Cesare, *Stranieri residenti. Una filosofia della migrazione* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2017), 213.

of jumping, running, swimming or climbing,¹⁸ because during the day he is forced to maintain a constant alert in a dimension that the Ghanaian philosopher Ato Sekyi-Otu has defined as “perceptual enclosure”.¹⁹

The scandal of violence is all here: the violence that triggers the process of decolonisation, the violence of the colonised, is the exact opposite of colonial violence. It is not an ideological violence, organised ahead of time, which takes form in response to an ethical reflection or a series of strategic or moral demands: it is the epileptic violence of the man with his back to the wall, as Achille Mbembe defined it, being kept in an enclosure that he confusedly seeks to interpret as survival.²⁰

To grasp the survival of this being, therefore, it will be worthwhile to take advantage of a significant coincidence, because the value that Fanon attributes to the activities included “from nine in the evening until six in the morning” immediately resonates with the title and anthropological perspective of another fundamental study on the conditions of the wretched of the earth: I refer to *The American Slave: From Sundown to Sunup* by George Rawick. A colleague of C.L.R. James, Rawick edited an edition of 41 volumes of oral interviews with former slaves and their children, of which *The American Slave: From Sundown to Sunup* represents an attempt at interpretation. And Rawick’s basic thesis is the following: “The slaves used what they brought with them from Africa in their memories, nerve endings, and speech to help them adapt to the new environment and to build for themselves a new life”.²¹ The sensory sphere, therefore, is immediately involved in the negotiation of new African-American societies that “are not bundles of African characteristics, but rather the product of the interactions of individuals whose ancestors had come from West Africa and had used West African forms to create new behaviours that would make survival in the New World possible”.²² It is therefore by adapting his original culture to the newfound circumstances that the slave could survive the hostile environment of the plantation, keeping for himself a slice of subjectivity “from sundown to sunup” that allowed him to actively contribute to the abolition of slavery. This happened through boycotts, escapes and participation in the civil war, of course, but also thanks to the more ordinary practices of worship or domestic life, where the resistance of the person and of an entire community coincided with the re-purposing of simple objects or other traditional practices. The most convincing pages that Rawick devotes to this topic are those related to the new

18. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 51.

19. Ato Sekyi-Otu, “Fanon and the Possibility of Postcolonial Critical Imagination”, in *Living Fanon: Global Perspectives*, edited by Nigel Gibson (London: Palgrave Mcmillan, 2011), 45-60. For further development of the same concept see Katarzyna Pieprzak, “Zones of Perceptual Enclosure: The Aesthetics of Immobility in Casablanca’s Literary Bidonvilles”, *Research in African Literatures* 47, no. 3 (2016).

20. Achille Mbembe, *Critique de la raison nègre* (Paris: La Découvert, 2013), 245. English trans. Achille Mbembe, *Critique of the Black Reason* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).

21. George P. Rawick, *The American Slave: From Sundown to Sunup* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Pub. Co., 1972), 30.

22. *Ibid.*, 31.

functions that are attributed to the iron pot or to the transmission of oral stories where the problem is always solved by a weak yet shrewd, ironic, cheating character.

Based on these indications, therefore, it is possible to see how even in Fanon's world of compartments the survival of the person is not entrusted exclusively to the passage from the atmosphere of violence to violence finally channelled against the occupier, nor confined literally "from nine in the evening until six in the morning". With regard to the physical and perceptive enclosure to which I am referring, Fanon himself also notes the smallest internal modifications, the waste, the exemptions to immobility that colonialism seemed to establish and that in the historical perspective of the camp could be defined as the temporary forms of resistance to detention. In *The Wretched of the Earth* the subject will re-establish itself in dance, rites of possession and in a supernatural world infested by zombies, snake-men, six-legged dogs and other monstrous creatures. The function of these terrifying myths is dialectic, Fanon explains, because while on the one hand they inhibit aggression, on the other they foster the production of a space in which "the settler's powers are infinitely shrunk-en."²³ "Religion was close to being the centre of slave life from sundown to sunup," Rawick would write: "By terrifying me—argues Fanon—it integrates me in the traditions and the history of my district or of my tribe, and at the same time it reassures me, it gives me a status, as it were an identification paper" (*un statut, un bulletin d'état civil*).²⁴ The use of tradition, in other words, can provide the indigenous "a collective mediation necessary for the complete and dynamic recovery of the national culture, an instrument of incomparable defence for the recovery of its particularity in the universal framework."²⁵

Similarly, in *A Dying Colonialism* we witness the transformations that involve some more concrete objects like the radio or the female veil or the re-articulation of parental structures and gender relations: Achille Mbembe defined it as "an immense work on objects and forms"²⁶ to which transit now entrusts a new function—different and vital—oriented towards the breaking of a physical and at the same time symbolic link that Fanon literally calls Europe: "[q]uittons cette Europe," he says to those imprisoned in the enclosure.²⁷ Physical link and at the same time symbolic because "culture is the combination of motor and mental behavior patterns arising from the encounter of man with nature and with his fellow-man",²⁸ he had said at the first congress of black writers and artists in Paris, in 1956. The

23. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 55.

24. *Ibid.*, 54.

25. Pietro Clemente, *Frantz Fanon tra esistenzialismo e rivoluzione* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1971), 123.

26. Achille Mbembe, "La pharmacie de Fanon," in *Politiques de l'inimitié* (Paris: La Découverte, 2016), 121-122.

27. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 310.

28. Frantz Fanon, "Racism and Culture", in *Towards the African Revolution*, trans. by Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1988), 32.

relevance of motor behaviours (*l'ensemble des comportements moteurs et mentaux*) therefore requires us to “consider both the processes of subjection and insurgency (the subjectivication) in the colonial situation starting from their elementary *physicality*,” maintained Sandro Mezzadra. Who then adds: “Radically discarding every image of the subject built around the primacy of *conscience*, Fanon seems to return to the original story of modern political philosophy, to that narrative of the social contract for which he suspends progressive temporality to reintroduce us to the scene of the state of nature.”²⁹ A state of nature that does not correspond to the final cause of a given political doctrine, therefore, but to a history of bodies and spaces that precedes and informs any representation of history: “The struggle against colonial oppression—wrote in this regard Homi Bhabha in his famous foreword to *Black Skin, White Masks*—changes not only the direction of Western history, but challenges its historicist ‘idea’ of time as a progressive, ordered whole.”³⁰

And it is the essay on the woman’s veil—that Stefan Kipfer called “the most important point of access to Fanon’s reflection on space and the city”³¹—in which the reflections on *physicality* refer more explicitly to the teachings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose classes Fanon took in Lyon in 1948 (and therefore three years after the publication of *Phenomenology of Perception*). I will just point out a few passages where the dialogue with Merleau-Ponty is evident, without getting into the merits of a more analytical comparison:³² “The absence of the veil distorts the Algerian woman’s corporal pattern—writes Fanon—[s]he quickly has to invent new dimensions for her body, new means of muscular control.”³³ And again: “The Algerian woman who walks stark naked into the European city relearns her body, re-establishes it in a totally revolutionary fashion.”³⁴

But the phenomenology of Fanon’s female perception is much more meticulous. At first, he explains, the woman coming out of the Casbah has to deal with a completely unknown spatiality. In fact, “[h]aving been accustomed to confinement, her body did not have the normal mobility before a limitless horizon of avenues, of unfolded sidewalks, of houses, of people dodged or bumped into.”³⁵ No one has taught her how to behave as “a woman alone in the street,” nor does she “have the sensation of playing a role she has read about ever so many times in novels, or seen in motion pictures.” It is therefore “an authentic birth in a pure state, without prelim-

29. Sandro Mezzadra, “Questione di sguardi. Du Bois e Fanon,” in *Fanon postcoloniale. I dannati della terra* oggi**, ed. by Miguel Mellino (Verona: Ombre Corte, 2013), 199.

30. Homi Bhabha, “Remembering Fanon: Self Psyche and the Colonial Condition,” introduction to Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), xxi.

31. Stefan Kipfer, “Fanon and Space: Colonization, Urbanization, and Liberation from the Colonial to the Global City,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25, no. 4 (2007): 703.

32. For an in-depth analysis see Jeremy Weate, “Fanon, Merleau-Ponty and the Difference of Phenomenology”, in *Race*, edited by Robert Bernasconi (Oxford: Blackwell 2001), 169-183.

33. Frantz Fanon, “Algeria Unveiled”, 59.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*, 49.

inary instruction," which can only follow the dramatisation of "a continuity between the woman and the revolutionary." Every time she has crossed the European city so far, perhaps to go to the funeral of a relative who lived elsewhere, she did so by car, so much so that now she "must overcome a multiplicity of inner resistances, of subjectively organised fears, of emotions. She must at the same time confront the essentially hostile world of the occupier and the mobilised, vigilant, and efficient police forces," but also "achieve a victory over herself, over her childish fears." "She must consider the image of the occupier lodged somewhere in her mind and in *her body*, remodel it, initiate the essential work of eroding it, make it inessential, remove something of the shame that is attached to it, devalidate it."³⁶ Beginning in 1956, therefore, when the National Liberation Front decided to respond to the massacre of its civilians with the massacre of European civilians, "[c]arrying revolvers, grenades, hundreds of false identity cards or bombs, the unveiled Algerian woman moves like a fish in the Western waters". Now "[s]he no longer slinks along the walls as she tended to do before the Revolution," her shoulders are free, "[s]he walks with a graceful, measured stride, neither too fast nor too slow. Her legs are bare, not confined by the veil, given back to themselves, and her hips are free." Yet "[o]ne must have heard the confessions of Algerian women or have analysed the dream content of certain recently unveiled women to appreciate the importance of the veil for the body of the woman. Without the veil she has an impression of her body being cut up into bits, put adrift; the limbs seem to lengthen indefinitely. When the Algerian woman has to cross a street, for a long time she commits errors of judgement as to the exact distance to be negotiated. The unveiled body seems to escape, to dissolve. She has an impression of being improperly dressed, even of being naked. She experiences a sense of incompleteness with great intensity. She has the anxious feeling that something is unfinished."³⁷ Until in 1957—in the dialectic between revolutionary struggle and *counter-assimilation*—the veil did not reappear and "[t]he Algerian woman's body, which in an initial phase was pared down, now swelled. Whereas in the previous period the body had to be made slim and disciplined to make it attractive and seductive, it now had to be squashed, made shapeless and even ridiculous"³⁸ to allow the veil to hide grenades and machine-gun clips while at the same time showing empty hands.

In short, the shape of the body is also a form subject to the re-purposing of the camp, a movement analogous to the "historical dynamism of the veil," as Fanon defines it: "In the beginning, the veil was a mechanism of resistance—he explained—but its value for the social group remained very strong. The veil was worn because tradition demanded a rigid separation of the sexes, but also because *the occupier was bent on unveiling Algeria*."

36. *Ibid.*, 52, emphasis added.

37. *Ibid.*, 59.

38. *Ibid.*, 62.

In a second phase, the mutation occurred in connection with the Revolution and under special circumstances. The veil helps the Algerian woman to respond to the new demands of the struggle".³⁹

It is in relation to these considerations, perhaps, that Hannah Arendt's criticism of Fanon is less convincing, because the collective violence—in *The Wretched of the Earth*—does not facilitate the exaltation of a biological life indifferent to the death of individuals,⁴⁰ but the subjectivication of a historically situated body that expresses itself in a new relationship with the world and with others. If violence allows the *colonised thing* to return to being a man, it is not in relation to an almost mystical experience, but rather to that of a form which, collectively liberating itself from the suffered and withheld violence, returns to life, even and above all in the most idiomatic (and phenomenological) sense of letting us know about itself. The prayer with which he closes *Black Skin, White Masks* was clear: "O my body—Fanon had written—make of me always a man who questions!"⁴¹ It would be Judith Butler who would interpret this invocation with greater clarity, writing "as if countering the psychoaffective dying in life that pervades the lived experience of the colonized, Fanon seeks to prompt the body into an open-ended inquiry."⁴² A body, therefore, that is understood and stimulated "as an opening toward the world and toward a radically egalitarian collectivity."⁴³ Therefore, what Arendt says is correct: what the concreteness of the struggle immediately fractures is the individual.⁴⁴ But it is not a generic individual—this is the point—but "a society of individuals where each person shuts himself up in his own subjectivity." Fanon writes it clearly: "Now the native who has the opportunity to return to the people during the struggle for freedom will discover the falseness of this theory. The very forms of organisation of the struggle will suggest to him a different vocabulary. Brother, sister, friend—these are words outlawed by the colonialist bourgeoisie, because for them my brother is my purse, my friend is part of my scheme for getting on."⁴⁵ On the contrary, thanks to the explosion of a shared violence, "[henceforth] the interests of one will be the interests of all, for in concrete fact everyone will be discovered by the troops, *everyone* will be massacred—or *everyone* will be saved."⁴⁶ As Stephanie Clare wrote, therefore, the violence in Fanon is "life that overcomes the stagnation of death,"⁴⁷ a death that—evidently—is not restricted

39. *Ibid.*, 63.

40. Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York and London: Harvest/HBJ, 1970), 67ff.

41. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* 181.

42. Judith Butler, "Violence, Non-violence: Sartre on Fanon", *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 27, no. 1 (2006): 3-24.

43. *Ibid.*, 58.

44. Arendt, *On Violence*, 67.

45. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 46.

46. *Ibid.*

47. Stephanie Clare, "Geopower. The Politics of Life and Land in Frantz Fanon's Writing", *Diacritics* 41, no. 4 (2013): 66.

to its literal and biological meaning.

That this overcoming takes place in the mass dimension should not be surprising, because it is truly “the settler who has *brought the native into existence* and who *perpetuates his existence*,”⁴⁸ Fanon explains, causing him to disappear into a “world without spaciousness” in which “men live there on top of each other, and their huts are built one on top of the other,” a city reduced to the shapeless mass “of niggers and dirty Arabs.”⁴⁹ And it was precisely a witness of the Nazi concentration camps—Viktor Frankl—who explained the desire that could push a deportee to camouflage himself in this world without spaciousness: “the man in the concentration camp =[...] in a last effort to save his self-respect, [...] lost the feeling of being an individual. [...] He thought himself then as only a part of an enormous mass of people.”⁵⁰ If “the camp contains masses and produces masses” as Kotek and Rigoulot have argued, it is also because being absorbed by the mass means not attracting attention, avoiding the ever sadistic attention of the guards, not being recognised.

Thus, from the look of the coloniser and the desire to survive, now “the chorus of the struggle, the feelings and emotions experienced in unison by a mass of men” and “the enthusiasm for the collective battle” drive the *motor behaviour* of the colonised. These are the words of Gillo Pontecorvo, who together with Franco Solinas explicitly referred to the work of Fanon when writing and shooting the film of *The Battle of Algiers*.⁵¹ The adherence to the pages of *The Wretched of the Earth* dedicated to the topic of spontaneity is quite evident: “they are the essence of the fight which explodes the old colonial truths and reveals unexpected facets—wrote Fanon—which brings out new meanings and pinpoints the contradictions camouflaged by these facts.[...] Without that struggle, without that knowledge of the practice of action, there’s nothing but a fancy-dress parade and the blare of the trumpets.”⁵² Now, however, for Solinas and Pontecorvo there was the problem of representing this epistemological fracture resulting from the metamorphosis of bodies and their performative incursion into space. A problem that emerged strongly at the time of the shooting of the famous scene in which the three militants of the National Liberation Front were preparing to go to place bombs in the European city. Pontecorvo was not convinced of the dialogue, he remembered, or better still, the climate that the dialogue established while the three women were combing their hair and joking in an atmosphere that was “too feminine.”⁵³ Solinas rewrote

48. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 35, emphasis added.

49. *Ibid.*, 38.

50. Viktor E. Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1985), 92.

51. *** Irene Bignardi, *Memorie estorte a uno smemorato. Vita di Gillo Pontecorvo* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1999), 121-129.

52. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 146.

53. For criticism of the still “too feminine” atmosphere that the film scene would continue to convey despite the director’s intentions, see Lindsey Moore, “The Veil of Nationalism: Frantz Fanon’s ‘Algeria Unveiled’ and Gillo Pontecorvo’s *The Battle of Algiers*,” *Kunapipi* 25, no. 2 (2003): 56-73.

that dialogue several times, but he was not satisfied either. On set, Pontecorvo remembered, there was the air of ugly silence typical of moments when the director does not know what to do. "But suddenly I remembered some music that I had heard and recorded—he continued—a *baba saleem*, the traditional music of Arab beggars, who perform it with a drum and castanets, a music that sounds very much like a beating heart." The *baba saleem* was then played on set during the shoot, becoming the soundtrack without dialogue during editing. That music still conveys the tension of the moment, probably the most dramatic of the film.

With the decision to resort to a cultural form as a heartbeat, a relationship is established between corporeity and tradition that involves the same biological datum (and the violence it supports) in a process of historical re-purposing. From this point of view, the body could be defined not only as an "opening" with respect to the world and the collective, as Judith Butler maintains, but also with respect to the past, from which it inherits a still unexpressed yet decisive posteriority in the production of new meanings and their knowledge. While in other respects it seemed to us that Fanon's "decentralised Marxism" could enter into a dialogue with the reflections of Gramsci and Rosa Luxemburg, here the terms of a possible juxtaposition with Ernst Bloch and Walter Benjamin seem more apropos.⁵⁴ What in any case it is important to emphasise for our conclusions is how Fanon's historical-racial scheme is not produced discursively, but are rather the deep-seated experiences of racism that support a corporeal scheme.⁵⁵

Fanon had already explained it in *Black Skin, White Masks*: "I know that if I want to smoke, I shall have to reach out my right arm and take the pack of cigarettes lying at the other end of the table. The matches, however, are in the drawer on the left, and I shall have to lean back slightly. And all these movements are made not out of habit but out of implicit knowledge. A slow composition of my self as a body in the middle of a spatial and temporal world—such seems to be the schema,"⁵⁶ to which the deep-seated experiences of trafficking and colonialism add the implication of "legends, stories, history, and above all *historicity*."⁵⁷ In *Black Skin, White Masks* the lived body of the black person would therefore have to deal with "the cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetichism, racial defects, slave-ships, and above all else, above all: 'Sho' good eatin',"⁵⁸ but the insistence with which in *The Wretched of the Earth* appear references to open wounds, muscle paralysis, breathing or that same heartbeat refers to the action of a *connaissance implicite* that adheres to a different programme, allowing the

54. Roberto Beneduce has already discussed the comparison with messianism in "La potenza del falso. Mimesi e alienazione in Frantz Fanon," *aut aut* 354 (2012): 25-29.

55. Dilan Mahendram, "The facticity of Blackness. A Non-conceptual Approach to the Study of Race and Racism in Fanon's and Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology," *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 5, no. 3 (2007): 200.

56. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 83

57. *ibid.*, 84.

58. *Ibid.*, 85

colonised to “bury himself among the people during the struggle for liberation.”

To name the “situated form of membership produced by the camp,” the sociologist Nando Sigona recently proposed implementing the term *campzenship*⁵⁹: it could be said that this implicit knowledge defines the specific campzenship of the colonial city, a state of non-progressive nature but substantiated by lacerations, inherited violence and an eminently physical religious terror that while inducing the colonised to “but of considering three times before urinating, spitting, or going out into the night,” includes him in history and issues “a certificate of civil status.”⁶⁰ That all this can resonate with what is happening today in the camps or structures for holding migrants, which can mirror the criticism and deconstruction, is quite clear. Perhaps it is not so clear to hypothesise that the analyses of Fanon can also reflect other forms of adhesion, no less situated or elementary. Forms that are taking on decisive importance in the reproduction of the so-called “postnational citizenship,” as defined by David Jacobson and Jamie Goodwin-White,⁶¹ that is to say in the context of a response to cosmopolitanism that notwithstanding its keywords like *sovereignty, security or border wall* obeys the intimately consular (or post-colonial) logic of globalisation.

59. Nando Sigona, “Campzenship: Reimagining the Camp as a Social and Political Space”, *Citizenship Studies* 19, no. 1(2014). My thanks to Professor Robert Gordon who referred this article to me.

60. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 55.

61. David Jacobson and Jamie Goodwin-White, “The Future of Postnational Citizenship: Human Rights and Borders in a Re-Nationalizing World,” *Mondi Migranti* 2 (2018): 7-26.

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