

# **Revolutions, Evolutions and African Political Economies: A Critical Review of Nigel Gibson's *Living Fanon – Global Perspectives***

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## **Abstract**

Frantz Fanon is one scholar and revolutionary figure who has influenced many minds and revolutionary social movements across the world. Although he wrote from specifically an Africanist perspective, his ideas, concepts, and arguments have found relevance within the continent and beyond. While this review essay of Nigel Gibson's (2011) book titled: *Living Fanon: Global Perspectives* contains Gibson and other contributors to the aforementioned theorization of Fanon, this piece also critically answers the question of how some of Fanon's ideas have been conceptualized and theorized in view of the African continent.

## Introduction

In the book *Living Fanon: Global Perspectives*, edited by Gibson (2011), the key to this volume is to understand struggles for freedom, independence and survival by Africans in the colonial and postcolonial milieus. It is a book that is handy in understanding African revolutions against the colonial racial, apartheid dispensations that had untold consequences on African subjectivities and African suffering that was induced by the colonial visitations. While cognizant of the significance of Frantz Fanon's work in African struggles for liberation from the colonial structures, the authors of this eighteen chapter book also draws on Fanon to inspire the contemporary struggles against resilient (neo)colonial structures that continues to provide the matrix for postcolonial African governments. This volume also shows the relevance of Fanon's work not only to Algeria, but also reflects Fanon's Pan-African thrust in which he held that the independence of Algeria was worthless without the independence of the other African countries to the rest of Africa. However, while the contributors in the book provide good insights based on Fanon's work, one is left after reading them with a sense that attention to African political thought is, at best, given short shrift attention by the focus on Marxism and revolutions as motors for freedom. Although it is true that revolutionary struggles for independence gave birth to new dispensations in a number of African countries like Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Algeria, Kenya and others, there is a need to situate them in broader African political thought and practice, at least as reflected in African ethnographies on politics and economies rather than merely on Marxist lenses that underpin the Fanonian explications in the book. Broadening African political economic thought and practice beyond Marxism would have made the phrase "Global Perspectives" in the title of the book reflective of the intended reality of inclusiveness. Also, broadening conceptualizations of African political economic thought and practice beyond a preoccupation with revolutions could have helped in overcoming the erroneous ways in which Africa has been simplistically portrayed by some scholars (see Kaplan 1994; Glendhill 1999; Richards 1996) in terms of "New Barbarism Hypothesis". The "New Barbarism Hypothesis" propounded by Kaplan (1994) (on the basis of his observations of conflicts in Sierra Leone) understands developments in Africa as pathologies of the periphery including anarchy, scarcity, crime, overpopulation and disease, rooted in the state crisis or partial exclusion from global networks (Glendhill 1999). Although it is pointed out by several contributors to the volume that Fanon did not conceive revolutionary violence as crime (Abane 2011: 37; Mellino 2011: 63), it is clear from several scholarly works such as the piece titled "New Barbarism," that violence continues to be viewed negatively.

## Discussion

One of the key issues raised in this book is the significance of revolutions in struggles for freedom by the colonized. For example, in the chapter titled "Introduction: Living Fanon?," Gibson (2011) notes that "critical reflection on living, lived experience and a lived experience that for the colonized could be summed up as 'living death' is essential to understanding Fanon's Marxist opinion that people change as they change the world."

But it also is implied in this chapter that in Fanon's work the politics is all about revolutions. So Gibson goes on to state that "Fanon insists that the mental liberation and the radical change in consciousness that accompany revolution begins with the "revolution in our minds," questioning everything that has been hitherto taken for granted (Fanon 1968: 100). It was upon these "revolutionary beginnings (1968: 191) that Fanon insisted on a second phase of total liberation" (Fanon 1967: 126), a notion of freedom and human dignity created by authentic liberation of the wretched of the earth, which equates with the collective actions of those hitherto damned, uncounted and dehumanized people becoming historical protagonists, turning the world upside down (p 3). It is not only Gibson's chapter that notes the focus of revolutionary violence within the thoughts of Fanon. Abane's chapter also points out that Fanon considered revolutionary violence as legitimate and observed that violent action is the most sure and certainly the fastest and most efficacious means by which a new man emerges from within the colonized society (p37). In this regard, the author of this chapter also notes that far from being an incitement to criminality, Fanonian violence is inscribed in the historic process of decolonization. Equally stressing revolutionary violence, Mellino observes that Fanon was encouraging the entire African continent to armed insurrection, not only against imperialistic nations and powers, but also against African national bourgeoisie, then and now the main intermediaries for those engaged in the management of the global economy.

While such stress on revolutions in Africa is not entirely misplaced as exemplified by the revolutionary struggles for independence in a number of African countries, the overemphasis on revolutions loses the nuances and variety of ways in which Africans play and have played politics. If one could draw examples from Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, there are indications that not everyone was eager to participate in the revolutionary struggles to the extent that some, including the peasants that Fanon is portrayed in the book as having accorded revolutionary will, were coerced into participating and helping the combatants. For instance Norma Kriger's (1992) book on *Zimbabwe's Guerrilla War: Peasant Voices* indicated that peasants did not simply willingly support the fighters but were intimidated and coerced into doing so. This shows that revolutions are much more than about the will of the people or their "mental liberation" and that they can be as much about coercion through overt and covert ways. Thus, although Gibson discusses what Fanon calls the "rationality of revolt" in reference to reasonableness of anti-colonial revolts (p 6), and while he demonstrates that the "rationality of revolt," with reference to the Abhalali base Mjondolo, a South African shack dweller organization that has been in conflict with the South African government, he fails to consider the contestations and conflicts as manifestations of different understandings of the "rationality of revolts." In other words, the "rationality of revolts" is a contested aspect but its contested nature is not surfaced in the scholarship notwithstanding the fact that other scholars on Africa have indicated that people respond to various constraints in various ways some of which do not amount to revolts. For instance, Scott's (1985) *Weapons of the Weak* shows the different ways in which dominated people respond in subtle ways, not invariably through revolt, to domination. Similarly, Nyamnjoh (2006) shows ways in which illegal immigrants in southern Africa navigate border restrictions in subtle ways without invariably confronting authorities by staging revolutions.

Also intriguing in the scholarship on southern Africa are ways in which even maids subvert relations of domination with their madams in subtle ways without confronting them (Nyamnjoh 2005, 2006). Also indicating that revolts are not invariably the way Africans play politics is Spierenburg's (2004) work in Zimbabwe that shows complex ways in which villagers navigated domination by government and by development agencies by not only negotiating with them but also by enlisting the assistance of spirit mediums and the *mhondoro* ancestors.

What the above comments illustrate is that politics in Africa is not all about direct confrontation in the form of revolutions. Furthermore, as Pithouse observes with respect to civil society, the civil society is in practice the preserve of a small group of elites who see themselves as the "high ground of modernity" but find when they descend to the people, that modernity "is facing an unexpected rival in the form of democracy" (p 232), scholarship that construe African politics in terms of revolutions as they face rivals in the form of alternative modes of political engagements in Africa. Struggles in Africa ought not to be construed merely in terms of revolutions, and it is against this observation that struggles as Abahlali baseMjondolo contended that "freedom go much further and deeper than the way our struggles are represented when they are described as "service delivery" protests (2010: 89, p. 232). The contentions by Abhalali baseMjondolo that their protests were construed narrowly in terms of service delivery protest equally applies to the narrowness implicit in construing politics in Africa merely in terms of revolutions even if deemed legitimate in Fanonian scholarship.

Important to take into cognizance is the variety of resources, which Africans have, to play politics and the calculus that they deploy to weigh which resources to work with in particular contexts to resolve particular political socio-economic challenges that confront them. The challenge for contributors to this book is that they did not situate Fanon in Africa, that is, they did not contextualize his scholarship in African ethnography choosing as they did to simply explain away African ways as tradition to which Africans were dissuaded from making recourse, and which were explained away along with notions of negritude. The idea that Africans were *tabula rasa*, and that their subjectivities were pulverized by the all powerful colonialism helped simplistically explain away the alternative African resources that could explain why they practiced politics without invariably taking recourse to revolutions. We contend, as explained below, that this idea that Africans were *tabula rasa* in fact explains away African history and essence while it narrowly takes on board the European intellectual history of Marxist revolutions, and of the psyche deemed *tabula rasa*. In this sense African politics is explained in terms not of the African thought but in terms of European revolutionary history, and scholarly essence. In Zimbabwe where we come from, the vernacular proverb that: *kukwira gomo hupoterera* (climbing a mountain requires winding round it) captures not only the need for nonconfrontation in resolving some big challenges but also the efficacy of negotiation, which is dismissed in the contributions to book.

While in the book, the national bourgeoisie is blamed for negotiated independence which amounted to the Fanonian “flag independence or pseudo independence” and to absence of meaningful redistribution of land from “whites” to “blacks,” it is not negotiation itself that should be blamed but arguably, negotiation in bad faith (bearing in mind that not all negotiation is in bad faith). Taking the vernacular Shona proverb that *kukwira gomo hupoterera* as a cue, one can argue that the African national leaders and indeed the populace engage in weighing not only the costs and benefits of climbing “mountains of politics” but also the costs and benefits of taking particular routes including of confronting or winding around in politics of negotiation, and/or politics of navigation. We argue that in the same way a navigator does not have to invariably confront the oncoming waves or obstacles, African politics is not invariably about confrontation and revolution as stressed in the book. In fact the ethnography about the repercussions of killing the other, for instance with respect to vengeance and retribution by the dead in various parts of Africa (Reynolds 1996; Honwana 1995; Schmidt 1997; VujFhuizen 1997; Mawere 2009; Mawere 2010; Marwizi 2010; Mawere 2011) underline the costs of stressing revolutionary confrontations with the other. Conversely the contentions about such repercussions point to the exigencies of negotiation and navigation, which is understated in the text, in African politics. Stressing revolutions in African politics has the consequence of underwriting notion of barbarism or validating the New Barbarism hypothesis that has been suggested by some scholars (Kaplan 1994) keen to see African politics in bad light that replicate colonial caricaturing of Africans as barbarians, savages, as without rules and restraint and morals. But the stress on revolutions and the portrayal of Africans as *tabula rasa* also has the shortcoming of denying African essence which denial of African essence was also pivotal in slavery and colonial projects which defined away the Africans in order to clear space for colonial occupation of Africa (Vera 2001).

It is of utmost importance to note that in the book, there is not only the privileging of Fanonian Marxism as servicing the political exigencies of Africans, but also the vilification of African modes of politics as reflected in ethnography particularly about “indigenous” modes of politics. In this regard, while Neocosmos (2011) is right about his observations of xenophobic chauvinism after independence which saw the collapse of nationalism into a statist project of neocolonial reaction (p194), his argument that the nation now refers to something other than a purely subjective affirmation, it refers to a social category founded on indigeneity – birth, history, ethnicity (p 195) is difficult to defend. Although agency (as contrasted with indigeneity) is important in nation building, as Neocosmos argues, it is by itself not sufficient whether in nation building or in everyday life survival. Agency in so far as we understand it, does not by itself render or even signify freedom for if it invariably did, even slaves who overtly exercised agency could be erroneously understood as free beings, for even a slave exercises agency but without freedom, in the service of the master. What is more, the link between indigeneity and xenophobia is at best contentious in the light of observations that claims to indigeneity are vehicles for claiming resources such as land which have been monopolized and appropriated by colonizers.

In the light of want of material means of subsistence in Africa, one wonders whether indigeneity is the primary problem or the exclusion of some from material resources (which are indeed the purport of Marxism) to which they then seek access by claims of indigeneity, if rigidly asserted.

Furthermore, if variants of the contemporary indigeneity existed in families, villages, chiefdoms and kingdoms prior to colonialism, one then wonders why (if indigeneity was such a primary issue underwriting exclusions) Europeans who subsequently colonized Africa were well received in spite of them not being indigenous. Indeed indigeneity should not only be construed in relation to the nation states and nationalism because this idea can be logically extended to the notion of the global to which human beings logically claim a variant of indigeneity and in which some have more claims than others occasioning some global xenophobic exclusions much like national xenophobic exclusions that Neocosmos narrowly focuses on.

Though Neocosmos rather narrowly focuses on a critique of nationalism, based on indigeneity, Cherki's (2011) chapter where he notes that the perverse effects of economic globalization were developing, leading to growing south/north inequalities and also growing inequalities inside each European country, with the old colonized people being pushed to the peripheries (p 132), rightly shifts to the global level. For Cherki, in 2000, the world situation has worsened. Inequalities between the south and the north and the multiplication of outcasts inside every country, the incessant and renewal of humiliation and the crushing of all those designated as "lacking", those without territory, the unemployed, and the homeless, illegal immigrants (p 132). The violence at the global level is surfaced in Cherki's argument that the oppressor's violence appears not to announce itself as such but "softly" advances by invoking the rule of law and then disregarding it and flouting it daily (p 133). So for Cherki, the West carries so-called democratic values yet does not hesitate to exert violence and to scorn international laws when they are not in its favor (p 136). We contend in this review essay that these observations by Cherki indicate that it is not only indigeneity that excludes others as purported by Neocosmos; it is not only nationalism that excludes others but the global powers and nations exclude others even as they evangelize an inclusive globalization. If xenophobia is about exclusion of others, as Neocosmos purports, one wonders why modes of exclusion at a global level, be they economic, political, epistemic, socio-cultural, religious and racial should not be understood as variants of [xeno]phobic exclusion, even if cloaked in a mantra of inclusivity.

What this calls for is the need to address structures of exclusion not only at a national level but also at the global level for to merely blame the [African] nationalists, the indigenists or the more local leaders without paying attention to exclusions at a global level would amount to a paradox. The structures that need to be addressed in postcolonial dispensations are not only national but, also global structures in so far as they engender, foster and legitimate more local structures of exclusion. The global, (neo)colonial, structures and relays of expropriation and appropriation manifesting in multiple veils, crafted and defined from the perspectives of powerful others, such as democracy, human rights need not mask the presence of their modes of exclusion, even if at a distance and via multiple proxies.

The continued exclusion of black South Africans from 87% of the total land surface which is owned by whites (More 2011: 182) can be understood in terms of (xeno)phobia which is however cloaked in the mantra of global (yet locally *elusive*) rights. So, as More (ibid) rightly notes, the new South African constitution restored black people's rights to own land, but it did not restore the land itself: it offered the right but not the means to own land while it simultaneously entrenched white ownership of land (p 181). If for Fanon, as More points out, true independence results from reappropriation of land by the colonized from the colonizers (p 180), then [indigenous] Africans cannot define their independence in terms of scraps of charity. Yet as noted by Gordon citing Fanon (1968: 140), "the native is so starved for anything, anything that will turn him into a human being, any borne of humanity flung to him, that his hunger is incoercible, and these poor scraps of charity, may here and there, overwhelm him These scraps of civility are not sudden act of voluntary good will. They have been extorted through effective resistance that has put settlers on the defensive (p 205). Yet Fanon (1968: 102) rightly points out that "the wealth of the imperial countries is our wealth too... Europe is literally the creation of the third world. The wealth that smoothes her is that which was stolen from the underdeveloped peoples (Fanon 1968: 102; p 210).

While More is right in arguing that for Europe to continue as if nothing were due, as if there were not in fact a reversed relation of indebtedness is to continue within an imperial hegemony that would treat the legacies of colonialism borne out in such material discrepancies as a lamentable inevitability, a consequence of compulsions of economic growth (p 210), we find Sekyi-Otu's (2011) question, in his chapter, strange. Sekyi-Otu argues that true decolonization, the post-apartheid, is ultimately not a matter of the final dawn of interracial justice, or of exploring possibilities of ethical cross-cultural intercourse though that is also important. For, Sekyi-Otu continues, supposing that colonialism and its archetype apartheid are in a more ethically significant sense not so much a matter of racial dispossession and injustice but rather an event of disruption (p 54). Colonialism as an episode in the life of a people, a rude interruption of the rhythms and idioms that sustain their local and common humanity, a digression from the terms of their moral argument with themselves (p 55). Sekyi-Otu then raises questions such as, "supposing that decolonization, the post-apartheid radically construed is not a matter of reclaiming stolen legacies, patents and ownership rights; gaining recognition of equal worth for our customs and practices and beliefs; getting back our very own world and words; our gods and our shrines; getting back our title deeds to artifacts upon which others have through ruse and force affixed their names?(p 55); what if decolonization is first and foremost a resumption of interrupted history. A resumption not indeed of some original purity and essences before the fall, but interrupted dramas, the essential tensions of native universals; above all a resumption of our dialogue and disruption with one another, with ourselves?" (p 55). This, for Sekyi-Otu, is the most revolutionary moment in Fanon's portrait of decolonization, the moment when decolonization ceases to be strictly and restrictively anticolonialist (p 55).

The problem with Sekyi-Otu's understanding of Fanon in this respect is that he does not situate him in African modes of justice, ethics and morality and law which enunciate retributive and restorative justice rather than mere resumption of interrupted histories. In any case he does not explain how the interrupted histories can be possibly resumed without restoration or reclaiming of what was forcibly expropriated from them by the colonizers. The challenge in Sekyi-Otu's rendering, as indeed in scholarship that does not situate Fanon in political African ethnography, is that they deny voice to Africans assuming as they do that Africans cannot define their own independence, their society and modes of justice, morality and ethics. While this challenge is raised by Cherki: who notes that Fanon describes the loss of language, of the violence of history and its renewals from generation to generation, of rejections, of the devalorization and of the exclusions of references and genealogies, of arrested traumas, all frozen in an impossible elaboration caused by denial and silencing (p 135), scholars like Sekyi-Otu fail to note how assumptions, lacking African ethnographic grounding, by scholars have the tendency to silence and hence to perpetuate colonialism of the dominated by silencing them and denying them voice on issues of justice. This failure to ground understandings of Africans in their epistemologies is also evident in Arendt's argument cited by Farred (2011). Farred notes that Arendt's work is an argument against the ways in which Fanon, in *The Wretched*, understood and deployed the relationship between politics and violence, revolution and struggle, against colonialism and violence (p 159). For Farred, Arendt's work: "On Violence," stands a critical intervention into the politics of nationalist identity because it offers an argument about how to think against collective indictment because of its political inefficacy (p 162). While Arendt's work against collective indictment has some validity, it is important to note ways in which collective indictment is much more broadly practiced. For example in contexts such as Zimbabwe where the adage: "*gudo rimwe rikadya munda zvinonzi makudo adya munda*/If one baboon destroys one's field, the farmer accuses all baboons" is widely embraced. The ways in which invasions of white owned farms in Zimbabwe reflected collective indictment and the ways in which Africans as a collectivity were defined as lacking essence, as indicated above; with their institutions including of popular epistemologies (Nyamnjoh 2006) were vilified and marginalized signifies collective indictment, of groups of people as well as of their institutions. In spite of the widespread nature of collective indictment worldwide they may be need to think through some of its shortcomings. How to move beyond such collective indictment is a challenge which would have needed serious attention and interrogation in the contribution to the book.

Although contributors such as Mellino, Abane and Ficek (2011) and Pithouse (2011) are right to criticize the national bourgeoisie in postcolonial societies for simply stepping into the shoes of the former colonial masters and perpetuating the structures of colonialism, there is need to be cautious of such criticisms in view of the constraints national bourgeoisie have owing to global structures that perpetuate exploitation, inequalities and domination. So Abane is right to surface Fanon's observation that "decolonization would lead to a new form of domination: neocolonialism with its pitfalls and perils that burdened the people" the national bourgeoisies steps into the shoes of the Europeans ... it discovers its historic mission as an intermediary ... to serve as a conveyer belt for capitalism forced to camouflage itself" (p 40).



Mellino is equally right to observe that the national bourgeoisie from their role of intermediary or *comprador* classes are always ready to promote “ negotiated independence and thus to maintain unchanged colonial structures in order to appropriate settler goods, properties, and privileges; ethnicist and chauvinist ideologies disseminated through the social fabric by different fractions of elites-to strengthen their power within the emerging postcolonial states, neocolonial pressures exerted by former European powers and especially USA whose political purpose in African was to give military and political support to those men, groups or regimes who appeared likely to guarantee a clear continuity with the colonial past; the colonial desire to follow the European model of economic and development that is the introduction of African nations into the Capitalist system in a new subaltern and dependent way.

Although these criticisms of the national bourgeoisie have some validity, the contributors could have been clearer on ways in which the national leaders are often subject to arm twisting for instance by multilateral institutions and powerful states that coerce them into adopting political economic models that are not favorable to African’s efforts to address poverty and other issues of justice. Literature on such arm twisting, for instance with reference to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank crafted Economic Structural Adjustment Programs (ESAP) which they were forced to adopt, is available. Bond (2005) for instance observes that Zimbabwe was arm-twisted by IMF for 15 years before it finally capitulated to ESAP, which resulted in deindustrialization, retrenchments, devaluation of the local currency, deregulation of prices and other vices including the widening gap between the rich and the poor.

While the criticisms, rendered by the contributors, of the national bourgeoisie and of neocolonial structures do not themselves suffice in building postcolonial and post-apartheid societies, they help in flagging the complex work of weighing and balancing that is needed in understanding African politics including the staging of revolutions. Such challenges of weighing and balancing issues are also apparent in some of the chapters to the book. For instance Sekyi-Otu surfaces the view by Fanon that subjectivity and its constitutive agony freedom, were time. In this regard, Fanon is noted as having associated freedom with human temporality, specifically with our openness towards the future, such that we are not slaves of any past (p 49), but then we wonder in this paper whether such openness to the future does not conversely render humanity in postcolonial dispensations as slaves to the future where they are consoled by promises of progress even if in fact their societies are visited with regress and hopelessness. In this sense, it is not only the past, as suggested by the contributors, that can enslave but the future also and this has to be taken into cognizance. Though Ficek (2011) points out citing Fanon (1967: 255) that in the postcolonial world there must be an across the board revival of human freedom, an all out affirmation of radical responsibility and the postcolonial world should be witness to the rebirth of humanity itself (p 81), he does not say whether or not such an “across the board revival of human freedom” would be sufficient in addressing inequalities that have explained unfreedoms of others in the colonial context.

The challenges of reverse discrimination are raised without being resolved in his argument that decolonisation as mere reversal is profoundly limited if not bankrupt: its measure of success is not whether “those unfair advantages of the colonial period have been eliminated in favor of something better, but whether they have been effectively reproduced in an independent postcolonial context (p 82).

But Ficek is not alone in grappling with the elusive challenge of rethinking postcolonial society. Kipfer, citing Bhabha’s (1994: 36), argues that Fanon can be understood pace Bhabha, as an embryonic thinker of “third space,” that space of “hybridity” where “everything comes together” in an “all-inclusive simultaneity.” There, any carefully delineated border of periphery and metropole, colony and empire become blurred, de-territorialized and unbounded (Hallward 2001: 22, 34) (p 94). But in spite of contributors like Kipfer arguing for hybridity, other contributors, such as Renault, cite Fanon (1967: 33) as having argued that decolonization must have no continuity with Europe’s history in the colonies, “we have chosen to speak of that *tabula rasa* which characterizes at the outset all decolonization” (1967: 33). Decolonization must be a new beginning of history (p 110). Fanon is noted by Renault, as having wished to sever all links, become impenetrable to the oppressor, and become immunized against the pathologies of European civilization: “these are the conditions of the *tabula rasa*” (p111). Still other contributors, like Hallward, cites Fanon (1967: 57) as having argued that in the new postcolonial society there are no “objective” factors – no ethnic or cultural inheritance, no essence, no historical mission – that should determine the course of such scrutiny and creation.

The above, different and to some extent contradictory, interpretations of Fanon could have been more adequately reflected upon. For instance, it is unclear how one can speak about hybridization in a context where humanity is deemed to have no essence. What hybridizes, we argue here are different essences of humanity yet in the contributions it is suggested that there are no *essences* and that there are only *tabula rasa*. These arguments about absence of essences, and in favor of *tabula rasa*, in the postcolonies would have required more explication given that the denial of the essence of others (colonial subjects) facilitated racial slavery and the colonial project in the first instance. The colonial subjects were deemed to be without essence (Vera 2001) and to be *tabula rasa*, without knowledge, as a prelude to their subjection to colonialism. Yet it is not explained in the contributions whether the denial of essence and the suggestion about the existence of *tabula rasa* in the postcolonies would not facilitate a new cycle of colonization in the same way they did in the past but under the cloak of building postcolonialities. A further contradiction is that whereas logically, it is due to one’s essence that one thinks and wills even the revolutions that underpin Fanonian Marxism as explicated in the contributions, essence is what the contributors surface even as they affirm revolutions. We argue that if one has no essence, and is *tabula rasa*, it is difficult to envisage how one can think and will.

As noted by Hallward (2011), Fanon's articles in the 1950s were peppered with references to "the will of the people", the national will of the oppressed people", their will to independence" etc, and for this reason we contend that these articles should have been reconciled, in the contributions, with arguments about absence of essence and for *tabula rasa* so as to facilitate an understanding of Fanon in context. Furthermore, it is not clear whether the absence of essence and the advocating for *tabula rasa* in the post-colony are not mere wishes of theoreticians that may not have tenure in real African experiences. One is left wondering whether Africans would agree that they have no essence and that they are really *tabula rasa* as intimated by some of the contributions to the book.

In spite of the critiques enunciated in this review essay, the contributions in the book remain important in understanding Fanon's work though we hold that more could have been done to situate his Marxist inclinations in the broader African context. The contributions are significant in understanding the consequences of colonialism on Algerians, Africans and the rest of colonized people including their reactions to the colonial projects imposed on them. However, it would have been important too to conceive African politics not merely in terms of revolutions, for conceiving African politics narrowly in terms of revolutions erroneously suggest that African politics is characterized singularly and mainly by impatience, chaos and struggles for resistance when in fact there are instances as in other places of the world where cooperation and negotiation obtain. Much like in other places of the world politics and life in Africa is about much more than revolutions, chaos, impatience and the political lives involve complex calculation and weighing of strategies and tactics that do not invariably amount to revolutions. A Fanon that does not reckon these multiple strategies and tactics could hardly be defined as global. As a result, we argue that the contributions that this book makes on variety of academic fronts and numerous disciplines would have situated Fanon's perspective, purpose, and agenda quite well.

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