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Les damnés de la terre and the African Spring

Anthony C. Alessandrini

Kingsborough Community College - City University of New York

I'm certainly not alone in noting that the year 2011 brings, for those of us who are students of the work of Frantz Fanon, two different anniversaries. This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *Les damnés de la terre*, Fanon's final book and, for many, his most lasting achievement. But it also marks the fiftieth anniversary of Fanon's death: he died, tragically young, on December 6, 1961, not long after the book's publication. It is no exaggeration to say that *Les damnés de la terre* was composed by Fanon from his deathbed, and that he was well aware that he was racing death as he rushed to complete the manuscript, as his publisher François Maspero remarked, "in pitiful haste."¹ Fanon had managed to complete it by July, although, as he told a friend, "I should have liked to have written something more."² As David Macey notes in his indispensable biography, "Fanon did see copies of his last book, but for its first readers, *Les damnés de la terre* was a posthumous work."³ The book and Fanon's death thus come to us bound inextricably together, fifty years later.

So it would seem that we have an anniversary to celebrate (and in doing so, we would thus be celebrating the continuing relevance of a classic work, as this special issue intends us to do), but also a death to mourn. If I proceed to make a suggestion that will seem at first to be the height of perversity, let me preface it by saying that this suggestion is occasioned by what I believe to be Fanon's greatest legacy, a legacy of unsparing intellectual and political commitment. For I want to begin by suggesting that this year brings us the mournful fact that fifty years on, *Les damnés de la terre* remains, in many ways, as relevant to our contemporary world as it was in 1961; but conversely, the anniversary of Fanon's death offers us a cause for celebration.

Let me get to the mournful half of this equation first: Why should we mourn the continuing relevance of Fanon's final book? As many of the most perceptive readers of *Les damnés de la terre* have noted, at its heart, Fanon's

book contains an essentially tragic narrative. As Fanon moves us through each of the stages of the anti-colonial struggle — “De la violence,” “Grandeur et faiblesses de la spontanéité,” “Mésaventures de la conscience nationale” — what he is describing is a gradual process by which the anti-colonial struggle, which was founded with such high hopes, goes progressively and inexorably downhill; his language informs us, not that everything may go wrong, but that everything *will* go wrong in the quest for what he describes repeatedly in the text as “true liberation.” The fourth chapter, “Sur la culture nationale,” seems to hold out more hope, in describing the development of a form of national culture that Fanon takes pains to differentiate from nationalism, but even here, the conditions of this possibility are linked precisely to the need for true liberation: “On ne peut vouloir le rayonnement de la culture africaine si l’on ne contribue pas concrètement à l’existence des conditions de cette culture, c’est-à-dire à libération du continent.”⁴ And the book’s penultimate chapter, “Guerre coloniale et troubles mentaux,” is a set of case studies that set out in unsettling and unsparring detail the psychic as well as the physical toll of the anti-colonial struggle, effects that Fanon promises will leave a deep and lasting legacy: “nous aurons à panser des années encore les plaies multiples et quelquefois indélébiles faites à nos peuples par le déferlement colonialiste.”⁵ Even the methodology of Fanon’s book itself shows signs of the toll taken by the struggle: at the beginning of the chapter, faced with the accusation that the inclusion of psychiatric case studies in this book might appear to some readers to be inopportune or untimely, Fanon simply throws up his hands, defying the call to clarify any further: “On trouvera peut-être inopportunes et singulièrement déplacées dans un tel livre ces notes de psychiatrie. Nous n’y pouvons strictement rien.”⁶

I am, of course, exaggerating one strand of Fanon’s text for polemical reasons. The book’s conclusion is the place where Fanon, having shown his readers scenes of death, decay, and destruction, exhorts us to the making of an entirely new future, calling upon his readers to find something different: “Allons, camarades, le jeu européen est définitivement terminé, il faut trouver autre chose.”⁷ As Lewis R. Gordon has put it in his appreciative study of Fanon’s attempt to create a new form of humanism, “Man needs to emerge out of the ashes of the fact of his dessication.”⁸ Fanon’s entire argument in *Les damnés de la terre* is that the condition of this emergence is the form of political independence that can only be brought about through the anti-colonial struggle, and that from this struggle will emerge the conditions of possibility for a new humanism; as he puts it near the end of the chapter on colonial war and mental disorders, “Quand la nation démarre en totalité, l’homme nouveau n’est pas une production *a posteriori* de cette nation mais coexiste avec elle, se développe avec elle, triomphe avec elle.”⁹ But I still must insist upon the deep sense of complexity that Fanon presents us with, even at such seemingly triumphant moments as this, since he follows this statement with one that clarifies the precise role played by

“independence” in this process: “L’indépendance n’est pas un mot à exorciser mais *une condition indispensable* à l’existence des hommes et des femmes vraiment libérés c’est-à-dire maîtres de tous les moyens matériels qui rendent possible la transformation radicale de la société.”¹⁰ National independence is the *indispensable condition* for the human liberation that Fanon is calling us towards, but he takes pains to point out that “independence” itself is not some magic word that will set the colonized free.

Allow me to state the obvious: this form of political independence, one that constitutes a true liberation, has yet to be realized in much of the post-colonial world, especially in post-colonial Africa. As Ato Sekyi-Otu puts it towards the end of his fine book on Fanon, “the history of postcolonial societies in the African world is a history of unspeakable disaster,” and furthermore, “the omens of catastrophe were all too visible to Fanon.”¹¹ A fully-responsive reading of *Les damnés de la terre* must take this fact into account; while Fanon’s conclusion, with its stirring rhetoric, might lead us to believe that we can simply align ourselves with a form of postcolonial humanism that has already come into existence, we must not forget that the necessary condition for this postcolonial humanism, a state of true political independence, has not yet arrived — *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, to quote the title of a very Fanonian novel by the great Ghanaian novelist Ayi Kwei Armah.¹² Armah’s own appreciative reading of Fanon focuses squarely upon his predictions regarding the inevitable failure of political independence in Africa: “Independence did not mean that [an] enslaving relationship was destroyed. . . . The African ruling classes do not rule in the interests of African people. If they function at all, they function as agents of white power.” In other words, Armah suggests, what has come to be called “independence” merely signified a shifting of “the colonial machine shredding Africa into neocolonial gear.”¹³

This is the paradox at the heart of Fanon’s argument in *Les damnés de la terre*: as Macey puts it, “whilst Fanon constantly prophesies the victory of the people, the theoretical model he adopts necessarily implies that the group unity on which that victory is based cannot be sustained.” This is at least in part because of the vitiating role to be played by the leaders of the new post-colonial nation, and as a result, as Macey puts it, “Fanon foresaw that the post-independence period would be difficult and dangerous.”¹⁴ What he may not have foreseen is that fifty years later, this post-independence period would have shown so few signs of any shift towards the victory of the people, and towards a true liberation. So this is the mournful aspect of *Les damnés de la terre*, and of its continued relevance: if the book continues to be useful in analyzing our contemporary political moment fifty years after its publication, this is at least in part because we have done depressingly little during this half-century to advance beyond the neocolonial outcome that was so accurately predicted by Fanon.

This concludes the “pessimism of the intellect” portion of my analysis. But there is also optimism of the will, and this is where we have a different responsibility to Fanon’s legacy, one that does call for a celebration of sorts. For I want to suggest that Fanon is relevant, fifty years after his death, to our very particular political moment in a way that would not necessarily have been as readily apparent even a few months back. It was during the first few weeks of 2011 that the popular revolution in Tunisia began, followed by another in Egypt, alongside the emergence of various revolutions, revolts, and uprisings throughout the region that continue as I write this in early April. In many cases (most horrifically, in Libya), the outcome of these revolutions still hangs in the balance. It is in this context that I offer a quote from the other key strand of *Les damnés de la terre*, the one that suggests that in spite of all the obstacles, pitfalls, and misadventures that will play an unavoidable part, the larger process of decolonization is, to put it simply, unstoppable:

Dans décolonisation, il y a donc exigence d’une remise en question intégrale de la situation coloniale. Sa définition peut, si on veut la décrire avec précision, tenir dans la phrase bien connue: << les derniers seront les premiers >>. La décolonisation est la vérification de cette phrase. C’est pourquoi, sur le plan de la description, toute décolonisation est une réussite.¹⁵

This passage ends with one of Fanon’s many misleadingly simple statements, of the sort that pepper the first half of *Les damnés de la terre*, giving the book an almost epigrammatic quality at times. It comes from the first few pages of the book; Fanon makes this declaration at the end of a section and simply moves on to his next point without further explication.

In what way is it possible to state that at the descriptive level, any decolonization is a success? It seems to have something to do with Fanon’s cannily lifted phrase from the New Testament, “the last shall be first.” Even more so, it has to do with the importance of that level that Fanon names as “le plan de la description.” What is the role played by description in revolution? As Benjamin reminded us, the French revolution introduced a new calendar to mark the beginning of a new time (Fanon followed suit in his account of the Algerian Revolution, entitling his second book *L’an V de la révolution algérienne*).¹⁶ We can find the same impetus to transform the world at the level of description in the statement made by an Egyptian protester preparing for the demonstration on January 25, the event that in effect set the Egyptian revolution in motion: “Starting today, 25th January, I take charge of the affairs of my country.”¹⁷ At the level of fact, needless to say, the struggle for control of the affairs of the country is ongoing in Egypt. But at the level of description – and this is what I take to be Fanon’s point – something is set irrevocably in motion by such a declaration.

In Tunisia, in Egypt, in Libya, and in many other parts of the region, this has been described again and again by participants in these popular uprisings as the process by which the “fear barrier” has been broken. Once this threshold has been breached, no matter what the outcome of these revolutions, things simply cannot return to their previous state.¹⁸ For a high-ranking police official, this is what distinguished, at the level of description, the *uprising* of January 25 from the previous *demonstrations* that had become familiar to the police: “What we saw on January 25 was an uprising, not a demonstration. A young man standing in front of an armored vehicle, jumping on it to strike it, falling off and then doing it again? Honestly, there was no fear.”¹⁹ At the descriptive level, every decolonization is a success: that is Fanon’s first lesson for today, echoed by the revolutionaries of our moment: “We, the sons of workers and farmers, are stronger than the criminals,” in the words of a Tunisian protester, or, from Tahrir Square in Cairo at the height of the uprising: “Before, I used to watch television, now it’s the television who is watching me.”²⁰

It was during the early days of these uprisings that I encountered Mohammed Bamyeh’s essential dispatches from the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt alongside his contribution to a fine special issue of *Theory, Culture & Society* dedicated to Fanon’s work.²¹ Reading Bamyeh’s account of the revolution in Tunisia as “a genuine popular revolution, spontaneous and apparently leaderless, yet sustained and remarkably determined,” and his observation that in the Egyptian uprising, “spontaneity thus became the compass of the Revolution and the way by which it found its way to what turned out to be its radical destination,” the connection to Fanon, the great theorist of spontaneous revolution, was readily apparent to me. But I had already been thinking of Fanon from the beginning of these uprisings, and continue to do so. So the rest of this article will be dedicated to bringing *Les damnés de la terre* into conversation with our current political conjecture, one which has been dubbed “the Arab spring” and which I would like, in honor of this Fanonian anniversary, to tweak slightly, into “the African spring.”

Commentators and analysts who have sought for a regional aspect to the popular uprisings of the past few months have generally described an “Arab Revolution” or, in Lamis Andoni’s words, the “resurrection” of “a new sense of pan-Arabism based on the struggle for social justice and freedom.”²² This seems apt. But I wonder whether Fanon might not also want to describe current events, were he here to observe them, as a version of what he called the African Revolution. In a time when we have become accustomed to “the Middle East” as a taken-for-granted spatial designation (one belied, of course, by the roundness of the globe), it is easy to lose sight of the geographical specificity shared by many recent sites of popular uprisings and demonstrations, including Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Algeria, and Morocco. This loss of geographical specificity may be part of what prompted the confusion in Fox News’ now-infamous map of the region (which actually

dates back to 2009), showing Egypt sitting between Iran and Syria, in place of Iraq.²³ After all, how could Egypt be in *Africa*? It's a "Middle Eastern" country.

Putting Egypt back in Africa (without taking it out of the Middle East) might become part of our analytic work to come. Perhaps one of the many things now made possible by these popular revolts is the broaching of the intellectual *cordon sanitaire* set up between the "North Africa" that has been subsumed into the standard definition of "the Middle East" and the "Sub-Saharan Africa" that has been, by comparison, largely neglected by political analysts, even those of a progressive stripe. In *Les damnés de la terre*, Fanon diagnosed this division of the continent into "*l'Afrique Blanche*" and "*l'Afrique Noire*" as one of the most harmful legacies that the new postcolonial elite would inherit (and subsequently reconstitute) from the colonial rulers:

On divise l'Afrique en une partie blanche et une partie noire. Les appellations de substitution: Afrique au Sud ou au Nord du Sahara n'arrivent pas à cacher ce racisme latent. Ici, on affirme que l'Afrique Blanche a une tradition de culture millénaire, qu'elle est méditerranéenne, qu'elle prolonge l'Europe, qu'elle participe de la culture gréco-latine. On regarde l'Afrique Noire comme une région interte, brutale, non civilisée . . . sauvage. Là, on entend à longueur de journée des réflexions odieuses sur le voile des femmes, sur la polygamie, sur le mépris supposé des Arabes pour le sexe féminin. . . . La bourgeoisie nationale de chacune de ces deux grandes régions, qui a assimilé jusqu'aux racines les plus pourries de la pensée colonialiste, prend le relais des Européens et installe sur le continent une philosophie raciste terriblement préjudiciable pour l'avenir de l'Afrique.²⁴

It is worth recalling that as Fanon was completing *The Wretched of the Earth* in Tunis, where the FLN in exile maintained its precarious existence, his vision was one of uniting Africa across the divisions that were themselves the concrete effects of the Western "scramble for Africa." This was not just a theoretical concern for Fanon; on a practical level, he proposed a scheme for opening up a "southern front" for the Algerian Revolution, on the border with Mali, for shipments of arms and, in Fanon's mind, for African forces from the south to engage with French forces in southern Algeria. Fanon actually made a trip along an ancient supply road that he imagined could be used for such purposes, recorded in his journals and posthumously published as "This Africa to Come."²⁵

While the uprisings that have gotten the most attention thus far have all been located in North Africa, there are signs that the African spring has the potential to spread throughout the continent. After all, there are plenty of authoritarian regimes throughout Africa currently supported by the U.S.

that are surely alarmed by the results of popular revolts in Egypt and Tunisia; indeed, President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, who has ruled Equatorial Guinea since he took over in a coup in 1979 (and who has been warmly received in recent years by both Condoleezza Rice and Barack Obama), at a certain point ordered the state-controlled media to stop reporting on Egypt altogether.²⁶ There have also been some more concrete examples. For example, there have been massive protests in Gabon: in January, thousands of protestors turned out in opposition to the regime of Ali Bongo Ondimba, who inherited the presidency in 2009 from his father, Omar Bongo, the president since 1967. In Djibouti, the site of large U.S. and French military bases, thousands of protesters, in a country with a population of less than a million people, took part in demonstrations in February demanding the resignation of President Ismail Omar Guelleh, among other political reforms.²⁷ There have also been protests and demonstrations directly inspired by events in Tunisia and Egypt in Sudan, Ethiopia, and Cameroon. In some cases, the uprisings began earlier: in Ivory Coast, there have been at least 300 people killed in protests surrounding a disputed presidential election that have been ongoing since November 2010.

Of course, there is no hard and fast link that can be made between these many uprisings and the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia, and certainly no sense yet that one can talk about anything so unified as a single “African Revolution.” But in the words of Emmanuel Kisiangani, “The uprisings . . . are making people on the continent become conscious about their abilities to define their political destinies.”²⁸ Fanon’s dream of a revolution that could bridge “White Africa” and “Black Africa” is starting to look rather less far-fetched.

But it is not only because he reminds us of the African context of these revolutions that Fanon should have a place in our thinking today. His richly ambivalent reflections on the role of spontaneity in revolutionary movements – what he referred to as the “grandeur” and “weakness” of spontaneity – remain valuable in thinking through the almost unimaginable events that have been brought about in recent weeks through popular struggles, as well as helping us to anticipate and understand some of the struggles to come. And, as I’ll note in my conclusion, Fanon’s own example, in terms of his commitment to the Algerian Revolution, has shown the power to outlast his death.

Of course, there are crucial differences between the anti-colonial struggle in Algeria that was Fanon’s touchstone and the uprisings of today, but as I’ve noted, one of Fanon’s great strengths was in anticipating and analyzing the post-colonial regimes that would come to inherit (steal, Fanon would say) newly-independent states throughout Africa. These post-colonial leaders, in Fanon’s account, look very much like the Ben Alis and Mubaraks of today, right down to their friendly relationships with leaders of the former colonial powers. Fanon is at his most scathing in delineating these

neocolonial relationships, as in his description of the “independence” achieved by the Republic of Gabon in 1960:

Alors, de la discussion autour du tapis vert, surgit la promotion politique qui permet à M. M’ba, président de la République du Gabon, de dire très solennellement à son arrivée en visite officielle à Paris: << Le Gabon est indépendant, mais entre le Gabon et la France rien n’est change’, tout continue comme avant >>. De fait, le seul changement c’est que M. M’ba est président de la République gabonaise et qu’il est reçu par le président de la République française.²⁹

Watching the former French Foreign Minister Michèle Alliot-Marie trying to explain her vacation in Tunis as the guest of Ben Ali and friends (even while protesters were being killed in the streets by the regime) or Hillary Clinton trying to back away from her remarks that she considered Mubarak and his wife to be “friends of the family,” Fanon would certainly recognize the continuity with the first generation of post-colonial leaders, who he described as acting as “party organizers” for Western leaders with a taste for exoticism, hunting, and casinos: “La bourgeoisie nationale organise des centres de repos et de délasserment, des cures de plaisir à l’intention de la bourgeoisie occidentale.”³⁰ In the Republic of Gabon, meanwhile, the struggle against the newest phase of this neocolonial legacy continues today.³¹

There’s much more that could be said about all this, but I’ll end with two moments from Fanon’s analysis of spontaneity that have flashed into my mind repeatedly in recent months, and that mark moments of his legacy to be celebrated today. The first is a moment that I have come to think about very differently since Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak finally bowed to the popular demand for him to step down. This moment from *Les damnés de la terre* comes in the midst of Fanon’s analysis of what he sees as an early stage of the anti-colonial struggle, when popular unrest has begun to coalesce around particular demands, including demands for the release of anti-colonial leaders who have been detained by the colonial regime. At a certain point, Fanon explains, the colonial powers decide to release these leaders and start negotiations, and thus, as Fanon puts it, “L’heure des bals populaires a commencé.”³²

It is only now – literally since watching the jubilation that followed Mubarak’s resignation – that I feel able to appreciate the fully dialectical nature of Fanon’s insight here. Previously, I had caught only Fanon’s caustic irony. He certainly leads us in this direction through his analysis of the play of forces found in the particular moment of the struggle that precedes the dancing in the streets: “Le peuple colonisé, qui avait spontanément investi sa violence dans la tâche colossale de destruction du système colonial, va se retrouver en peu de temps avec le mot d’ordre inerte, infécond : << Libérez

X ou Y >>.”³³ In this account, the grandeur of spontaneity, inspired by the concrete experiences of immiseration that are constitutive of colonialism, has been betrayed by its weakness, the inability to think through the long-term results of certain slogans and campaigns. This dancing looks dangerously premature, as underlined by the phrase’s very placement in the first pages of the first chapter of a book outlining a long and violent struggle still to come.

But the literal dancing in the streets of Cairo has put Fanon’s phrase in a very different light for me, revealing the dialectical opposite of this first interpretation. For even if a certain “sterility” and “passivity” can be detected in the slogan “Free X or Y!” it is nevertheless true that it is only the spontaneous revolt of masses of people that brings this outcome to pass. The same has shown itself to be true in the streets of Tunisia and Egypt. Simply shouting “Ben Ali dégage” or “Irhal Ya Mubarak” (or even the slogan eventually taken up and echoed throughout the region: “The people want to overthrow the regime”) is not in and of itself sufficient political analysis for a sustained revolutionary uprising. But it is undeniable that it was only mass popular action that sent Ben Ali packing to Saudi Arabia, and Mubarak sulking to Sharm el-Sheikh en route to his next destination. To not celebrate the sheer breathtaking nature of these accomplishments is to ignore, and thus betray, the spontaneous energy that has allowed the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt to sustain themselves, energy that will be badly needed in the days and months and years ahead. In this account, the dancing in the street is hardly premature; it is a way of marking the grandeur of a spontaneity that must be carefully maintained once the dancing has ended and the slight but pleasant hangover has subsided.

The protesters in Tunisia and Egypt are the last ones who need to be reminded of the cautionary aspect of Fanon’s point here. Members of the Tunisian opposition have been zealous in trying to protect their place in the political changes that are underway and in guarding against the return to power of Ben Ali’s RCD Party. In Egypt, the protesters, even as they held on to the streets for many days, managed to issue clear, substantial, and long-term demands. Since Mubarak’s resignation, Egyptian protesters have on a number of occasions refused the military’s appeal to desist from assembling in Tahrir Square, choosing to use their leverage to call for a swift transition to civilian rule. Prominent voices from within the protests have refused the invitation to return to “normalcy” since Mubarak’s ouster, and certainly the numerous strikes and labor protests that played a major part in the uprising show no sign of abating.³⁴ Most recently, police fired live ammunition at protesters holding a sit-in in Tahrir Square, killing at least one and injuring seventy-one, and suggesting the possibility that more state violence aimed at the protesters, and ultimately a major confrontation between the popular movement and the army, is not out of the question.³⁵

Indeed, if anyone needs a Fanonian reminder of the potentially premature nature of dancing in the streets, it may be those of us who have

been drawn to the uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and the rest of the region from the United States. Given the hugely powerful role of U.S. money, weaponry, and political influence throughout the region, there is a great deal to be accomplished from here in solidarity with these ongoing democratic uprisings. In this context, one last moment from Fanon is in order. At a later point in his analysis of spontaneity, at a moment when the anti-colonial movement has begun to gain momentum, Fanon pauses to note the comments of Western observers, even sympathetic ones, in response to the pace of these movements. It's a moment marked by Fanon's trademark irony, but it also partakes of some of the fearless jubilation of our present moment: "On dit alors que les colonisés veulent aller trop vite. Or ne l'oublions jamais, il n'y a pas bien longtemps on affirmait leur lenteur, leur paresse, leur fatalisme."³⁶

Adapting Fanon to the current moment, and to, say, the context of Egypt, we might re-translate him this way: Today they say that the Egyptian people want to move too fast towards true democracy. Let us never forget that it was only yesterday Egyptians were accused of being too slow, too lazy, and too fatalistic for true democracy. The racist truisms, remnants of colonialism and Orientalism, that have informed Western thinking about so-called "Arab (and African) fatalism," "Arab (and African) passivity," "Arab (and African) backwardness" as explanations for autocratic regimes like those ousted by the people of Tunisia and Egypt have now been burned to the ground; their remains lie next to the ashes of the NDP headquarters in Cairo, and they have been laid to rest equally effectively alongside the dismantled offices of the CDR in Tunisia.

Fanon's greatest legacy, I would suggest, is one of solidarity, in the truest sense of the word. *Les damnés de la terre* is unsparing in its critique of the weaknesses, blind spots, and sloppy thinking that he often diagnosed in the popular struggle for decolonization. At the same time, he put this critique completely at the service of the Algerian Revolution. This is the example he leaves us today. In the face of calls for "stability" – which has been the term most often used by those who see the need for a slowing down of the current revolutions – he reminds us that decolonization represents nothing less than a complete overturning of the existing world: "The last shall be first." In place of a commitment to stability in the present, he calls us towards a commitment to the future that has not yet come.

In bringing the impossible to pass, the people of Tunisia and Egypt, and their fellow protesters throughout the region, have moved faster than many of us dreamed possible. In the months to come, after the euphoria passes, there will be calls for them to slow down, in the interests of "stability." Our job, as Fanon reminds us, will be precisely the opposite: as decolonization makes its inexorable way forward, we must do our best to keep up.

- ¹ François Maspero, "Quelqu'un 'de la famille,'" *Les temps modernes* (October-December 1990), p. 1018; quoted in David Macey, *Frantz Fanon* (New York: Picador, 2002), 454.
- ² "Homage à Frantz Fanon," *Présence africaine* 40 (1962), 140; quoted in Macey, *Frantz Fanon*, 455.
- ³ Macey, *Frantz Fanon*, 493.
- ⁴ Frantz Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1991), 282.
- ⁵ Fanon, *Les damnés*, 299.
- ⁶ Fanon, *Les damnés*, 299.
- ⁷ Fanon, *Les damnés*, 372.
- ⁸ Lewis R. Gordon, *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man: An Essay on Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 12.
- ⁹ Fanon, *Les damnés*, 367.
- ¹⁰ Fanon, *Les damnés*, 367, my italics.
- ¹¹ Ato Seki-Otu, *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 217-18.
- ¹² Ayi Kweh Armah, *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1989).
- ¹³ Ayi Kweh Armah, "Fanon: The Awakener," *Negro Digest* 18 (October 1969), 5, and "Our Language Problem," *West Africa* (29 April 1985), 831, both quoted in Neil Lazarus, *Resistance in Postcolonial African Fiction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 28.
- ¹⁴ Macey, *Frantz Fanon*, 487.
- ¹⁵ Fanon, *Les damnés*, 67.
- ¹⁶ Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), 260; Frantz Fanon, *L'an V de la révolution algérienne* (Paris: La Découverte, 2001).
- ¹⁷ For a brilliant account of and analysis of the events leading up to and following from the January 25 protests, see Mona El-Ghobashy, "The Praxis of the Egyptian Revolution," *Middle East Report* 258 (2011).
- ¹⁸ See, for example, Mohamed Elshahed, "Breaking the Fear Barrier of Mubarak's Regime," Social Science Research Council [<http://www.ssrc.org/pages/breaking-the-fear-barrier-of-mubarak-s-regime/>], accessed 4 April 2011.
- ¹⁹ *Al-Masry al-Youm*, March 12, 2011; quoted in El-Ghobashy.
- ²⁰ Quoted in Alain Badiou, "Tunisie, Egypte : quand un vent d'est balaie l'arrogance de l'Occident," *Le Monde* (18 February 2011).
- ²¹ Mohammed A. Bamyeh, "The Tunisian Revolution: Initial Reflections," *Jadaliyya* (21 January 2011); "The Egyptian Revolution: First Impressions from the Field," *Jadaliyya* (11 February 2011); "On Humanizing Abstractions: The Path beyond Fanon," *Theory, Culture & Society* 27 (2010).

- ²² Lamis Andoni, "The Resurrection of Pan-Arabism," *Al-Jazeera* (11 February 2011). See also Vijay Prashad, "The Long Arab Revolution," *CounterPunch* (15 February 2011) and Mouin Rabbani, "Egypt, Tunisia, and the 'Resumption of Arab History,'" *Jadaliyya* (15 February 2011).
- ²³ See "Fox News' Graphic Fail from 2009," *Huffington Post* (31 January 2011).
- ²⁴ Fanon, *Les damnés*, p. 202-03.
- ²⁵ Frantz Fanon, "This Africa to Come," in *Toward the African Revolution*, trans. Haakon Chevalier, New York, 1988, pp. 177-90. John Edgar Wideman has drawn on these journals for his partly-fictionalized account of Fanon's journey through Mali in his brilliant book *Fanon: A Novel* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2008).
- ²⁶ For more on the growth of U.S. support for the government in Equatorial Guinea thanks to a shift in strategy regarding African oil producing countries, see Brendan McSherry, "The Political Economy of Oil in Equatorial Guinea," *African Studies Quarterly* 8 (2006); for more on the human rights abuses of Obiang's regime, see Human Rights Watch, *Well-Oiled: Oil and Human Rights in Equatorial Guinea* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2009).
- ²⁷ I have written about this at greater length in "A Word on Africa: Djibouti," *Jadaliyya* (19 February 2011).
- ²⁸ Azad Essa, "In Search of an African Revolution," *Al-Jazeera* (21 February 2011).
- ²⁹ Fanon, *Les damnés*, 98.
- ³⁰ Fanon, *Les damnés*, 194.
- ³¹ For further background, see Sylvain Bayalama, "Pluralism and Political Change in Central Africa," *Africa Today* 38 (1991), and Douglas A. Yates, *The Rentier State in Africa: Oil Rent Dependency and Neo-colonialism in the Republic of Gabon* (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 1996).
- ³² Fanon, *Les damnés*, 104.
- ³³ Fanon, *Les damnés*, 104.
- ³⁴ Hossam El-Hamalawy, "The Workers, Middle Class, Military Junta, and the Permanent Revolution," *Jadaliyya* (12 February 2011).
- ³⁵ *Al-Masry Al-Youm* (9 April 2011).
- ³⁶ Fanon, *Les damnés*, 107.