

Beauvoir, Fanon, and the Existential Ethics of Liberation: An Anticolonial Inheritance for New
Revolutions

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ABSTRACT

Beauvoir, Fanon, and the Existential Ethics of Liberation: An Anticolonial Inheritance for New Revolutions

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Beauvoir, Fanon, and the Existential Ethics of Liberation investigates existential theories of liberation to provide an ethics for contemporary revolutionary movements. Existential humanism must now be mobilized for its politico-ethical critique, despite the many posthumanist critiques. Post-WWII liberation struggles, which were oriented by existential humanism and ethics, offer important guidelines for the conduct of today's liberation struggles. Yet, Beauvoir's ethics and its linkage to Fanon's anticolonial philosophy remain undertheorized. I argue that examining Beauvoir's understanding of liberation in terms of her ethics and putting Fanon's view of anticolonial liberation into the context of Beauvoir's ethics can help to rethink liberation for today.

My account traces the concept of liberation via existential humanism across their works. I draw out a dialogical relation between Beauvoir and Fanon to show their critical intersections vis-à-vis liberation. I argue that Fanon redeploys Beauvoir's concept of authoritarian seriousness to critique colonial power; mobilizes Beauvoir's legitimation of revolutionary violence to argue for violent action against the colonizer; and, finally, advances Beauvoir's concept of intersubjectivity to open up the question of the human beyond colonization. Yet, I claim, Fanon implicitly critiques Beauvoir for neglecting the colonized other's agency. Fanon offers another concept of liberation, in which the colonized becomes instrumental to the goal of resisting the colonial permutations of oppressive power.

Following both existentialist thinkers, who account for concrete realities to substantiate ethical action, I develop an ethics attentive to the lived experience of the oppressed. In so doing, I demonstrate that their concepts of oppression, revolution, and freedom provide possible historical and critical resources for interpreting contemporary social and political crises. In order to address violent ontologies, liberation must today be thought in relation to the resurgence of violence, the recurrence of oppressive power, and the longue durée of colonial racism. Drawing attention to the urgency of ethics, *Beauvoir, Fanon, and the Existential Ethics of Liberation* shows that existential humanism comprises an anticolonial inheritance for radical black and anti-racist politics, feminism, environmental justice, and anti-fascist and anti-capitalist movements.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ADBD</i>	Simone de Beauvoir. <i>America Day by Day</i> . Translated by Carol Cosman, University of California Press, 1999.
<i>AAJLJ</i>	Simone de Beauvoir. <i>L'Amérique au jour le jour</i> . Gallimard, 1954.
<i>EA</i>	Simone de Beauvoir. <i>The Ethics of Ambiguity</i> . Translated by Bernard Frechtman, Philosophical Library, 2015.
<i>PMA</i>	Simone de Beauvoir. <i>Pour une morale de l'ambiguïté</i> . Gallimard, 1947.
<i>BSWM</i>	<i>Black Skin, White Masks</i> . Translated by Richard Philcox, Grove Press, 2008.
<i>PNMB</i>	Frantz Fanon. <i>Peau noire masques blancs</i> . Éditions du Seuil, 1965.
<i>WE</i>	Frantz Fanon. <i>The Wretched of the Earth</i> . Translated by Richard Philcox, Grove Press, 2004.
<i>DT</i>	Frantz Fanon. <i>Les damnés de la terre</i> . Maspero, 1961.
<i>WFS</i>	Lewis Gordon. <i>What Fanon Said: A Philosophical Introduction to His Life and Thought</i> . Fordham University Press, 2015.
<i>VNV</i>	Judith Butler. "Violence, Non-Violence: Sartre on Fanon." <i>Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal</i> , vol. 27, no. 1, 2006, pp. 3-24.

INTRODUCTION

Beauvoir, Fanon, and the Existential Ethics of Liberation investigates existential theories of liberation to provide guidelines for today's liberation struggles. Existential humanism must now be mobilized for its politico-ethical critique, in order to respond to current social and political crises. Post-WWII liberation struggles, which were oriented by existential humanism and ethics, offer important tools and formations for the development of a new concept of ethics. Yet, Beauvoir's existential ethics and its linkage to Fanon's anticolonial philosophy remain undertheorized.¹ I argue that examining Beauvoir's understanding of liberation in terms of her ethics and putting Fanon's view of anticolonial liberation into the context of Beauvoir's ethics can help to rethink liberation for today.

Examining gaps in the critical literature, I suggest that the influence of Beauvoir's existential ethics in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947) on Fanon's anticolonial philosophy in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) has not been adequately investigated.² I argue that Fanon's concept of anticolonial revolution must be put into the context of Beauvoirian ethics. Furthermore, I show that their respective contributions to existential ethics reflect a shared understanding of mid-twentieth century forms of oppressive violence. Thus, they both offer an ethics of liberation that responds to the histories of colonialism, fascism, and Nazism. In my dissertation, I demonstrate that Beauvoir and Fanon illuminate an anticolonial inheritance at the heart of existentialist philosophy, now crucial for the development of new theories of liberation, which must build on anticolonial victories. I view Beauvoir's ethics as a philosophical resource for Fanon's anticolonial philosophy. In so doing, my dissertation emphasizes the important contribution of existential humanism to the development of a new concept of the human, despite the many posthumanist critiques.

¹ Christine Daigle and Jacob Golomb, in their "Introduction" to *Beauvoir & Sartre: The Riddle of Influence*, place Beauvoir and Sartre within a vibrant community of philosophers in the immediate post-WII period: "We are talking here about two existential philosophers who were involved in a rethinking of human experience in a postwar world that tended to become a nihilistic hell. They shared their enterprise with that of other philosophers of that movement. They can be said to have been influenced, together with other phenomenologists or existentialists, by such thinkers as Husserl, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard. They also shared many ideas with other contemporary Continental philosophers like Heidegger, Levinas, Merleau-Ponty, and Camus" (6-7). I add Fanon to this list of philosophers. His absence underlines my argument that the linkage between Beauvoir and Fanon has not been adequately theorized.

² The French scholar Matthieu Renault follows Margaret A. Simons, whose groundbreaking work on Beauvoir argues that the intertextual references to *The Second Sex* in *Black Skin, White Masks* reveal Beauvoir's influence. Rather than focusing on the evidence of intertextual details, however, I suggest that their interrelated concepts, ideas, and politics reflect the dialogism of diverse philosophical concepts circulating in the post-WWII period. Hence, I corroborate the influence of *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947) on Fanon's two seminal works, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) by demonstrating that Beauvoir's existential humanism and ethics are dialogically related to Fanon's anticolonial theory.

In order to avoid conflating the diverse lineages of humanism, I underscore existential humanism's negation of universal humanism, to emphasize existentialism's condemnation of the abstract concept of Man for its record of death and oppression. I suggest that posthumanists who repudiate abstract universalism draw on the critiques provided by existential humanism. My dissertation argues that – after posthumanism – a new concept of the human might draw on the existential humanism of Beauvoir and Fanon, which opposes the abstract universal and foregrounds concrete realities. By theorizing the linkage between Beauvoir and Fanon, I show that their critical concepts of oppression, revolution, and liberation are corroborated by mid-twentieth-century violent histories from the Holocaust to Empire. This suggests that any new ethics calls for an attentiveness to the lived experience of the oppressed.

Rethinking the Human After Posthumanism

As existentialist thinkers, both Beauvoir and Fanon provide an existential humanism that repudiates universal humanism. Despite distancing their views from humanist philosophy, disparaged for its abstract universal, some of the major late twentieth-century posthumanists, I argue, redeploy the existential repudiation of the abstract universal. Certainly, postcolonial theory takes a posthumanist view of universal humanism. The seminal postcolonial theorist Edward Said argues that the Orientalist objectification of the Arab produces its exclusion from the concept of the human, defined as an abstract universal. After Said, many postcolonial investigations brandished the colonial record as evidence that humanist philosophies had triggered violent oppression in the colonial world. In general, postcolonial theorists after Said aimed to bring the racialized and colonized other back into the concept of the human, via the repudiation of universal humanism.³ Although Said is regarded as a posthumanist, his critiques of humanism do not renounce the need for a concept of the human. Instead, Said calls for a rejection of the abstract concept of Man, while preserving the ethical value of the humanist ideal. Negating the failed humanist assumption that European subjectivity embodies the abstract ideal, Said concludes that the abstract concept of Man – in its colonizing form– consumes all other human existences, inclusive of their cultural, economic, and

³ David Marriott argues that Fanon's anticolonial critique of universal humanism is central to the project of restoring the racialized and colonized other to the concept of the human. Sylvia Wynter writes that Fanon introduces "a new mode of causation ... with the still-to-be-explained puzzle of (hu)man consciousness(es)" outside disciplinary borders (330). Wynter therefore suggests that Fanon's answer to the question of the human extends beyond humanist philosophies in the West. Here, she refers to universal humanism, but suggests a decolonial option. She implicitly calls for rethinking the concept of the human by delinking from colonial ideas, in order to introduce a decolonial, possibly decentered, worldview.

political systems, in its determination to utilize, expend, and exhaust the living being of the other, for the purpose of strengthening European power. But, despite his wariness of humanist philosophies, in light of the record of historical injustices perpetrated by the West, his later writings call for a “critical humanism,” to rethink the concept of the human, beyond the failures of the universalistic determinations implicit in the colonizing project.⁴ Hence, a certain humanism, as its historical record evinces, would have to be negated, with the aim of creating a new concept of the human in its wake, or a new posthumanist humanism.

More recently, Judith Butler has provided a new understanding of the human as universal via the posthumanist theory of vulnerability, which views the human as a corporeality, intrinsically exposed to a universal state of precariousness beyond hierarchies and borders. Butler’s concept of precariousness invokes the ethical indefensibility of human bodies unequally exposed to grief, pain, and loss. Despite decentering the tradition of the humanist ideal, however, Butler preserves the shared “we” for a new concept of the universal. Thus, she makes space for an ethics, which is normative, yet ambiguous, and based on precariousness, despite the dangers of its cooptation. An ethical response is needed, she suggests, to defend the right of human dignity for all. A universal theory of embodied vulnerability, she believes, would affirm the fact of a differential vulnerability. This would consequently call for a movement from the ontological to the ethical. Butler concludes that the struggle against an unjust exposure to precariousness must occur at the site of that exposure. An investigation of the concrete situation of precariousness would therefore trigger the universal recognition of a differential vulnerability, leading to the demand for an ethical response.⁵ In this regard, Butler’s posthumanist redefinition of the concept of the human beyond universal humanism draws on Beauvoirian ethics. I argue that Beauvoir’s ambiguous, non-prescriptive ethics is a detectable influence in her writing. I therefore suggest that Butler’s posthumanist return to the concept of the human draws on the legacy of Beauvoir vis-à-vis existential humanism and ethics.⁶

⁴ Edward Said in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (2004) calls for a new critical humanism, in order to move beyond the failures of Empire. He argues that it is needed urgently, for the triumph of co-existence over escalating conflicts. My reading follows Sonia Kruks, who cites Said’s call for a new concept of humanism in his later work.

⁵ Butler, in both *Precarious Life* (2004) and *Frames of War* (2009), provides a concept of precariousness to describe bodily vulnerability, not only to mortal dangers, but also to interdependent self-other relations. She concludes that exposure to the other leads to the recognition that shared experiences of pain and grief unite humans and necessitate a moral obligation to the other. This is most important, according to Butler, in response to the increased levels of precariousness experienced by particular individuals and groups.

⁶ The relation between Beauvoir and Butler is described by Ann Murphy in “Ambiguity and Precarious Life.” Murphy explains that Butler views embodied vulnerability as the universal site of precariousness, but that it is unjustly mobilized to oppress others. The oppressed therefore suffer from a greater exposure to grief, pain, and loss, which is precisely where the right to protection from this unjust exposure must be defended. Murphy suggests that Beauvoir’s concept of

I follow Beauvoir critic Sonia Kruks, who argues that posthumanist critiques do not abandon the concept of the human.⁷ Examining the retention of humanist theories within posthumanism, Kruks concludes, “The task ... is to move beyond critiques of humanism and toward its productive reconstruction” (31). Thus, the critical task after posthumanism, she proposes, is to appropriate the attainments of humanism for a new concept of the human. Kruks enlists Beauvoir for the project of reconstructing humanism. Alongside Kruks, Ann Murphy provides an analysis of the Beauvoir-Butler relation, to suggest that Beauvoir’s ethics must be acknowledged as an important legacy in posthumanist critiques, thereby implying a relation between humanist and posthumanist theories. Following Kruks and Murphy, my dissertation argues for a return to existential humanism after posthumanism, but with the caveat that any new concept of the human cannot uncritically reconstruct past forms. Thus, I call for a *critical inheritance* of Beauvoirian ethics, which builds on its successes, while acknowledging its failures.

A Critical Inheritance: Beauvoirian Ethics

In this regard, I concur with Kruks that Beauvoir’s ambiguous humanism is “a valuable resource for this task,” but I do not support her defence of Beauvoir against the criticisms that elucidate Beauvoir’s appeal to racial and colonial abstractions (31). Kruks suggests that Elizabeth Spelman and Sally Markowitz, who were two of the first scholars to trace the racial and colonial origins of Western feminism in Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, provide an anachronist view of Beauvoir, since they criticize her use of racial and colonial abstractions.⁸ But, more recently, others have joined the ranks

ambiguity is integral to Butler’s understanding that a differential vulnerability produces an ambiguity in the concept of universal vulnerability, which, as for Beauvoir, is situated in the experience of corporeality

⁷ My references to Said and Butler follow Kruks. She shows that Said and Butler are posthumanists with a renewed interest in humanism. I therefore follow Kruks’s insights into the posthumanist-humanist turn, traceable in the writings of Said and Butler. I also draw on Murphy, who links Butler to Beauvoir, to underscore the influence of Beauvoirian ambiguity on Butler’s concept of precariousness, which calls for ambiguous “constitutive obligations” to defend against an intensified exposure to grief, loss, and pain. As I will later show, Beauvoir views contingency and failure as central to her concept of ambiguous ethics. See the section of this chapter entitled “Beauvoir’s Ambiguous Ethics” for a further explanation.

⁸ Kruks suggests that Spelman’s criticism of Beauvoir’s use of colonial stereotypes is anachronistic, since it judges Beauvoir by today’s standards. I argue, however, that examining the abstractions of race and colonialism within existential theories of liberation is an important endeavour, since such oppressive practices must be demystified and transcended within the concept of liberation. Thus, I follow Hill-Collins, who describes the vibrant communities of black thinkers and artists of the Harlem Renaissance, bypassed by Beauvoir in her theorization of black oppression in *The Second Sex*. In fact, this part of Kruks’s work in *Simone de Beauvoir and the Politics of Ambiguity* focuses on *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, but she draws on Spelman’s criticism of *The Second Sex* for her discussion of race and colonialism, thereby setting aside her discussion of the concept of ambiguity. Since 1988, the year of Spelman’s publication, other scholars have offered similarly critical readings, including Patricia Hill-Collins, Kathryn T. Gines, Sabine Broeck, and Alia Al-Saji. In general, they argue that Beauvoir’s lapses vis-à-vis the racialized and colonized other cannot be disregarded in contemporary investigations of oppression. In her footnote no. 31, in defense of Beauvoir, against Spelman, Kruks

of Spelman and Markowitz to corroborate their early observations. Patricia Hill-Collins has shown that Beauvoir separates women's oppression from the histories of race and colonialism, which results in the narrowing of women's liberation to a purely Western origin. This, Hill-Collins suggests, reflects the fact that Beauvoir did not engage the proto-intersectional feminist critiques within black artistic and intellectual circles, despite her connections to African-American writers, such as Richard Wright, especially during her visit to the US.⁹ Indeed, the early criticisms by Spelman and Markowitz on Beauvoir's racial and colonial abstractions have since grown stronger. Not only Patricia Hill-Collins, but also Kathryn T. Gines, Sabine Broeck, and Alia Al-Saji all reject attempts to rationalize or dismiss the presence of racial and colonial abstractions in Beauvoir's writing.¹⁰ Much of this scholarship focuses on *The Second Sex*. Following their interventions, I turn my attention to the racial and colonial abstractions prevalent in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, to rethink Beauvoir's concept of ethics. A part of the project of critically inheriting Beauvoirian ethics, I show, is accomplished by Fanon, since he appropriates Beauvoirian ethics, but departs from her use of racial and colonial abstractions, by investigating the subjective experience of racial and colonial oppression.

writes, "*Les temps modernes* was among the very first sites in France to argue for full decolonization of the French empire – long before the Communists and other sections of the French Left did so" (50). But, Spelman, I argue, is questioning neither Beauvoir's personal views nor her political interventions. Rather, she queries the unreflexive return to abstractions, which leads to the reiteration of colonial values, with the aim of transcending this failure in feminism.

⁹ Patricia Hill-Collins criticizes Beauvoir for not seeking out the fellowship of African-American women writers during her travels in the US, documented in her autobiography *America Day by Day*. Hill-Collins argues that, apart from her friendship with Richard Wright, Beauvoir could have also explored the ideas emanating from the vibrant African-American political and artistic movements, to consider the possibility of a proto-intersectional analysis of women's oppression. In addition to Zora Neale Hurston, Hill-Collins mentions activists Ella Baker, Pauli Murray and Anna Arnold Hedgeman (336). Moreover, Hill-Collins is critical of Beauvoir's selective choice of resources for her study of black experience, since she heavily relies on Swedish economist and Nobel Laureate Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (1944), a work commissioned by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Hill-Collins criticizes Beauvoir's use of a resource outside black authorship for her construction of black existence, thus implying that by not pursuing black authors, Beauvoir misses out on theorizing black existence from within the subjective experience of blackness. Kruks, in defense of Beauvoir, suggests that other resources were not available at the *Bibliothèque nationale*. But Hill-Collins argues that Beauvoir's access to resources was much wider. Certainly, Myrdal's sociological study was central to Beauvoir's theorization of oppression. Sarah Relyea, in *Outsider Citizens: The Remaking of Postwar Identity in Wright, Beauvoir, and Baldwin*, draws out the intertextual references to Myrdal's work in Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*.

¹⁰ Spelman was the first to draw attention to Beauvoir's stereotypes of race and colonialism in *The Second Sex*. More recently, Gines, Hill-Collins, Broeck, and Al-Saji have further analyzed the abstractions of race and colonialism in Beauvoir's writing, which, they show, coexist with her explicit condemnation of racial and colonial oppression. Implicit in these criticisms is the fact that, in general, since feminist standpoint epistemology emphasizes a unified perspective, it risks overlooking the more complex intersectionalities within women's experience. I do not pursue the matter of women's oppression in *The Second Sex*. But, I argue that Fanon addresses the lapses in Beauvoirian ethics for an understanding of liberation beyond the reversion to abstract concepts of the racialized and colonized other. Of course, Fanon's concept of the anticolonial subjectivity is also exclusionary, vis-à-vis its masculinism. I address these exclusions later in this chapter and, in greater detail, in Chapter 1.

Much of the contemporary scholarship on Beauvoir's racial and colonial abstractions generates new critical questions, pertaining not only to the residual colonial attitudes in mainstream feminist theory, as well as theories of liberation, but also to the susceptibility in academia to reflexively revert to forms and methods that objectify the other, even in attempts to end this oppressive practice. Beauvoir invokes commonplace attitudes toward racial and colonial difference, despite her scrupulous attention to the goal of ending such forms of oppression. Although Beauvoir believed that subjectivity must thoroughly question its convictions to evade collective prejudices, the reverberations of racialization and colonization in her writings expose the hegemony of colonial rule and its embedded systemic practices, which, in the post-WWII period, continued to exert control over the creation of form and meaning in intellectual pursuits – and, evidently, as I will show, in philosophy.

Disciplinary Exclusions

Many scholars of Beauvoir and Fanon hold the discipline of philosophy accountable for not engaging the findings of area studies. This has resulted in the marginalization of feminism, postcolonial studies, and black studies, amongst other important fields of research, as well as non-Western philosophical traditions, in mainstream philosophy.¹¹ Stella Sandford identifies a certain resistance to feminism in philosophy, despite the gains of feminist philosophy. One of the central problems, in her view, is that continental philosophy is marginalized in “the traditional, hegemonic academic discipline of philosophy,” thereby producing the elision of today's transdisciplinary feminist ideas and concepts, heir to the original transformations from abstract philosophizing into critique, which occurred in the post-WWII period, mainly in continental philosophy (173).¹²

¹¹ In “Contradiction of Terms: Feminist Theory, Philosophy and Transdisciplinarity,” Stella Sandford argues that philosophy has been most effective at erasing the experience of oppression (173). Sandford shows that the practice of marginalizing oppressive histories has not disappeared in mainstream philosophy, despite the changes of the past few decades. As Sara Ahmed argues, in her criticism of contemporary scholarship, the negative impact of historical oppression permeates institutional practices across the humanities and social sciences. I elaborate on Ahmed's thesis later in this chapter.

¹² Sandford refers to “the transdisciplinary origin of gender” with its roots in Marxism and critical theory. As a critical concept, ‘gender’ challenges philosophy's self-containment (160). Despite disciplinary borders, Sandford illuminates the openness of phenomenology and existentialism to feminist, antiracist, and anticolonial critical concepts, evident in texts such as *The Second Sex* and *Black Skin, White Masks*, which, she argues, brought transdisciplinarity into the humanities. While the humanities were transformed by this critique, however, Sandford argues that traditional philosophy did not subsume it, which follows, she argues, from the marginalization of continental philosophy (170). Therefore, even as Beauvoir and Fanon belonged to the phenomenological and existentialist tradition between 1947 and 1961, their radical transformations of the discipline did not result in an opening of disciplinary borders. Sabine Broeck suggests that the anticolonial critique began much earlier, with Aimé Césaire in *Discourse on Colonialism* (1936) and was then redeployed by Sartre in “Black Orpheus” in 1948, but (notwithstanding Fanon's critique) it “was not received widely as an exhortation

Sandford claims that the distance between feminism and philosophy is the result of their contradictory origins, since feminist philosophy originates in forms of knowledge that stand apart from the abstract universals deeming philosophy a self-sufficient field of inquiry.¹³ Sandford draws attention to the dangers of marginalizing continental philosophy, since, she argues, it first invoked the revolutionary transformations of critique, thereby inviting transdisciplinary concepts into the discipline.

In regard to the important contributions of Beauvoir to philosophy, Penelope Deutscher suggests that Beauvoir brings specific concepts, not understood as normatively philosophical, into existentialism and phenomenology, thereby exposing the fact that conventional methods cannot conceptualize oppressive histories, such as women's experience. Finally, Sonia Kruks regards Beauvoir's ambiguous ethics as a destabilizing force within traditional philosophy, which displaces transcendental idealism, to emphasize lived experience. Playing an important part in the project of reclaiming Beauvoir for philosophy is the publication of Beauvoir's philosophical writings, which illuminates her place alongside the most celebrated French phenomenologists and existentialists of the mid-twentieth century, including Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and others.¹⁴

All of the above criticisms focus on the marginalization of women philosophers, and feminist concepts, in mainstream philosophy; however, the seminal Beauvoir critic, Margaret Simons, identifies a parallel between the exclusion of a European woman philosopher such as Beauvoir, and that of a colonial black philosopher such as Fanon. Simons discovers a missing link in the genealogy of existentialism at the intersection of gender and race. Moreover, she directs our attention to the autobiographical and intellectual ties that unite Beauvoir and Fanon, primarily citing *The Second Sex* as an intertextual influence on *Black Skin, White Masks*. While Simons emphasizes the importance of *The Second Sex* (1949) for Fanon, my dissertation identifies a dialogical relation

to radically submit Enlightenment philosophy to a decolonial reading" (97). My dissertation argues that Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity* must be added to Sandford's and Broeck's respective lists of the major texts that radically transformed the discipline, by providing critical concepts, which were later taken up by Fanon. Sandford calls for a greater recognition of continental philosophy in her bid to bring these critical concepts back into the discipline.

¹³ In *Orientalism*, Said is critical of the repression of politics within the human sciences. He suggests that it is not only evident in light of the lack of detailed literary-historical criticism, but also in other traditional disciplines, such as philosophy, as in the case of philosophers who "will conduct their discussions of Locke, Hume, and empiricism without ever taking into account that there is an explicit connection between their 'philosophical' doctrines and racial theory, justifications of slavery, or arguments for colonial exploitation" (13). Thus, Said concludes that the historical evidence of colonialism is missing from these discussions.

¹⁴ Simons collected Beauvoir's early work in *Philosophical Writings*, thereby bringing Beauvoir back into the discipline of philosophy. Sara Heinämaa studies Beauvoir in relation to Merleau-Ponty and Husserl, and Laura Hengehold views Beauvoir through a Deleuzian lens, in relation to Bergson and Leibniz. These efforts represent an attempt to bring Beauvoir into philosophical genealogies.

between *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947) and both *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961).¹⁵

Beauvoir's exclusion from philosophy is understood to be the result of the endemic sexist intellectual culture of post-WWII France. It is thought to be a major reason for why Fanon disregards her impact on his writings, despite his citation of European male philosophers. Perhaps inadvertently, Fanon plays a part in the marginalization of women philosophers. Lewis Gordon corroborates this critical view of Fanon's elision, by stating that an "epistemic sexism" in the discipline prejudiced Fanon, rendering him unable to admit to Beauvoir's influence (*WFS* 58). I suggest that, in the time since the publication of their writings, Beauvoir and Fanon have become further divided by the institutional practice of separating feminist, postcolonial, and black studies from mainstream philosophy, leaving their convergences undertheorized. Of course, intersectional studies, mainly in feminist and critical race theory, attempt to mitigate this problem by examining lived experiences across multiple sites of historical oppression.¹⁶

It is important to reflect on the longstanding paternalism in the discipline of philosophy, which negatively affected Beauvoir's self-perception: she never viewed herself as a philosopher, nor did her contemporaries perceive her as one. It follows that she could never have admitted to her philosophical influence on Fanon. In fact, Beauvoir and Fanon dissociated themselves from each other, despite their personal and intellectual affiliations. Yet, I argue, their dialogically-related concepts of oppression, revolution, and liberation have transformed the discipline.

My aim is to develop a reading of Beauvoir and Fanon, which draws out their interrelated concepts, in an effort to show their contemporary relevance for new theories of liberation. Despite this aim, however, I do not disregard the fact that both mid-twentieth century thinkers replicated the power structure they repudiated. In fact, they remained imbricated within gendered, racialized, and colonized structures of thought, in spite of their efforts to transcend these oppressive categorizations. Recognizing the limitations of their contributions can help to theorize liberation today, along the lines of more equal, democratic structures, which work against the ingrained

¹⁵ For Bakhtin, novels reflect the dialogism implicit in consciousness. Thus, they are multi-voiced works (as opposed to monological ones), which comprise multiple perspectives and voices, including the past, which reverberates in present meaning. Hence, my understanding of the dialogical relation between Beauvoir and Fanon draws on Bakhtin's concept of the multi-vocal text, to argue that the ostensibly separate projects of Beauvoir and Fanon must be viewed as interrelated. Moreover, the notion of dialogism is implicit in the existential concepts of Beauvoir and Fanon, which argue for an essential interrelationality within the concept of existence.

¹⁶ Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality in critical race and feminist theory has generated new critical investigations into the complex identities and experiences of oppression.

tendency to separate people, ideas, concepts, etc., in terms of the hierarchization of gender, race, and colonialism.

While feminism has enabled Beauvoir's philosophy to be retrieved from obscurity, black and postcolonial studies have effectively argued that Fanon's concept of existence must be recognized for its originality.¹⁷ Historically, Western philosophy avoided any investigation of racial and colonial experience from the viewpoint of racialized and colonized peoples. For Gordon, the fact that Fanon is most often studied in relation to European luminaries rather than on his own terms proves that an anti-black racism still permeates critical interpretation, preventing the recognition of Fanon as an original thinker, even as his contribution to existentialism and phenomenology is vital, since it demonstrates that the histories of slavery and colonization are essential to the philosophical investigations of oppression, revolution, and liberation (*WFS* 18). While my dissertation argues that Fanon appropriates and transforms Beauvoir's concepts and ideas from *The Ethics of Ambiguity* to advance his own anticolonial philosophy, the intention is not to disregard Fanon's originality, but rather to validate it. It must be noted, however, that my approach to investigating the influence of Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity* on Fanon's writings is speculative, insofar as my dissertation moves beyond the need to establish a bona fide historical affiliation. Arguing for the recognition of their shared concepts, I do not aim to prove a definitive influence, but rather to draw out the dialogism of Beauvoirian ethics and Fanon's anticolonial theory.

After Area Studies

Post-WWII academia witnessed the development of feminist theory, critical race theory, postcolonial theory, and Holocaust and genocide studies. Most of this new criticism drew inspiration from the worldwide women's movements, civil rights movements, and anticolonial movements of the mid-twentieth century, as well as Europe's struggle against anti-Semitism. At this very instant, intellectual critique struck a chord with political revolutions, illuminating the relation between critical concepts and revolutionary action. But, while early post-WWII existentialism and phenomenology brought the knowledge of oppressive histories into continental philosophy, over time, the sizeable shift in academia occurred more rapidly across the humanities and social sciences, rather than in philosophy per se.¹⁸ A case in point is Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1979), which has been studied

¹⁷ In addition to Gordon, Nigel C. Gibson, David Marriot, and Sylvia Wynter believe that Fanon's contribution to existential philosophy is unprecedented.

¹⁸ Holocaust and genocide critic Max Silverman states that the radical critique of humanism, which viewed the phenomena of genocidal violence across both colonial and anti-Semitic histories, dissipated, once the immediate post-

primarily in language and literature departments rather than philosophy. *Orientalism* chronicles the archives of race and colonialism within the disciplines, to reveal the marginalization of non-European races and cultures within all forms of knowledge. By disregarding the actual histories of the colonized, Said argues, European humanist philosophies were able to erase the colonial experience, thereby affirming Western Man as the cause for the evolution of human existence in the modern world.¹⁹

Well before the publication of Said's *Orientalism*, European existentialist philosophers had interacted with and recognized the philosophical contributions of their contemporaries from the colonies. The editor of the two anthologies *Existence in Black* (1997) and *Existentialia Africana: Understanding Africana Existentialist Thought* (2000), Lewis Gordon, recounts how French existentialism enacted a critique of black experience. Gordon identifies Jean-Paul Sartre as an Africana philosopher, who, along with Richard Wright and Fanon, established black existentialism.²⁰ Gordon does not mention Beauvoir's existentialism in these anthologies, but I argue that she must be counted within the ranks of black existentialism.²¹ Gordon does however describe Beauvoir's relation to Richard Wright and Fanon, chronicled in the third volume of her autobiography, *Force of Circumstance*. I argue that Gordon's reference to Beauvoir elides the fact that *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, published in 1947, contains an existential ethics, well before Sartre's *Notebook on Ethics*, which Gordon references, in addition to Sartre's *Nausea*, "Return from the United States," and "Black Orpheus" (13).²²

WWII period had passed. But, he argues, the theme of the interrelated histories of oppression and genocide is explored in film and literature in later years.

¹⁹ A specific discourse of the Orient took precedence within academia at the end of the eighteenth century, Said claims, which produced "a complex Orient suitable for study in the academy, for display in the museum, for reconstruction in the colonial office, for theoretical illustration in anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial, and historical theses about mankind and the universe, for instances of economic and sociological theories of development, revolution, cultural personality, national or religious character" (*Orientalism* 7-8). Said's umbrella of fields assembles an archive that exceeds the limits of empirical reality with "a battery of desires, repressions, investments and projections" (8). The archival data therefore constructed a phantasmatic other, beyond factual limits.

²⁰ Gordon writes, in *Existentialia Africana*, "Africana existential philosophy is a branch of Africana philosophy and black philosophies of existence. By *black philosophy* what is meant is the philosophical currents that emerged from the question of blackness" (5-6). Gordon views the existentialist project within the larger *Africana* tradition, which includes other investigations of black philosophical existence.

²¹ Viewing existentialism as a "fundamentally European phenomenon" apart from "philosophies of existence," Gordon argues that the latter involve "a centering of what is often known as the *situation* of questioning or inquiry itself" (*Existentialia Africana* 10). Thus, while writers such as W.E.B. DuBois, Aimé Césaire, and CLR James are not existentialists, they are philosophers of existence.

²² Gordon corrects this omission of Beauvoir in *What Fanon Said*, thereby implicitly linking her work to the tradition of black existentialism.

My dissertation fills a gap in the genealogy of black existentialism by recognizing Beauvoir's contribution. Regrettably, Gordon is still called upon to repudiate the colonial worldview that a European project, such as black existentialism, must have had a European origin. He argues that intellectuals on both sides – the oppressor and the oppressed – jointly congregated around the aspiration to critically interpret the histories of racial and colonial oppression, in response to the precise historical moment in which they found themselves to stand in political and intellectual solidarity, against the furtherance of oppressive violence across the modern world. In the course of reflecting on the Second World War and the Holocaust, French philosophers could not avoid the parallels with European colonization, especially since France was still a colonial power.²³ Consequently, they took notice of the black writers, artists, and philosophers from the colonies. But, I argue, this important intellectual movement continues to fall outside the genealogies of mainstream philosophy. Thus, the discipline of philosophy has yet not registered the critical interpretations of race and colonialism offered by black existentialism.²⁴

An Inclusionary Politics

It is commonly understood that European colonial rule across the Americas, Africa, and Asia officially ends with the granting of national independence. But, as Achille Mbembe argues, the *longue durée* of colonial racism persists in the postcolonial world.²⁵ Hence, the allegedly dated histories of colonialism cannot be overlooked in contemporary investigations of oppression and liberation. Mbembe implicitly argues that the histories of slavery and colonialism are linked to present forms of oppression, but this link remains imperceptible – and must be brought to light.

²³ Hill-Collins writes, “In the late 1940s and through the 50s, French intellectuals found it virtually impossible to ignore anticolonial freedom struggles. Algeria, in particular, aggravated an unresolved tension within French national identity concerning citizenship and national belonging” (334). Hill-Collins argues that French intellectuals were forced to confront the realities of liberation struggles outside Europe, amidst their efforts to theorize oppression and liberation in European philosophy. She suggests that their inclusion of black struggles was not altruistic, but necessary, and perhaps expedient, since the conflict between the concept of liberation and the realities of oppression was too stark to ignore.

²⁴ Reflecting on political philosophy, Charles Mills asserts that the race gap is still prevalent in the discipline, despite the many positive changes, following the introduction of black studies. Notwithstanding the changes, Mills criticizes philosophy for the continued marginalization of black philosophies and philosophers. Citing the evidence of exclusion in analytic philosophy, he argues that, overall, these divisions dominate intellectual work. In his own study of liberalism, Mills suggests that restructuring philosophical inquiry requires the intervention of marginalized philosophers and philosophies; if not, he argues, liberalism will continue to repeat the categorical suppression of the other. In this chapter, I show how Sandford makes a parallel claim in regard to women in philosophy, and Sara Ahmed, in regard to women and minorities in scholarship. All of this work offers a reflection on the obstacles faced by minorities and women in philosophy and in academia.

²⁵ Achille Mbembe, in his seminal work *On the Post Colony*, argues that the era of the colony has not yet ended, but has been restructured for a new colonial status, which is the post colony.

Following Mbembe, I argue that a state of *senselessness* prevents the revelation of oppressive power today. Catherine Malabou suggests that today's political climate invalidates forms of critique that might elucidate the concrete phenomena of violent oppression. She calls it a war against *sense*, since attempts to demystify a violent politics are thwarted by the *amalgam* of nature and politics (155).²⁶ In this regard, she writes of "this mixture where politics is annulled as such so that it assumes the face of nature and where nature disappears beneath the mask of politics" (156). This leaves no method for identifying political violence apart from natural, catastrophic events. Therefore, the culpability for violence is effaced. For this reason, I argue for the elucidation of the concrete histories of oppression, in order to resist the new power structures, which are effacing the traces of their oppressive methods by concealing them within the language of natural catastrophe. To contest their methods, an inclusionary politics must invite concrete forms of knowledge into traditional disciplinary formations, thereby mobilizing the disciplines to respond to current ethical crises.

Decolonial theory questions the dominance of Western forms of knowledge. Decolonial theorist Walter D. Mignolo proposes that an epistemic and political delinking from Western universals triggers a decentering of epistemic knowledge, which redirects attention to the lived realities of the oppressed. The multiple experiences of Western oppression across the modern world, he writes, are interrelated via "the singular connector of a diversity of decolonials" (161).²⁷ Implicit in this statement is the possibility for a new solidarity amongst the many, whose experience of colonial oppression allows for a rethinking of existence outside the parameters of the West. According to Mignolo, engaging in delinking requires an "epistemic disobedience" (prior to civil disobedience), since colonial knowledge must first be deconstructed, so that previously excluded epistemologies may enter the disciplines, to effectively reframe them (173-174). Decoloniality founds a new

²⁶ Catherine Malabou, in *The New Wounded*, writes, "the enemy today is hermeneutics." It prevents any potential diagnosis of psychic ills that result from political violence, since this violence is naturalized as a catastrophe – dissimulated. It is therefore not endowed with a political sense. In her view, "neurology, psychoanalysis, and neuropsychanalysis" must begin to redefine trauma, "*to produce the sense of this war on sense*" (155). I argue that the humanities, including philosophy, must also identify and interpret the meaning of political violence, in response to the *war on sense*.

²⁷ In "Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom," Walter D. Mignolo names the "geo-politics of knowledge" and the "body-politics of knowledge" as two categories of an epistemic de-centering, which could trigger a delinking from Western epistemologies. Mignolo cites political movements, such as civil rights struggles, as manifestations of what he calls the body-politics of knowledge. He states that the following peoples are at the forefront of the body-politics of knowledge: "Women –first white women, soon joined by women of color (and linking with geo-politics, so-called 'Third World women'); Latino and Latina scholars and activists; Afro-Americans and Native Americans, mainly" (174). Mignolo suggests that Fanon's concept of 'sociogeny,' which views the body in terms of contingent experience, enacts the decolonization of knowledge, since, "Fanon's move is at once epistemic de-linking and epistemic disobedience (176). Following Mignolo, I suggest that Fanon unites "body-politics" with an epistemic delinking, via the decolonization of knowledge, thereby drawing together the project of exceeding the limits of epistemological inquiry with the project of revolutionary action.

intellectual movement emerging from the study of Orientalism, which gestures toward a future ceding of Western regimes of knowledge to a pluralist, possibly decentred, worldview.²⁸

But decentering Western knowledge in decolonial theory makes the political will requisite for actively pushing the disciplines to incorporate alternative knowledge, not simply to supplement, but rather fundamentally change the way that ideas and concepts are organized, initiated, supported, and reflected within all institutional practices. Despite his demand for institutional change, however, Mignolo elevates the practice of saving “human lives and life in general” above the intellectual pursuit of knowledge (178). The project of saving life is therefore salient for institutions, which may even engage in this project. At the same time, institutions elicit the decolonial option to *humanize* the disciplines by closing the gap between critical concepts and the evidence of lived experience. Thus, decolonizing knowledge engages ontological realities to redefine concepts with the goal of saving and protecting dignity, even as saving actual lives prevails over the project of transforming archival knowledge.

Currently, the resolve to bring the findings of area studies into philosophy is occasioned by the need for philosophical projects to invite forms of knowledge originating outside the traditional discipline, with the aim of responding to current ethical crises. My recovery of the dialogical relation between Beauvoir and Fanon underscores their neglected interrelation vis-à-vis ethics, which is missing from philosophical genealogies. Furthermore, I argue that the need for a new theoretical understanding of oppression and liberation demands a philosophical method that corroborates lived experience. Both Beauvoir and Fanon provide an existential ethics of liberation. It must be mobilized for the development of new critical concepts that elucidate concrete realities.²⁹

Fanon Beyond Beauvoir: From Ontological to Concrete Existential Ethics

While Beauvoir describes the universal structure of the oppressive situation by drawing on metaphor, analogy, and history in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, Fanon, in *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*, puts his views of colonial oppression and anticolonial liberation into the context of Beauvoirian ethics, to underscore the relation between the lived realities of the oppressed and the

²⁸ Mignolo cites philosophers still unrecognized in mainstream Western scholarship. I argue for the inclusion of philosophers, such as James Maffie, who, in *Aztec Philosophy: Understanding a World in Motion* (2014), describes an indigenous metaphysics beyond Western influence.

²⁹ I do not suggest that area studies must be subsumed within mainstream disciplines. On the contrary, area studies are crucial for the production of marginalized knowledge. But, I argue, this knowledge must transcend the boundaries of the traditional disciplines.

concept of ethics. In so doing, he moves beyond Beauvoir's more general historical references, which function as objective phenomena, in order to investigate the subjective experiences of violent objective realities. Hence, in following Beauvoir's ethics, Fanon sharply departs from her focus on the purely ontological description of oppressive situations. Instead, he argues for an existential ethics that reflects an understanding of specific, subjective experiences. In effect, Fanon theorizes liberation *from below* – from the viewpoint of the oppressed. This distinguishes his philosophical method from Beauvoir. I therefore propose that Fanon provides a *concrete existential ethics* beyond Beauvoir's *ontological existential ethics*.

Certainly, Beauvoir's philosophical method does emphasize the need for the elucidation of lived experience in the search for truth. Stella Sandford, Sonia Kruks, Margaret Simons, and Sara Heinämaa, amongst others, have examined Beauvoir's emphasis on the concrete experience to describe women's oppression in *The Second Sex*. Fanon undoubtedly read *The Second Sex*. His unstated appropriation of her method in *The Second Sex* has been documented by Beauvoir and Fanon scholars alike.³⁰ But little has been said on the relation of *The Ethics of Ambiguity* to Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*. I argue that the dialogical relation between them has not yet been fully investigated.

Of course, Fanon's omission of Beauvoir from his list of citations in both of his major works exacerbates the post-WWII vanishing of their interrelation from the history of philosophy. It follows that Fanon's exclusion of Beauvoir has had a negative impact on the ability of today's scholarship to trace the genealogical origins of his anticolonial philosophy to Beauvoir's existentialism. Despite their many personal and writerly connections, neither Beauvoir, a French bourgeois woman, nor Fanon, a Martinican colonial man, was able to acknowledge the dialogical relation between their existential concepts. Neither was able to appreciate their intellectual affiliation, nor were the other major existentialists and phenomenologists of their time. My dissertation explicates their interrelation, to argue that it crystallizes significant transformations in the philosophical concepts of oppression, revolution, and liberation.

A Critical Phenomenology of Race and Colonialism

According to Gayle Salamon, the present critical turn in phenomenology, called 'critical phenomenology,' forsakes the abstract idealism of classical phenomenology to focus on

³⁰ Alongside Matthieu Renault and Margaret Simons, Lewis Gordon's *What Fanon Said* is a major text, which addresses the missing intertextual references in Fanon's work. I elaborate on Gordon's thesis in this chapter.

intersubjectivity, thereby preserving the first-person for the self-and-world phenomenological description.³¹ A common criticism, which faults phenomenology for its solipsism, accuses the phenomenological description of lacking an adequate embrace of the relation between self and world, via the socio-political phenomena of lived experience (9). After critiquing the self-and-world relation in classical phenomenology for its disengagement from lived realities, Salamon argues that critical phenomenology must become self-reflexively critical of the discipline's own structural shortcomings, in its effort to surpass the limitations of the classical form. But, she adds, the critical turn "turns out to have been there all along" (12). Thus, an openness to self-critical perspectives has been present in phenomenology, at least in inchoate form. Of course, the emergent field of 'critical phenomenology' views Beauvoir and Fanon as important antecedents. My dissertation further develops the interrelated concepts of Beauvoir and Fanon for the new critical turn in phenomenology.

In her memoir, *Force of Circumstance*, Beauvoir is critical of her early philosophical writings for their reiteration of abstractions, despite her awareness of the danger posed by abstractions to the search for truth.³² Fanon, I argue, rejects these abstract categories in his philosophical method, which examines subjective experience *from below*, to illuminate forms of existence, previously invisible in such abstractions. As a result, Fanon engages Beauvoirian ethics to theorize the lived experience of racial and colonial oppression, by opposing the actual, lived realities of the colonized to their abstract concepts.³³ His philosophical method is therefore revolutionary: he links the critical phenomenological description of the oppressive experience to the concrete enactment of revolution.

The Exclusionary Practice of Citation

Criticizing the narrow view of academia in the present, Sara Ahmed argues that excluding the citations of women and minorities constitutes a type of revisionism, which eliminates differences, thus preserving the dominant worldview. This implies that the charge that scholars are errantly engaged in historical revisionism, when they mine the past for signs of minority contributions to

³¹ *Puncta: Journal of Critical Phenomenology* was launched in 2018. It engages the critical turn in phenomenology "with the specific intention of redirecting phenomenological intentionality" toward the "enactment of critique." Gayle Salamon's "What's Critical about Critical Phenomenology" appears in the inaugural issue.

³² Stella Sandford describes Beauvoir's dissatisfaction with her early philosophical writings, in regard to their inability to transcend the classical forms of abstract philosophizing (*How to Read Beauvoir* 29).

³³ Sandford explains that Beauvoir was critical of *The Ethics of Ambiguity* for relying on abstractions rather than concrete experience. Sandford concludes that this dissatisfaction led Beauvoir to change the way she philosophizes, especially in *The Second Sex*, and later, in *Old Age* (*How to Read Beauvoir* 19). Later, in "Beauvoir's Transdisciplinarity: From Philosophy to Gender Theory," Sandford elaborates on this point.

intellectual life, is mistaken. Instead, Ahmed claims, recovering marginalized histories resolves the errors of revisionism. In her view, exclusionary citation lists prevent the affirmation of dissident voices, thereby guaranteeing that the future will receive a reductive account of the past, which is precisely the revisionism that must be opposed. Hence, Ahmed echoes Fanon's call to recognize the importance of racial and colonial pasts in the concept of liberation, which she redeploys for her criticism of mainstream academic scholarship.

Underscoring the impact of citationality on scholarship, Ahmed explains that highly cited written publications bring ideas and concepts into the mainstream of intellectual life, but they remain largely exclusionary.³⁴ This problem is exacerbated by the practice of citing already highly cited sources, which results in the elision of counterclaims to ascendant forms of knowledge. Hence, current scholarship prolongs the instilled practice of silencing the counterevidence that might otherwise call upon institutions to recognize the authors and texts that critically reinterpret dominant forms and meanings, with consequences not only for decolonizing academic disciplines, but also for addressing questions of social and political injustice, since the faculty of critical interpretation is needed to respond to current forms of oppression.³⁵

Similarly, Lewis Gordon is critical of the suppression of minority voices in mainstream publications.³⁶ Gordon's cursory glance at citation lists in academic publications reveals the lack of non-white and non-Western sources. This dearth of minority scholarship in the mainstream, he implies, amounts to a quasi-official practice of segregation, which eliminates minority intellectual contributions.³⁷ In this regard, the academic institution operates along the lines of an oppressive

³⁴ In *Living a Feminist Life*, Ahmed recounts her own experience: "As a student of theory, I learned that theory is used to refer to a rather narrow body of work. Some work becomes theory because it refers to other work that is known as theory. A citational chain is created around the-ory: you become a theorist by citing other theorists that cite other theorists" (19). Ahmed argues that the practice of citing mainstream sources serves as a barrier to marginalized peoples, ideas, worldviews, etc. The putative "citational chain" thus opposes the democratization of scholarship, along with the potential to decolonize intellectual production.

³⁵ In "Contradiction of Terms," Sandford notes that Ahmed does not specifically call out the discipline of philosophy. Ahmed is attentive to the negative effect of citational histories on feminist theory (and in the humanities in general), which, she believes, has led to the exclusion of minority and women's perspectives from scholarship. For Sandford, however, holding philosophy as a discipline to account is essential, if the critical interpretation of exclusionary practices is to infiltrate and transform mainstream philosophy. Furthermore, Sandford argues, current neoliberal efforts to undermine intellectual criticism require critically transformed disciplines such as philosophy, which would enable philosophical critique to effectively assert its legitimacy in the face of attempts to dismiss its validity.

³⁶ In his review of Matthieu Renault's *Frantz Fanon: De l'anticolonialisme à la critique postcoloniale*, Gordon lauds Renault's list of resources, thereby shedding light on the more usual practice of excluding minority citations. He calls the typical exclusion of minority citations a form of "citational apartheid" (211).

³⁷ The phenomenon of exclusionary citationality also marginalizes publications in non-European languages. As Mignolo writes, following his reading of Fanon, "If to speak a language means to carry the weight of civilization, then to engage in disciplinary knowledge-making means to master the language of the discipline in two senses. You can of course do sociology in Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Mandarin, Bengali, Akan, etc. But doing it in those languages will put you at a

political system, with hierarchies of knowledge to validate its control over the production of meaning. While Gordon draws attention to the exclusion of racialized and colonized scholars and their scholarship, he also observes the gendered exclusion of Beauvoir from philosophical genealogies.

The question of ‘exclusionary citations’ is central to my dissertation, which explores all that is missing from the history of philosophy with the omission of Beauvoir and Fanon. In general, the exclusion of the ideas, experiences, and realities of marginalized peoples persists across the disciplines. As Said points out, the disciplines are shaped by their colonial origins. Thus, despite the official end of European colonization, the *longue durée* of colonial racism persists in most areas of human activity, including the efficiencies of academic scholarship, which Ahmed and Gordon reveal.

The Gender Gap: Fanon’s Exclusion of Beauvoir

I address the problem of the gender gap in philosophy to account for the fact that, while Fanon cites the major European philosophical influences on his work, he fails to include Beauvoir. Gordon attributes Fanon’s exclusion of Beauvoir from his citational practice to the phenomenon of “epistemic sexism” in the mid-twentieth century discipline of philosophy, which led to the exclusion of women philosophers. Following Gordon, I argue that the gendered exclusion of Beauvoir not only resulted in Fanon’s exclusion of Beauvoir, but also in Beauvoir’s exclusion of Fanon from her later autobiographical writings. Why does she not reflect on Fanon’s development of her existential ethics? Since both *The Ethics of Ambiguity* and *The Second Sex* were published several years prior to *Black Skin, White Masks*, Beauvoir cannot fail to cite Fanon. But, in her autobiographies, there is little to suggest that Beauvoir fully accepted the degree to which her ideas had influenced Fanon. Simons and Fullbrook, amongst others, have unearthed Beauvoir’s bid to devalue her own philosophical ideas, later found in Sartre’s texts, bringing to light a plausible endeavour to preserve Sartre’s reputation at her own expense.

Following her refusal to accept the fact that she was the author of philosophical ideas and concepts, while extolling the originality of Sartre, came the successive omission of her influence on

disadvantage in relation to mainstream disciplinary debates. Granted, doing sociology in French, German or English will also be ‘local sociology’. The difference is that you have a better chance of being read by scholars in any of the above-mentioned languages, but the inverse will not hold. You will have to get your work translated into French, German or English” (“Epistemic Disobedience,” 166). Thus, in addition to Gordon’s indictment of Western scholarship for marginalizing minority voices, Mignolo adds the lack of linguistic diversity from outside Europe to the problem of citational history.

Fanon. Indeed, the exclusion of Beauvoir from philosophy has had a detrimental effect on our ability to acknowledge her contribution, not only to the ideas in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, alongside his other writings, but also to Fanon's anticolonial philosophy. The extensive problem of Beauvoir's exclusion cannot be understood outside her place in the post-WWII web of philosophers, which Beauvoir scholarship has attempted to untangle. In the following paragraphs, I describe the barriers faced by Beauvoir, which resulted in the disavowal of her contribution to philosophy. Only through this description is it possible to comprehend Fanon's elision of her core philosophical concepts from his list of citations.

Simons attributes Beauvoir's refusal to accept her contribution to philosophy primarily to sexism, adding that the conventional belief that philosophy must reveal a grand philosophical system gave Beauvoir the justification she needed to relinquish her place amongst the celebrated phenomenologists and existentialists of her time. Thus, Beauvoir rejected the initial attempts by Simons to convince her that her work was philosophical. In the time since the first Simons interview in 1979, Beauvoir scholars have wrested the title of philosopher back for her, by placing her vital transformations of the discipline at the forefront of their criticisms.³⁸ In her published collection of Beauvoir's philosophical writings, Simons concludes that Beauvoir's philosophy has received little attention for three reasons: its original methodology, the celebrity status of Sartre, and the problematic English translation history, all of which arise out of a sexist culture.

First, her rejection of classical philosophical systems, which universalized concepts, instead of reflecting the ambiguities of the concrete situation, meant that her philosophy was not recognized as philosophy, despite its original methodology.³⁹ Secondly, her relationship with Sartre, chronicled in her multi-volume autobiography, led to the notion that her work amounted to an application of his ideas, not vice versa. Certainly, the sexism inherent in the discipline of philosophy was palpably evident after the publication of *The Second Sex* in France, when the French press marshalled typically misogynistic terms, calling her "*La Grande Sartreuse*" and "*Notre-Dame de Sartre*," to dismiss her work

³⁸ See Kate and Edward Fullbrook, Toril Moi, Sonia Kruks, Sara Heinämaa, and Laura Hengehold, amongst others.

³⁹ Edward Fullbrook cites Beauvoir's rejection of grand philosophical systems as her explanation for why she did not think of herself as a philosopher. He writes, "her definition of 'philosopher' excludes not only herself but also Wittgenstein and, in most years, all the participants at American Philosophical Association conferences" (124). Sandford argues that Beauvoir is mistaken about her exclusion from philosophy, since *The Ethics of Ambiguity* is a philosophical essay in the tradition of Pascal, while *The Second Sex* offers a philosophical critique (*How to Read Beauvoir* 18-20). Heinämaa emphasizes Beauvoir's important transformation of the philosophical method, which interprets Descartes, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard, amongst others. Heinämaa shows her relation to Husserl and Merleau-Ponty.

as a philosopher.⁴⁰ The media construction of her public persona as Sartre's companion, Edward Fullbrook points out, "was believable in terms of patriarchal myth" (117).⁴¹ Even prior to the publication of *The Second Sex*, in 1945, Maurice Blanchot had entitled an article on her philosophical novels "*Les Romans de Sartre*," literally incorporating her work into Sartre's. Simons suggests that the possibility for recognition was improbable in the sexist intellectual culture of her era.⁴²

Beauvoir had come to attribute her ideas to Sartre, despite her early embrace of philosophy, recorded in her wartime journals.⁴³ Simons traces Beauvoir's efforts to efface all evidence of her philosophical work from her autobiography, "deleting references to philosophy from diaries and letters excerpted in her memoirs and describing herself as never 'tempted to try my hand at philosophy'" (2). Simons describes her own futile attempts to have Beauvoir admit to her philosophical contribution. In the aforementioned 1979 interview, Beauvoir declares: "I am not, and

⁴⁰ This experience of sexual harassment would have negatively shaped Beauvoir's perception of her own writing. Eighteen years earlier, in 1929, Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* described the commonplace slurs maligning the reputation of women writers in the English university and highbrow literary circles. Indeed, Beauvoir's experience was not exceptional. But the fact that Beauvoir edited out aspects of her original thought and lived experience has been detrimental to understanding the scope and impact of her philosophical work. Scholars were unable to draw on her autobiography for signs of her contribution to philosophy until Simons discovered the elisions in the original sources, once they became available.

⁴¹ Fullbrook writes, "The characterization of Beauvoir as nothing but Sartre's disciple was believable in terms of patriarchal myth. Patriarchy's history of ideas is the history of men's thought. In most cases, its first premise is that only men have ideas: women do not. This has traditionally been the framework that contains (and constrains) the history of human thought. In Beauvoir's case, it meant that she could attract some acceptance as a freak original female thinker, but only so long as her direct formative influence on male philosophers was not imprinted in public consciousness" (118). In "The Limits of the Abject: The Reception of *Le Deuxième Sexe* in 1949," Ingrid Galster concludes that the content of the book exceeded the ability of most critics to adequately address it, which resulted in gender stereotyping (39). The title "The limits of the abject" is a quotation from François Mauriac in *Le Figaro*, who suggested that the May 1949 publication of "*L'initiation sexuelle de la femme*" in *Les Temps Modernes* had indeed reached these limits (*Le Deuxième Sexe* 6). In *Le Deuxième Sexe de Simone de Beauvoir*, Galster examines the reception of *The Second Sex* in greater detail, to conclude that it was the explicitly sexual content of the second publication that drew the ire of some of its most prominent reviewers.

⁴² Toril Moi in *Feminist Theory and Simone de Beauvoir* compiles an extensive list of the anti-feminist slurs and insults, which marked the hostile reception of *The Second Sex* in France. Daigle and Golomb comment on the fact that this negative reception in France led to the exclusion of Beauvoir's ideas from French philosophy (Note 9, 11). Edward Fullbrook argues that her early reception, prior to the publication of *The Second Sex*, proves that she was celebrated for the 1944 publication of "Pyrrhus and Cinéas," as well as for her essays on existential ethics, published in *Les Temps Modernes*. Her fame carried her through a cross-country lecturing tour of the US in 1947, the subject of her travel memoir, *America Day by Day*. Fullbrook speculates that Beauvoir became a target of sexual harassment only after the publication of *The Second Sex* (117). In "The Adulteress Wife," a review of the new translation of *The Second Sex*, published in 2010, Moi summarizes the original reception of *The Second Sex* in France as follows: "The first volume was an unexpected success, selling 22,000 copies in the first week. But when the second volume appeared, with its detailed studies of female sexuality, Beauvoir was deluged: 'Unsatisfied, cold, priapic, nymphomaniac, lesbian, a hundred times aborted, I was everything, even an unmarried mother. People offered to cure me of my frigidity or to satisfy my ghoulish appetites.' The Vatican put the book on the Index; Albert Camus accused her of having made the French male look ridiculous." According to Moi, it was the second volume rather than the first that set off the blaze of disapproval. Galster corroborates this view in "The Limits of the Abject: The Reception of *Le Deuxième Sexe* in 1949"—and documents the reception of *The Second Sex* in *Le Deuxième Sexe de Simone de Beauvoir*.

⁴³ Beauvoir's 1927 diary proves that Beauvoir arrived at her concept of bad faith prior to Sartre (Simons 402).

never really wanted to be a philosopher. I like philosophy very much, but I have not constructed a philosophical work. I constructed a literary work” (2). After her death (and Sartre’s), critics uncovered in Sartre’s and Beauvoir’s diaries and letters facts that tell a different story: Sartre had been influenced by her early writings, and she had described herself as having constructed an original existentialist ethics early in her writerly life.⁴⁴

Simons ascertains that the timing of Beauvoir’s initial disavowal of herself as a philosopher in 1958, the year she published the first in her series of volumes of her autobiography, is significant. When asked in a 1960 interview about her memoirs, Beauvoir responded by stating that she did not want to be remembered for writing *The Second Sex* as a work of “feminine resentment,” in order “to avenge a life that would have been totally unhappy and embittered her” (3). In other words, she crafted her autobiography by eliding any reference to herself as a philosopher, with the intention of leaving a legacy in which her feminism would not be exploited against her reputation. If she had included her ambition to write philosophy, she would have appeared to be living unhappily with the knowledge of her non-recognition within philosophical circles, of Sartre’s betrayal, and of her futile attempts to enter a male-dominated discipline.

Regrettably, like Fanon’s failure to cite Beauvoir, her failure to cite herself has resulted in today’s state of confusion over her philosophical contribution (3). Christine Daigle and Jacob Golomb first suggest that the “prolonged downplay” of Beauvoir’s philosophical texts is founded on her very own disavowal, but they complicate this reading by revealing that Sartre similarly disavowed himself as mainly a philosopher in the same time period. Thus, along with Simons and Fullbrook, Daigle and Golomb implicitly suggest that Beauvoir’s gender played a dominant role in her elision from existentialist history, not her disavowal.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the 1952 Parshley translation of *The Second Sex* produced an English version that deleted her philosophical concepts, corroborating the

⁴⁴ When Kate and Edward Fullbrook read Sartre’s diaries, as well as the Sartre-Beauvoir letters, they discovered that Sartre was already familiar with Beauvoir’s philosophical ideas in *She Came to Stay*, before he wrote *Being and Nothingness* in 1943 (Fullbrooks, cited by Simons xiii). For the Fullbrooks, when Beauvoir’s 1926-30 diaries were deposited at the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* in 1990, “the full extent of Beauvoir’s philosophical projects and ideas became public, alongside the discovery that Merleau-Ponty had also been influenced by her” (cited by Simons, xiv).

⁴⁵ Daigle and Golomb write, “Beauvoir insisted that the only influence she can have had on Sartre philosophically is through the critique she could make of his work, since she was always the first reader. This and other repeated claims that she was not a philosopher may have contributed to the prolonged downplay of Beauvoir’s contribution to this field. These claims are all the more interesting when one considers Sartre’s similar statement at the time: ‘I was always a writer first, and then a philosopher: that’s just how it was’” (4). It can be assumed, therefore, that the sexist intellectual culture takes precedence over Beauvoir’s self-effacement, when attempting to explain Beauvoir’s exclusion from the philosophical canon.

commonplace notion that she was not a philosopher.⁴⁶ Unsurprisingly, Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, and her earlier works, were overshadowed by the media reception of *The Second Sex* in 1949, and the English edition in 1952, the same year that Fanon published *Black Skin, White Masks*. While Fanon appropriated her ideas to develop his anticolonial philosophy, the negative image of Beauvoir in the French press, as well as the commonly-held view that women did not write philosophy, resulted in his own elision of her contribution.

Of course, Fanon also stood at the margins of the European tradition as a black colonial philosopher writing an anticolonial philosophy, which called for the decolonization of the Western discipline.⁴⁷ But Beauvoir would choose to separate herself entirely from philosophy, following the publication of *The Second Sex*. After 1949, Beauvoir portrayed Sartre as her major philosophical influence. Sartre, she argued, provided the philosophical ideas, which she applied to her purportedly non-philosophical texts: novels, plays, essays, and memoirs. When Simons suggested to her that *The Ethics of Ambiguity* was a work of philosophy, Beauvoir replied that, since it was not a grand philosophical system, it could not be called philosophy. Certainly, her verdict no longer stands up to the many critical interpretations to the contrary.⁴⁸ Over time, her exclusion from important collections of existentialist writings perpetuated the notion that she was not an important philosopher, beginning with Walter Kauffman's well-known anthology *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, published in 1956 and reprinted in 1975. For Simons, the exclusion of Beauvoir underscores the fact that sexism has shaped the philosophical canon.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ In "The Adulteress Wife," Moi, commenting on the translation of *The Second Sex*, states that the zoologist H.M. Parshley's first English translation was mired in imprecisions, which erased many of Beauvoir's philosophical arguments. Simons, in 1983, first explained the extent of these elisions and imprecisions in the English translation. Fullbrook suggests that this translation history reflects a general will to silence feminist and women's philosophical ideas. Moi adds that the 2010 edition, translated by Constance Borde and Malovany-Chevallier, is also marred by imprecisions and unreadability. Moi suggests that the Parshley edition is stronger, despite its obvious errors.

⁴⁷ Lewis Gordon's "Fanon on Decolonizing Knowledge" describes Fanon's radical transformation of philosophical critique via the inclusion of diverse fields of experience and knowledge.

⁴⁸ As noted by Fullbrook, Beauvoir's strict definition of philosophy could not contain Wittgenstein. Certainly, I suggest, Beauvoir would not have thought of Fanon as a philosopher.

⁴⁹ The Walter Kauffman anthology, *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, published in 1956, did not include Beauvoir, despite the English translations of *The Ethics of Ambiguity* in 1948, and *The Second Sex* in 1952. In the 1975 edition, Kauffman adds a text on Marxism by Sartre, but, again, there are no entries on Beauvoir. Kauffman did not include Fanon either. It is assumed then that the sexism of the canon parallels the racial and colonial exclusions, keeping both Beauvoir and Fanon out of an anthology that interprets existentialism in a much wider frame, inviting literary writers including Camus – who refused the title existentialist – into the compilation. Simons details other anthologies and encyclopedias of philosophy, which have excluded Beauvoir, and misattributed her work to Sartre (114). Beauvoir's elision from the list of founders of *Les Temps Modernes* is also noted by Simons. This is problematic in light of Stève Bessac-Vaure's observation that Beauvoir's role was pivotal for the cultural direction taken by *Les Temps Modernes*. This suggests that the impact of her work, especially as an editor of Fanon and Wright, amongst others, has been underestimated.

The effects of canonization are apparent today, leading scholars to identify philosophical work in relation to the tradition. In the second volume of her autobiography *The Prime of Life*, Beauvoir describes the lack of confidence that spoiled opportunities for herself, and women, who chose to refrain from writing grand philosophical systems. Moreover, as Simons points out, we learn in *The Prime of Life* that “although Sartre urged her to write, he was nonetheless apt to see her essentially as a critic, or even as a passive spectator of philosophical discourse, rather than as a true participant” (2). Sartre’s failure to view her as a philosopher was mirrored by the intellectual community’s inability to recognize her contribution. For Simons, it becomes clear why Beauvoir saw herself as Sartre’s follower. In her view, this also calls for a reflection on the sexism that negatively affects women in intellectual life (2-3). Ahmed echoes Beauvoir’s description of the crisis in confidence, which prevents women from participating in male-dominated fields of scholarship today, while, she adds, it also deters people issuing from previously colonized regions from entering areas of study in which they are likely to face racism and sexism, or in areas where they are discouraged from critically examining the legacy of racial and colonial pasts.

Examining Fanon’s Sources

Why did Fanon not cite Beauvoir? The many accolades for Jean-Paul Sartre, Karl Jaspers, and other influential male philosophers fill Fanon’s citation list in *Black Skin, White Masks*. It is a list that spells out the breadth of Fanon’s knowledge, while also bringing his own contribution into the phenomenological and existentialist tradition. Importantly, I argue that Fanon’s list of sources breaks the boundaries of traditional philosophy, by drawing phenomenology and existentialism into relation with psychoanalysis, history, literature, and autobiography, including black writers, making Fanon’s practice of citation revolutionary to the extent that it acknowledges the historical sources of its ideas. Nonetheless, Beauvoir is cited only once in *Black Skin, White Masks*, and not at all in *The Wretched of the Earth*. But this single citation does not acknowledge the extent of her contribution to his work. In fact, Fanon’s reference to Beauvoir downplays the influence of her ideas. He cites *America Day by Day*, without naming the source, for its autobiographical content alone (“In New York, while Simone de Beauvoir was walking with Richard Wright, she was reprimanded by an old lady” *BSWM* 160; *PNMB* 148). This then functions as a primary resource for Fanon to theorize black oppression in relation to Sartre’s *Anti-Semite and Jew*, without acknowledging Beauvoir’s own critical interpretation of racial and colonial oppression.

Of course, Fanon might have considered Beauvoir's lack of concreteness, including her reiteration of colonial ideas, unworthy of mention in his own philosophical writing. In other words, he might have chosen not to acknowledge her three major works to date, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, *America Day by Day*, and *The Second Sex*, as important antecedents to the analysis of the concrete particularities of black existence, despite Beauvoir's attempt to theorize oppression vis-à-vis racial and colonial history, on which she had done a tremendous amount of reading of various sources.⁵⁰ But this does not explain his appropriation of her ethics, nor his unstated citing of her philosophical concepts.

Simons deciphers yet another layer of the Beauvoir-Fanon relation, which is that Beauvoir's inspiration for her construction of women's subjectivity in *The Second Sex* can be found in the critical literature and fiction (and friendship) of Richard Wright.⁵¹ While Fanon was heavily influenced by the work of Beauvoir, he was also inspired by Wright. Simons links Beauvoir's concept of oppression to Wright, revealing a shared resource for Beauvoir and Fanon. Most studies of Beauvoir's philosophy align her with Sartre. Numerous critical essays and books document their long-term relationship, scandalous sexual exploits, and radical political affiliations. But so much is lost in the focus on Sartre, including Beauvoir's affiliation with the civil rights and anticolonial movements, especially their fields of philosophical and literary production.

Simons suggests that Beauvoir's feminist theory developed after her reading of Wright. Wright's autobiography, literature, and literary criticism on the double consciousness of racial oppression formed her philosophical perspective "specifically in providing her with a theory of racial oppression and liberation that she utilized as a model in constructing the theoretical foundations of radical feminism in *The Second Sex* (1949)" (168). The analogy of sexism and racism, Simons argues, is central to Beauvoir's concept of woman as other, as well as her concept of cultural solidarity as the basis of political struggle.⁵² Beauvoir's close relationship with Wright is documented in her journal *America Day by Day* – which Fanon cites in *Black Skin, White Masks* (176). Beauvoir first read Wright's *Native Son* in 1940, but Beauvoir and Wright were "especially close from 1947 to 1955"; in 1945, the inaugural edition of *Les Temps Modernes* published a story by Wright, at a time when Beauvoir was a principal editor (176). In describing the relationship between Beauvoir and Wright, Simons attempts to rethink the tradition of reading Beauvoir's philosophical ideas as

⁵⁰Sarah Relyea provides a detailed account of the influence of Myrdal on *The Second Sex*.

⁵¹Sarah Relyea also provides an account of the Wright-Beauvoir relation.

⁵² As previously stated, the sexism/racism analogy in *The Second Sex* is critiqued by Hill-Collins, Gines, Broeck, and Al-Saji.

applications of Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (1943), by including the literary and critical texts of the civil rights and anticolonial movements (185). In effect, Simons suggests that Beauvoir's feminist philosophy is propagated by her contact with the experiences of racial and colonial injustice, illuminated in the critical and literary work of the colonial authors she chose to publish.

Furthermore, and importantly, Simons explains that the Wright-Beauvoir connection "should help to correct the provincial view that all trans-Atlantic intellectual influence extends westward and that Wright, as an expatriate writer, was only a passive recipient of French influence." Simons concludes, "The broader significance of this research may be in furthering the recognition within the canons of history and philosophy of the significance of theorizing about race and racial oppression" (xv). In other words, the idea that European intellectual movements were influenced by colonial authors challenges the parochialism of Europe, which typically denies any influence from other parts of the modern world.⁵³ The Beauvoir-Fanon-Wright relation, Simons concludes, shows that Beauvoir founded her theory of women's oppression on Wright's theory of racial oppression, while Fanon constructed his theoretical model for the black psyche, primarily from his reading of *The Second Sex*. Hence, it is evident that the dialogism of civil rights, anticolonial struggles, and women's movements of the mid-twentieth century generated a new theoretical understanding of liberation.

The autobiographical and biographical details of the Beauvoir-Fanon relation provide ample grounds not only for criticizing Fanon's failure to cite Beauvoir, but also for identifying the fact of their dialogical relation. Following Simons, Toril Moi takes notice of the link between *The Second Sex* and *Black Skin, White Masks*, to speculate on whether Fanon had been influenced by Beauvoir's concept of woman's consciousness, while Françoise Vergès illustrates this parallel by noting that Fanon was a reader of *Les Temps Modernes*, in which selections from Beauvoir's books were published. More recently, in "Le genre de la race: Fanon, lecteur de Beauvoir," Matthieu Renault corroborates this parallel by citing numerous points of convergence between Fanon and Beauvoir, to argue, after Moi and Vergès, that Beauvoir's feminist philosophy became a model for Fanon's theory of racial oppression. Noting that Fanon's personal library included a copy of Volume One of *The Second Sex*, Renault states that Fanon's appropriation of Beauvoir's thesis "One is not born, one

⁵³ Dipesh Chakrabarty's "The Idea of Provincializing Europe" in *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* attempts to displace the mythic dimensions of Europe, by rerouting it through the histories of modernization in South Asia. A similar argument could be made for the histories of modernization in other parts of the world. For instance, Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* defines the dialogism that developed along African slave trading routes. This scholarship destabilizes the myth of an isolated imperial continent, standing apart from the rest of the modern world.

becomes a woman” is evident in his description of black existence, which Renault interprets as follows: “*one is not born black, one becomes black.*” Arguing that Fanon deliberately “erased every trace of Beauvoir” from *Black Skin, White Masks*, Renault concludes that this elision persists in today’s critical work, notably in Fanon Studies.

Undoubtedly, Fanon read Beauvoir’s published essays. Simons suggests that, in addition to Volume One of *The Second Sex*, Fanon would also have encountered *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, which was published serially in *Les Temps Modernes* in the first six issues of 1947, alongside Sartre’s “What is Literature?” and a translation of Richard Wright’s autobiography *Black Boy* (1945) (Simons 176). We learn also from Vergès that Fanon was a faithful reader of *Les Temps Modernes* (“Creole” 583). Indeed, Fanon cites Sartre’s “What is literature?” and some of Wright’s published translations in *Black Skin, White Masks*. In 1945, both Fanon and Beauvoir would have been reading Wright’s theory of race consciousness – and, early in 1947, Fanon would have begun reading Beauvoir’s *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, prior to the publication of *The Second Sex* in 1949. Gordon refuses to defend Fanon’s failure to acknowledge his indebtedness to Beauvoir. Contrasting Fanon’s acknowledgement of the psychoanalytic contributions of Anna Freud to the exclusion of Beauvoir’s philosophy, Gordon writes that, “it is clear that Beauvoir not only offered much intellectual sustenance for Fanon’s thought but also that he was aware of at least two of her major contributions at the time of writing *Black Skin, White Masks*, as the presence of these books in his home library attests” (WFS 32).⁵⁴ Gordon concludes that the elision of Beauvoir is proof that misogyny was prevalent in the academic discipline of philosophy.

Even Sartre did not defend Beauvoir from the antagonistic press after the publication of *The Second Sex* in 1949, writes Simons. Fanon was most certainly aware of the character attacks on Beauvoir, following the publication of *The Second Sex*. This leads to the speculation that he strategically placed his citations at a distance from her published work in order to avoid its controversy. Gordon intervenes in this debate, to argue that it was not the controversial nature of Beauvoir’s personality, politics, or writing that deterred Fanon, but rather his inability to accept the fact that Beauvoir had made a valid contribution to the male-dominated discipline of philosophy. Affirming Gordon’s view of this sexist culture, Fullbrook adds that the rejection of Beauvoir as a contributor to existentialist philosophy was especially aggressive after the publication of *The Second*

⁵⁴ Gordon’s source for Fanon’s personal library is the catalogue of the *Fonds Frantz Fanon, Centre National de Recherches Préhistoriques, Anthropologiques et Historiques* (CNRPAH, Ministère de la Culture, Algiers, Algeria, 2013) (WFS, Note 33, 156).

Sex (117). Nevertheless, once off the radar, Beauvoir's ideas could be mined and appropriated without acknowledging their authorship.

Notably, Gordon cites Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, in addition to *The Second Sex*, as a major influence on Fanon's understanding of childhood, the limits of the Hegelian dialectic, and the significance of psychoanalysis for analyzing the inevitability of subjective failure in situations of racialization (31). More generally, Gordon establishes a relation between Fanon's *Black Skin, White Mask* and Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, by placing Beauvoir's philosophical concepts of seriousness and childhood in relation to Fanon's well-known misattribution to Nietzsche of Beauvoir's line, "Man's misery is that he was once a child." This error has previously been pointed out by both Moi and Renault, who claim that the correct source is Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (Moi 30). To theorize seriousness, Beauvoir draws on Descartes' concept of childhood, which Fanon then cites from Beauvoir, without providing a citational record, while mistakenly attributing the line to Nietzsche. Gordon argues that Fanon's belief that human development from childhood is limited in the oppressive situation of racialization and colonization comes from his reading of *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. Echoing Simons, Gordon states that it must be understood that Beauvoir constructs her philosophical ideas on the basis of her reading of Wright's critical and literary writings, which analyze black racism in the US. In retelling the multiple parallels, Gordon refrains from accusing Fanon of deliberately appropriating Beauvoir's concepts. Instead, he attempts to underscore the dialogism that produces this particular elision. There are however numerous other omissions of Beauvoir in Fanon's writing. Gordon does not pursue them, instead attributing many of Fanon's ideas to Nietzsche, Jaspers and Sartre, without following up on the extent of influence that Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity* had on Fanon.

Beauvoir's Ambiguous Ethics

Beauvoir defines subjectivity as living consciousness caught in a state of anguish between a purely reflective interiority and a threatened exteriority, exposed to an outside world. This leads consciousness to seek permanent shelter in one of these two forms of experience (*EA* 5-6; *PM* 11-12). Beauvoir calls the escape from anguish an act of bad faith, since, for her ethics, the essential ambiguity of existence is enacted to transcend facticity, despite the risk of failure. Moving beyond factual limitations by ambiguously temporalizing subjectivity is fundamental to Beauvoir's ethics, against the idea that the ambiguity of existence must be transcended. Beauvoir provides a different

definition of ethics – from transcendental ethics – in which contingency and failure are integral to the goal of liberation for all.

Her ambiguous ethics invites an openness to alterity and futurity, yet it is also a situated ethics, which demands that ethical means and ends are validated vis-à-vis concrete particularities. Hence, Beauvoirian ethics proposes that ethical actions are inseparable from their historical contingencies. In other words, specific ethical values are linked to specific situations. This places insurmountable constraints on ethical action, thereby guaranteeing the presence of failure in the realization of ethical projects. It also raises questions in regard to the role that facticity plays in shaping free action.

Thus, contingent constraints may even produce a deterministic outcome, despite efforts to enact freedom. But they may also trigger freedom struggles, which mobilize the ambiguity of existence to liberate subjectivity from factual limitations. Beauvoir's concept of ethical freedom assumes that failure is essential to ethical actions, which are realized in imperfect, concrete forms. Thus, a radical indeterminacy frustrates every ethical action, guaranteeing the fact of failure amidst ethical successes. Ethical value is therefore created vis-à-vis contingency and failure, rather than despite it. In this regard, the ethical value cannot be affirmed apart from its concrete realization, since the creation of value is inseparable from its realization.

A Final Meeting in Rome, 1961: Sartre, Beauvoir, Fanon

It is true by all biographical accounts that Sartre and Beauvoir met Fanon in Rome, along with Claude Lanzmann, shortly before Fanon's death in 1961. Alice Cherki, Fanon's friend and former colleague at the psychiatric hospital in Blida-Joinville, provides a biographical account of her conversations with Fanon, upon his return to Tunis, which she corroborates by referencing Beauvoir's *Force of Circumstance*. David Macey's biographical account of the 1961 meeting also relies heavily on Beauvoir's autobiography. As Macey describes, at this meeting in Rome, Beauvoir discovered Fanon's passionate temperament in his handshake, and his weakened state showed her a man "haunted by death" (458). Beauvoir's encounter with Fanon, in the company of Sartre and Lanzmann, is narrated in her autobiography, although, as Macey points out, Beauvoir "has little to say about the philosophical content of Fanon's discussions with Sartre" (458). Macey assumes that the discussions between Sartre and Fanon were mainly about Sartre's first volume of *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, "and particularly on the themes of fraternity and terror that are so central to *Les Damnés de la Terre*" (458). Macey assumes that Beauvoir is excluded from the philosophical content

of these discussions. In all accounts, it is said that Fanon expressed annoyance with Beauvoir, over her request that Sartre retire for the night.⁵⁵ In response, Beauvoir speculated on the nature of Fanon's anger, which she attributed to his illness, as well as to his experiences of racialization and colonization.⁵⁶ But it was well-known within philosophical and clinical circles that Fanon had an explosive temper, which often repelled his colleagues, according to his mentor in the field of social psychiatry François Tosquelles, as well as his psychiatric hospital colleague Jacques Postel.⁵⁷

According to Cherki, none knew exactly how ill Fanon was at the time of their meeting. He was, in all of the above accounts, travelling from Tunis to northern Italy to seek treatment for rheumatism, a consequence of injuries sustained in Morocco.⁵⁸ But the fact that his leukemia was advancing was apparent to Beauvoir, who foresaw the approach of his death. Agreeing to meet Sartre (and Beauvoir) at a hotel in Rome, where they were vacationing, while escaping the OAS retaliation against Sartre for his support of Algeria, would have been physically and emotionally draining for Fanon, despite his desire to meet Sartre. In Cherki's retelling, after Fanon returned to Tunis, he told her that he had wished to meet Sartre alone. His complaint was that Beauvoir had stolen his opportunity to be with Sartre. Although it is possible to speculate that Fanon had clashed with Beauvoir for other reasons, he told Cherki – as he had told Lanzmann at the hotel – that he did not like people like Beauvoir, who “saved themselves up.” Fanon reserved the term *economiser* to describe people whom he did not like: the bourgeois, for example, who placed limits on free thought.⁵⁹ But Beauvoir was, like Sartre, a supporter of the Algerian Revolution, and together with

⁵⁵ They talked until 2 am, when Beauvoir, concerned about Sartre's ill health, suggested that they end the conversation. As David Macey explains in his biography, Sartre continued to take corydrane and consume alcohol, while completing an article on Merleau-Ponty for *Les Temps Modernes* during his stay in Rome (456). Fanon explained to Lanzmann that his anger at Beauvoir was the result of his not liking people “who spare themselves,” thereby holding Beauvoir responsible for ending his meeting with Sartre. Macey draws on Beauvoir's autobiography for this explanation. In any case, the anger expressed toward Beauvoir by Fanon has recently been revisited by Renault, who links Fanon's dismissive attitude toward Beauvoir, despite her major influence on his philosophy, to sexism.

⁵⁶ Macey writes, “[Fanon] did admit that he feared for his life, when he lost his sight for two or three weeks and felt himself to be sinking into his mattress ‘like a dead weight.’ That he had already been to the USSR for treatment was mentioned almost as an afterthought” (456). According to Cherki, none present at the meeting knew exactly how ill he was (162). Beauvoir's reaction to Fanon's anger is also of interest, since she attributes it to the historical experience of colonization, thereby objectifying him by drawing on large historical categories to explain his specific, concrete behaviors.

⁵⁷ See the accounts of Fanon by François Tosquelles and Jacques Postel.

⁵⁸ Fanon insisted that no attention be paid to his advancing leukemia during his meeting with Lanzmann, Sartre and Beauvoir. Cherki believes that Fanon was determined to focus on his philosophy rather than his illness (160).

⁵⁹ Cherki writes that Beauvoir was never aware of the fact that Fanon did not want her there, which is evident in her memoir: “What she did not know, aside from the fact that Fanon was fighting for his life, was how much he would have preferred to meet just with Sartre. ‘I met Sartre. I wish I could have had a moment alone with him. But Simone was omnipresent, she never left us alone, and she is one of those people who saves themselves up’” (162). David Macey also retells the conflict between Beauvoir and Fanon, but he does not give such a detailed account.

Sartre and Lanzmann, a founding member of the editorial board for *Les Temps Modernes*, making her one of his main editors. In Renault's view, Fanon mobilized Beauvoir's very idea from *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, that it is impossible to place limits on free existence, to oppose her presence in the room. According to Renault, sexism plays a central part in Fanon's anger toward Beauvoir.

Of course, Fanon was aware that he would not live for much longer, after the publication of *The Wretched of the Earth*. He had submitted his manuscript to Lanzmann, who had, at Fanon's request, invited Sartre to write the preface, prior to their meeting in Rome. It is likely that Fanon saw in their meeting the opportunity for an intellectual exchange, which would inspire the writing of the preface. In Cherki's account, Fanon believed that Sartre's name was much more important than the content of the preface.⁶⁰ Sartre's celebrity status might have made his agreement seem crucial for Fanon's posthumous recognition. But his affection for Sartre certainly extended beyond the fact that he was seeking a namesake, since Fanon was one of few who had read Sartre's Volume One of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* before its publication.⁶¹ It is thus assumed that Fanon would have wanted Sartre to write the preface.

In contrast to Cherki, Gordon speculates that, because Fanon had already made a name for himself through the publication of *L'An V*, he did not need Sartre's name to establish himself as a writer.⁶² In an attempt to disprove the view that Fanon was seeking public recognition from Sartre's name, Gordon concludes that the reason for his invitation to Sartre to write the preface was solely intellectual: Fanon likely saw Sartre's reworking of dialectical history in the first volume of *Critique of Dialectical Reason* as a response to Fanon's earlier criticism of "Black Orpheus" in *Black Skin, White Masks*. In his response to "Black Orpheus," Fanon had faulted Sartre for elevating the Marxist dialectic over Negritude. Gordon concludes that Fanon's aim to have Sartre write the preface did not reflect a need for recognition (132).⁶³ But Gordon's reading is complicated by the recent discovery that Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason* fell under the influence of Beauvoir's *The Ethics of*

⁶⁰ Cherki writes "The substance of the foreword was not the important thing here; what was far more important was that Sartre was putting his seal to Fanon's last book, a book that Fanon did not expect to be around to defend when the time came" (162-163).

⁶¹ Cherki points out that Fanon was one of a few at that time who had read Sartre's first volume of *La Critique de la raison dialectique* (160).

⁶² Gordon does not cite Cherki, but he questions the assumption that Fanon was seeking Sartre's namesake, when he asked Sartre to write the preface for *The Wretched of the Earth*. Gordon believes that Fanon was sufficiently established in philosophical circles, and therefore had no need of Sartre's "seal" on his work.

⁶³ Cherki narrates the contents of Fanon's letter to Maspero, in which he requested Sartre for the preface. Fanon writes, "Tell him [Sartre] that I never sit at my desk without thinking of him [...] he who has written so many important things for the future of us all and who cannot find readers at home who still know how to read, or here, on the outside, where they simply cannot read" (160-161).

Ambiguity, as Michel Kail substantiates in “Beauvoir, Sartre, and the Problem of Alterity.”⁶⁴ Clearly, Beauvoir’s influence on Sartre was disregarded by, or more likely unknown to, Fanon, as much as he himself felt it necessary to disregard her contribution to his philosophy.

The editorial collective of *Les Temps Modernes* included Beauvoir, alongside Sartre and Lanzmann, among others, but Beauvoir was largely responsible for the publication of Fanon’s manuscript entitled “On Violence,” later included in *The Wretched of the Earth*. In Chapter 2 of my dissertation, I demonstrate that “On Violence” is structurally and intellectually indebted to Beauvoir’s *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. But this does not disprove Gordon’s understanding that Fanon’s intellectual connection to Sartre, following his reading of Volume One of *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, might explain why Fanon chose Sartre for the preface – over Beauvoir. Yet, it does not take much speculation to know that neither Fanon nor Sartre, nor Lanzmann, would have considered Beauvoir for the preface. After 1949, the early praise for *The Ethics of Ambiguity* had dissipated into an anti-feminist backlash to the publication of *The Second Sex*. Fullbrook, in “Ten Ways to Erase a Woman Philosopher,” argues that the erasure of the woman philosopher explains why Beauvoir was not recognized within her philosophical community. Fullbrook concludes that the only way that Beauvoir could have brought her philosophical ideas to the reading public would have been through her affiliation with “well-connected men” (126). Following Fullbrook, I suggest that Beauvoir’s philosophical views could only have been amplified through her relationship with Sartre, thus excluding her philosophical contribution from the discipline.

At the hotel in Rome, Beauvoir was not invited to participate in the philosophical discussions between Sartre and Fanon, or, at least, her contributions, if any, were not recorded. Renault remarks that Fanon used Beauvoirian terms in his angry outburst in Rome to argue against her presence in the room – without acknowledging her, either in his writing or his personal conversations. Arguing that Fanon used Beauvoir’s own words against her, Renault states that, not only did Fanon decline to acknowledge her philosophical contribution, but he also refused to be

⁶⁴ After citing Beauvoir’s “regimes of alterity” to describe the control of rulers over the conditions of a situation, Michel Kail writes, “In Sartre’s terminology from the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, these regimes of alterity have to be understood as modes of circulation of the third. This is, I believe, proof that Sartre must have heard the Beauvoirian lesson; identity is no longer conceivable without alterity. Henceforth, Sartre conceives of identity and alterity as strict contemporaries” (157). Kail concludes that this particular direction in existentialist philosophy must assume that there is a “Beauvoirian-Sartrean philosophy” (157).

seated with her at a table of philosophers.⁶⁵ As previously stated, Sartre, and other philosophers of the era, did not recognize Beauvoir's philosophical contribution - unsurprisingly, neither did Fanon.

Later that year, in 1961, as Fanon's death approached, *The Wretched of the Earth* was published in France, which led to its negative reception by the French press, followed by its infamous censorship. Just as the French intelligentsia had not been prepared for Beauvoir's critique of women's oppression in 1949, neither were they prepared to receive Fanon's anticolonial critique in 1961, a year prior to the end of French colonial rule in Algeria. Holocaust and genocide theorist Max Silverman views the early 1960s as the unofficial end-date of the immediate post-WWII period, during which time philosophers in Europe had endeavoured to measure the impact of colonial, fascist, and Nazi histories on the concepts of oppression, revolution, and liberation. In this regard, the negative reception of *The Wretched of Earth* in 1961 marked the end of this initial period of an interrelated anti-fascist and anticolonial critique, which had invited racial and colonial histories, alongside European genocidal histories, into philosophy.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter 1, "Childhood, Seriousness and Terror in the Modern World from Beauvoir to Fanon" argues that Beauvoir's theorization of childhood and seriousness provides a critique of authoritarian power, which Fanon then mobilizes to address colonial oppression. This chapter elucidates the dialogical relation between *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947) and *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952). First, I demonstrate that Beauvoir's concepts of childhood and seriousness explicate the violent phenomena of authoritarianism and tyranny in the modern world. She draws her references from the historical resources of Nazism, fascism, and colonialism, thereby creating a lineage for modern political terror. This, she argues, is the consequence of naturalized human hierarchies, reflected in an obedient childhood. Beauvoir's concept of seriousness is therefore founded on the failed trajectory of the child, whose path to ethical freedom is obstructed by reflexive values. Hence, the liberating possibilities of existential freedom are closed off to the serious man, who replicates the subservience

⁶⁵ Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition* writes, "To live together in the world means essentially that the world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it" (cited by Ahmed in *Queer Phenomenology*, 80). Arendt warns that the table as a mediating point for sociality will dissipate with the rise of mass culture. Ahmed, citing Arendt's table, examines the orientation of bodies, extending toward one another, around a focal point, which provides a spatial relation, organizing the processes of sociality and constituting a relational orientation. Implicit in Renault's criticism of Fanon's comportment is the fact that the exchange of philosophical ideas supposes this orientation. I use the table to describe the exclusion of Beauvoir from the spatial relations of sociality, preceding intellectual exchange.

of childhood in adult life. Arguing that a reflexive return to the past endangers ethical freedom, Beauvoir proposes that Cartesian self-critique provides a method of philosophizing with the potential to rupture subservience, thereby triggering a departure from the reflexive repetition of past values. Beauvoir concludes that a lack of self-reflexivity leads subjectivity passively toward authoritarian values, which demand a quasi-religious veneration of idealisms, alongside the willingness to obey leaders. This allows for the rise of tyrants and autocrats.

Beauvoir's concept of authoritarian seriousness is substantiated by her historical references. Hence, her ethics calls for the end of tyranny and authoritarianism by founding the existential humanist project on the repudiation of serious values, which obstruct the path to ethical existence in the modern world. I argue that her concept of authoritarian seriousness provides an important guideline for understanding the rise of authoritarian politics. But, I am also critical of Beauvoir's exclusion of the racialized and colonized other from the self-reflexive possibilities of liberation. Following my explication of Beauvoir's concepts, therefore, I show that Fanon offers another concept of liberation, since his critique of colonialism calls for the self-reflexive, autonomous movement of the racialized and colonized subjectivity toward anticolonial liberation.

This chapter suggests that both Beauvoir and Fanon draw on the interrelated histories of Nazism, fascism, and colonialism. This, I argue, leads them both to conclude that a universal structure of liberation is needed to oppose the quintessentially modern form of authoritarian power, which served as the principal engine for oppression and genocidal violence in both the Holocaust and Empire. Max Silverman elucidates the conceptual break between Western and colonial histories, which was temporarily suspended in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. Within Silverman's periodization, I locate the existential humanism of Beauvoir and Fanon, whose philosophical concepts are inseparable from the histories of civil rights and anticolonial movements, alongside the struggle against anti-Semitism in Europe. I therefore conclude that an interrelational principle of critique in post-WII existentialist philosophy led Beauvoir and Fanon to a shared understanding of liberation as linked to the actual histories of their time.

But, I argue that, despite their dialogical connections vis-à-vis the theorization of modern oppression, Beauvoir and Fanon propose theories of liberation, dependent on the exclusion of others. On the one hand, Beauvoir excludes the slave and harem woman from the potential of self-reflexive liberation, and, on the other hand, Fanon excludes the colonized woman, Jewish history, and the "cripple" from "the liberatory horizons of anticolonial discourse" (Singh 30). Thus, I argue that mid-twentieth century exclusionary practices were imbricated in these theories of liberation. I

conclude that such exclusionary practices must now be transcended, in an effort to theorize more diverse, democratic forms of liberation for the contemporary world.

Chapter 2, “Violence and Revolution: From Beauvoir’s Concept of Revolutionary Violence to Fanon’s Concept of Anticolonial Violence,” demonstrates that Beauvoir’s concept of revolutionary violence in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* is dialogically related to Fanon’s concept of anticolonial violence in “On Violence,” Chapter 1 of *The Wretched of the Earth*. I claim that Fanon mobilizes Beauvoir’s validation of revolutionary violence in cases of absolute oppression, to argue for violent action against the colonizer. My reading of Beauvoir and Fanon on the theme of violence and revolution draws attention to their shared belief that violence cannot be eradicated from the concept of ethical liberation; they both take the position that violence in situations of oppression is potentially legitimate, if corroborated by an examination of concrete particularities. Furthermore, they share the view that violent responses to oppressive violence do not adhere to any *a priori* measure. In other words, the violent action against violent oppression cannot be determined in advance of the situation that produces it, nor can it be assigned an ethical value, since violence is not ethically justifiable in itself. In contrast, the ethical project, deploying violence to revolt against an oppressive state, exists inviolably within the parameters of the violent oppression it opposes. It cannot therefore exist outside the situation that determines its methods, even as it is mobilized to transcend it. Importantly, violent revolt shows that, while living consciousness remains repressed under an inescapable violent oppression, its emergence within this state of violence will express itself violently.

This controversial philosophical position vis-à-vis revolutionary violence, I explain, has been largely viewed as endorsed by Fanon alone. Yet, before Fanon, Beauvoir provided an influential theory of revolutionary violence in her existential ethics of liberation. It is not well-known, since her existential ethics remains underexplored in philosophical debates. But, it is also important to note that, in the immediate post-WWII period, ideas concerning the deployment of violence against oppressive regimes freely circulated in intellectual circles and were, on no account, confined to Beauvoir and Fanon. Hence, isolating Fanon in this regard can be attributed to other motives, mainly the fact that a colonial writer had actively rejected the colonizer’s violent oppression, in its philosophical terms. But the year 1961, the year of the publication of *The Wretched of the Earth*, is also significant, since it falls at the outer limit of Silverman’s periodization for the interrelational principle of critique; hence, the time for considering colonial histories as interrelated with European wars had

come to an end. With the tolerance for such criticisms on the wane, existential concepts addressing oppressive realities were no longer recognized for their critical transformations of the discipline.

Fanon also exposes the colonizer's failure to recognize the existential dimension of colonized peoples, which leads to the assumption that the racialized and colonized subjectivity lacks the ability to autonomously generate its own philosophical liberation apart from the colonizer. I argue that this colonial mindset lies behind Beauvoir's failure to acknowledge the potential for an autonomous insurrectionary movement within slave communities. Despite her denunciation of racial and colonial oppression, Beauvoir does not afford the enslaved subjectivity the space needed to enact its own liberation. Fanon, I argue, moves beyond Beauvoir, by enlisting the colonized subjectivity in the struggle for universal liberation.

Of course, the dialecticism that structures Fanon's understanding of anticolonial violence suggests that a historical conflict between the colonizer and colonized drives the project of universal liberation. While Fanon does consider the fact that anticolonial violence risks producing violent legacies, he does not supply another kind of liberation. Judith Butler, in "Violence, Non-Violence: Sartre on Fanon," asks: "Can he not yet supply it precisely because he is not yet historically there, in the place where it can be imagined?" (18). Importantly, both existentialist thinkers espouse an explicitly anti-fascist and anticolonial politics, which deems that non-violent responses to tyrannical violence provide the space and time for oppressive forces to violently repress democratic ideas and movements, in the absence of effective opposition. Hence, these writers were unapologetic for legitimizing violent revolution in situations of violent oppression.

Chapter 3, "The Intellectual, Artist, and Politician: Three Beauvoirian Prototypes for Fanon's Anticolonial Revolution" demonstrates that both Beauvoir and Fanon provide definitions for ethical subjectivities linked to the ethical programs they undertake. I argue that Fanon appropriates the Beauvoirian prototypes of the intellectual, artist, and politician to construct the figures of the colonized intellectual and the colonized artist, on the one hand, and, on the other, the revolutionary artist and the revolutionary leader. First, I explicate the Beauvoirian prototypes of the intellectual and the artist, to illuminate the difference between the intellectual's failure and the artist's success, in relation to the enactment of ethical freedom. Beauvoir is critical of the objective values created by the intellectual, which, she argues, diverge from the lived experience of oppression. This leads the intellectual into an inert state, vis-à-vis oppressive forces. In contrast, the artist invites a relation to the other into the work of art, thereby creating the conditions for the development of an interrelational existence beyond oppression. Hence, artistic freedom poses a greater threat to

oppressive regimes, since it repudiates the oppressor's demand for the absolute closure of the self in relation to the other.

For Beauvoir, the figure of the artist constitutes the highest form of ethical freedom, to be emulated by not only intellectuals, but all manner of subjectivities, whose goal is to create tangible forms of ethical freedom in the social and political world. Beauvoir urges politicians to develop artistic sensibilities, in order to avert unreflexive political decisions, which produce devastating consequences. Thus, Beauvoir's ethical politician brings the concept of interrelational freedom into pragmatic decision-making, with the goal of creating the concrete conditions for the enactment of ethical existence.

Next, I demonstrate that Beauvoir's three prototypes are appropriated by Fanon for his critique of the colonized intellectual and artist, his invocation of the revolutionary artist, and his counsel to militant leaders, to acquire artistic sensibilities, for the purpose of creating egalitarian forms of democratic governance. Arguing against the colonized intellectual, who serves colonial power in bad faith, Fanon calls on the anticolonial intellectual to enact mass struggle. As Fanon explains, the colonized intellectual maintains the status quo, thereby reaping the economic and political rewards for acquiescing to power. But, in the colonial situation, the artist may also reflect colonial values. Thus, the colonized artist replicates Western art forms, outside colonial experience. Colonial power enters every facet of existence. In response, the revolutionary artist creates works of art that reflect lived realities. The revolutionary artist thus provides the inspiration for an anticolonial revolution, thereby inviting the colonized intellectual to become a militant leader by taking up a politics of solidarity with the masses.

For both Beauvoir and Fanon, retreating from the scene of oppression is never the ethical privilege of the intellectual, artist, or politician. Instead, they must risk exposing themselves to the oppressive regime, which aims to silence dissent. Even aesthetic expressions of human misery are not admissible in authoritarian politics, since they expose the violence of a system that hides its oppressive methods. Hence, any free action, which shines a light on the oppressive experience, is suppressed. Not only writers and critics, therefore, but every subjectivity with the ability to struggle against oppression must do so. Fanon forewarns of a redoubled violence in the future, if colonial power is emboldened, undoing the gains of today's liberation struggles.

Chapter 4, "Manifestos for Future Action: From Beauvoir's Concept of Ethical Action to Fanon's Anticolonial Liberation Struggle," analyzes the conclusions of *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, *Black Skin, White Masks*, and *The Wretched of the Earth*, to argue that the ethical subjectivity cannot be

separated from the concrete struggles for liberation. By naming these conclusions “manifestos,” I show that both Beauvoir and Fanon urge their readers to move beyond the definitions of pasts and futures invoked by oppression, by committing themselves to ethical actions and goals in the present. Hence, the political platform is mobilized for existentialism’s ambiguous revolutionary projects. This follows from the genealogical tradition of political manifestos, aimed at mass society, thereby concretizing philosophical concepts for pragmatic determinations via popular dissemination.

This method of philosophizing, linked to political action, revokes abstract values, which, typically, according to both Beauvoir and Fanon, disregard social and political realities. Hence, the oppressed subjectivity revolts against its violent objective reality with concrete revolutionary actions, to make its freedom tangibly exist in the world. Yet, while Beauvoir draws on the political power of the manifesto to connect her ethics to political projects, in theorizing the movement from a descriptive ontology to a political program, she provides a concept of ethical subjectivity, which is not rooted in any particular situation. In other words, while urging her readers to substantiate the concept of ethics via its enactment, she addresses a *non-particular* subjectivity drawn from her phenomenological description of the oppressed, rather than any specific subjectivity. Even as she militates for a philosophical attentiveness to concrete realities, her *ontological ethics* does not foreground subjective experiences. In contrast, Fanon foregrounds the subjective experience of oppression by addressing his philosophical manifestos to the oppressed, vis-à-vis the particularity of their situation. He therefore provides a *concrete ethics*. In so doing, he draws attention to the previously marginalized histories of racial and colonial oppression, which, he concludes, provide resources for the validation of liberation struggles. This allows for the recognition of traditionally excluded subjectivities within an understanding of universal liberation.

After explicating Beauvoir’s call for future ethical action in the conclusion of *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, this chapter turns to Fanon. But I reverse the chronology of Fanon’s texts, beginning with an examination of the conclusion of the 1961 publication, *The Wretched of the Earth*, which calls for a political revolution. I contrast this call for a violent, collective revolt to the 1952 conclusion of *Black Skin, White Masks*, which foregrounds the role of self-reflexivity and communicative, dialogical relations for the enactment of liberation. Drawing on Beauvoir’s Cartesian concept of self-critique to theorize ethical liberation allows Fanon, in the conclusion of *Black Skin, White Masks*, to provide a guideline for a new concept of the human beyond violent revolution. Fanon anchors this new concept of the human in the first- and second-person voices, setting aside third-person, reflexive categorizations. This suggests that a new concept of ethics beyond the call for anticolonial violence

is possible via both the self-reflexive “I” and the dialogical encounter with the “you.” I therefore conclude this chapter by suggesting that new theories of liberation must rethink the possibility for interrelational freedom beyond oppression.

Each of my chapters ends with a reflection on the importance of the existential ethics of liberation for a new ethical exigency. After theorizing the linkage between Beauvoir and Fanon, I conclude that their existential humanism and ethics offer an anticolonial inheritance, which can be mobilized to critically investigate the lived experiences of the oppressed in the contemporary world. An ethics is now needed to make sense of the new forms of oppression, which have their origins in racial and colonial pasts. Hence, I conclude that viewing Beauvoirian ethics in relation to Fanon’s anticolonial theory provides a possible resource for the development of new ethical projects, seeking new concepts and strategies for new revolutions.

CHAPTER 1: CHILDHOOD, SERIOUSNESS, AND TERROR IN THE MODERN WORLD: THEORIZING OPPRESSION FROM BEAUVOIR TO FANON

Authoritarian seriousness leads to the horrors of Holocaust and Empire attests Beauvoir. She theorizes the linkage between childhood and seriousness, to explicate the historical phenomena of tyrants and dictators. Beauvoir's concept of seriousness views an obedient childhood as obstructionist to the goal of existential freedom, since it precedes an unreflexive adherence to idealisms in adult life. Indeed, the adult's lack of self-reflexivity reproduces childhood subservience, but with the caveat that the adult's actions incite terror in the social and political world. Consequently, Beauvoir's "serious man" acts in bad faith, since faith in idealisms demands that the oppression underlying unethical means and ends remains concealed – or mystified. Thus, the process of mystification is essential to serious goals. This results in the worship of authoritarian leaders, and a willingness to serve their projects. Hence, the serious subjectivity falls to one of the lowest rungs on Beauvoir's hierarchy of ethical prototypes. On the lowest rung, the sub-man bows to the whims of its master, and, on the rung directly above, the serious man suppresses a relation to the other and an open future, to fulfill external ideals.

Beauvoir's concept of authoritarian seriousness is mobilized by Fanon to critique colonial oppression. Hence, colonial power constructs a serious world, in which the serious goals of the colonizing power produce the violent histories of racialization and colonization. Fanon therefore appropriates Beauvoir's concept of seriousness to rethink colonial oppression as the consequence of an unreflexive reiteration of serious values. The colonizer is therefore emblematic of the serious man, wreaking terror across the colonial world to instill Western ideals. The colonial project is thus definitively unethical.

I argue for the recognition of a dialogical relation between Beauvoir's concept of seriousness in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, and Fanon's critique of colonial power in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Part 1 of this chapter reconstructs Beauvoir's two prototypes of bad faith, which deny their freedom – the sub-man and the serious man – to argue that unethical actions are the result of serious values. Beauvoir examines the failure of these two figures to engage the self-and-world phenomenological relation, which would otherwise radically open their projects to relations with others, and to an open future. Beauvoir's phenomenological description of the colonizer shows that colonialism is prototypically serious, in view of its abstract philosophical claim of Western progress. This draws attention to the negative impact of the colonial relation on the development of an ethical existence.

Part 2 of this chapter argues that Fanon, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, redeploys Beauvoir's critique of seriousness to describe the colonial experience. But, in following her prototypical descriptions of seriousness, he departs from them, to provide a first-person account of the oppressive experience. Thus, he concludes that a self-reflexive understanding of the limitations imposed by the serious world is needed for the colonized subjectivity to free itself from colonial power. In so doing, Fanon draws out the connections between an emergent anticolonial subjectivity and black history, thereby widening the scope of phenomenological inquiry, to include racial and colonial difference. Finally, by critiquing the racial and colonial abstractions implicit in the colonizer's serious worldview, Fanon repudiates the ethical claims of Western power. Thus, he inverts the tropes of racialization and colonization, to reveal their dehumanizing effect, such as the *Y a bon Banania* advertisement discussed in this chapter.

But, after analyzing their respective contributions to the development of a critical concept of oppression, which investigates the ethical failures of seriousness, I have discovered specific limitations within their concepts vis-à-vis the possibilities for existential liberation. I conclude that both existentialist thinkers must also be critiqued for the way in which their theorizations are imbricated in the logics of the power they oppose. In my Introduction, I showed that the recent critical race scholarship on Beauvoir has pointed out the limitations in Beauvoir's understanding of liberation vis-à-vis hegemonic ideals. Without a critical analysis of these limitations, I argue, her existential concepts cannot be mobilized to theorize the more diverse, democratic projects of liberation needed today.

Fanon also worked within the same logics of power. Many scholars have studied Fanon's unnuanced repetition of colonial attitudes toward the colonized woman, which produces a masculine concept for the anticolonial subjectivity.⁶⁶ Recently, Julietta Singh has argued that the colonial logics of power retains a concept of self-mastery, which gives subjectivity the goal of mastering the self and other, via projects with a delimited individualistic determination. Fanon, she

⁶⁶ Rey Chow, Diane Fuss, Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks, and others have addressed the suppression of the colonized woman in Fanon's writing. I mainly refer to Julietta Singh, who argues that certain "sacrificial frames" permeate "the liberatory horizons of anticolonial discourse" (30). She states that these "frames" are populated by "colonized women, indigenous peoples, the 'uncivilized' groups of the emergent nation-state, the animal, the cripple, and nature itself" (31). She concludes that anticolonial movements assumed that certain forms of colonial domination must remain suppressed within the concept of liberation. Françoise Vergès in "Chains of Madness, Chains of Colonialism: Fanon and Freedom" calls Fanon's revolutionary discourse "a powerful yet ultimately flawed discourse about emancipated masculinity" (65). She thus assumes that there is no space in Fanon's theorization of revolution for a post-masculinist emancipation. Later in my dissertation, I show that Butler follows the critiques of Fanon's masculinism with a different reading of Fanon, which suggests the possibility that Fanon also offers a concept of liberation that exceeds all known categories of identification.

argues, provides an ethics for a putative masculinist, but also a racially-specific, able-bodied subjectivity, which further marginalizes vulnerable others. The process of othering therefore reappears in his philosophical concepts, despite efforts to oppose this process. This raises the question of whether, in studying a genealogical tradition, critically examining the limits imposed by the point of history at which particular philosophies originate, is essential for mobilizing the critical power of the genealogical tradition to redress its historical limitations and move beyond them.

The Beauvoirian themes of childhood, seriousness, and mystification are crucial to the development of the critical concept of oppression. Hence, this chapter begins by explicating Beauvoir's concepts of childhood, seriousness, and mystification, in order to shed light on the importance of her theoretical understanding of oppression, vis-à-vis Fanon. Yet, even as both thinkers were aware of the ways in which the very work of existence and freedom is undermined by the phenomenon of reflexive repetition, neither were fully alert to how they were missing some of these obfuscations in their own theoretical projects. Hence, my chapter also reveals the limitations implicit in their concepts.

PART 1: Beauvoir's Concept of Oppression

Beauvoir elucidates a critique of oppression, which rejects the practice of abstract philosophizing. She argues that metaphysical forms have historically repressed human existence, by eclipsing the ambiguity of lived experience. Hence, her philosophical method brings the concrete situation and historical particularity into a concept of existence. In *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, she accuses the oppressor of unethically validating violent means and ends, which produce concrete forms of oppressive existence. In general, Beauvoir's prototypical figures of bad faith enact projects that declare themselves to be ethical, while mystifying their oppressive foundations. Thus, Beauvoir argues for the demystification of the oppressive relation, in order to expose the unethical goals of oppressive forces.

Beauvoir draws on Descartes' concept of self-doubt, in order to reject a reflexive adherence to past values. This would entail radically questioning unconsciously-held convictions, to critically rethink inherited values vis-à-vis the present.⁶⁷ Her citation of Descartes to describe the manifestations of bad faith importantly explicates the authoritarian impulse ingrained in modern

⁶⁷ Beauvoir's philosophy follows Descartes' "radical critique of dogmatic and habitual thinking," which aims "to question one's own preconceptions, to take responsibility for one's own beliefs and convictions through self-criticism" (Heinämaa 5). This leads Beauvoir to forego systems of thought that justify their findings in the absence of a relation to the world. Rather, she believes that actions must be validated with evidence and communication.

consciousness. Beauvoir's historical context is evident in her description of fascist, Nazi, and colonial oppressors. Hence, she finds several historical resources to corroborate her theorization of oppression. In this regard, she discovers the hidden motivation to brutalize and dehumanize others embedded in Western ideals, which, she argues, require demystification.⁶⁸ This concept of demystification is central to her critique of oppression.

Despite her important contribution to the critical project of demystifying oppression, I show that Beauvoir's mobilization of the Cartesian description of childhood also leads her back to certain reflexive ideas, since she reverts to abstractions to describe the slave and harem woman, as inherently childlike, thereby reproducing racial and colonial exclusions from the possibilities of liberation. The major failure in Beauvoir's theorization of oppression, I argue, is that she did not consider the implications of deploying racial and colonial abstractions. Nevertheless, Beauvoir does provide an important phenomenological method for the description of oppressive existence, which becomes crucial for the development of Fanon's theory of colonial oppression.

From Childhood to Seriousness

The search for truth in the evidence of lived experience leads Beauvoir to affirm the essential place of childhood in the choices that adults make, which, she argues, must be identified if we are to view dogmatic beliefs as a reflection of the seriousness that calls for a passionate obedience to given values. Bringing the concept of childhood into her writing allows Beauvoir to challenge the predominance of philosophical reason, since her plea to examine the historical sources of existence opposes the notion that actions can be evaluated on the basis of reason alone. Reason limits the study of existence to a dehistoricized subjectivity, which cannot explain the habitual return to convention. If faith in existing values is not questioned, the reconstruction of past forms, including religious, social, and political systems, simulates the child's natural acceptance of 'ready-made values,' but it is actually a perversion, since adults are no longer children. Along these lines, adults who uncritically reconstitute the given world revoke their ethical responsibility to enact their freedom, which demands the radical questioning of inherited values.

⁶⁸ Demystification is defined as the process of exposing the hidden resources power, in order to critique power, which thereby validates the overthrow of this power. For Marx, the concept of mystification is both theoretically important, in that it validates ontological realities vis-à-vis economics, but it also exposes the "phantasmagoric form" of value, which leads to revolution, as the ultimate demystification, from all forms of mystification (Vioulac). Beauvoir and Fanon, I argue, draw on the Marxist concept of demystification to critique oppression.

Beauvoir thus begins her chapter entitled “Personal Freedom and Others” by citing Descartes in her opening line: “Man’s unhappiness, says Descartes, is due to his having first been a child” (*EA* 37; *PM* 47). Descartes enables her to propose that the evolution of subjectivity encompasses the movement from the contingent freedom of the child to the ethical freedom of the adult. In her view, the preliminary stage of childhood establishes the site to which subjectivity unconsciously returns, making the later contravention of beliefs a lifelong struggle. Since the given world cannot be contravened by the child, but only affirmed, the child must assume already existing values, whose facts appear as absolute truths. Beauvoir writes, “This means that the world in which he lives is a serious world, since the characteristic of the spirit of seriousness is to consider values as ready-made things” (*EA* 37-38; *PM* 47). But the child is not innately serious. In fact, the child’s lack of seriousness is a privilege, which allows him to lose himself in play by passionately fulfilling self-made goals, with no bearing on the social and political world.⁶⁹ Evidently, child’s play is unlike the “real world,” in which the child must respect and obey “parents and teachers” as “divinities” (*EA* 38; *PM* 48).

The child learns to become conscious of his own existence by beginning to see in himself the being he attributes to the adult, while, at the same time, learning to adhere to the principles decreed by a sovereign, thus setting up for a future in which he strives to become the being he reveres on the one hand, and on the other, in which he grows to be a disciple of absolute authorities. Both behavioural patterns are integral to the making of the oppressive relation. Unhappily, childhood prepares subjectivity to make ethically questionable choices, in light of a childhood dominated by conformity and obedience. Hence, subjectivity requires a philosophical description of existence to elucidate the nature of the existential choice vis-à-vis ethics, thereby providing a definitive ethical ground for judging the validity of free actions.

Thinking of oneself as an idol and engaging in idolatry comprise the two forms of the perversion of childhood. While the child plays at fulfilling inconsequential goals, for the adult, it is not playful to engage in unvalidated projects, since the impassioned actions of adults toward particular goals have repercussions in the social and political world. Furthermore, the worship of

⁶⁹ I use the masculine pronoun for my analyses, to make them resonate with the original text. But I suggest that the subjectivities under discussion are open to gender-diverse interpretations. Nonetheless, I assume that both Beauvoir and Fanon construct authoritarian figures, such as colonial administrators or fascist dictators, who are specifically masculinist. Later in my dissertation, I show that gender and racial divisions, however pertinent to the description of prototypical behaviours, have negative consequences for constructing solidarities that must blur the divisive lines separating racial and gender categorizations. I also affirm the critique of Fanon’s masculinist concept of anticolonial revolution for its limited view of liberation.

idols threatens the ability of the adult to concretely express free choice outside the limits of convention, which leads to the unconscious replication of inherited values that do not address present concerns. Finally, the child is free of the metaphysical anguish of freedom, but the adult cannot successfully remain free of it; if he does, he becomes infantile, with its connotations of immaturity. Instead, the adult must engage in ambiguous activities that aim to escape servility, which therefore incites the state of anguish essential to the pursuit of freedom. The veneration of idols begins in childhood, but risks inflicting harm to the self and other in the adult world. In effect, where subjectivity reveres idols, the stage is set for the destructive behaviour of authoritarian systems, whose leaders remain unaccountable for their actions, even resorting to childish pretexts to counteract the danger they pose to others. These ingenuous personas, which nonetheless wield power, lure adults seeking solace in the absolute truths of their youth, despite the negative consequences of their devotion. Hence, acts of bad faith are inextricably bound to the experience of childhood – and the risk of their escalation cannot be dismissed.

Beauvoir's Racial and Colonial Abstractions

Beauvoir investigates the destructive effects of seriousness in the adult world, but her attribution of childhood to the slave and harem woman is incorrect on several levels. After examining the situation of oppressed peoples who do not rebel, she concludes that, in certain oppressive situations, the formation requisite for revolutions does not appear to be accessible. Thus, she reasons that in these particular situations – *essentially* – the predisposition to transcendence is not present. But her argument is flawed, both in her estimation of the requisite formation available *and* in her essentializing claim. This leads her to conclude that there is no essential predisposition for transcendence in slave and harem communities.

While her attention to the colonial experience is foregrounded, which has consequences for her project overall, since her work provides a resource for the subsequent development of an anticolonial philosophical position, this does not clear Beauvoir of a critical evaluation of these wrong estimations. Following the conclusions in the recent scholarship by Gines et al., I argue that her objectifications of race and colonialism cannot be overlooked, since they uncover a central flaw in the concept of existential liberation. My aim is therefore to identify her failure to jettison the abstract figures of the colonial world from her theorization of oppression. In Part 2 of this chapter, I show that shedding colonial descriptions of the other is the focus of Fanon's subsequent critique.

It might seem incongruous to propose that Beauvoir reverts to the categories of colonial knowledge, since I argue that Beauvoir is critical to the development of Fanon's anticolonial philosophy. But her abstractions in fact elucidate the colonial tropes, analogies, and metaphors, central to Western archival knowledge, as described by Said.⁷⁰ Recently, as I have shown, the field of critical race feminism has produced strong criticisms of the colonial abstractions that trouble Beauvoir's concept of liberation, primarily women's liberation. While the main focus of these investigations is *The Second Sex*, some attention is paid to *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. Generally, these critics take the position that Beauvoir must be held to account for offering an essentializing claim in lieu of a deeper investigation of the concrete situation. In *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, this scholarship argues, the prototypical colonial figures of the 'happy slave' and the 'harem woman' reiterate classical objectifications. Consequently, Beauvoir's observations of the oppressive situations of slavery, specifically those of black slaves and Arab harem women, led her to essentialize their lack of predisposition to transcendence. According to her theorization of oppression, these figures exist in an infantile state, without access to the tools that would enable transcendent possibilities beyond oppression. She describes them as living like children, whose contingent freedom has no impact on the social and political world, in which the struggle for freedom takes place. Even as they are oppressed, they remain incapable of realizing themselves as oppressed, since they have no awareness of the injustice of their situation.⁷¹

The slave and harem woman in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* reveal, according to Beauvoir's critics, that Beauvoir's prototypes reiterate the colonial idea that liberation is fundamentally Western, despite the fact that Beauvoir contests this view in her rejection of abstract humanism.⁷² Hill-Collins argues that it is not the analogical form per se that determines the method of exclusion, but rather the fact that Beauvoir's uncritical analogies function as "shortcuts to build her case about oppression" (328). Accordingly, Hill-Collins is critical of *The Ethics of Ambiguity* for deploying the figure of the child as the "trope for natural freedom," to advance a theory of liberation, dependent

⁷⁰ I discuss Said in my Introduction.

⁷¹ Beauvoir is critical of the conservative, who treats the working-class or "native" as "a grownup child" (EA 92; PMA 108). But, in her view, extreme forms of oppression produce the conditions for the development of adults with childish dispositions. She opposes the conservative, by arguing that, once the radically oppressed are made aware of their oppression, revolt is inevitable. But it requires an intervention from the adult world. Of course, as Gines shows, this view of the oppressed wrongly assumes that liberation is not already present, in, for instance, slave communities.

⁷² Kathryn T. Gines (2014) relaunched the conversation begun by Elizabeth Spelman (1988) in regard to Beauvoir's analogy of racial and gender oppression. While Gines mentions *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, her focus is on *The Second Sex*. Hill-Collins also focuses her criticism on *The Second Sex*, but she does also offer an analysis of *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, as do Sabine Broeck (2017) and Alia Al-Saji (2018). Their implicit argument is that the concept of freedom as fundamentally Western may lead to the assumption that non-Western cultures are not predisposed to freedom.

on the antagonistic iterations of the adult child, typically portrayed by the slave (329). Hence, Hill-Collins concludes that the slave figure is perceived as essentially hostile to the liberated consciousness, and in need of Western intervention. On the one hand, the “happy slave” echoes the trope of racialization, which effectively suppresses “African American responses to slavery, incarceration, the denial of education and scientific discourse and popular culture that recasts Black culture as carefree and already strangely ‘free’” (Hill-Collins 328).⁷³ Thus, Hill-Collins points out that the impact of the concrete experience of enslavement on resistance is not acknowledged in Beauvoir’s construction of slave consciousness.

On the other hand, the “harem woman” stands in more generally for Arab and Muslim women and ‘woman’ outside the West. Their infantilization in Beauvoir’s writing reinforces the suppression of the colonial woman in the concept of existence.⁷⁴ Sabine Broeck explains that, in *The Second Sex*, the abstraction of the colonial woman provides a foil for the Western woman in Beauvoir’s slave/woman analogy – a “seductive analogy of woman and slave that, in the long history of Western white feminism, dates back to early foundational texts like Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication*” (98). She thus connects Beauvoir’s deployment of this analogy to a long tradition in feminist writing, dating back to Wollstonecraft. The idea that both slave and ‘harem woman’ are essentially passive, and thus incapable of active resistance, is arrived at via the observations of an outsider. The outcome is the positive projection of liberation, including women’s liberation, as a Western phenomenon, dependent on the abstraction of the colonial other.

According to Broeck, Beauvoir’s disavowal of slave experience is attributed to the fact that, in France of the 1940s and 50s, the figure of the slave “had an entirely Hegelian/Kojevian horizon” that made no reference to the history of modern slavery (101). She concludes that the Hegelian allegory in postwar French philosophy erases the experience of black enslavement. Since Fanon employed the Hegelian allegory to describe the black experience of slavery after Beauvoir, however, it can be assumed that Beauvoir did not learn from Fanon’s redeployment of Hegel, which she must

⁷³ CLR James’s *The Black Jacobins* (1938) narrates the history of slave rebellions from the inception of modern enslavement. Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic* (1995) proposes that the slave ship disseminated revolutionary ideas in the colonies, bringing existing anti-slavery struggles into contact with worldwide democratic movements.

⁷⁴ Hill-Collins also offers a critical investigation of the colonial attitude toward class in Beauvoir’s writing: “Beauvoir’s treatment of class also falls victim to the analogical thinking of her race/gender analogy. Because Black people are so closely associated with slavery, Black people become a class like no other, a ‘class’ without internal distinctions of economic status, gender or citizenship.” She concludes, “By default, in keeping with both neo-classical economics and Marxist social thought, class is white, Western, and male-defined” (330). Thus, the intersection of Marxist and anticolonial struggles is not pursued in Beauvoir’s writing, even as she juxtaposes these struggles in her phenomenological description of the oppressed.

have learned from reading *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952).⁷⁵ Although Fanon's work postdates her own interpretation of the Hegelian allegory for *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, and later for *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir did not return to re-examine this view after the end of the early postwar period, in response to Fanon's emphasis on slave history.

In *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, the woman and slave function as "rhetorical levers" to explicate the view of the slave and harem woman as a reflection of pure immanence, negatively defined along the lines of Nietzsche's slavish consciousness, in which the slave is made responsible for enacting a faithful submission (Broeck 103-104). In Beauvoir's interpretation, the slave and harem woman cannot independently revolt against their situation. Regrettably, Broeck argues, the woman/slave figure "actually serves to hide the actual resistant agency, which enslaved peoples – not the rhetorical figure of the 'slave' in post-Enlightenment philosophy – have had in European and New World history" (105). Susan Buck-Morss has discovered that the link between Hegel and the Haitian Revolution is missing in studies of Hegel's philosophy. Alternatively, she proposes that the history of anticolonial revolt triggered the development of Hegel's concept of freedom.⁷⁶ Much earlier, C.L.R James's *The Black Jacobins* (1938) describes the active resistance of the enslaved from the inception of the slave trade onward. Yet, Broeck observes, the slave figure in Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity* remains a "static, metaphysical figure, not a human being enslaved" (105). Hence, the historical struggles against modern enslavement are not present in Beauvoir's writing, while "a stock figure of racism" is deployed, apart from "herself as a free agent" (106). Broeck, along with Hill-Collins and others, suggests that Beauvoir narrows her definition of freedom to Western struggles.

The figure of the infantile slave is most clearly found in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* in Beauvoir's "old Negro slaves" of the Carolinas "who were bewildered by a freedom which they didn't know what to do with and who cried for their former masters" (cited by Broeck 105). In Broeck's reading, the hierarchical relation between master and slave allows the free white subject to symbolize "an unnamed instance of responsibility and oversight," while the "ignorant slave" – in Beauvoir's words – must be "furnish[ed] with the means of transcending his situation by means of revolt, to put an end to his ignorance" (cited by Broeck 106). For Beauvoir, slave consciousness cannot be liberated by the slave's own agency and requires "the intervention of the free moral subject to act for

⁷⁵ Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* was originally edited by Francis Jeanson, an editor of *Les Temps Modernes*. Although there is no proof to support the claim that Beauvoir read *Black Skin, White Masks*, it can be assumed that she had read it. An editor at *Les Temps Modernes*, she was later responsible for editing and publishing Fanon's "On Violence."

⁷⁶ Susan Buck-Morss, in *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History* (2005), argues that modern slave and colonial resources are essential to Hegel's theorization of universal freedom.

liberation” (106). Consequently, the trope of the ‘white burden’ further instills the perception that the white master is naturally free, while the black slave remains constitutively outside freedom.⁷⁷ Thus, Beauvoir concludes that the only freedom open to the slave is to remain contingently free within a community of slaves, where the slave could finally “live as a free and moral man within his world” (cited by Broeck 106). In this regard, Beauvoir’s slave figure is not (yet) the Hegelian slave who risks life in anticipation of liberation (107). Broeck analyzes Beauvoir’s use of the verb “furnish” to reflect on the missing subject of the action. This suggests that, by concealing the identity of the free subject, which manifests the process of mystification, the master guards against the slave’s independent appropriation of freedom for itself. In other words, the concept of liberation requires the suppression of the slave’s self-defined engagement, and demands the master’s seizure of freedom, which enables the latter to determine the conditions of liberation for the oppressed (107).

In addition to the “negro slaves” of the Carolinas, harem women are also thought of as adult children in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*.⁷⁸ Beauvoir’s analysis of the harem introduces her concept of women’s oppression, but it is more fully developed in *The Second Sex*.⁷⁹ Along with the slave, the harem woman places further limits on access to the requisite formation for transcendence from within the state of oppression. Alia Al-Saji cites Beauvoir’s objectification of Muslim and Arab women in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* as follows:

⁷⁷ Broeck calls the white man’s burden “the free person’s intimate burden,” referring to the slave, who serves as a source of negation to support the free agent. But this presumes that the free agent chooses the methods for indoctrination (106). Thus, the free person is “burdened” by the interruption of an otherwise ‘pure’ freedom, if obliged to choose for the other. Underlying the concept of the white man’s burden is the assumption that the slave is fundamentally antagonistic to the advancement of freedom.

⁷⁸ Broeck writes, “The oscillation of *Ethics* around the figure of the slave carries over into a series of tenuous deliberations about women’s situation; in *Ethics*, she already begins to put in place the slave’s symbolic potency to discuss women’s oppression, which she will extend into a full-blown allegory, and thus empower considerably, in *The Second Sex*” (107). She thus observes that Beauvoir’s initial description in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* is further developed into a colonial theory of women’s oppression, which narrows the concept of women’s liberation to a Western origin.

⁷⁹ Images of the harem are found in the French mythologies of the Orient. Said describes the Orientalist mythology of women’s sexuality in nineteenth-century French literature, especially the writings of Gérard de Nerval and Gustave Flaubert, which reveal a fascination in French society with dangerous seductress figures such as “Cleopatra, Salome and Isis” on the one hand, and on the other, with female perversion and animality in, for example, the “dumb and irreducible sexuality” of the Egyptian dancer and courtesan Kuchuk Hanem in Flaubert’s Oriental travel memoir entitled *Flaubert in Egypt*. Said writes, “[Kuchuk Hanem] was surely the prototype of several of his novels’ female characters in her learned sensibility, delicacy, and (according to Flaubert) mindless coarseness. What he especially liked about her is that she seems to place no demands on him, while the ‘nauseating odor’ of her bedbugs mingled enchantingly with ‘the scent of her skin, which was dripping with sandalwood’” (*Orientalism* 186-7). The Arab woman’s sexuality is marked by base animal instinct and vermin-like horror. This further reveals a repressed repulsion, which generates attraction in characterizations of women in Orientalist literature. Beauvoir’s understanding of the harem is likely influenced by these popular mythicisms.

[T]he Black slave of the 18th century, the Muslim women enclosed in the depths of the harem, do not have any tools that allow them to attack, be it in thought, be it by astonishment or anger, the civilization that oppresses them. Their behaviour is defined and can only be judged within this given situation. (cited by Al-Saji, corrected translation 44)

Aside from the obvious elision of the intersectional experience of “Black Muslim slaves” and the incipient trope of racial difference that will come to define women’s liberation in contrast to slavery in *The Second Sex*, Al-Saji describes Beauvoir’s conclusion that the Western woman is complicit in her oppressive situation, and therefore ethically positioned to liberate herself. Accordingly, Beauvoir defines the Western woman’s predisposition to transcendence as available to her from within her oppressive state, which is not absolute, in opposition to the oppressive world of slaves and Muslim women, who cannot independently enact their liberation from within their situations. In other words, particular racialized and gendered others are placed at the margins of the struggle for liberation, which, according to Al-Saji, projects them outside time, “projected backward in the linear colonial construction of time, which Beauvoir repeats in her narrative and which was part of the self-justification of French colonialism” (45). In this regard, the open future, requisite for existential freedom, is closed off for the racial and colonial other.

Distancing the slave and Muslim woman from the tools and formation required for their access to transcendence assumes their passivity. I concur with Al-Saji’s claim that Beauvoir excludes the possibility that responses of wonder and astonishment, for instance, may constitute expressions of liberation, beyond the normative understanding of revolutionary action. Beauvoir therefore concludes that the formative state of interiority, in which reflective thought or affective expressions are formed, is not available for the evolution of consciousness toward freedom (Al-Saji 45-46). Therefore, since situations of absolute oppression – the particular situations of racial and colonial oppression – define the limits of freedom for Beauvoir, she cannot conceive of freedom emerging from within them. Hence, Beauvoir assumes that theories of liberation must invoke the West as the cause for the evolution of universal liberation in the modern world.

I conclude that Beauvoir’s claim that there is no essential predisposition for transcendence in slave and harem communities reveals serious elisions of oppressed peoples and histories. Of course, this complicates my argument that Beauvoir’s work builds a conceptual resource for the development of an anticolonial philosophy. But, as I will show, Fanon’s appropriation of Beauvoirian ethics sets aside her objectifications. Importantly, Fanon does not return to either of Beauvoir’s abstract figures in his writing, despite being largely influenced by *The Ethics of Ambiguity*.

Furthermore, he displaces Beauvoir's "happy slave" by invoking the *Y a bon Banania* figure, which thoroughly refutes the validity of racial objectifications. Yet, Fanon does redeploy Beauvoir's concepts of childhood, seriousness, and mystification, to describe the obstructions to freedom found in modern subjectivity, which, he argues, is indelibly marked by the historical period of black enslavement and colonial oppression. I further develop this argument in Part 2 of this chapter.

The Bad Faith of the Sub-man and the Serious Man

Beauvoir's concept of childhood is linked to her description of the ethical failures of the sub-man and the serious man. I examine these two figures of bad faith, to account for the resources that they provide for Fanon's anticolonial philosophy. Furthermore, by critically analyzing Beauvoir's views on antisemitism, and Nazi collaboration and resistance, in relation to her understanding of colonial history, I show that her concept of oppression elucidates the underlying interconnections amongst the different manifestations of historical violence, to corroborate a theoretical understanding of modern oppression.

Unlike the slave and harem woman, whom Beauvoir places outside universal history, her figures of bad faith are held accountable for their ethical failures. Hence, the bad faith of the sub-man and the serious man offer important figurations of the oppressive relation, with overlapping historical references to fascist, Nazi, and colonial histories. Therefore, Beauvoir's prototypes reveal the unethical character of the oppressor, which paradoxically succumbs to a servile state, vis-à-vis the worship of external ideals. The oppressor's projects, which inflict pain and suffering on the other, are the result of an unexamined faith in serious goals, elevated above oppressive methods and outcomes. Beauvoir defines bad faith as the activity of free choice in projects that have not been subjected to the self-critique needed for an awareness of the fallibility of consciousness. As a result, activities pursued in bad faith possess no ethical validity, which leaves them open to enacting oppression. This creates the space for tyrants to emerge. In response, the ethical project must be transgressive, according to Beauvoir, since opposing the oppressor's appropriation of violence for the accomplishment of serious goals becomes the only ethically legitimate activity in times of oppression.

Furthermore, since violence is mystified by the oppressors, an ethics must disclose or "demystify" the hidden sources of power. In the absence of this critical task, all revolutionary activities are at risk of serving the interests of the powerful. This leads oppressive projects to pose as liberationist, or liberationist projects to reiterate the logics of power. Hence, even activities

demanding the liberation of the oppressed play into the hands of the powerful, if they do not interrogate their unconscious alignment with power. Bad faith must thus be opposed by self-reflexive movements that take account of the oppressive relation.

The Bad Faith of the Sub-man

Beauvoir's metaphor of the ladder illuminates the hierarchical divisions of bad faith. The respective activities of her prototypes are assembled into classes, which trace an evolving consciousness toward ethical liberation. Occupying "the lowest rung of the ladder" is the sub-man (*EA* 45; *PMA* 56). Sub-men generally "have eyes and ears, but from their childhood on they make themselves blind and deaf, without love and without desire" (*EA* 45; *PMA* 56). Their choices eliminate all of the risks associated with ontological freedom. While bad faith allows the sub-man to escape the risk of failure, it also excludes him from the passions of love and desire. Since he lacks the ability to love others, the idea of ethical freedom is abhorrent. Beauvoir views the abandonment of free choice by the sub-man as unethical, since "the rejection of existence is still another way of existing," which makes the sub-man responsible for his violent actions (*EA* 47; *PMA* 57). Beauvoir writes, "He cannot prevent himself from being a presence in the world, but he maintains this presence on the plane of bare facticity" (*EA* 46; *PMA* 57). Thus, the effort to make himself a pure facticity demands the self-driven mobilization of his original freedom or the "nothingness which is at the heart of man" – in other words, the consciousness he has of himself becomes the source of his unethical choice (*EA* 47; *PMA* 57).

Evidently, the sub-man's violence does not allow for the transcendence of facticity, since such actions do not aim at liberation. Instead, the sub-man finds temporary refuge from the anguish of existence by losing himself in "the ready-made values of the serious world" (*EA* 47; *PMA* 58). This leads him to hand over his transcendence to the projects of the more dangerous serious man, who exploits the sub-man's frustration and anger for his serious goals. The sub-man's fulfillment is short-lived, since accomplishing the serious goals of others does not require any faith in ideals, but rather a state of absolute submission. Consequently, the types of projects to which he becomes attracted are most often destructive. Beauvoir provides the examples of "anti-Semitic, anti-clerical, anti-republican" projects to describe their allure for the sub-man (*EA* 47; *PMA* 58). The sub-man's actions can be found in an investigation of the historical record of reactionary violence against

religious and political minorities, to which European fascism and tyranny attest.⁸⁰ Yet, in post-WWII Europe, Beauvoir sees that the figure of the sub-man is still lurking in consciousness, prepared to engage in unethical actions in moments of crisis.

The sub-man is particularly dangerous in periods of uncertainty, when political leaders of all kinds appropriate the “blind, uncontrolled force” of negativity in the sub-man, to fulfill their projects of terror (*EA* 47; *PM* 58). Inevitably, the sub-man latches onto any hateful campaign propagated by tyrants. Beauvoir writes, “In lynchings, in pogroms, in all the great bloody movements organized by the fanaticism of seriousness and passion, movements where there is no risk, those who do the actual dirty work are recruited from among the sub-men” (*EA* 47; *PM* 58). Beauvoir’s historical references, which give the embodied consciousness of the sub-man a concrete form, draw a comparative relation between lynching in the Jim Crow South, and the pogroms directed at European Jews and other minorities in the prewar and interwar periods. Thus, the parallel fanaticisms of lynching and pogroms depend on the provocation of the fear and anger of the sub-man, “bewildered before the darkness of the future which is haunted by frightful specters, war, sickness, revolution, fascism, bolshevism (*EA* 48; *PM* 59).”⁸¹ Living with the dread that at any moment his consciousness might be made evident to him, while fearing the spectral other amplified by the tyrants, he will be driven to destroy the object of hate, mobilized by the second to lowest type in Beauvoir’s hierarchy, the serious man.

The Bad Faith of the Serious Man

In many respects, seriousness epitomizes the unethical activities of the colonizer. For her description of the serious man, Beauvoir provides numerous historical references to colonialism. Earlier, I argued that Beauvoir’s concept of seriousness is corroborated by unethical actions and goals, which reflect an unquestioned faith in external ideals. I concluded that, for Beauvoir, the serious man ranks a passionate engagement with ideals above the oppression of others. I now show that the serious man shares the sub-man’s surrender of his transcendence to given values, but he does so, not

⁸⁰ In *Spectres of Marx*, Derrida calls for a new “revisionist history” of Europe, in order to critically interpret the past two hundred years, since the concept of history has not elucidated the historical record of genocide and atrocity, as the effect of a repetitive phantasmatics of terror up to the present. Beauvoir’s description of the historical record of violence suggests that spectral fears and violence are deployed by oppressors, thereby triggering the destructive activities of the sub-man, which leaves an evidential trace across the violent histories of modernity.

⁸¹ Here, Beauvoir endeavours to describe the essential features of oppression, evident in the multiple histories of atrocity, including class warfare and the Holocaust. In all instances, the sub-man enacts violence in response to contemporary hardships, which warn of a bleak future. Indeed, the sub-man is incapable of transcendence in the absence of an opening to futurity. Hence, Beauvoir elucidates a universal structure of bad faith in the sub-man’s violent actions.

impulsively, but rather to serve his own interests and those with whom he shares power. As a beneficiary of power, he hovers above the sub-man on Beauvoir's hierarchical ladder.

Accepting given values allows the serious man to escape the ambiguity of existence. He chooses to pursue ethically unvalidated goals, thereby escaping the anguish of his freedom. His reverence for external idols, elevated above a duty to others, cancels out the possibility of an ethics, whose goal is to liberate the self and other from oppression. The bad faith of the serious man is complex, since he believes in and exudes passion for the serious goals he fulfills, while hiding the fact that these predeterminations are external to the evolution of his own consciousness. The serious man is also enslaved, but only to his own chosen end.⁸² It is his choice of an unconditioned object, not another's goal, nor absolute coercion, to which he dedicates his free existence. Beauvoir writes, "By virtue of the fact that he refuses to recognize that he is freely establishing the value of the end he sets up, the serious man makes himself the slave of that end" (*EA* 52; *PM* 63). Consequently, he enslaves himself to particular goals, rather than choosing to transcend them. But this leads him to manipulate the world for his own interests. It may also lead to his accruing of the power to wield force in view of his serious projects. The bad faith of the serious man is Beauvoir's second and final figural form for the denial of freedom, but it is the most destructive one, since it leads to all forms of tyranny.⁸³

Beauvoir provides several exemplars of the serious man: the military man, the colonial administrator, and the revolutionary leader. She writes, "For the military man, the army is useful; for the colonial administrator, the highway; for the serious revolutionary, the revolution – army,

⁸² In *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, Beauvoir recounts the philosophical history of the serious man: "After Hegel, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche also railed at the deceitful stupidity of the serious man and his universe. And *Being and Nothingness* is in large part a description of the serious man and his universe" (*EA* 49; *PM* 59). Beauvoir recognizes the influence of Sartre's concepts of seriousness and bad faith; however, it has been argued that their ideas are in fact much more consistent. In a reading of *Being and Nothingness*, Matthew C. Eshleman writes, "Rarely noted by other commentators, Sartre abandons his initially exaggerated view of absolute freedom: freedom is not limited only by itself; it is also limited by Others. While existence precedes essence, the social world precedes individual existences; thus, when Sartre considers the fact that sociality precedes and modifies existence, he argues for social limitations to freedom" (69). According to Eshleman's reading, Sartre and Beauvoir are more closely aligned than previously thought.

⁸³ Eshleman states that Beauvoir's theory of normative justification requires not only "the reflective endorsement of my freedom" but also the act of "willing the freedom of others." Some of the figures like the passionate man assume their freedom without fully reflecting on the nature of their actions vis-à-vis the other. Eshleman writes, "In cynicism, one can affirm subjective freedom, like both the passionate person and the adventurer Beauvoir discusses in chapter 2, while encroaching upon the freedom of Others" (80). Eshleman's notation reads as follows: "While all of the five main attitudes discussed in chapter 2 of *The Ethics of Ambiguity* – the sub-man, the serious, the nihilist, the passionate person, and the adventurer – all fail to meet the requirement of authenticity, the last two fail for a fundamentally different reason than the first three. Whereas the first three deny one's own freedom, the last two affirm one's own freedom but deny the freedom of Others" (note 42, 88). In this regard, the nihilist is viewed as a form of bad faith, which denies its freedom, in addition to the sub-man and the serious man. My focus in this chapter on the first two figures reveals that they are consistent with the unethical activities of colonizing forces.

highway, revolution, productions becoming inhuman idols to which one will not hesitate to sacrifice man himself” (*EA* 52-53; *PM* 64). In effect, this form of idol worship attributes a divine status to objects from the human world, hence providing a messianic concept for worldly action. The serious man attributes all resources, including the lives of others, to “the unconditioned value of the object” – the “thing” (*EA* 53; *PM* 64). Because he does not believe he has sacrificed human life, to the extent that he refuses to recognize the existence of others, his projects are capable of causing pain, destruction, and death.

Beauvoir’s exemplar of the colonial administrator as a serious man contributes to a critical concept of oppression that foregrounds colonial history. Beauvoir writes, “The colonial administrator who has raised the highway to the stature of an idol will have no scruple about assuring its construction at the price of a great number of lives of the natives, for what value has the life of the native who is incompetent, lazy, and clumsy when it comes to building highways?” (*EA* 53; *PM* 64). Thus, the colonial administrator dehumanizes racialized and colonized others, in order to render them sacrificial for given ends, but rejects the recognition of this sacrifice. The violence that drives the colonial project can be viewed in other historical fanaticisms, from the pre-modern Inquisition to “the Vigilantes of America who defend morality by means of lynchings” (*EA* 53; *PM* 64). Hence, the dehumanization of the other is needed for “a political fanaticism which empties politics of all human content and imposes the State, not *for* individuals, but *against* them” (*EA* 53; *PM* 65). Inverting ethics in politics for a defence of the serious goal, the colonial administrator turns ironic: “He contests the importance of happiness, the comfort, the very life of the native, but he reveres the Highway, the Economy, the French Empire; he reveres himself as a servant of these divinities” (*EA* 54; *PM* 65). Hence, the ironic mode hides the horrors of colonization in a language of ascendancy. Thus, Beauvoir holds the colonizer ethically accountable for the destruction and death that ensues from his idolization of the industrial projects of empire-building.

The serious man is incapable of perceiving the world beyond his idol, “which bars the horizon and bolts the sky,” making “the rest of the world ... a faceless desert” (*EA* 54; *PM* 66). While the colonial administrator is enthralled with colonialism, to the extent that it consumes his free existence, he is inexorably tied, through Beauvoir’s analogy, to the American Vigilantes, who sacrifice black lives, thinking them “nothing” in service of the white man. Both bad faith actions are couched in the language of morality. Serious men intuitively understand that they will never be the equals of their idols, but they ignore their consciousnesses in view of their absolute servitude to

them. The serious man might even enforce projects of mass death with an exuberance, since for him the world is full of “abandoned zones,” populated only with the material exploited to serve his serious goals (*EA* 55; *PM* 66). But his goals will never be mastered, since they are subjected to the external world’s “uncontrollable course of events,” which undoes his every effort (*EA* 55; *PM* 66). In other words, the future contests his goals from their inception; hence, the colonial administrator will never be the master he wishes to be.⁸⁴ In a state of delusion, he inaccurately views himself as the divinity he idolizes, but his projects will inevitably fail.

Hence, Beauvoir’s concept of seriousness is described via the colonial situation, which produces mass exploitation and death, to fulfill the unvalidated goals of the colonizer. These goals fall outside the realm of an ethical validation, which would call for an assessment of their concrete impact on the collective pursuit of ethical freedom. Beauvoir’s critical analysis of the colonizer as a serious man thus reveals the fact that the oppressor does not escape servility – since he sees himself as a dutiful servant of Empire. Carrying out his duty to enact the unconditioned projects of Western domination, he wrongly believes himself to be the divinity he serves. Supposedly freed from an attachment to the world of those he rules over, the serious man is capable of committing the worst atrocities.

In Part 2, I show that Beauvoir’s historical allusions to the colonial world in her concept of seriousness influence the development of Fanon’s anticolonial critique. Clearly, her concept of seriousness establishes a foundation for critical investigations of colonial oppression. I argue that Fanon must be studied for his critical transformation of Beauvoir’s concept of seriousness, which addresses the concrete experiences of colonial oppression.

The Mystification of Oppression

Another major link between Beauvoir to Fanon is found in their development of the concept of mystification, which provides a method for exposing the oppressive relation hidden in the language of naturalization. Beauvoir argues that the oppressor naturalizes the state of the oppressed, in order to depoliticize the origin of its claim to freedom. In Beauvoir’s words, “One of the ruses of oppression is to camouflage itself behind a natural situation since, after all, one cannot revolt against

⁸⁴ Beauvoir’s figure of the highway symbolizes the roads, railways, and other types of ‘development,’ perceived to be a gift from the West. This gift expects payback in the form of labour exploitation, land appropriation, and other kinds of civic obedience. Hence, it is both remedy and poison, in the Derridean sense. The serious project of the highway, which conceals the undeclared goal of capital accumulation at the expense of the exploited, is disclosed in Beauvoir’s characterization of the serious man vis-à-vis empire-building.

nature” (EA 89; PMA 104-105). Summoning examples from class analysis, she shows how the conservative “declares that the present situation of wealth is a natural fact and there is thus no means of rejecting it” (EA 89; PMA 105). In defence of this naturalized human hierarchy, the oppressor affirms that “he is not *stealing* from the worker the product of his labor, since the word *theft* supposes social conventions which in other respects authorizes this type of exploitation” (EA 89-90; PMA 105). The oppressor thus naturalizes the extraction of the other’s productive labour by placing it within a hierarchy of human types, thereby making it incontestable. Beauvoir then compares the process of placing others into ranked economic classes to the slave’s mystification, which, she believes, differs from the class struggle in particular ways. Beauvoir writes,

The slave is submissive when one has succeeded in mystifying him in such a way that his situation does not seem to him to be imposed by men, but to be immediately given by nature, by the gods, by the powers against whom revolt has no meaning; thus, he does not accept his condition through a resignation of his freedom since he cannot even dream of any other. (EA 91; PMA 106-107)

Thus, Beauvoir builds her argument that the predisposition to transcendence is not accessible to the apparently unrebelling slave. She argues that the mystification of oppression works upon the slave differently from class relations. Of course, Beauvoir must leave aside investigations of slave and colonial resistance against economic forms of oppression. Her slave figure symbolizes the mystification of oppression as a serious project, which projects different circumstantial situations into intractably innate differences, which lack the power of transcendence. Unlike the class struggle, however, which revolts against the oppressor’s mystification of oppression, Beauvoir observes slaves who do not appear to rebel. As I stated earlier, her estimations, vis-à-vis slave rebellions and other forms of revolt, do not pursue a deeper investigation of the concrete situation, thereby leading Beauvoir to her essentializing claim.

Beauvoir’s conclusion that, since the slave does not appear to rebel, it must follow that the essential tools for transcendence are missing from their particular situation. She therefore assumes that the slave must be instructed to engage the forces of liberation. In other words, the tools and formations of resistance must be brought into the world of slavery from outside its borders. But this assumption forgoes an understanding of the oppressor as justifying the withdrawal of basic resources through the naturalization of power, in order for the slaves to remain situationally unprepared to overthrow their oppressors, or, more likely, that their resistances fail to accrue the resources required for developing the strategies and philosophies of resistance, essential for the development of revolutionary movements. She writes, “it is necessary to bring the seed of liberation

to [the slave] from the outside” (EA 91; PMA 106). Here, the troubling exclusion of black revolutions works against her critical investigation of the oppressor. The more cogent argument in this regard is however that the slave’s lack of power to engage with the outside world in the struggle for liberation must, for the oppressor, be sustained by all means in order to ensure the so-called ‘peaceful’ enactment of serious projects.⁸⁵ That is why “it is not necessary to give education to the people or comfort to the natives of the colonies” and also why “ringleaders” within those constituencies “should be suppressed” (EA 91-92; PMA 107). Mystification enforces a violent political structure that actively obstructs the resources of freedom, such as education, health, housing, care, etc., whose aim is to effectively suppress the development of the conditions for an ethical existence.

In her critical view of French nationalism, Beauvoir draws attention to Charles Maurras, the anti-Semitic and far right author, and a leading figure of the nationalist *Action française*, a conservative Catholic movement, which anticipated the rise of fascism (EA 92; PMA 107). A member of the *Académie française*, Maurras welcomed collaboration with the Nazis.⁸⁶ Beauvoir cites Maurras for his anti-Semitic attribution of natural inferiority to Jewish peoples prior to the Occupation. She is therefore attentive to the justification of oppression found in the intellectual and political movements of the proto-fascist figures in France, such as Maurras.

Beauvoir draws a parallel between French colonialism and nationalism, which, she implicitly argues, respectively suppress the existence of the other. This leads to the concealment of the

⁸⁵ In *America Day by Day*, Beauvoir spends an evening with Richard Wright at The Savoy, where she observes the black music-hall guests and offers her reflection on racism. She writes, “Of course, racists use this as an argument: Why would you want to change the condition of blacks if they’re freer and happier ones? An old argument found on the lips of capitalist bosses and colonials – it’s always the workers or the natives who are freer and happier. Indeed, the oppressed escape the power of the idols that the oppressor has chosen, but this privilege doesn’t justify oppression” (ADBD 38-39; A4JLJ 43). This observation is more critical of the stereotype of the happy and free black than that of the happy slave in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. Yet, according to Hill-Collins, Beauvoir’s observations do not go far enough in pursuing the critical investigations of race by African-American writers available to Beauvoir during her US visit. See my earlier discussion.

⁸⁶A *New York Times* article discusses the current controversy over the inclusion of Maurras in the 2018 edition of *National Commemorations*. In “France Rethinks Honour for Charles Maurras,” Elian Peltier describes how the French Minister of Culture, Françoise Nyssen, was forced to eliminate Maurras from the roster of authors celebrated for their contributions to French culture, once news of his anti-Semitic activities was publicized. Beauvoir cites Charles Maurras of the extreme-rightist league in metropolitan France called the *Action française* (AF). But he was also imbricated in Algerian politics. Concerning Maurras in the Algerian context, Samuel Kalman writes, “Led by monarchist poet and journalist Charles Maurras, the group’s appeal to replace parliamentary democracy with the pre-1789 alliance of throne and altar attracted leading conservative intellectuals to the movement. The newspaper *Action française* became essential reading for the French Right, selling up to 60,000 copies per day in the 1920s, while wealthy conservatives provided needed funding throughout the group’s existence” (17). While he argues that the AF, alongside other French Right leagues, attempted to bring French Algerians into their movement by racializing both Jew and colonized, Kalman also underscores the backing of wealthy conservatives, whose economic interests in the colonies coalesced with settler bigotry and anti-Semitism to create an alliance between business elites and ethnonationalists.

socioeconomic and political gains that result from the naturalized hierarchy, thereby justifying religious, racial, and colonial forms of oppression. Mystification is the process whereby the constructed nature of oppression and the oppressor's active role in its maintenance are shielded by the perception that present inequalities are the result of given values. Beauvoir elucidates the active process of mystification, by exposing the invalid arguments of 'reverse-oppression,' where the oppressor believes that he is oppressed, because of the resistance he faces against his ability or right to oppress. She describes the quarrel between the Southern slaveholder and the abolitionist, as well as Jim Crow lynching, to prove this faulty line of argumentation. In the first instance, Beauvoir exposes the rhetorical flaw of the argument, whereby the slaveholder accuses the abolitionist of oppression, demanding that his freedom must not be constrained by any attempt to end the legal right of slave ownership. Admitting the obviousness of the historical case of legal slavery, Beauvoir adds the analogous, contemporary example of lynching in the American South. She writes, "We smile at such scruples; yet today America still recognizes more or less implicitly that Southern whites have the freedom to lynch negroes" (*EA* 96-7; *PMA* 112).⁸⁷ Thus, oppression requires the invocation of class, religious, and racial hierarchies, all of which are subject to deceptive, invalid forms of argumentation, concerning the meaning of freedom. In addition to being rhetorically flawed, neither are ethically valid, and therefore require transgression.

Beauvoir's colonial resources bring the colonizer's project of mystifying oppression into view. I have argued that, while her appeal to the slave fails to critically displace the notion that the tools for transgression are not available in certain situations of slavery, her more credible critique of oppression is found in her phenomenological description of the oppressor. Furthermore, Beauvoir demonstrates that the critical power of demystification is found in its ability to expose the concrete realities of oppressive violence, hidden in the language of natural fact, thereby linking the exposure of violence to the overthrow of the oppressor. The liberating tools of demystification, I will show, are crucial for Fanon's critique of colonial oppression.

⁸⁷ Beauvoir dovetails her reference to US racial violence with the sophism of bourgeois interests, which were not only evident in the newspapers of the P.R.L. (*Parti Republicain de la Liberté*), but in "all conservative organs" (*EA* 97; *PMA* 113). Thus, she links the impetus for US racial violence to the nostalgic return of past values, typically found in conservative politics. Beauvoir therefore assumes that conservatism has the potential to leverage nostalgia, and may lead, if unimpeded, to the rationalization of violent oppression. Her evidence is drawn from the proto-fascist activities, which were commonplace in conservative political culture during the prewar and interwar periods.

Beauvoir's Marxist Concept of Revolution

In *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, Beauvoir sheds light on the possibly disingenuous actions of the bourgeois intellectual, who works for the proletarian struggle. She critically interprets the Marxist concept of revolution, to argue that the subjective experience of class oppression drives revolution, beyond bourgeois influence. She writes,

In order for the universe of revolutionary values to arise, a subjective movement must create them in revolt and hope. And this movement appears so essential to Marxists that if an intellectual or a bourgeois also claims to want revolution, they distrust him. They think that it is only from the outside, by abstract recognition, that the bourgeois intellectual can adhere to these values which he himself has not set up. Regardless of what he does, his situation makes it impossible for the ends pursued by proletarians to be absolutely his ends too, since it is not the very impulse of his life which has begotten them. (*EA* 18-19; *PM* 26)

Hence, the subjective action, which liberates the oppressed, cannot be defined as an abstract recognition of subjective will, but rather as a concrete realization of consciousness. In this case, the revolutionary action is corroborated by the lived experience of the proletarian, which exists independently of bourgeois intervention. For the proletarian, therefore, revolution reflects the particularity of the oppressive situation, which is shared with other proletarians, rather than with the bourgeois intellectual, whose abstract understanding of class oppression does not reflect the concrete experience that shapes the values of the class struggle. Beauvoir concludes that fulfilling the goals of others cannot provide an ethical validation for one's own actions. This analysis of the concept of revolution, I will later show, is dialogically related to Fanon's critique of Sartre's *Black Orpheus*. I now turn to Fanon's writing, in order to explicate the influence of Beauvoir's concepts of childhood, seriousness, and mystification on Fanon's black existentialist critique.

PART 2: Fanon's Black Existentialism

In Part 2, I study the influence of Beauvoir's concept of oppression, including her references to colonial history, on Fanon's critique of racial and colonial oppression in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Importantly, I argue that Fanon's attentiveness to the subjective experience of the colonized furthers our understanding that the development of the concept of oppression cannot be separated from the lived experience of oppression. I begin by analyzing Fanon's appropriation of Beauvoir's concepts of childhood, seriousness, and mystification, to argue that they are crucial for his theorization of the colonial experience of oppression. This leads Fanon to conclude that the oppression of the

racialized and colonized other cannot be affirmed without the elucidation of the subjective experience. Thus, Fanon uses the first-person voice, to shed light on the subjective experience of racial and colonial oppression.

On Childhood and Seriousness

Chapter five of *Black Skin, White Masks*, entitled “The Lived Experience of the Black Man,” voices the lived experience of the oppressed in the first-person.⁸⁸ This reversal of perspective moves from the objectification of difference to an account of the subjective imposition on the objective world vis-à-vis racial and colonial oppression. In effect, Fanon inverts racial and colonial abstractions, by placing the racialized and colonized subjectivity at the centre of a critical investigation of existence, which therefore requires phenomenological and existentialist concepts to validate the negative aftereffects of black slavery and colonial power on the evolution of modern consciousness. I argue that Fanon appropriates Beauvoir’s concepts of childhood and seriousness to explicate the legacy of slave and colonial terror in the modern world.

Fanon’s indebtedness to Beauvoir is evident at the outset of “The Lived Experience of the Black Man,” since it begins with an uncited intertextual reference to Beauvoir’s Cartesian concept of childhood. Fanon appropriates this reference in order to critically examine the impact of white domination on black existence. But, even as he cites Beauvoir on Descartes, Fanon chooses not to pursue her reiteration of the classical abstractions drawn from colonial history, evident in her figural description of the slave.⁸⁹ He denounces racial objectifications, on the one hand, and on the other, he further explores the significance of the Cartesian child for an understanding of interracial relations in the post-WWII period.

⁸⁸ Lewis Gordon writes, “I will ... use ‘the black’ and ‘the white’ in places where [Fanon] writes *le Noir* and *Le Blanc*. Although the translators have often chosen the expression ‘the black man’ and ‘the white man,’ Fanon’s meaning is not often gendered except where he is specifically referring to women and men. So, I will do the same” (*WFS* 22). According to Gordon, Fanon’s nomenclature for the subjective formation of racial identities is not gender-specific. Consequently, Gordon retranslates the English title of chapter five of *Black Skin, White Masks* from “The Lived Experience of the Black Man” to “The Lived Experience of the Black.” My dissertation acknowledges but does not adopt Gordon’s retranslated title. Despite the problematic use of the masculine pronoun in the mid-twentieth century philosophical writing, I redeploy it in my discussions of Beauvoir and Fanon, to more closely align my analysis with their worldview. Importantly, Gordon informs us that the title of this chapter is a riff on the second volume of *The Second Sex* subtitled “Lived Experience” (*WFS* 47). It has been noted that Beauvoir conducts an objective study of women’s lived experience, whereas Fanon describes a first-person experience of black subjectivity. As many scholars (Moi, Renault, Simons, and Gordon) have argued, the central thesis of *Black Skin, White Masks*, that black identity is a white construction, mirrors the renowned thesis of *The Second Sex*, that one is not born but becomes a woman (*WFS* 31). I refer to this point in the Introduction.

⁸⁹ See my Introduction, where I describe Fanon’s appropriation of Beauvoir, and his misattribution of her line to Nietzsche.

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon defines whiteness as a serious value. Hence, Fanon's interpretation of seriousness must be understood in relation to Beauvoir's concept of seriousness. This allows him to theorize the oppressive violence of the modern world as racially determined. The phenomenon of black oppression therefore reveals the serious value of whiteness. I argue that Fanon draws out Beauvoir's understanding that the oppressor's faith in serious goals constitutes a misappropriation of free existence, which leads to projects of terror. In so doing, he mobilizes Beauvoirian seriousness to investigate the oppressive practices of racialization and colonization.

In *What Fanon Said*, Lewis Gordon acknowledges Beauvoir's influence on Fanon, in regard to the concept of seriousness in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. But Gordon refers primarily to Nietzsche, when he writes, "Like Nietzsche who sought to break the idols of (and thus idolatry) in Western civilization, Fanon hopes to destroy the idols that militate against the human spirit in an anti-black and colonial world" (25). Gordon further underscores Nietzsche's influence, by mentioning another of Fanon's cited authors Karl Jaspers, also Fanon's mentor, for his reading of Nietzsche, to argue that Fanon's concept of black existence draws on "these theoretical idols" of Western philosophy (25). Even so, Gordon does recognize that Beauvoir's concepts of seriousness and ambiguous existence in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* influenced Fanon. Offering a critical description of Beauvoir's original definition of serious values, Gordon writes, "Seriousness is absolute; it leaves no option. It collapses into 'material values,' where there is supposedly no ambiguity" (25). He thus shows that Beauvoir's concept of seriousness is essential to Fanon's understanding that oppression reflects the absolute closure of black subjectivity to alterity and futurity. The colonial world is therefore quintessentially determinate in structure, which demands the suppression of ambiguities.

I argue that Fanon's concept of seriousness is shaped by and draws on many more of Beauvoir's resources than Gordon describes, especially from *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, since, in any case, Gordon mainly focuses on *The Second Sex* to discuss Beauvoir's influence on Fanon. Moreover, the concept of idolatry that Gordon attributes to Nietzsche and Jaspers is also found in Beauvoir's prototype of the serious man, and, importantly, in her exemplar of the colonial administrator. Beauvoir's description of idolatry in the colonial situation is therefore dialogically related to Fanon's description of the breaking of idols, which explicates the aim of colonial critique to dismantle Western ideals. I argue that Beauvoir's influence on Fanon is much greater than previously thought.

Fanon's assertion of whiteness as a serious value suggests that the colonizer aims to invalidate black existence, while placing white existence off limits to black subjectivity. In other words, the binary relation forces the black to submit to white values, which are made inaccessible for

black liberation. With blackness preceding whiteness in the colonizer's human hierarchy of racial types, black speech is made to sound naturally childlike, which affords the racialized characterizations of blackness as instances of simplistic, childish reverie. Furthermore, these racial characterizations, which locate the black in an infantile world, are deepened by non-human descriptions of the other, unveiling the darker connotations of biological racism in imagery evoking evolutionary origins. Therefore, Fanon's theory of non-recognition in black-white dichotomies places the Hegelian dialectic at a distance from the historical brutalization of the black races, which, he believes, is the result of a deliberately imposed project of seriousness.

In the following sections, I show that Fanon revokes the serious project of white existence, by arguing for the necessity of liberating black subjectivity from the prevalence of racial abstractions in popular culture. I also argue that Fanon appropriates Beauvoir's Cartesian definition of childhood, to illuminate the early years of the modern period, which were marked by colonial violence and genocide. Regrettably, the initial interaction amongst peoples of the pre-modern world was violently suppressed by the slave trade and colonization, which led to modernity's uncritical replication of tyrannical methods vis-à-vis the other. In describing these violent relations, Fanon draws attention to the atemporality of oppression, imposed by the serious value of whiteness. In other words, black subjectivity is pushed out of temporal existence by white domination. I draw attention to the racial restrictions on access to temporalization and describe Fanon's first-person investigation of black oppression as an insurrectionary movement aimed at ending the atemporality of the oppressive situation. Following this analysis, I examine Fanon's comparative study of the interrelated histories of Jewish and Black peoples, to propose that, while Fanon demonstrates an interest in linking together these experiences, he does not construct an interrelational concept for racial oppression. Hence, the colonial logics of power negatively impacts Fanon's concept of black existence, which is set apart from the racialization of Jewish peoples. This has the effect of reinforcing divisions among oppressed groups, which is the ultimate goal of oppressive power. Finally, I propose that Fanon appropriates Beauvoir's method of demystification, to expose the evidence of racial and colonial oppression. Moreover, the project of demystification is linked to the enactment of revolution.

Fanon's Denunciation of Racial Abstractions

Fanon's reference to the *Y a bon Banania* character is often considered a mere detail in a much larger body of work. But its effect is devastating for the existential subjectivity. Not only does it condemn

the prevalence of racism in popular culture, but it also signals the failure to construct a concept of existence, which reflects the subjective experience of social and political phenomena. Consequently, Fanon invites the concrete situation of racial oppression into the concept of existence, to draw attention to the subjective experience of racial stereotypes in popular culture. Earlier, I described Said's definition of the colonial archive of knowledge, from which colonial attitudes are drawn. In response to the seriousness of Western ideals, which demand the objectification of the racialized other, Fanon argues that racial objectifications of the black, circulating in popular culture, must be unambiguously denounced, in order to oppose the dominance of the colonial worldview.

Describing the subjective experience of being racially objectified, Fanon writes, "I cast an objective gaze over myself, discovered my blackness, my ethnic features, deafened by cannibalism, backwardness, fetishism, racial stigmas, slave traders, and above all, yes, above all, the grinning *Y a bon Banania*" (BSWM 92; PNMB 90). Thus, everyday life in the ostensibly peaceful post-WWII metropole is interrupted by the stigma of racial difference, where skin colour and physiognomy signify a host of colonial stereotypes, which oppress black existence. Hence, the colonial legacy, of portraying the black as an adult child, triggers contemporary reiterations of racial and colonial oppression. This is evident to Fanon in the present-day *Y a bon Banania* advertisement of a wide-lipped, grinning Senegalese soldier, a member of the WWI French colonial troops, speaking in 'pidgin' French.⁹⁰ Hence, Beauvoir's 'happy slave' reappears in post-WWI consumerist culture, which portrays a childlike, happy, and "curiously free" black soldier with enhanced physiognomic features, sporting colonial garb and speaking in a non-existent language, since the concept of 'pidgin' French was based on the notion that Africans were incapable of speaking metropolitan languages. Fanon thus refers to the numerous objectifications drawn from the colonial archive, to show that they are still present, collectively reinforcing the colonial belief in the naturalized human hierarchy. Moreover, allusions to evolutionary origins are found in the exaggerated facial features of the Senegalese man. Hence, consumer culture further objectifies the image of the black, to render it consumable as a chocolate drink marketed to French children.⁹¹ Fanon remarks that racial objectifications are distinctly prejudicial toward the black races, since the black has been placed at the threshold of the human hierarchy of races, which suggests a relation to non-human origins.

⁹⁰ Myron J. Echenberg recounts the history of the French colonial conscripts in the First World War.

⁹¹ Anne Donadey provides an analysis of this longstanding advertisement for a chocolate banana mix, originally marketed for mass consumption by WWI soldiers, and later for the domestic French market.

Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* implicitly suggests that act of denunciation must be mobilized for the development of the concept of black liberation.⁹² More precisely, he suggests that if the objectifications of race and colonialism are not overtly repudiated, they will continue to circulate, since popular, scientific, and political discourses uncritically reproduce them, with negative repercussions for black subjectivity in the present and future. Hence, Fanon consciously delinks from the racial and colonial objectifications of black existence.

The Scandalous Childhood of Interracial Relations

Fanon appropriates Beauvoir's concept of the child to argue that black enslavement destroyed the possibility of intersubjective freedom in the modern world, which henceforth makes the struggle against oppression essential for the liberation of consciousness from modernity's formative years. Fanon cites Beauvoir on the child, to argue that the scandalous childhood of interracial relations constitutes the violent foundation of modern consciousness. In his "Introduction" to *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon, (mis)citing Beauvoir, writes, "Man's misfortune, Nietzsche said, was that he was once a child" (*BSWM* xiv; *PNMB* 8).⁹³ In this line, Fanon proposes that the racial hierarchy, inherited from the childhood of modernity, must be disinherited, if modern consciousness is to exceed its failures, and work toward the advancement of universal liberation.

To throw off the mantle of racial oppression, Fanon argues, subjectivity must radically question its inheritance of the racial hierarchy. He writes, "But in order to apprehend this we urgently need to rid ourselves of a series of defects inherited from childhood" (*BSWM* xiv; *PNMB* 8). This account appropriates Beauvoir's Cartesian concept of the child, to examine the racial complexes associated with the violent histories of slavery and colonization, which have resulted in the individual and collective reiteration of serious values; these values are inherited from a childhood dominated by coercive instruction in the naturalization of racial difference. Since the child learns to see himself in the inherited hierarchies of race and colonialism, the adult reiterates conventional

⁹² Critics who suggest that the colonizers are maligned in critical literature and must be valued for their positive contribution do not enact the project of liberation, which demands the condemnation of colonizing activities, irrespective of intentions. In a similar vein, *With Good Intentions: Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal Relations in Colonial Canada* (2006) revokes the praise for "good intentions," to argue that, even if some colonizers recognized the wrongs of colonization and made efforts to oppose violence and injustice, all colonizers must be held to account for executing the colonizer's unethical project.

⁹³ This reference to the Cartesian concept of the child is repeated in the final lines of *Black Skin, White Masks*: "The misfortune of man is that he was once a child" (*BSWM* 206; *PNMB* 188). For a critique of Fanon's misattribution of this line to Nietzsche in *Black Skin, White Masks*, see my Introduction. I describe how Fanon attributes this line to Nietzsche, but the actual source is Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity*.

attitudes toward racial difference, instilled in childhood, with violent effects for the contemporary world. But the negative aftereffects of the initial trauma are suffered by both white and black. White subjectivity erroneously believes in its own superiority, while black subjectivity aspires to prove its lack of inferiority. The resulting complexes are not only individually experienced but dominate the collective psyche, since the inaugural stage of modernity, which instigated racial divisions in an effort to secure Western power over colonized peoples and histories, repeats itself, up to the present.

The impact of racial histories on the experience of childhood is examined in greater detail in “The Lived Experience of the Black Man.” Fanon’s first-person encounter with a white child, on the streets of Lyon in postwar France, does not produce an intersubjective relation. Instead, the white child objectifies the black adult. In this encounter, the childhood of interracial relations is exposed for its violent historical origins, which instigated the trauma of slavery and the Middle Passage. Consequently, the reiteration of the scandalous first phase of mass contact expresses itself in the gaze of the white child, who negates black existence. The scene is set for a violent re-enactment of black enslavement via the child’s language, whereby the white child, whose identification with whiteness must assume the exclusion of the black, expresses itself as a fear of the other. Early in the historical period of modernity, the white-black interrelation, Fanon writes, was replaced by the “epidermal schema” organizing current human relations. Thus, the white child must accept the epidermalization of human existence as a “ready-made value,” which will shape his embrace of serious values in the adult world.

A double-sided crisis is at work in the interracial encounter: for the white child, the crisis of his evolving subjectivity is resolved by his white mother’s embrace, but for the black, the ancestral memorialization of dismemberment in the Middle Passage is triggered by the child’s use of the prismatic word “Negro,” whose effect is further heightened by the gesture of pointing. Hence, the expression: “Look, a Negro” (*BSWM* 91; *PNMB* 90).⁹⁴ At this instant, black subjectivity is objectified by the white child. The black experiences the non-recognition that began with the original historical encounter. In contrast, the white child returns to the white patriarchal embrace, which secures a future identification with power. The affinity with Beauvoir is clear, since she

⁹⁴ Gordon writes, “The French word *nègre* means “Negro” and “nigger” depending on the context” (*WFS* 22). Gordon draws on Ronald A.T. Judy’s study of Fanon’s terms. He thus retains the French word for its ambiguity in his line translation of *Black Skin, White Masks* to conclude that, “In a way, the subtext of “Negro” is always “nigger” (*WFS* 22). This suggests that, in English, the ambiguous French word more aptly reflects the negative connotations of the apparently neutral term.

perceives the child as dreaming of becoming the “imposing statue” of the adult.⁹⁵ Fanon’s encounter suggests that Beauvoir’s imposing statue must be white, since the white child cannot see his future in the black adult. For Fanon, whiteness shapes the interaction and outcome of race relations, since the present inherits the founding moment of colonial modernity. This encounter also demonstrates that European colonization relies on the reproduction of the white patriarchal family for its power over the racialized other.

Restricting the Horizons of Black Subjectivity

The metaphor of whiteness explicates the seriousness of the colonial world. In the final section of “The Lived Experience of the Black Man,” a white horizon and ground construct Europe as a concentric space of death for black subjectivity.⁹⁶ An eviscerating feeling dominates the racialized subjectivity, whose horizon is limited, thereby curbing access to the transcendent power of projects that aim at an ethical future. The feeling of evisceration is captured in the following line: “All this whiteness burns me to a cinder.” Hence, black subjectivity experiences dying within life, where past violence is revived by the living consciousness, a sign that historical destruction and death shape present existence. Thus, the afterlife of modern slavery is experienced as a recurrent trauma, which hampers the ability of black existence to move beyond the oppressive situation. As Fanon writes, “The fire had died a long time ago, and once again the Negro is trembling” (*BSWM* 94; *PNMB* 92). Hence, reliving historical trauma obstructs the temporalization of freedom.

Despite the metaphorical incineration, black subjectivity is still alive. But, while the terror of slavery and the Middle Passage has ended, the living consciousness of the black is psychologically triggered by the racist remark of the white child. He experiences the absence of this historical trauma as the missing limbs of an “amputation” (*BSWM* 119; *PNMB* 114). Hence, the terror of enslavement is reconstituted as psychic pain, or death in life, imagined as an amputated limb. Fanon’s metaphor for the oppressive situation is the “circle,” a fixed and unbroken space and time of closure: “I was

⁹⁵ In *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, Beauvoir writes, “Later on [the child] too will become a big imposing statue. While waiting, he plays at being, at being a saint, a hero, a guttersnipe. He feels himself like those models whose images are sketched out in his books in broad, unequivocal strokes: explorer, brigand, sister of charity” (*EA* 38-39; *PMA* 48-49). Fanon contrasts the white child’s future sovereign status to the black child’s future objectification. In the first chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks* entitled “The Black Man and Language,” Fanon describes the colonial experience of reading French comic books, which leads Martinican children to mistakenly identify with a future sovereign status, reserved for white subjectivity.

⁹⁶ Any project aimed at restricting horizons is therefore fundamentally unethical. Thus, the absolute limitation of black subjectivity by a white horizon and ground works against the objective of ethical projects, which is to create the conditions for the expansion of horizons. See my article, “Diagnosing the Sociopolitical Wound: Frantz Fanon and Catherine Malabou” for the above readings.

walled in,” he writes (*BSWM* 97; *PNMB* 94). Thus, the barriers to liberation appear to be insurmountable, which leaves black existence caught within a constricted space (“I am a prisoner of the vicious circle”) (*BSWM* 96; *PNMB* 94). This absolute closure and limited horizon are manifest in the street encounter with the white child, and, later, on the train and in the clinic. In every facet of everyday life, the black subjectivity must relive a violated body schema, which produces a state of psychic destruction, without the possibilities of transcendence. Black subjectivity is viewed only in relation to the white horizon and ground, which reduce its existence to “cinders.”

Fanon writes, “The white man is all around me; up above the sky is tearing at its navel; the earth crunches under my feet and sings white, white. All this whiteness burns me to a cinder” (*BSWM* 94; *PNMB* 92). The subjective experience of the white horizon and ground is described as follows: “When I opened my eyes yesterday I saw the sky in total revulsion. I tried to get up but the eviscerated silence surged toward me with paralyzed wings ... I began to weep” (*BSWM* 119; *PNMB* 114). Hence, the oppressed subjectivity attempts to reconstruct his existence, but language overpowers him. Since all of the senses are attuned to whiteness, there are no prospects within communicative relations to transcend it. Instead, whiteness thoroughly envelopes the black, which effectively silences, and even paralyzes him; he is thus locked into an oppressive situation, which does not afford the time and space for liberation. Meanwhile, the traumatized white child finds solace in his mother’s arms and learns that language is a future source of power over the racialized other. In contrast, black subjectivity experiences this racial power as a spectral death, infiltrating the senses to the point that it is no longer possible to breathe or move, or even think, without being reduced to ashes. For him, there can be no embrace.⁹⁷

For Fanon, Beauvoir’s serious man becomes the earth and sky. The elemental parts of the natural environment are in fact racialized and colonized, which reverses the hierarchies of human types, by showing that what appears to be most natural is violently political. But the erasure of black subjectivity in a white colonial world also leads the black to idolize the serious value of whiteness. One of the major outcomes of the oppressive relation is that the oppressed reiterate the prevailing values ingrained in the dominant worldview. Thus, the oppressed subjectivity must also question its unconsciously-held convictions, or risk supporting the ethically unvalidated goals of the oppressor. These serious values were instilled in the oppressed consciousness during childhood, with negative effects for the advancement of all types of liberation struggles, including black liberation.

⁹⁷ Again, I first give this reading in my article “Diagnosing the Sociopolitical Wound.”

A differential skin colour stands out against the white horizon and ground. Gordon notes Fanon's criticism of the World Health Organization, which deliberately misused science, to prove the rationality of racial hierarchies (*WFS* 52). Since pseudo-science was continually peddled by a United Nations agency even after the scientific debunking of those claims, Fanon believes that *factual proof* will continue to fail in any attempt to resist the imposition of a systematized classification of human beings, according to skin colour. Fanon implicitly argues that the critical phenomenological description of the subjective experience of racial oppression, rather than the accumulation of scientific facts proving racial equality, resists the uncritical reiteration of naturalized racial categories. Fanon explicates the concept of racial oppression with a first-person account of being overdetermined by skin colour. This overdetermination reflects the dominant method of classifying human beings, according to the inherited racial hierarchy, despite its scientific debunking.

To examine the impact of being racially overdetermined, Fanon compares the experience of anti-black racism to anti-Semitism. He adopts Albert Memmi's belief that Nazism logically follows from the violent histories of colonization, to foreground the relation between anti-black and anti-Semitic beliefs. But, on the other hand, Fanon distances his understanding of colonial racism from the European practice of racializing Jewish peoples in its genocidal histories. Hence, in order to differentiate the Jew from the Black, Fanon overlooks the historical racialization of the Jew. Fanon's conclusions have been recently challenged by Paul Gilroy, who searches for an affinity between the Black and the Jew in literature, with the understanding that the racial hierarchies of modernity connect Jewish and Black peoples more closely than Fanon assumed. More recently, Julietta Singh has offered a critique of Fanon's theorization of oppression, which, she argues, separates peoples and histories, rather than seeking solidarities among oppressed groups.⁹⁸ She raises the question of anti-Semitism, but also addresses the phenomenon of ableism in Fanon's writing. Singh argues that both of these oppressive groups are othered, in an effort to construct a concept of black subjectivity, which reflects the colonial project of "self-mastery" – a fundamentally individualistic notion of self-possession, which seeks to suppress the self-other relation.

⁹⁸ See Paul Gilroy's *Between Camps: Nations, Cultures and the Allure of Race* and Julietta Singh's *Unthinking Mastery: Dehumanism and Decolonial Entanglements* for the above arguments.

Between Oppressions: Colonial Racism, Anti-Semitism and Ableism

Fanon establishes a relation between anti-black racism and anti-Semitism, influenced by Beauvoir's concept of mystification.⁹⁹ But this influence is overshadowed by Fanon's citation of Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew*. Sartre definitively influenced Fanon's effort to connect Jewish and black histories. As Holocaust critic Max Silverman explains, both Memmi and Fanon were influenced by Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew*. In "The Lived Experience of the Black Man," Fanon cites Sartre, to advance his theory of the overdetermination of skin colour, or the "epidermalization" of racial difference, which, he argues, separates the Jew and the black. Hence, Fanon views black subjectivity in terms of epidermalization, while he "de-epidermalizes" Jewish subjectivity, based on his reading of Sartre. This leads him to argue for a political solidarity between the Jew and the Black, which thereby excludes the Jew from an investigation of the shared histories of racial oppression.

Fanon cites Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew* as follows: "They [the Jews] have allowed themselves to be poisoned by the stereotype that others have of them, and they live in fear that their acts will correspond to this stereotype ... We may say that their inside conduct is perpetually overdetermined from the inside" (cited by Fanon, *BSWM* 95; *PNMB* 93). Fanon appropriates Sartre's analysis of the Jew for its construction of the anti-Semite, to argue that the black is overdetermined from the outside through a darker skin colour.¹⁰⁰ To advance his theory of overdetermination for black subjectivity, Fanon contrasts the black to the Jew, to suggest that the Jew is perceived to be "a white man" who "can pass undetected" (*BSWM* 95; *PNMB* 93). Fanon assumes that the Jew is protected from the violence of racialization, unlike the black, thereby conferring the privilege of whiteness on Jewish subjectivity. This racial advantage, Fanon argues, explains the respected position of the Jew in the European universalism described by Sartre. Thus, Fanon concludes that the allegedly racially white Jew escapes the absolute exclusion of the black.

Describing the genocidal histories in Europe as "just minor episodes in the family history," Fanon's comparative analysis positions the Jew inside the project of universal humanism. Fanon then cites Sartre's claim that the Jewish intellectual assertion of universal rationalism, which defines the "spiritual bond among men," was momentarily contravened by anti-Semitic thinking (cited by Fanon, *BSWM* 98; *PNMB* 95). Even Sartre's reading of the "philosophical intuition" of Bergson is

⁹⁹ In "Beauvoir, Sartre, and Patriarchy's History of Ideas," Edward Fullbrook discovers that Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew* was likely influenced by the concept of oppression in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, especially Sartre's contention that the Jew is constructed by the anti-Semite. In light of this discovery, it would be worth further exploring Beauvoir's influence on Sartre.

¹⁰⁰ Fanon cites Karl Jaspers, whose lessons had taught him that *historicity* constitutes the 'body schema,' which Fanon appropriates to describe "an epidermal racial schema" for black subjectivity (*BSWM* 92; *PNMB* 90).

cited by Fanon, to demonstrate that, in the tradition of the “anti-intellectualist doctrine” of Bergson, the quest for universal reason includes the Jew (*BSWM* 98-99; *PNMB* 96). As a part of the intellectual history of Europe, the Jew is recognized by the universalism that periodically excludes the Jew. Fanon is faithful to Sartre’s belief in Jewish inclusion within European humanism, which he contrasts to black exclusion.

Fanon’s appropriation of Sartre’s *Anti-Semite and Jew* begins by setting up a contrast between Jewish recognition and black non-recognition. Fanon writes, “But with me things take on a *new* face. I’m not given a second chance. I am overdetermined from the outside. I am a slave not to the ‘idea’ others have of me, but of my appearance” (*BSWM* 95; *PNMB* 93). The focus on skin colour suggests that the white subjectivity devalues the philosophical existence of racial difference. This leaves the Jew unaffected. The Jew henceforth disappears from Fanon’s analysis of race, subsumed into the concept of abstract universalism. To further develop the idea that racial oppression is not recognized within abstract universalism, Fanon suggests that abstract universalism has enabled the Catholic religion to justify slavery before condemning it. He writes, “But by reducing everything to the notion of human dignity, [the Catholic religion] had gutted prejudice” (*BSWM* 99; *PNMB* 96). In other words, abstract universalism corrected laws, while allowing eugenics to persist, thereby suppressing the official recognition of racialization, in order to promote an abstract human equality via legal and cultural statements.¹⁰¹

In contrast to abstract universalism, however, Fanon views the “nostalgia for past glory” of “French values” as the site for political solidarity between the Jew and the black. Fanon writes, “It’s in the name of tradition that anti-Semites base their ‘point of view.’ It’s in the name of tradition, the long, historical past and the blood ties with Pascal and Descartes, that the Jews are told: you will never belong here” (*BSWM* 100-101; *PNMB* 97). In the absence of a shared experience of racial oppression, Fanon foregrounds the need for political solidarity against the rise of ethnonationalism, since “the anti-Semite is inevitably the negrophobe” (101). Thus, ethnonationalism presupposes the exclusion of all others – and it provides the ground for a political relation between the Jew and the black. Fanon concludes that the historical interrelation of the Jew and the black rests on their similar

¹⁰¹ Fanon’s footnote refers to Jon Alfred Mjoen, “Harmonic and Disharmonic Race-Crossings,” Second International Congress of Eugenics (1921), *Eugenics in Race and State*, vol. 2, p. 60, quoted in Burns, op. cit, p. 120 (*BSWM* 99; *PNMB* 96). His note reveals the fact that eugenics was still accepted in mainstream literature, despite its scientific debunking. The fact that eugenics was recurrent amidst the claims for abstract universal equality led Fanon to conclude that cultural and legal methods calling for human equality may be ineffectual, while lived realities of racial oppression remain unchallenged.

status vis-à-vis “French values.” The Jew for Fanon becomes “my brother in misfortune” through political solidarity (*BSWM* 101; *PNMB* 98).

For this argument, however, Fanon must overlook the evidence of the racialization of Jewish peoples in the history of anti-Semitism. He thus returns to the colonial logic of separating peoples into discrete categories, rather than investigating their interrelated histories. Following Gilroy and Singh, I argue that linking Jewish and black experiences of racialization exposes a shared historical foundation, which would further strengthen the project of ending racial oppression. In effect, Fanon’s division of these histories of racialization suggests that his aim is to separate them, in order to delineate and empower black liberation. Yet, he misses the possibility of solidarity based on the evidence of an interrelation among racial histories. I therefore argue that the interrelated histories of racialization must be mobilized for formidable solidarities against racial oppression.

The division between black and Jew is followed by the separation of the subjective experiences of blackness from those of physical disabilities. Turning to the movie *Home of the Brave*, Fanon describes an encounter between a white soldier with disabilities, and a black man: “The crippled soldier from the Pacific war tells my brother: ‘Get used to your color the way I got used to my stump. We are both casualties’” (*BSWM* 119; *PNMB* 113). Fanon’s response reveals the need to deny the possibility of solidarity between the two characters. In effect, distancing racial oppression from the oppression of the disabled allows for the presumed universal character of blackness to be placed above the reductive “humility of the cripple” (*BSWM* 119; *PNMB* 114). To counteract the effort of the disabled soldier to establish a relational bond with the black character, Fanon emphasizes their separation, in order to claim that the black soul, unlike that of the “cripple,” possesses the power to occupy the entire world. This suggests that the self-mastery of the colonizer is implicit in Fanon’s theorization of black liberation. He writes, “Yet, with all my being, I refuse to accept this amputation. I feel my soul as vast as the world, truly a soul as deep as the deepest of rivers; my chest has the power to expand to infinity” (*BSWM* 119; *PNMB* 114). In effect, Fanon values the colonizer’s project of the masterful subjectivity over an identification with the other’s oppressive existence.¹⁰² Hence, Fanon defines a concept of black existence, apart from other vulnerable subjectivities.

¹⁰² Julietta Singh suggests that Fanon displays a missing empathy for the disabled. Singh reads the scene of the “cripple” in Fanon’s text, to explicate the divisions engendered by Fanon’s language of “self-mastery,” which produces the requisite subjective disposition for black liberation, apart from other oppressed peoples.

At first glance, the link between Beauvoir and Sartre is apparent. Sartre's claim that the Jew constructs subjectivity on the basis of the anti-Semite's stereotype rejects the anti-Semitic faith in a naturalized hierarchy. Sartre's theorization of the anti-Semite converges with Beauvoir's claim that the oppressed subjectivity is defined as inherently inferior by the oppressor, thereby invalidating the naturalized human hierarchy. Sartre's theory of the constructed subjectivity suggests that the Jew becomes this construction through a process of internalization; thus, subjectivity forms itself via the dominant objectification, which determines a supposedly innate subjective formation.¹⁰³ If we concur with the recent criticisms by Simons, Fullbrook, and others, however, it would be worth mining Sartre's ideas for the influence of Beauvoir's concept of mystification, prior to his writing of *Anti-Semite and Jew*. One might then conclude that Sartre's understanding of Jewish internalization in light of the invasive work of stereotyping came under the influence of Beauvoir's concept of mystification, which elucidates the naturalization of oppressive relations.

The Mystification of Racial Oppression

Fanon cites Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew*, but not Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. As previously stated, however, Fanon was clearly influenced by Beauvoir's concept of mystification. Beauvoir theorizes the naturalization of oppression, which, she argues, instigates human hierarchies. This critique of the naturalization of oppression vis-à-vis the practices of mystification influences Fanon's effort to detect the naturalization of racial difference in the discourses of scientific racism, language, cultural texts, comics, film, advertisements, etc. The accumulated archive produces a mythicism of the other as a natural phenomenon.¹⁰⁴ Naturalization requires, for Fanon, a vast set of resources, to furnish the so-called proof of racial superiority, in an effort to erase any claim to the contrary,

¹⁰³ In chapter six of *Black Skin, White Masks* titled "The Black Man and Psychopathology," Fanon returns to Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew* to discuss the psychopathology, which causes the Jew to internalize anti-Semitic feelings. Interestingly, Fanon uses the word "ambiguity" in his description of Sartre: "Here is all the ambiguity that Sartre describes. Certain pages of *Anti-Semite and Jew* are some of the finest we have ever read" (BSWM 158; PNMB 146). Beauvoir is not cited in many places in this reading, but she is glaringly absent in Fanon's reference to the concept of ambiguity. My chapter does not pursue a reading of the psychopathology of oppression in relation to Fanon and Beauvoir, but I mention it here to show that, once more, Fanon does not recognize Beauvoir as an important influence. In this section of the text, Fanon establishes a relation between the Black and the Jew, which draws on Sartre, but not Beauvoir. Certainly, the construction of the Jew by the dominant group, and the ambiguous process of internalization, which turns the oppressed against its own liberation, is also related to the Beauvoirian concept of oppression. Fanon concludes his reading of *Anti-Semite and Jew* as follows: "In reaction against anti-Semitism, the Jew becomes an anti-Semite" (BSWM 160; PNMB 147). Thus, he draws a parallel to the indoctrination of white values in black subjectivity.

¹⁰⁴ In my Introduction, I pointed out that Said contests the amassing of non-factual data on the colonized, in support of colonial projects. After Said, Fanon can be read for his elucidation of the colonizer's accumulated archival resources, promoting the idea of colonial inferiority, which lends itself to the creation of a spectral image of the other, even when presented with evidential claims to the contrary.

including any evidential statements. The “natural fact” that Beauvoir identifies in her critical concept of oppression must be recognized for its influence on Fanon’s questioning of the facts of racial superiority. The foundations of colonial power are then made evident, since the cultural, religious, and ideological archives driving the belief in natural or biological hierarchies, regardless of any evidential proof to the contrary, are debunked via the practice of demystification.¹⁰⁵

Black Skin, White Masks lists a great many empirical sources, spanning various fields of knowledge, to demystify the constructed foundation of the practice of naturalization. For an understanding of the naturalization of racial difference, Fanon examines the construction of blackness as a “natural fact.” As previously discussed, Fanon criticizes the scruples of scientists, who refuse to accept the new theories of racial equality in their own scientific disciplines. This shows that the massive accumulation of archival resources creates a phantasmatic concept of the other, which continues to exert control over consciousness, despite the bona fide proof of scientific evidence to the contrary. Not only the colonizer, but also the colonized are negatively affected by this spectral history. Internalizing the idea of natural inferiority, black subjectivity succumbs to its so-called natural exclusion, as if it were an incontrovertible fact of blackness. Fanon believes that cumulative case histories of black experience cannot discover the truth of black existence. Consequently, collecting data on black experience cannot become the focus of research. The project to discover black subjectivity must be phenomenological – to draw out the essential features of the phenomena of black existence, by focussing on the “individual case” taken to “the furthest possible limit” (Jaspers, cited by Fanon).¹⁰⁶

Black exclusion haunts the living consciousness in “The Lived Experience of the Black Man”: “Too late. Everything had been predicted, discovered, proved, and exploited. My shaky hands grasped at nothing; the resources had been exhausted. Too late! But there again I want to know why” (*BSWM* 100; *PNMB* 98). Fanon demonstrates that, while the modern world has established a range of ethical projects in science, technology, art, philosophy, etc., it has also systemically destroyed the possibilities of transcendent activity for racialized and colonized others. The

¹⁰⁵ Natural explanations that defend colonial history circulate in popular culture. In response to critiques of colonization, a commonplace rebuttal is, “There has always been violence against others” – as if the violent oppression of racialized and colonized others reflects a natural fact of universal existence, which is inevitable and incontrovertible. No other trajectory of progress is arguably possible, in light of the right of power, as a predetermination. This reflects the fact that the archival history on the discourse of naturalization in the modern period, which Said elucidates, is still ascendant.

¹⁰⁶ Fanon states this incongruence between cumulative case studies and the individual case in his discussion of psychopathology, in which he cites Karl Jaspers’ *General Psychopathology*. Fanon follows Jaspers to propose a black psychopathology (*BSWM* 146; *PNMB* 136).

temporalizing powers of Western modernity have created a situation in which the temporal possibilities for another worldview are narrowed, or almost completely suppressed. It is also the case that the potential for any incursion into the resources accumulated through modern discoveries by the formerly colonized for the purpose of creating alternative projects will be, at the least, limited, if not essentially off limits to the vast majority of oppressed peoples, whose access to those resources will be hampered by various forms of exclusion, leading to the renewal of the conditions experienced under colonization and enslavement.

Thus, Fanon concludes that the activities of black liberation must propose radically different resources, beyond those provided by modern progress. Yet, he is aware that assuming and transcending dominant projects will be met with resistance. Any activity aimed at moving beyond Western discoveries will be viewed either negatively as *theft*, or as material to be assimilated into existing projects. Earlier, I discussed Beauvoir's interpretation of the Marxist concept of theft, in which the worker's labour time is stolen by the bourgeoisie, who deliberately deflect the language of theft, which would otherwise disclose the exploitative practices of the capitalist system. By not speaking in the language of theft, the bourgeoisie reaffirms its mystifying claim to natural power. Even as Beauvoir follows her class analysis with the example of the slave, she does not develop the way in which the language of theft is experienced in the racialized context. Fanon mobilizes the Marxist concept of theft to demonstrate how it is deflected onto the racialized other. In black-white relations, the white feels he has been cheated by the black, a feeling that intensifies after black liberation.

Describing the effect of Negritude, Fanon states that once the black has established an alternative poetic and artistic claim to affectivity, the white man, who believes he has the right to all forms of property, begins to feel that the black is stealing from him, even if what is "stolen" remains outside rationality. Fanon writes, "The white man had the uncomfortable feeling that I was slipping away and taking something with me. He searched my pockets, probed the least delineated of my convolutions" (*BSWM* 107; *PNMB* 103). The language of theft is thus constructed to oppose any new transcendent activity of the racialized other, as soon as it begins to form itself outside the white gaze. In criminalizing the other's transcendent activity, the oppressor attempts to place any potential for ethical freedom outside its grasp.

Negritude, Black Orpheus, and the Hegelian /Marxist Dialectic

Fanon's disagreement with Sartre's "Black Orpheus," the preface to Léopold Senghor's 1948 *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache*, is over Sartre's universalized Marxist dialectic, which suppresses the potential for Negritude to become the site where black subjectivity discovers itself without the direction of the European proletariat. Fanon opposes Sartre's criticism of the Negritude movement. He takes Sartre to task for whitening black redemption, by incorporating it into the proletarian movement. Sartre draws on the myth of Orpheus to describe Negritude's descent into a racially black world of affirmation, which he believes is racist in its distinctive articulation of a separate consciousness, but also antiracist in its rejection of white dominance. He concludes that Negritude can only be symbolically revolutionary, since the recuperation of black culture must be integrated into the Marxist dialectic. Fanon criticizes Sartre's conclusions for attempting to restrict the formative possibility of a black artistic movement by subsuming it into the Marxist struggle. To counter Sartre's dismissal of Negritude, Fanon proposes a critique of the Marxist dialectic.

I argue that Fanon's critique of Sartre must also be viewed in relation to Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. Fanon's concept of Negritude has parallels with Beauvoir's understanding that class solidarity is inseparable from the subjective experience of class oppression.¹⁰⁷ For Beauvoir, the specific experiences of the oppressed generate specific revolutionary projects, while, for Fanon, the Negritude movement endeavours to define black subjectivity apart from Western narratives, since the black has not set them up for himself.¹⁰⁸ Fanon's response, which is closely aligned with Beauvoir's emphasis on the role of subjective experience in the class struggle, takes Sartre's criticism as a slight against Negritude's focus on inviting black subjectivity to generate its own movements. For Fanon, Sartre's erasure of Negritude suppresses the creative worlds imagined by black writers and artists, in his bid to elevate the Western concept of the proletarian revolution.

Beauvoir appropriates the Hegelian dialectic in *The Second Sex*, to argue that women's oppression outweighs race and class oppression, because of its allegedly ahistorical origins. Before *The Second Sex*, however, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* provides a critique of Hegel's concept of dialectical

¹⁰⁷ Beauvoir draws on a Marxist analysis to support the negation of the oppressive situation, but she refrains from an adherence to the "Party," since, for her, it constitutes a serious value.

¹⁰⁸ Beauvoir does not pursue an understanding of class oppression for black liberation. I argued above that her colonial and racial abstractions lead her to subsume black liberation within Western definitions. Like Sartre, she views racial difference as secondary in the concept of liberation, which goes expressly against her parallel claim that class oppression must be opposed by the original movements of the proletariat. Thus, for Beauvoir, racial oppression is fundamentally different from class oppression.

history for assuming the annihilation of the other in the advancement of universal subjectivity.¹⁰⁹

But, for Fanon, the larger problem with the Hegelian dialectic is that it does not address the lack of black recognition. Hegel, Fanon explains, presumes the mutual recognition of the master and bondsman, a relationship that is not present in the interracial encounter. The white master demands the submission of the black slave to his projects of enslavement and colonialism, but, unlike the classical Hegelian master, white exploitation depends on the non-recognition of the other. Fanon suggests that the black occupies a position outside the Hegelian dialectic, which differs from the dialectical otherness of Hegel's bondsman. Fanon concludes that non-recognition characterizes black exclusion from dialectical history.

In light of his critique of Hegel, Fanon argues that the struggle for black liberation begins with the demand to be recognized as the classical bondsman of the dialectic. Thus, the affirmation of black existence must precede the movement for liberation implicit in dialectical history. Gordon, explicating in greater detail Fanon's interpretation of the Hegelian narrative for black liberation, concludes that only by creating the political conditions for human beings to appear in relation to one another could the boundary separating racial groups be crossed (*WFS* 69). Thus, *Black Skin, White Masks* argues for the preliminary inclusion of black subjectivity within the space of dialectical history, to provide it with a dialectical position vis-à-vis the white. This would allow for a potential crossing of the line between non-recognition and recognition.

CONCLUSION: Theorizing Oppression Today: The Search for a New Hermeneutics

The servile consciousness reproduces reflexive values in adult life. This, Beauvoir argues, provides ballast for the development of authoritarianism and tyranny. She observes the phenomenon of childlike subservience in the actions of peoples amidst the rise of Nazism and fascism across Europe in the mid-twentieth century. Hence, her concepts of childhood, seriousness and mystification are substantiated by contemporary manifestations of the oppressive prototypes invoking death and oppression. Fanon appropriates her ethics for a phenomenological self-and-world understanding of black oppression. The idea of racial oppression, he concludes, originates in the serious worldview of colonial history. Their insights, I argue, are important for the development of a new hermeneutics that can define and explicate existing forms of oppressive violence. I suggest that this new project must view today's violent world as a reflexive iteration of the foundational histories of modernity,

¹⁰⁹ Kathryn T. Gines, Patricia Hill-Collins, Sabine Broeck, and Alia Al-Saji all offer criticisms of Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*.

which were founded on slavery and colonization, alongside the histories of anti-Semitism in Europe. Hence, I argue that the politico-ethical critique provided by existential ethics and humanism must be mobilized to make sense of the violent afterlife of modern oppression, which now threatens to trigger new forms of violence. Beauvoir and Fanon view modern oppression in relation to inherited, reflexive attitudes toward the other. Mobilizing their critiques of childhood, seriousness, and mystification would therefore allow for a critical view of the serious attitude, which appeals to reflexive idealisms today.

Current forms of political violence must be understood in light of what I call the *geopolitical other*, which is now subjected to violent oppression and death. Thus, a critical concept of oppression, which takes the legacy of modernity's racial and colonial past into account, is needed for an understanding of today's oppressive state. Achille Mbembe views contemporary iterations of violent oppression, as embedded in, yet exceeding, the racial and colonial pasts of modernity.¹¹⁰ Following Mbembe, I argue for a critique of today's sociopolitical and economic systems as inherited colonial manifestations of power, which place serious goals above the protection of life and existence. This, I suggest, produces the conditions for new authoritarian projects and leaders to invoke archaisms, once thought eradicated.

The stage is thus set for the toppling of democratic freedoms, but the seizure of power remains obfuscated by the processes of mystification, which obstruct today's attempts to decipher the foundations of violent oppression.¹¹¹ This war against democratic values is aimed at intellectuals, writers, artists, and all dissenters, against the rise of tyrannies. The ultimate aim of repressive regimes

¹¹⁰ I propose a concept of the geopolitical other to suggest that a potentially new oppressive state issues from racial and colonial pasts but is not governed by its specific hierarchies. Human hierarchies from the colonial period are therefore reconstructed to subsume the differentially vulnerable, to use Butler's terms, or those exposed to a greater risk of death and oppression. I suggest that a new exclusionary human concept is opened up by financial globalization and digitization to oppress marginalized peoples globally, with an emphasis on geopolitically-isolated peoples, together with their cultural, economic, and political systems, extending from indigenous communities to ghettoized minorities, mainly in and from the former colonies. I also follow Achille Mbembe, who, in *Critique of Black Reason*, calls the "*Becoming Black of the world*" a new global racism that refuses the old vocabulary, thereby inflicting non-recognition onto the fungible bodies of all subalterns, constructed as forms of *expendible human life* within global capitalist markets (6, my italics). This new categorization, he argues, is not exclusively marked by the "skin crypt" of blackness inherited from the period of modernity (6). Finally, Mbembe suggests that the fungibility of the category could at the same time revisit the promise of the universal equality it first demanded in the modern period. The black/non-black thus becomes the site where a new repository of loss can accumulate to globally devastating levels of world colonization, but also where new ethical projects aimed at universal freedom could be realized through new forms of black/world revolution. Mbembe's theorization of future forms of racialization, as well as future forms of resistance, demands moving beyond today's understanding of oppressive categories. I suggest that Beauvoir and Fanon provide tools for identifying evolving forms of oppressive violence, as well as revolution.

¹¹¹ I return to Catherine Malabou's *The New Wounded* to suggest that today's *war against sense* prevents the possibility of a political understanding for death and oppression in the contemporary world (155).

is to terrorize children, women, the poor – those escaping violent oppression and destroyed ecosystems, mainly in the former colonial regions of Empire. To elucidate these developments, new forms of critique are needed to decipher, investigate, and expose today's nebulous oppressive forces. Furthermore, I argue for the importance of demystifying the new iterations of oppression, since they place in peril the very future of existence, for the fulfillment of unreflexive projects and goals. In other words, new forms of critique must be prepared to oppose new regimes of power, no longer formulated on the basis of the modern concept of power, but which now threaten life itself.¹¹²

In Chapter 2, I argue that Beauvoir and Fanon provide a concept of revolution, which legitimizes revolutionary violence vis-à-vis a phenomenological understanding of Manichean conditions. Beauvoir theorizes the linkage between violence and ethics. This is then appropriated by Fanon, who views violence as an essential tool of liberation from colonial oppression.

¹¹² See note 170 for a discussion of the shift away from colonial modernity toward *detrterritorialized* forms of global power.

CHAPTER 2: VIOLENCE AND REVOLUTION: FROM BEAUVOIR'S CONCEPT OF REVOLUTIONARY VIOLENCE TO FANON'S CONCEPT OF ANTICOLONIAL VIOLENCE

Is revolutionary violence ever legitimate? Both Beauvoir and Fanon respectively show that contingent responses to authoritarian violence may be valid, if the concrete situation and historical particularity do not provide the means for any other type of revolt against violent power. But, neither Beauvoir nor Fanon maintains that violent action is ethically valid apart from the contingent situation that produces it. Thus, neither provides a legitimization of *violence in itself*. These existentialist thinkers argue for a contextual understanding of violence vis-à-vis the lived experience of the oppressed. This understanding implicitly assumes that revolutionary violence cannot be linked to a categorical imperative, since violent responses are unjustifiable outside the context of the oppressive situation in which they occur. Beauvoir and Fanon conclude that examining concrete sites of violent oppression exposes the universal structure of revolt, yet violent responses refuse the possibility of a program for the conduct of liberation struggles.

The mid-twentieth century wars witnessed by Beauvoir and Fanon led them to theorize revolutionary responses to the histories of authoritarianism and tyranny in the modern world.¹¹³ Beauvoir and Fanon were both deeply concerned with questions of violence and its role in revolutions, although this theme is better known in regard to Fanon. As stated in my Introduction, many European philosophers attempted to theorize revolutionary violence, after witnessing the historical violence of the Second World War. Therefore, the concept of revolutionary violence, which shaped Beauvoir's and Fanon's respective views of liberation, drew on the questions that inspired the intellectual community of their era. Both concluded that the lived experience of authoritarian oppression produced violent responses that were legitimate.

In the context of these considerations about violence, oppression, and revolution, Chapter 2 begins by demonstrating that Beauvoir's concept of revolutionary violence in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947) explicates the ethical legitimacy of violent revolutions. Consequently, I view her investigation

¹¹³ Beauvoir experienced the war as a French bourgeois woman intellectual in Paris, whereas Fanon, a Martinican man, fought for the French forces against the Nazis, in North Africa, before embarking on his studies in France. Their experiences of the war were remarkably different, certainly at the level of exposure to violence. While their existentialist theories reveal a shared perspective on wartime violence and the related struggles for liberation, the differences in their theorizations of violence were likely influenced by their own lived experiences. Beauvoir's autobiographies offer insight into her wartime experience, and Alice Cherki, in *Frantz Fanon: A Portrait*, offers her view of Fanon's experience of the Second World War and the liberation of France.

of violent revolution, essentially linked to the oppressive situation, as an important influence on Fanon's theorization of anticolonial violence in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). While Chapter 1 traced Beauvoir's influence on Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), Chapter 2 proposes that *The Wretched of the Earth* also fell under the influence of Beauvoir. But, as stated, their dialogically-related concepts remain underexamined.

Part 1 of this chapter reconstructs Beauvoir's concept of revolutionary violence, to demonstrate that her search for a method of achieving ethical liberation from oppressive power leads to her idea that concrete forms of oppression generate specific forms of revolutionary violence. In other words, she orients the project of ethical liberation toward violent revolutions, aimed at liberating subjectivity from specific instances of absolute oppression. Hence, her focus on the link between the contingent realities of oppressive violence and indeterminate forms of violent negation is appropriated by Fanon, to argue for the use of violent force against the colonizer. Certainly, Beauvoir was aware that the histories of colonialism needed to be recognized within a universal concept of modern oppression. Hence, her phenomenological description of violent oppression draws on the colonial situation. It remains a central historical reference for Beauvoir's concept of revolution, which calls on existentialist critique to make sense of revolutionary violence, for an understanding of liberation.

It is worth recalling Beauvoir's concept of Cartesian self-doubt, discussed in Chapter 2. There, I argued that Beauvoir opposes the obfuscation of concrete realities in abstract philosophizing. Her reference to Descartes is important for her questioning of concepts that reflexively reiterate past values, thereby concealing the evidence of lived realities. Beauvoir's view of Cartesian self-reflexivity is therefore integral to her understanding that revolutions move beyond the limits imposed by existing ideals. Therefore, revolutionary action demystifies the concealments of oppressive power, making room for the enactment of ethical freedom. Beauvoir corroborates her concept of revolution by drawing on historical references to past revolutions. As I later show, Beauvoir's concept of Cartesian self-reflexivity is appropriated by Fanon, to argue for the recognition of anticolonial revolutions as autonomous self-reflexive movements toward liberation.

Part 2 develops a link between Beauvoir's concept of revolutionary violence and Fanon's first chapter in *The Wretched of the Earth*, entitled "On Violence." I argue that Fanon draws on Beauvoir's concept, to provide an ethical validation for violent anticolonial revolution. Hence, Fanon's theoretical understanding of revolution draws on the Beauvoirian concept of revolutionary violence, to affirm the legitimate use of anticolonial violence. But, in appropriating her concept,

Fanon moves beyond it, to suggest that a more concrete understanding of the colonial situation is needed to legitimate the use of violence in revolutionary struggles. This leads Fanon, a clinical psychiatrist, to focus on the bodily and psychic destruction that results from oppressive violence, in an effort to demonstrate that the development of violent responses to Manichean forms of power is triggered from within the subjective experience of the violent situation. Drawing on Beauvoir, and his own training in psychiatry and psychoanalysis, he implicitly suggests that the temporalization requisite for future projects is not available to the colonized, whose bodies and psyches are shaped by violent oppression. Hence, the temporality of liberation, which invites a relation to the other and an open future, is closed off within the atemporal structure of oppression, evident in the Manichean situation. The absolute closure of time leaves the colonized in a static and immobile state of pain and suffering, outside the possibility of future liberation. I argue that Fanon's focus on the atemporality of oppression is crucial to his understanding of violent responses to oppressive violence. The lack of temporalization, he concludes, results in the explosive, destructive activities of the oppressed via negative actions, arising within the state of oppressive violence, which are physically and psychically experienced.

Furthermore, Fanon appropriates Beauvoir's Cartesian concept of self-doubt, to argue for the legitimacy of colonized peoples to revolt against the colonizer. Thus, he acknowledges the self-reflexive autonomous movement toward liberation of racialized and colonized others. Hence, the anticolonial movements revolting against the authoritarian power of the colonizer self-reflexively reconstitute the colonized peoples as anticolonial revolutionaries. Fanon shows that anticolonial struggles cannot be overlooked in Western theories of liberation. Hence, existentialism cannot theorize universal liberation without rethinking the origins of philosophical liberation in the anticolonial struggles, which are quintessentially modern. This would also entail recognizing that the resistance against oppression and the development of an ethics of liberation demand a reckoning with the violent, genocidal practices of modern history, including the persistent reiteration of anachronistic racial hierarchies, which fail to recognize the self-reflexive structure of liberation outside the West. Hence, the anticolonial struggle becomes the site where a new ethical subjectivity forms itself, separately from the concept of liberation as essentially Western. The fact that anticolonial violence is deployed to achieve liberation is therefore understood to occur within the context of the violent practices of colonization.

Fanon appropriates Beauvoir's concept of revolutionary violence to propose that the enactment of violent revolt, in relation to the particularity of the colonial situation, demands an

investigation of the subjective experience of colonial violence. He therefore argues that armed struggle must be understood from the viewpoint of the colonized. Furthermore, by opening up the practice of colonial violence to scrutiny, Fanon reveals an amalgam of Western values found in linguistic, cultural, political, and social practices, beyond the overtly physical terror of “red-hot cannonballs” (*WE* 3; *DT* 30).¹¹⁴ Consequently, *a violent revolt as a revolt against violence* is not solely a question of armed struggle, but also a revolt against the ‘violence’ of values associated with Manicheanism.¹¹⁵ Finally, Fanon argues that the anticolonial intellectual must further break down the barrier between the philosophical concept of revolution and historical revolutions by critiquing the materialization of these values in the colonial world. Fanon’s political commitment therefore becomes a way of writing philosophy.¹¹⁶

The matter of the difference between the reception of Beauvoir and Fanon is addressed in my introductory section below, where I argue that Beauvoir’s existentialism was overlooked in the overtly sexist culture that volubly opposed her concept of women’s liberation in *The Second Sex*, thereby drowning out her earlier philosophical contributions. But it is also worth exploring the thorny reception of Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* in 1961. Indeed, Fanon’s “On Violence” has been maligned by the history of its reception. Certainly, the French media review of *The Wretched of the Earth* largely characterized Fanon as an enemy of the state. The major reviews however professed a knowledge of Sartre’s preface.¹¹⁷ The book’s subsequent censorship led to its exclusion from French intellectual circles. It was the US black power movements of the 1960s and 1970s that popularized *The Wretched of the Earth* for the civil rights movement.

More recently, Matthieu Renault, Françoise Vergès, and Sonia Dayan-Herzbrun have exposed the silence within French academia in regard to Fanon’s influence. A part of the problem, in their view, is that the concept of the French nation, as temporally and spatially delimited, excludes colonial history. Renault implicitly calls on national consciousness to include colonial thinkers.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Said’s *Orientalism* traces the historical trajectory of colonization, not only its militarism, but also its economic, social, cultural, political, etc. values. Said concludes that the amassing of archival knowledge on the racialized and colonized other reinforces colonial power.

¹¹⁵ Fanon’s description of colonial violence is focused not only on military occupation, but also on culture, economics, science, etc. Hence, anticolonial strategies aim to end colonial domination over all fields of knowledge.

¹¹⁶ Chapter 3 examines Beauvoir and Fanon for their respective theorizations of political commitment in intellectual and artistic projects.

¹¹⁷ Macey compiles some of the newspaper reviews that judge Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* on the basis of Sartre’s preface. Macey shows how the negative commentaries in *Esprit* by Jean Domenach and *L’Express* by Jean Daniel were mainly aimed at Sartre’s preface, and secondarily at Fanon through a misinterpretation, stemming from the preface (460-462).

¹¹⁸ Historian Frederick Cooper suggests that the territorially delimited nation-state of France is a post-1962 construction. He writes, “If one wants to rethink France from its colonies, one might argue that France only became a nation-state in

Following their demand for the inclusion of Fanon, I argue that Fanon's contribution to French existentialism, of concepts addressing racial and colonial histories, must be brought back into the genealogy of French philosophy. Therefore, this chapter offers a "corrective" reading of Fanon on violence, by attending to the Beauvoirian influences, and showing how Fanon's concrete analyses of violent realities move beyond Beauvoir, to provide a new theorization of ethics and violence.

PART 1: Beauvoir's Concept of Revolutionary Violence in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*

In *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, Beauvoir develops a concept of revolutionary violence, which links the histories of violent oppression to the revolutionary efforts that violently oppose them. The philosophical problem, in her view, is that the realities of violent revolution cannot be overlooked by existential ethics. In other words, violent responses to violence must be theoretically important, since they reflect the materialization of the concept of existence in oppressive situations. Hence, despite the fact that violence is in itself unethical, "absolute negation" remains an essential tool for the defence of existence against its annihilation. The danger that revolutionary violence poses, if violent legacies obstruct the possibilities of future freedom, is briefly addressed by Beauvoir. But the historical viewpoint of the mid-twentieth century fascist and colonial wars likely led Beauvoir to conclude that, in cases of absolute oppression, no historical record could be found to demonstrate that non-violent responses were capable of generating the goal of ethical liberation.

Beauvoir's theorization of ethical liberation implicitly assumes that the liberating action essentially violates existing ideals, to fundamentally oppose the reflexive consciousness it inherits.¹¹⁹ In this regard, negative projects cannot remain concealed within an abstract concept of liberation, without an act of bad faith. Beauvoir therefore opposes her existential ethics to the obfuscations of resistance within the concept of abstract universalism, in order to argue that resistance becomes unavoidable for her concept of ethical liberation, whereby ambiguities lead to antinomies, integral to the historical movement of liberation. Part 1 shows that Beauvoir's concept of revolutionary violence foregrounds the need for an ethical validation of negative actions, in response to criticisms

1962, when it gave up its attempt to keep Algeria French and tried for a time to define itself as a singular citizenry in a single territory" (22). Cooper's demand for a revised historiography, which would include colonial histories, runs parallel to the argument that the Western philosophical tradition must critically rethink colonial ideas and concepts. I believe that this demand to think beyond the borders of nationalistic narratives becomes more urgent in response to a resurgent ethnonationalism. Françoise Vergès addresses the missing colonial histories of France in *La mémoire enchaînée*.

¹¹⁹ In "Transgressive Freedom: On Beauvoir's Hegelian Philosophy of Action," Martina Ferrari explains that the source for Beauvoir's concept of ethical freedom is found in her interpretation of Hegel's *Antigone*. According to Ferrari, Beauvoir proposes that the subjectivity, which surpasses collective norms, invokes freedom by transcending the limitations of the given situation. This makes the movement beyond already-given values inherently transgressive.

that invalidate the violent responses of revolutionaries against violent systems of power. In demonstrating the linkage between revolutionary violence and ethical liberation, I conclude that Beauvoir offers a philosophical method for validating violent responses to violent oppression.

The Temporality of Revolution

Chapter 1 addressed Beauvoir's view that situations of oppression do not provide the vital resources requisite for the enactment of freedom. Thus, life becomes a state of "not dying" (*EA* 89; *PMA* 104).¹²⁰ Clearly, a definitive lack of temporalization pervades oppressive existence. Hence, the time and space for free activities "with no other limits than those which the subject assigns himself" are missing within the oppressive situation (*EA* 89; *PMA* 104). In Beauvoir's existential ethics, an open future is demanded for all. Where it does not exist, revolutionary movements attempt to reinstate it. Thus, the only possible method to liberate the oppressed entails the "negative action" of revolt against the oppressor's theft of time and space. Beauvoir does employ the term Manicheanism in *The Second Sex* to describe the oppressive situation of women under patriarchy, but it is not explicitly used in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*.¹²¹ Nevertheless, she does describe a Manichean situation, when she writes, "Oppression divides the world into two clans: those who enlighten mankind by thrusting it ahead of itself and those who are condemned to mark time hopelessly in order merely to support the collectivity" (*EA* 89; *PMA* 104). In effect, the oppressor and the oppressed are divided along the Manichean lines that delimit the horizons of an oppressive existence. The delimitation of access to temporalization generates the absolute reversal of position, which takes the form of a "real and concrete" revolution without "words and ideologies," in order "to explode at the heart of the world

¹²⁰ Judith Butler's "Violence, Nonviolence: Sartre on Fanon," is studied at greater length in Chapter 4. Butler proposes that Sartre's description of the colonized, as ontologically deconstituted by the colonizer, elucidates the paradox of dying while alive. She views this analysis as "a further permutation of what Orlando Patterson, invoking Hegel in the context of describing slavery, called 'social death'" (*VNV* 7). Social death therefore illuminates the lived experience of death in life – or a living death, caused by the destruction of the social and political conditions essential for what Butler calls a "livable existence." In effect, for nonrecognition to triumph, the conditions for social death must ensure that the deconstituted being is kept alive.

¹²¹ In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir writes, "To posit the Other is to define Manichaeism. That is why religions and their codes treat woman with such hostility" (88). In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir develops a critique of women's oppression modelled on the Manichaeism of Pythagoras. While she does provide a reading of the Manichean structure of oppression in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, she does not use the term "Manicheanism." In *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, Beauvoir's understanding of Manichean relations is not specifically attributed to women's oppression. Instead, Beauvoir links Manichean power to the negative action of revolution, aimed at ethical liberation for all.

and to break its continuity” (*EA* 91; *PM4* 106).¹²² In other words, the reversal of the Manichean relation cannot occur apart from the concrete materialization of violent revolutionary action.¹²³

Beauvoir then turns to the question of the liberator, who mobilizes subjective freedom in an effort to liberate the oppressed. For Beauvoir, this “free unfurling” is available to the liberated, seeking to liberate others. The ethical actions of the liberated vis-à-vis the oppressed are critical for Beauvoir’s concept of liberation. She writes, “Indeed, there is nothing more arbitrary than intervening as a stranger in a destiny which is not ours: one of the shocking things about charity – in the civic sense of the word – is that it is practised from the outside, according to the caprice of the one who distributes it and who is detached from the object” (*EA* 92-93; *PM4* 108). Hence, the critical interpretation of charity is that it fails to establish a subjective relation with the object it professes to aid, which implicitly suggests that charity works against the effort to liberate the oppressed. However, Beauvoir argues that the oppressor, who does not participate in the cause of freedom, is complicit in oppression. The ethical subjectivity must therefore view liberating others as its goal, while averting the obstructive work of charity.

I argue that Beauvoir’s ethical validation of the liberator remains contradictory, in light of her critique of charity. On the one hand, she argues that the liberated must struggle for the other’s freedom; on the other hand, she reverts to the concept of charity, which she allegedly opposes, since her theorization objectifies the oppressed, thereby assuming their lack of agency. Thus, I conclude that Beauvoir’s liberator cannot establish a subjective relation to the other, as long as the other is placed outside the limits of temporalization. Her description of the goal of the liberated “to put the oppressed in the presence of his freedom” erroneously assumes that the oppressed are dependent on the liberated for their liberation (*EA* 93; *PM4* 109).

As I argued in chapter 1, her argument redeploys racial and colonial objectifications to theorize the liberated subjectivity apart from the slave. In this case, the white liberator brings the

¹²² Beauvoir is critical of both Hegel and Marx. She views the Hegelian dialectic as an idealistic and “harmonious development,” on the one hand, and on the other, she rejects the seriousness of the Marxist adherence to the Cause (*EA* 127; *PM4* 146). In her view, both fail to address the ambiguity inherent in consciousness. She therefore implicitly argues that both Hegel and Marx rank the abstract concept above the concrete particularity. This leads to the concealment of the ambiguity inherent in lived realities.

¹²³ As discussed in Chapter 1, Beauvoir takes the side of US slaveholders in the Carolinas, who allegedly believed that slaves lacked the ability to be free, since the “old negro slaves ... were bewildered by a freedom they didn’t know what to do with and who cried for their former masters” (*EA* 92; *PM4* 107). Beauvoir’s understanding of modern enslavement assumes that demystification becomes the ethical responsibility not of the slaves themselves, but of the non-conservatives among the oppressors. Hence, a Western determinism is concealed in her concept of universal liberation. An internal contradiction appears between her concept of revolution for all and the limits of the slave’s oppressive state.

news of liberation to the black slave. This suggests that an essentially Western liberation enacts freedom for the oppressed, who occupy allegedly non-Western sites of oppression. Of course, this view contradicts Beauvoir's understanding that specific liberation struggles reflect specific forms of lived experience. She excludes the specific situations of slavery and harem from the temporalization requisite for revolutionary struggles. But she also declares that revolutions must be fought by the oppressed, since "the urgency of liberation is not the same for all" (*EA* 93; *PM* 109).¹²⁴ In other words, concrete struggles for liberation demand that revolutionaries belong foremost to their respective oppressed groups. But, it appears, this demand does not accommodate certain others. I therefore argue that Fanon, moving beyond Beauvoir, proposes that the temporalization requisite for revolutions is present within every oppressive situation, irrespective of racial or colonial origins.

The Antinomies of Revolution

One of Beauvoir's major contributions to existential ethics is her critical interpretation of the antinomies in revolutionary movements. Referring to the conceptual structure of the antinomy, Beauvoir, drawing on the historical phenomena of conflicting values within revolutions, shows that multiple struggles exist in conflict with one another, which obstructs the complete realization of ethical goals. She concludes that the antinomies of revolutionary projects thwart the absolute realization of ethical goals by citing two examples of conflicts from colonial history: the first describes how "the Arabian fellah is oppressed by both the sheiks and the French and English administration," while the second elucidates the competing interests of the French proletariat and "the natives in the colonies" (*EA* 95; *PM* 111).¹²⁵ I argue that the first example fails to theorize the relation between the sheiks and the colonial authorities. This might have led to an investigation of the overlapping interests of colonial and class structures, which produce the colonizer, along with the comprador classes in the colonies. While Beauvoir attempts to show that oppressive forces are

¹²⁴ In the "Introduction" to *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir takes this perspective further to argue that women's liberation is intimately linked to the particularity of women's lived experience, despite men's participation. She writes, "The man most sympathetic to women never knows her concrete situation fully. So there is no good reason to believe men when they try to defend privileges whose scope they cannot even fathom" (14-15). Beauvoir's view of women's liberation is preceded by her more general claim, in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, that specific struggles oppose specific forms of oppression. Thus, the assumption that the slave cannot access liberation, apart from outside intervention, contradicts her view that oppressed groups develop specific methods of liberation, notwithstanding the solidarity of others. Accordingly, her view that the black subjectivity of slavery does not self-reflexively generate specific forms of resistance, from within its oppressive state, contradicts her general conclusions in regard to the specificity of revolutionary struggles.

¹²⁵ I argue below that Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, views violent anticolonial revolution as a legitimate response to the violent oppression, attributed not only by the police and military, but also to economic programs, and the institutional dissemination of Western values in general.

not homogeneous, she does not pursue an inquiry into a possible colonial/class international alliance, linking together the European and indigenous ruling elites. The second example demonstrates the competing projects of the European proletariat and the anticolonial revolutionaries, whom, she suggests, are divided by their specific ethical goals.

To further corroborate this last point, Beauvoir describes the different allegiances of the civil rights movement and the anti-WWII struggle. She writes, “during the war, when Negro leaders in America were asked to drop their own claims for the sake of the general interest, Richard Wright refused; he thought that even in time of war his cause had to be defended” (*EA* 96; *PM* 112). By examining Richard Wright’s ethical commitment vis-à-vis the Second World War, or, more abstractly, the anticolonial revolutionaries in the colonies who face conflicting sources of oppressive violence, Beauvoir arrives at a concept of revolution, which respects the presence of antagonisms. Hence, she concludes that antagonisms cannot be erased, since they are crucial for generating the goal of ethical liberation for all.¹²⁶ Thus, antagonisms are integral to the revolutionary struggle against oppression.

The Exigence of Violent Action

The presence of antinomies in revolutions is important for Beauvoir’s affirmation of violent responses to oppressive situations. Beauvoir proposes that revolutionary movements resort to violence, in order to end violent oppression. If the oppressors do not voluntarily renounce their dominance, then, Beauvoir states, they must be objectified and “treated like things with violence” (*EA* 104; *PM* 121). A fundamental reversal of the power structure occurs through a violent revolt: “the oppressed are metamorphosed into a blind force, a brutal fatality; the evil which divides the world is carried out in their own hearts” (*EA* 104; *PM* 121). In other words, the oppressed appropriate the oppressor’s tools of violence to “become masters, tyrants and executioners” in their own right (*EA* 104; *PM* 121). Their violent methods are not liberating, since they lead to self-objectification and brutalization, the negative consequence of resorting to the oppressor’s tools of death and destruction. But, Beauvoir concludes, this violence must be legitimate, if it opposes a

¹²⁶ Beauvoirian ethical freedom demands the solicitation of others, who, paradoxically, become the source of both a crucial relationality and an inevitable violence. In “Violence Is Not an Evil: Ambiguity and Violence in Simone de Beauvoir’s Early Philosophical Writings,” Ann V. Murphy writes, “Beauvoir claims that ethics is always complicity in a kind of violence: a violence that arises insofar as norms are born of these historical contingencies and – in some cases – vested interests. This is the violence that attaches itself to finitude and to the ontological reality that freedom is recognized in conflict with others” (32). Hence, while ethical worlds progress as a result of historical solicitations, which are essentially intersubjective, they are simultaneously laden with failures and violence.

situation of absolute oppression. Beauvoir writes, “the outrageousness of the violence” of the oppressed meets the “outrageousness” of the oppressor’s absolute denial of freedom (*EA* 105; *PMA* 121). Thus, even as the violent struggle of the oppressed is a moral outrage, it is indelibly linked to the outrage of the oppressor’s violence – and can never be judged separately from it. But, even as violent struggle is aimed at a complete absolution, given its moral exigence, it may also be obfuscated by certain ethical dangers posed by violent legacies, which could trigger a counter-revolutionary return to oppressive power. However, this possibility is not pursued further in her concept of violent revolution vis-à-vis ethical freedom.

Sacrificing Human Life

Violence against oppression entails the sacrifice of human life. Beauvoir argues that violence must be done not only to the oppressor but also to those “accomplices” among the oppressed, despite the fact that they are not responsible for the oppressive situation. Ultimately, anyone obstructing transcendent activity toward ethical freedom in situations of war can potentially be sacrificed be they oppressors or oppressed, once the value of ethical freedom is raised above all others. Beauvoir draws on the example of Hitler youth to prove her point: “When a young sixteen-year old Nazi died crying, ‘Heil Hitler,’ he was not guilty, and it was not he whom we hated but his masters” (*EA* 105; *PMA* 122). She describes the ethical exigence of violent action in the war against Nazism, to further investigate the nature of the sacrifice, which includes those coerced or converted by the oppressor. In particular, wartime violence decrees the immediacy of the decision, which leaves no time or space to ideally “re-educate the misled youth,” a victim of the oppressor’s mystifying power. Instead, Beauvoir concludes, “[w]e are obliged to destroy not only the oppressor but also those who serve him, whether they do so out of ignorance or out of constraint” (*EA* 106; *PMA* 122). Hence, the state of war determines the obligation to inflict violence, in view of regaining the value of ethical freedom for all.

Comparatively, the parallel revolts against fascism and colonialism reveal that the antinomies of revolution are linked to the urgency of decision, where “no Anti-fascist could have wanted the revolts of the natives in the British Empire to be successful; on the contrary, these revolts were supported by the Fascist regimes; and yet, we cannot blame those who, in considering their emancipation to be the more urgent action, took advantage of the situation to obtain it” (*EA* 106; *PMA* 123). In comparing these two revolutions against oppressive power, Beauvoir divides the war against European fascism from anticolonial revolutions. The latter, she argues, are supported by the

fascists in Europe, thereby weakening the anti-fascist revolution. The anticolonial revolution is therefore opposed by the anti-fascists. Yet, the goals of anticolonial movements would, in other circumstances, be supported by the anti-fascists.¹²⁷

The antinomies of war result in the sacrifice of causes, external to the specific struggle. Furthermore, the conditions of war produce a *factual* structure, encompassing not only “the men who are in our way, but also those who are fighting on our side, and even ourselves” (*EA* 106; *PM4* 123). Hence, the reduction of existence to facticity creates a generalized exposure to violence. Emphasizing the biological body’s vulnerability to the dehumanizing effects of violent conflict, Beauvoir describes the phenomenon of objectification, which envelopes the oppressor and the oppressed within war zones, reducing both to the lowest common denominator.¹²⁸ She writes, “Since we can conquer our enemies only by acting upon their facticity, by reducing them to things, we have to make ourselves things; in this struggle in which wills are forced to confront each other through their bodies, the bodies of our allies, like those of our opponents are exposed to the same brutal hazard: they will be wounded, killed, or starved” (*EA* 106-107; *PM4* 123). Consequently, the negative transformation of human existence into the factual material of warfare renders both sides vulnerable to destruction and death.

Just as the border between self and other is transgressed by violence, so is the border between war and peace. In peacetime, “when blood flows, the permanent possibility of violence can constitute a state of veiled warfare in which individuals are sacrificed in a permanent way” (*EA* 107; *PM4* 124). Hence, if the human sacrifice in war zones is not suspended in peacetime, the possibility exists for an undeclared, perpetual state of war. Thus, the instrumentalization of human life exposes bodies to violence within any oppressive situation, even outside war zones. Wherever oppression exists, violence imposes itself on the biological body, which devalues human existence by reducing it to facticity.

The greatest ethical danger lies in sacrificing human life to fulfill serious goals. Beauvoir describes the unethical project of human sacrifice, which employs numerical figures – statistical

¹²⁷ Beauvoir writes, “Thus, it is possible, and often it even happens, that one finds himself obliged to oppress and kill men who are pursuing goals whose validity one acknowledged himself” (*EA* 106; *PM4* 123). This captures the antinomies of revolutionary action in situations where those whom one would defend in peacetime become enemies in wartime. It is possible to speculate that Beauvoir had the simultaneity of the Indian Independence movement and WWII in mind. She later suggests that the revolt against British rule conflicted with the anti-fascist struggle.

¹²⁸ See my Introduction for a reading of the Beauvoir-Butler relation. Butler theorizes human vulnerability for a new concept of the human. As Murphy argues, in “Ambiguity and Precarious Life,” Beauvoir is a key influence for Butler’s concept of biological vulnerability, which accounts for bodily exposure to destructive social and political systems, including violent wars and revolutions.

truths – to measure the number of victims, which raises the question of the individual sacrifice when “he is only a zero” (*EA* 107; *PMA* 124). In other words, when a single human life is not valued for its subjective freedom, then subtracting that individual from the collective results in the absolute erasure of that particular life. As a consequence, thousands can be sacrificed without the recognition of sacrifice, where the individual is simply a thing to be subtracted from the total, to the point that any finite number is reducible to zero. Beauvoir concludes that “[i]t is even possible that the wretchedness of each element is only further affirmed by this futile expansion” (*EA* 108; *PMA* 125). Hence, the disregard of human value in the sacrificed life has the potential to boost growth in the numerical figure. Alluding to images of the Nazi death camps to affirm her criticism of indifference toward human life, Beauvoir illustrates how horrific images of genocide produce the further dehumanization of the corpse as decayed “animal flesh,” merely confirming the destiny of the mortal body, beyond which no human meaning can be extracted that would make it appear as an outrage (*EA* 108; *PMA* 125). This is the process of normalization, or banalization, whereby mass death, aimed at dehumanizing the corpse, results in a growing indifference toward the life of others.

But the production of “humiliated bodies” also affects survivors of wartime violence, making deportees think of themselves as “an animal horde whose life or desires were no longer justified by anything, whose very revolts were only the agitations of animals” (*EA* 109; *PMA* 126). Thus, the perpetrators continually justify the misery of the oppressed, by signaling the other’s humiliated body via acts of violence, torture, starvation, discrimination, etc. Beauvoir concludes that the lure of subjectivity into a state of indifference to the other’s destruction is so ingrained that only those practising intellectual, political or religious faith can continue to belief in the humanity of the already destitute.¹²⁹ This is why, she argues, “[a]ll oppressive regimes become stronger through the degradation of the oppressed” (*EA* 109; *PMA* 126). Hence, a general indifference in the majority to the practice of human degradation is the victory of any oppressive regime.

From the genocidal violence of the Holocaust, Beauvoir turns to colonial Algeria. She writes,

In Algeria, I have seen any number of colonists appease their conscience by the contempt in which they held the Arabs who were crushed with misery: the more miserable the latter were, the more contemptible they seemed. So much so that there was never any room for remorse. And the truth is that certain tribes in the south were

¹²⁹ Beauvoir writes, “That is why the Nazis were so systemically relentless in casting into abjection the men they wanted to destroy: the disgust which the victims felt in regard to themselves stifled the voice of revolt and justified the executioners in their own eyes” (*EA* 109; *PMA* 126). In other words, the production of the abject body of the victim is requisite for oppressive regimes, in order to subdue potential reprisals. This invites the possibility of escalating mass exploitation, destruction, and death. Beauvoirian ethics suggests that the dehumanization of the oppressed calls on intellectuals, and religious and moral leaders to provide dissenting views.

so ravaged by disease and famine that one no longer felt either rebellious or hopeful regarding them; rather, one wished for the death of those unhappy creatures who have been reduced to so elemental an animality that even the maternal instinct has been suppressed in them. (*EA* 109; *PM4* 126-127)

Beauvoir draws a parallel between the death camps in Europe and the colonial situation in Algeria. This evokes her understanding of the interrelated histories of oppressive violence in the modern world. In the colonies, a contempt of the racialized and colonized other quells any potential resistance by Europeans to the oppressive practices of colonial rule, thereby dispelling the justification for revolt by those who would otherwise have refused to support this injustice. Rather, the oppressor's violence supports the destruction and death of the other as a justifiable goal that then absolves the oppressor of any ethical responsibility to recognize the human value of each singular existence. Beauvoir therefore implicitly argues that the contempt for human life, which resulted in the Holocaust in Europe, persists in the colonial world. In contrast to this contempt for and subordination of singular existences, Beauvoir valorizes individual sacrifices, which, in death, are "integrated into a project which surpasses the limits of life" (*EA* 111; *PM4* 129). In other words, choosing to sacrifice one's life as a unique value counteracts the degradation of human life as "a thing." Its aiming at an ethical future opposes the servility of historical fatalism. The ruler is therefore frightened by those who sacrifice themselves for liberation movements, to the extent that the unique value of individual freedom reflects the untenable ground of authoritarianism.

Arguing against fatalism, Beauvoir alludes to the historical phenomena of modern slavery and colonialism, stating that "the freedom of a single man must count for more than a cotton or rubber harvest" (*EA* 122; *PM4* 140). Thus, she restates her belief that the individual human existence must be valued as an original freedom in the determination of the means and ends of any human project. If cotton or rubber harvests expend human life to realize the economic and political goals of the American South or the European colonies, she concludes, they are not ethically justified.

The Means and Ends of Ethical Action

Beauvoir contrasts her criticism of Hegel's dialectic, as a harmonious progression, to her concept of the world as a "battle-field where there is no neutral ground," inciting struggles against others (*EA* 128; *PM4* 147). Hence, the world is always at war. But this definition of war excludes the cynicism of "abnormal behaviour" or the perpetual state of war, which submerges freedom in peacetime (*EA*

128; *PM4* 148). In other words, conceiving the world as a battlefield does not justify oppressing others for unethical goals. In contrast, the subjectivity, which engages in ethical projects, defies objective limitations to achieve an ethical victory. This concept of war precludes the use of indifferent means for given ends. While the unethical deployment of oppressive means requires faith in the externality of the ends, Beauvoir's concept of ethics presumes the fusion of means and ends, since an external value cannot be ethically validated. In other words, the erroneous belief in the logic that the "ends justifies the means" is a consequence of the serious attitude, which encourages an indifference to the suffering caused by oppressive means in view of an external idol, which promises a Messianic end (*EA* 126; *PM4* 145). Thus, the fact of externality projects the goal beyond the limitations of the ethical battle-field described by Beauvoir, rendering it irrelevant to human existence.¹³⁰

Since ethical goals cannot adhere to external ideals, beyond the temporal world, temporality is vital to the construction of ethical goals, contrary to the abstract universal, which externalizes the human value of freedom, rendering it extraneous to life on earth. Accordingly, Beauvoir is critical of humanist narratives that do not critique their Messianic foundations. In pragmatic terms, the revolutionary subjectivity must make decisions by studying "intelligible sequences within temporal forms," rather than following a predetermined causal structure (*EA* 132; *PM4* 152). Consequently, the decision is made without "perfect knowledge," since immediacy precludes it; nevertheless, the revolutionary subjectivity "fashions history" by deciding on present actions in the absence of rigour (*EA* 133; *PM4* 153). The ethical action is therefore limited to the temporal form, whereby the means do not justify but rather define the ends.¹³¹

Finally, Beauvoir emphasizes the importance of the fusion of means and ends for the long-range ethical goals of revolutions, which exceed the limits of the ephemeral present. To demonstrate this, she compares the far-off goals of anticolonial and socialist revolutions. She writes, "When one fights for the emancipation of oppressed natives, or the socialist revolution, he is obviously aiming

¹³⁰ Beauvoir attributes the messianic concept in Christianity to humanism, thereby showing that the "inhuman idols" of State and World in the humanist tradition are an extension of religious values. Thus, she concludes that abstract humanism retains an affiliation with prior narratives of religious faith. Beauvoir critiques abstract humanism, which she opposes to existential humanism. Fanon mobilizes Beauvoir's existentialist critique of universal humanism to examine the violence of humanist ideals in the colonial world.

¹³¹ Beauvoir argues that if a democratic regime uses similarly oppressive means as those of authoritarian regimes, it can no longer call itself democratic. She writes, "a democracy that defends itself only by acts of oppression equivalent to those of authoritarian regimes, is precisely denying all these values." She draws on the example of Stalinism, in which the mythical future of Stalinist Russia, with its external ends, unethically justifies oppressive force in the present (*EA* 134-135; *PM4* 154-155). Authoritarian values oppose the temporal structure of free existence. They lead inexorably to the denial of the freedom they idealize.

at a long-range goal; and he is still aiming at it concretely, beyond his own death, through the movement, the league, the institutions, or the party that he has helped to set up” (*EA* 138; *PMA* 158-159).¹³² Thus, any work that one does for ethical freedom comprises a finite action in a finite existence, passed on to future generations. As Beauvoir concludes, “we must not expect anything of that time for which we have worked; other men will have to live its joys and sorrows” (*EA* 138; *PMA* 159).¹³³

Ambiguity and Antinomies in Postwar Conflicts

Beauvoir contrasts the purely negative revolt to the ambiguity and antinomies of the post-revolutionary period, which has historically generated counter-revolutions, turning toward the serious goals of the past. She writes, “It has often been observed that revolt alone is pure” (*EA* 143; *PMA* 164). Her historical reference to the unquestioned solidarity of anti-fascists against the “single oppressor” during the Occupation is contrasted to the European counterrevolutions from Christianity to the Reformation to revolutionary humanism. To avert the return of seriousness, she concludes, any positive action must assume a “permanent tension” in the means/end relation. In order for the newly liberated subjectivity to accept this tension, it is essential that the end be placed “in parentheses,” thereby allowing it to be thoroughly questioned.¹³⁴ In posing questions, one does risk redefining a fixed ethical content in lieu of the activity of invention, but, while an action can never invent itself through an *a priori* moment or content, it can also never be causally determined. Rather, “there must be trial and decision in each case,” akin to the practices of the arts and sciences (*EA* 145; *PMA* 167). Like artists and scientists, “the man of action” must examine the existing conditions, to determine the ambiguous choices of ethical projects.¹³⁵

¹³² The English translation glosses over an important part of this line. In the original French version, Beauvoir writes, “When one fights for the emancipation of oppressed natives, *the liberation of the Blacks of America, the construction of a Palestinian State*, the socialist revolution, he is evidently aiming at a long-range goal” (corrected translation, my italics, *PMA* 158). Bernard Frechtman’s translation collapses the historical references highlighted by Beauvoir into the abstract category of oppressed natives. The missing historical references reveal both her political commitment to these particular struggles, and the scope of her phenomenological reading of oppression, which underlines the necessity of drawing on these revolutionary histories.

¹³³ Finite projects – transcendent activities toward ethical freedom – such as the specific task of establishing a new national consciousness and culture – are pursued by Fanon in the later chapters of *The Wretched of the Earth*. In Chapter 3, I consider the importance of national consciousness for the development of Fanon’s revolutionary subjectivity.

¹³⁴ Beauvoir offers an alternative to the self-questioning of Kierkegaard’s Abraham in *Fear and Trembling*: she educs the story of Isaac to contrast Abraham as a Pharisee to the common moral man, embracing an ambiguous ethics (*EA* 144; *PMA* 165-166).

¹³⁵ The place of artistic projects in the formation of the ethical consciousness, especially for Beauvoir’s “man of action,” is discussed in Chapter 3.

In this regard, the use of violence must be critically validated. Beauvoir writes, “violence is justified only if it opens concrete possibilities to the freedom which I am trying to save” (*EA* 147-148; *PM* 170). Thus, the decision to do violence to others cannot be made “indiscriminately” (*EA* 148; *PM* 170). Instead, it requires an evaluation of the singular case. In the process of evaluating the particularity of the concrete situation, however, it is also crucial to not allow for claims to be made *on the basis of ignorance*. Beauvoir concludes that the colonizer is an exemplar of bad faith. She writes, “violence is not immediately justified when it opposes wilful acts which one considers perverted” through ignorance. Often, she explains, elites paternalistically decide for “the child, the illiterate, the primitive crushed beneath his superstitions” (*EA* 150; *PM* 172).¹³⁶ Hence, hierarchical power suppresses the other’s subjective freedom by exercising its power to oppress.

The historical reference for Beauvoir is the prototypical figure of the colonial administrator, who degrades customs and culture, in an effort to justify the violent denial of the other’s freedom. The lack of ethics arises from a decision to oppress another’s freedom on the basis of ignorance of other worldviews. Beauvoir contrasts the self-reflexive subjectivity to the ignorant colonizer, who does not critically examine and question the validity of his own actions: “[T]he colonial administrator himself would not have the right to freedom; he is much further from perfect knowledge than the most backward savage is from him” (*EA* 150; *PM* 172). Regrettably, Beauvoir slips back into racial and colonial abstractions in this analysis, as is evident in her deployment of the terms “primitive” and “savage.”¹³⁷ Nonetheless, her aim is to hold the colonial administrator to account, by reasoning that if he were judged according to his own rationale, he could not have the right to freedom, since he denies it to others – on the basis of ignorance. Beauvoir therefore underlines the critical role of knowledge in any determined course of action.

The serious goal of the “Economy,” a Western idealization, is opposed by Beauvoir. She argues for a different goal, which is the right of self-determination for colonized peoples. Comparing

¹³⁶ When Beauvoir describes the phenomenon of the “primitive crushed beneath his superstitions,” her aim is to criticize oppressive forces for obstructing the freedom of the colonized. In so doing, however, she espouses the colonial worldview, which assumes that non-Western customs and cultures remain secondary to the goals of Western progress. Hence, paradoxically, she decries the validity of the racial hierarchy, while simultaneously placing the “primitive” on it, via the implication that the ethical end for the colonized other must be a Western form of liberation. Excluded from her theorization of the so-called primitive is the possibility of separate struggles for liberation, autonomously driven by non-Western peoples, generating alternative values, which diverge from Western goals.

¹³⁷ Of course, Beauvoir’s use of the term “backward savage” is itself a racial and colonial objectification – as is her use of the word “primitive.” These terms redeploy the negative characterizations she claims to rebuke, rendering the racial and colonial other incommensurable with Western values. It could be argued that Beauvoir uses this terminology to critically interpret the colonial worldview, but it is not sufficiently critiqued in the context of Beauvoir’s writings to merit this assumption.

the flawed arguments against French suffrage to the revocation of the right of self-determination to the colonized, Beauvoir concludes, “With like impudence it is almost unanimously stated today in France that if the natives of the French Union were given the rights of self-determination, they would live quietly in their villages without doing anything, which would be harmful to the higher interests of the Economy” (*EA* 151-152; *PMA* 174). Hence, French nationalism is linked to the serious goal of capital accumulation, to which the colonized are sacrificed. A false equivalence, a tool of mystified power, determines the logic of subservience to the French economy as the condition of liberation. It emboldens the colonial narrative that portrays colonial life as inherently oppressive, which invites the violent measures of the colonizer against the “indolent negroes,” enforcing their sacrifice for the West’s economic projects (*EA* 152; *PMA* 174).¹³⁸

Otherwise, according to this false equivalence, they would be “left to vegetate” in a somatic void. This view of the “native” invokes the closure of a different future to oppressed peoples. It also allows for images of vegetative life to be mobilized for the justification of oppressive force. Thus, the colonial power officially sanctions the violence needed to convert the colonized into the means of production, to serve the interests of capital accumulation. The colonial administrator is therefore a respected figure in France, a member of the “enlightened elite,” entrusted with the use of violent methods to discipline the “eternal child” of the colonies (*EA* 152; *PMA* 175).¹³⁹ For Beauvoir, revealing the colonizer’s ignorance underlying this “perfect knowledge,” is critical, to expose French complicity in regard to the revocation of the right of self-determination to colonized peoples based on ignorance (*EA* 150; *PMA* 172).

Yet, Beauvoir does not completely disavow the notion that colonial life is inherently indolent. There is a tension between her support for the colonial project versus her repudiation of it. She writes,

And doubtless the state of stagnation in which they choose to live is not that which a man can wish for another man; it is desirable to open new possibilities to the indolent negroes so that the interests of the Economy may one day merge with theirs. But for the time being, they are left to vegetate in the sort of situation where their freedom can merely

¹³⁸ In describing Algerian colonialism, Beauvoir offers an analysis of the oppressed. But, in this passage, she refers to both the “negro” and “native.” This leverages the space for a critical investigation of the concrete particularities of each situation, if their abstractions are to be transcended.

¹³⁹ The rationalization for authoritarian methods rests, according to Beauvoir, on a concept of the child. On this basis, the authoritarian decides for the woman and slave, characterized as “an eternal child” or a “grown-up child” (*EA* 152; *PMA* 175). Despite the flawed logic of the authoritarian, which she absolutely opposes, Beauvoir accepts that there is some validity to the image of the ‘happy slave’ in certain situations. I argue that she is wrong about her assumption that, in particular situations of enslavement, adults *remain* children, thereby releasing them from the anguish of ethical freedom. See Chapter 1 for my criticism of Beauvoir in regard to her abstract understanding of the slave and harem woman.

be negative: the best thing they can desire is not to tire themselves, not to suffer, and not to work; and even this freedom is denied them. It is the most consummate and unacceptable form of oppression. (*EA* 152; *PM* 174-175)

Thus, Beauvoir envisions a future for the oppressed, in which the so-called independent economic projects of the colonized merge with the dominant Western “Economy.” This assumes that the colonized will eventually become a part of the liberating project of the West. Her objection to curtailing the right of self-determination rests in her belief that the bad faith of the colonizer obstructs a revolution in the colonies, which, she believes, would free the colonized to pursue their own economic projects, but these projects would eventually merge with those of the West. This assumption precludes a description of the colonial destruction of precolonial economic systems, including subsistence economies and access to a commons, ending with land enclosures.¹⁴⁰ The possibility for an alternative economics, which does not conform with Western capitalist projects, is not pursued.

The Historical Legitimacy of Revolt

The historical justification for present actions in the absence of a self-reflexive consciousness is rejected by Beauvoir’s existential ethics. But, she legitimates today’s revolutionary struggle by affirming past revolutionary struggles, to argue that historical revolutions shape the present action, even as the revolutionary subjectivity consciously rejects reflexive iterations of the past. Beauvoir presents an ethics meant to delegitimize the authority not only of the colonizer, but of anyone at all to establish an *a priori* end, stating that “[t]he fact is that no behaviour is ever authorized to begin with, and one of the concrete consequences of existentialist ethics is the rejection of all the previous justifications which might be drawn from the civilization, the age, and the culture; it is the rejection of every principle of authority” (*EA* 153-154; *PM* 176). Hence, every action, appended to the present moment, surpasses past justifications, which are tied to specific times and places that no longer exist as they had once existed.

Against the authorizing power of the past, Beauvoir wields the metaphor of the “conducting wire,” to link together the means of achieving the other’s freedom and the ends of ethical freedom, which requires “an original solution” for every separate action (*EA* 154; *PM* 177). Thus, previous

¹⁴⁰ Glen Sean Coulthard, in *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, describes the violent land enclosures, which preceded the rise of capitalist markets, beginning in Europe and expanding, through the destructive practices of colonialism across the modern world, with devastating effects for indigenous cultural, economic, social, and political systems.

projects cannot be repeated in the present. However, acknowledging past revolutions is essential for a historical understanding of liberation. As Beauvoir writes, “It is fitting that the negro fight for the negro, Jew for the Jew, the proletarian for the proletarian, and the Spaniard in Spain. But the assertion of these particular solidarities must not contradict the will for universal solidarity and each finite undertaking must be open on the totality of men” (*EA* 156; *PM* 179). Since historical struggles form an inheritance for present-day revolutions, the stories of past revolutions inspire new movements. Despite the particularity of the singular struggle, however, each revolution, if it is aimed at ethical liberation, enters into a universal solidarity with other struggles. *En masse*, these struggles reject the authoritarian refusal to acknowledge the existence of oppression. In effect, historical struggles affirm the value of ethical freedom as a universal goal. This assumes that, if past struggles for freedom are not kept in mind, then the human hierarchy may regain its authority over the concept of existence.

Beauvoir compares historical revolutions, by contrasting Stalinism with the “absolute evil” of Jim Crow lynching, to affirm her view that certain situations of oppression, such as the latter, require absolute negation, while other situations raise the problem of antinomies. Beauvoir writes, “Lynching is an absolute evil; it represents the survival of an obsolete civilization, the perpetuation of a struggle of races which has to disappear; it is a fault without justification or excuse” (*EA* 158; *PM* 181). Thus, she asserts that there is never any ethical validation of the racial hierarchy, which is why it must be aggressively suppressed. On the other hand, she believes that Stalinism is more ambiguous: while the opponent calls its violence criminal, since it is not linked to the aim of social equality, the supporter justifies its violence seriously in view of an unconditioned end. Yet, neither argumentative position considers the necessity of deciding concretely whether violence is justified, external to an *a priori* end (*EA* 160; *PM* 183). Beauvoir rejects Stalinist orthodoxy, but, she argues, an unexplored future socialist idea, beyond the failure of Stalinism, cannot be dismissed. The Bolshevik Revolution, initially envisioned social and economic equality, but later collapsed into the unethical, seriousness of Stalinism (*EA* 157-159; *PM* 180-183).¹⁴¹ Beauvoir views the civil rights

¹⁴¹ In *War and Revolution: Rethinking the Twentieth Century*, contemporary historian Domenico Losurdo argues that a reactionary historical revisionism is currently attempting to dismantle the universally accepted historical interpretation of the twentieth-century revolutionary tradition. By fusing the French and Bolshevik Revolutions into a counterrevolutionary force, today’s revisionists, Lusardo claims, are rewriting the conceptual equivalence of Nazism-Colonialism, which had previously deemed colonialism unethical, on the basis of its linkage to the histories of Nazism in Europe. This is now being substituted by the Nazism-Communism equivalence, in which colonial history is effectively erased, with the Third Reich conceptually equated with Communism. However, as Lusardo explains, from the Second World War to the outbreak of the Cold War, the Soviet Union was viewed as a part of the democratic revolution (18). According to Lusardo, the revisionism underway builds on the historical revisionism of German historians, who viewed

struggle against US lynching as ethically valid, versus the competing antinomies in the Soviet post-WWII era, where revolutionary activities risk reinstituting oppressive regimes, as they did under Stalinism.

Beauvoir ends her series of comparative readings by turning from French revolutionary history to the British colonization of India, to affirm the value of failed insurrections in the history of revolutionary struggles. Why fight oppression if the outcome is likely to be defeat? Beauvoir acknowledges that minor revolts, or seemingly inconsequential resistances, are bound to fail: “the insurrections in Paris and Lyons at the beginning of the nineteenth century, or the revolts in India, did not aim at shattering the yoke of the oppressor at one blow, but rather at creating and keeping alive the meaning of the revolt and at making the mystification of conciliation impossible” (*EA* 162; *PM* 186). The present revolutionary movement therefore inherits the multiple, failed attempts at liberation of its predecessors, which renders their failed attempts “already a liberation” (*EA* 164; *PM* 188). These seemingly inconsequential insurrections illuminate the impermanence of the oppressor’s power, which weakens the legitimacy of the oppressive regime, thereby opening the future to the possibility of a large-scale revolutionary movement.

If Indian colonization is the historical source for Beauvoir’s recognition of failed revolts, it is almost certainly an allusion to the Indian Sepoy Rebellion of 1857 against British rule.¹⁴² In drawing a parallel between the early nineteenth-century insurrections of France and the nineteenth-century revolts in India against colonial rule, Beauvoir implicitly suggests that the anticolonial movements are connected to the French revolutionary tradition. In all instances of revolt, the enforcement of “foreign absolutes” over self-determination produces injustice, she argues. Beauvoir concludes that the failed insurrection against colonial rule in India illuminates the value of ethical freedom, as did the early insurrections in France.¹⁴³ Thus, the universal structure of revolution is asserted via particularities, inclusive of their genealogical origins, found in the histories of failed insurrections.

the fascist “counter-annihilation” as a legitimate political movement against the “annihilation” perpetrated by the Communists (23). Lusardo concludes that revisionist attempts to erase the critique of fascism, Nazism, and colonialism, rests on a desire to legitimate fascist politics.

¹⁴² Nicola Frith describes the French reaction to the Sepoy Rebellion, to show that it “was mobilized as an instance in which French writing could imagine India beyond British control, and thus envisage France’s own, late-nineteenth-century imperial revival after a long period of stagnation” (2). Frith argues that the negative portrayals of the British Empire in the French press reveal an intra-European rivalry, which, she concludes, inspired the later century *mission civilisatrice* in North Africa and Indochina. In other words, the Indian revolt, well-publicized in France, reinvigorated late-century colonizing efforts in France. Thus, the images of Indian anticolonialism were popularized in French historical consciousness. Beauvoir brings them to mind for her claim that failed rebellions are crucial for the progress of liberation struggles.

¹⁴³ Hannah Arendt, in *On Violence* (1970), argues that early insurrections lead, historically, to greater forms of repression, not liberation. For Arendt, the quiet and swift violent action that breaks oppression outside rationality or explanation is a

One of the important existentialist lessons that Beauvoir imparts is that distinct revolutionary groups exist in parallel to one another, even as this view does not address the perils of the gaps that separate oppressed peoples. In other words, she calls for a universal solidarity among all forms of racial, social, and economic oppression, while acknowledging the fact that each group develops its revolutionary movements separately. But her conceptualization of the relation between universal and distinct struggles, however, does not elaborate on the necessity of a dialogical encounter, in which each of these struggles intersects with the others. She suggests that the universal struggle must not erase discrete histories by delinking them. Yet, she does not invite relations to form among separate struggles, whereby, for instance, the black struggle could be seen in relation to the Jewish struggle, or the working-class movement. This would call for a universal solidarity to be realized as an intersectional, coalitional concept. These contemporary philosophical questions lie outside the parameters of Beauvoir's philosophy of revolution.

Political Violence and the Modern Police

Finally, I argue that Beauvoir demystifies the alliance between the modern police force and political power, to provide a glimpse into a possible reiteration of wartime tactics. In this chimeric form, politics justifies the use of police violence to suppress freedom outside war zones. Beauvoir writes, "all politics makes use of the police, which officially flaunts its radical contempt for the individual and which loves violence for its own sake. The thing that goes by the name of political necessity is in part the laziness and brutality of the police" (*EA* 167; *PMA* 191).¹⁴⁴ The post-WWII police force, Beauvoir warns, is capable of multiplying atrocities, which have no other aim than to continually

short-term goal, but, even this form of violence, she argues, often backfires, with the means overwhelming the ends. She writes, "If goals are not achieved rapidly, the result will be not merely defeat but the introduction of the practice of violence into the whole body politic" (177). Arendt's view opposes Beauvoir's assertion that failed insurrections are critical antecedents to large-scale revolutionary movements. Arendt's opposition to Fanon's "On Violence" is well known, even as her criticism of Fanon rests on her reading of Sartre's preface. Nevertheless, Arendt was critical of the idea that revolutionary violence against oppressive violence could result in liberation. Thus, she opposes both Beauvoir and Fanon, who view revolutionary violence as legitimate in situations of absolute oppression. She offers another view of liberation, in which the police and military surrender their weapons, leaving open the possibility of the end of oppressive power.

¹⁴⁴ Beauvoir reverses the typical colonial claim, condemning the revolutionary insurgent for espousing 'violence for its own sake,' by considering the culpability of the oppressive regime, which perpetuates war-like conditions in the aftermath of war. She therefore draws attention to the perpetrator of state violence. The difference between them, according to Beauvoir, is that the insurgent claims an ethical goal, while the regime has no ethical claim for its use of violent methods. The lack of an ethical goal leads, for instance, to the colonial project of inflicting violence for the sake of violence, in situations where the militarization of the police force proliferates new, chimerical forms of violence, unbridled by political constraints. In all cases, in peacetime, the prolongation of wartime violence leads regimes to create enemies out of those whose dissent challenges the validity of their projects.

inflict violence against those that oppose its political allies, which leads to the continual brutalization of the oppressed by the institutions of political power.¹⁴⁵ Indiscriminate brutality becomes the preferred method of the police/politics alliance, since violently suppressing dissent is easier than remaining vigilant of it. Beauvoir insinuates that the use of violence to fight wars lays a fertile ground for the development of new forms of state violence in the postwar period, which could be as – if not more – lethal to the triumph of the ethical world. Thus, the reversal of individual freedom is realized via the police/politics alliance. Beauvoir concludes that only vigilance can assure that ethical freedom is raised above any serious goal. If violence is used to vanquish oppression, it is justified, but not if it intends to permanently suppress individual freedom. As I will show, Fanon appropriates the Beauvoirian concept of the police/politics alliance to develop a critique of colonial policing, which exposes the colonized to a chimerical structure of colonial violence, blending military and police powers with politics.

From Beauvoir's Violent Negation to Fanon's Anticolonial Violence

In Part 1, I explicated Beauvoir's concept of revolutionary violence, to illuminate her ontological defence of violent negation in situations of absolute oppression. I have also demonstrated that Beauvoir draws on the interrelated histories of fascism, Nazism, and colonialism, to emphasize the historical legitimacy of revolutionary violence. In Part 2, I draw out the connections between Beauvoir and Fanon on revolutionary violence, to argue that Fanon mobilizes Beauvoir for the development of an existential concept of revolution, which underlines the importance of the concrete situation and historical particularity. This suggests that, for Fanon, the subjective experience of oppressive violence is theoretically relevant for an understanding of revolution.

I argue that Fanon provides a view of anticolonial revolution, as a struggle against violent power, which legitimizes the use of violent force in the colonial situation, albeit in the absence of *a priori* means and ends – and, importantly, in the absence of an ethical justification outside of the

¹⁴⁵ In his 2019 Holberg Lecture, Paul Gilroy concludes that the current “securitocracy and its proliferating states of exception” lead to “an extremely uncomfortable judgement about the half-life of the twentieth century fascist revolution.” I argue that Beauvoir's critique of the modern police/politics alliance resonates with Gilroy's contemporary view of “proliferating states of exception.” Indeed, Gilroy's effort to make sense of a reactionary return to fascist pasts also builds on Beauvoir, who forewarns that if anachronistic pasts are not eradicated, they may reappear to obstruct present and future ethical projects. Reflecting on Jean Améry's view of the “resilience” of fascism, Gilroy goes on to say, “Perhaps with additional guidance from Fanon, he would have also been able to see it as the living residue of race-friendly colonial rule.” Gilroy watches this “living residue” of fascist and colonial pasts being “restored to the metropole” in the guise of newly-constructed racialized figures. Gilroy acknowledges that the shared histories of anti-Semitism and colonial racism are producing new tools of racialization, which are reshaped and restored for deployment at the point of their origin.

situation in which it emerges. Moreover, I will argue that Fanon, drawing on Beauvoir, concludes that the moral exigence of violent action in the colonies is unknowable in advance of its explosive entry onto the scene of the anticolonial struggle. Finally, I conclude that the theorization of revolutionary violence offers a method for rendering legible violent histories of oppression and revolution, otherwise suppressed in the language of moral condemnation.

PART 2: Fanon's Concept of Anticolonial Revolution in "On Violence"

Fanon, like Beauvoir before him, makes the case that each instance "one by one" merits a study of its particularities, to consider whether a violent response is legitimate. I argue that the study of the concrete particularity is of greater importance, on a methodological level, in Fanon's writing. For Fanon, the subjective experience of violent objective realities must be elucidated, to validate the use of revolutionary violence in liberation struggles. In the colonies, where Manicheism destroys the possibility for non-violent means, Fanon argues, violence permeates the situation of colonial oppression, which produces violent revolts, irrespective of any moral condemnation. Fanon corroborates this point by arguing that revolutionary violence is temporally delimited and subjected to a self-critical reflexivity, outside of which it loses its validation. In this regard, Fanon critically rethinks Beauvoir's concept of revolutionary violence, to describe the phenomenon of anticolonial violence. He implicitly assumes that predetermined methods are absolutely averted by focussing on concrete particularities. Like Beauvoir, Fanon alleges that the oppressive situation determines the conditions for revolt against it.

Unlike Beauvoir, however, Fanon mobilizes the existential dimensions of self-critique, to theorize revolution as quintessentially anticolonial. This focus on the anticolonial revolution separates his theorization of revolution from Beauvoir's, which instead draws on historical references to colonial history, but does not engage with the actual histories of oppressed peoples. Fanon concludes that the colonized peoples enact an autonomous politico-philosophical movement of liberation, thereby envisioning a "new humanity" beyond the West. In this regard, the future concept of the human, once liberated from the violent histories of racialization and colonization, via the violent catharsis called for in "On Violence," will be constructed outside the limits of Western power.

Like Beauvoir, Fanon acknowledges the fact that revolutionary violence risks creating violent legacies but does not further an understanding of them. Instead, he proposes that the colonial situation justifies violent action, even as it is delimited by its concrete particularity. In Part 2, I argue

that Fanon redefines the Beauvoirian themes on violence, oppression, and revolution, to account for the actual histories of colonized peoples. I begin by examining Fanon's figure of the tabula rasa, to argue that it is dialogically related to Beauvoir's concept of revolution, which rejects reflexive pasts in order to instate present and future ethical actions and goals. Hence, the repudiation of reflexive values is crucial for the temporalization of ethical projects. In other words, a space and time free of reflexive values liberates subjectivity to imagine a different future, unrelated to the reiteration of past forms. Secondly, I show that Fanon's concept of pure negation vis-à-vis the ethical validation of revolution is directly related to Beauvoir's concept of absolute negation in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, which proposes that, in cases of absolute oppression – or Manicheanism – there is no alternative to the purely negative movement.

Following my discussion of the tabula rasa and the concept of pure negation, I argue that Fanon offers a new theorization of revolution – *from below*. This is a key theme, which moves beyond Beauvoir. Her understanding of revolution affirms the relevance of historical oppression to the concept of existence, but it remains unaffected by the subjective transformations of revolutionary action. This leads Beauvoir to separate resistance from the idea of freedom in certain situations of absolute oppression, arguing that the idea of freedom is brought to the oppressed from outside the experience of the oppressive state, which implicitly assumes that a top-down transfer of objectified knowledge is needed for revolutionary movements in particular situations of absolute oppression. Fanon provides a different concept of revolution, which suggests that revolutions cannot be directed from outside the oppressive situation. Thus, the specific, subjective realities of the oppressed provide the resource for the generation of specific revolutionary actions.

I suggest that Beauvoir distances her concept of revolution from the actual histories of revolution, while Fanon foregrounds particularities. Thus, Fanon concludes that any effort to direct the struggle from outside its limits is not tenable. Finally, and importantly, I explicate the linkage between Beauvoir's understanding that modern policing poses the possibility of extending wartime violence into the postwar period, which implicitly forewarns of oppressive futures, and Fanon's understanding that colonial structures of power threaten all future democratic social and political systems, if they are not radically opposed in the present moment. Hence, both thinkers call for actual revolutions against oppressive violence.

In describing Fanon's appropriation of Beauvoir's concepts, I argue that Fanon – at the level of methodology – provides an original existential concept that calls for an investigation of the subjective experience of oppression, in order to explicate revolutionary methods. This suggests that

the philosophical concept cannot be separated from lived realities. Finally, I conclude that Fanon's theorization of anticolonial violence exists within a larger set of postwar philosophical debates concerning revolutionary violence. I therefore provide a corrective reading of Fanon, since he is often viewed apart from other existentialist thinkers on violence. In his theorization of violence and revolution, Fanon proposes that revolutionary violence must be understood from within the concrete, lived realities of violent oppression. Moreover, as I will show, Fanon's concept of modern revolution has anticolonial origins, which suggests that any future struggle for liberation will build on anticolonial victories.

The Theme of Temporality and the Tabula Rasa

The theft of space and time in the colonial situation is a central theme in Fanon's writing. The resulting lack of temporality leaves the living consciousness of the oppressed without the possibility to invoke ethical goals outside pasts and futures marked by death and destruction. With the past and future closed off to consciousness, the colonized live in a state of "not dying." Hence, the lived experience of atemporality constitutes the oppressive state. Fanon views the tabula rasa as the first open space and time of consciousness, which allows for the temporalization of consciousness outside the predeterminations of colonial power.¹⁴⁶ This involves the repudiation of the enforced state of atemporal oppression. The anticolonial movement therefore invokes the temporality of liberation to vanquish the atemporal world via the tabula rasa. Once returned to the time and space of future-making, the living consciousness of the colonized mobilizes free existence for ethical projects. Therefore, the colonizer can no longer sacrifice the lives of others for unethical ends.

Fanon's tabula rasa reconstitutes the temporal synthesis of present and future for ethical activities, which "break the continuity" of atemporal oppression.¹⁴⁷ Fanon's understanding of revolutionary time as a blending of present and future tenses draws on the existentialist theory of original freedom. Hence, the figure of tabula rasa invites the temporalizing subjectivity to enact its freedom, thereby repudiating all previous justifications for oppressing colonized peoples and histories. Thus, the tabula rasa symbolizes the seizure of time and space for the rejection of inherited

¹⁴⁶ In *The Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche writes, "a little peace, a little tabula rasa of consciousness to make room for something new" (38). Thus, consciousness demands an "active forgetfulness" to liberate itself from predeterminations, in order to move beyond them. Gordon cites the influence of Nietzsche on Fanon, in regard to the breaking of idols, but he does not specifically spell out the Nietzschean influence on Fanon's concept of the tabula rasa in "On Violence."

¹⁴⁷ Beauvoir's phrase – "breaking the continuity" – describes how revolutionary violence breaks the cycle of oppressive violence. Fanon uses similar terms, to argue for violence against colonial power.

oppressive systems. Importantly, Fanon views the tabula rasa as a delimited space and time, before new ruling ideas enter consciousness. It is essentially the space of invention, detached from any instituting power.

The enactment of the tabula rasa is connected to the project of decolonization, which, Fanon writes, is “always a violent event” (*WE* 1; *DT* 29). Fanon thus concludes that the tabula rasa triggers the violent enactment of freedom in the colonial situation. Decolonization therefore constitutes the absolute reversal of Manichean power. While Beauvoir uses the word “reversal” to describe the inversion of the power structure, Fanon uses the psychoanalytic term “substitution.”¹⁴⁸ Fanon writes, “Decolonization is quite simply the substitution of one ‘species’ of mankind by another” (*WE* 1; *DT* 29). Accordingly, decolonizing activities rely on the logic of substitution. This absolute reversal or substitution of the power structure is explicated through a description of the anticolonial struggle, which produces an “unconditional, absolute, total, and seamless” substitution (*WE* 1; *DT* 29). The substitutive logic generates the figure of the tabula rasa, which in turn provides the temporal synthesis of present and future. This leads to the projection of consciousness outside inherited values.¹⁴⁹ But the tabula rasa cannot be separated from its enactment. In other words, it does not exist apart from the seizure of freedom. Like Beauvoir, who views the concept of existential freedom in relation to the enactment of freedom, Fanon concludes that the tabula rasa is not an external value. Instead, he suggests that it must be enacted from within the subjective experience.

If decolonization is violent, it is because remaking the “social fabric” requires a violent transformation of situation and subjectivity (*WE* 1; *DT* 29). It calls for both the radical transformation of the social and political world and the reformation of subjectivity. Fanon thus concludes that armed struggle cannot singlehandedly dismantle oppressive forces, since the project of decolonization also entails the repudiation of unconsciously-held convictions, evident in “individual encounters, a change of name for a sports club, the guest list at a cocktail party, members of a police force or the board of directors at a state or private bank” (*WE* 1; *DT* 29). Hence, ordinary relations, from the face-to-face meeting to the institutional relations governing state

¹⁴⁸ The Freudian concept of substitution, whereby a perceived thought is repressed and replaced with another, describes the psychic defense mechanism, which transforms a site of conflict into a site of gratification. Fanon alludes to this Freudian concept, to describe the transformation of the oppressive state into the site of political revolution (Valls).

¹⁴⁹ Nigel C. Gibson describes Manicheanism as atemporal. He writes, “For the native, history has stopped. History is the settler’s. For the colonized, there is no history; only the taking over of space by the colonizer” (108). For Gibson, Manicheanism closes off access to an open future, thereby producing the nonexistence of the colonized other, via the violent appropriation of time and space by the colonizer. In this sense, history belongs to the settler.

affairs, undergo a reorganization, which reflects the substitutional logic of decolonization. In this regard, Fanon's definition of violence exceeds the limited view of criticisms focused on his support for armed struggle. In fact, Fanon broadens the definition of violence, thereby revealing the extent to which it permeates the lived experience of the colonized, to include not only individual encounters, friendships, and appellations, but also the institutional apparatuses of the police, as well as bankers, whose economic violence spans state and private sectors.¹⁵⁰ Thus, colonial violence is found in the institutional norms governing everyday social, political, and economic life. Fanon therefore proposes that an anticolonial logic of substitution must overthrow existing colonial norms by seizing power via the temporalization implicit in the *tabula rasa*. The *tabula rasa* invites future-making activities, which substitute the dominant colonial worldview with an open future, whereby lived existence is no longer subjected to the totality of oppressive institutional practices in the colonial world.

But, while the colonized consciously embrace the figure of the *tabula rasa*, which invites the creative work of temporalization, the colonizer, in contrast, remains haunted by fears of a "terrifying future" (*WE* 1; *DT* 29). In this regard, the colonizer, a Beauvoirian serious man, adopts the outlook of the sub-man in the face of the other's freedom, expressing fear and disillusionment. Because the colonial situation has been mystified, both the colonized and the colonizer view it as a natural phenomenon, along the lines of the established colonial and racial hierarchies. Demystifying the colonial relation therefore leads to projects that repudiate not only its particular aspects, but also the validity of the entire project, thereby exposing the mystified foundation of colonial power as the true historical injustice.

As Fanon writes, the exploitation "continued to the point of the bayonet and under cannon fire" (*WE* 2; *DT* 30). In other words, the colonizer introduced a negative 'creationism' into the colonial world, by employing the sculpting and shaping powers of police and military violence for projects of annihilation, terror, and humiliation. Thus, when the colonized mobilize their existential 'original freedom' to oppose the foundational violence of the colonizer, they invoke a true creationism, against the oppression and death produced by colonial systems. The colonizer, threatened by all forms of free existence, likewise fears the erosion of colonial language, customs,

¹⁵⁰ Fanon forges a link between police and capital, to suggest that a police/capitalist alliance is affirmed by political power under colonial rule. I suggest that this has implications for understanding contemporary alignments of economic and political power.

culture, politics, etc.¹⁵¹ The colonizer's fear can be defined as a fear that stems from an undisclosed recognition that an anticolonial consciousness affirms its original freedom, thereby announcing the dissolution of all serious values.

Hence, the colonizer fears losing his place at the top of the naturalized hierarchy. But, according to the Beauvoirian prototypes of bad faith, the colonizer descends to the lowest rungs of ethical existence. Thus, the colonizer lacks an ethical validation for his colonial projects. In contrast, Fanon's anticolonial subjectivity suspends ethics to inflict violence with the aim of establishing ethical freedom. The tabula rasa grants a delimited margin of time and space for the shaping and sculpting powers of projects that range from the appropriation of the master's military arsenal to the verbal, ideological, etc. rejection of Western values. Hence, colonial power triggers the enactment of freedom, which moves toward the dissolution of all institutional forms of violent oppression. The anticolonial project therefore clears space and time for the possibilities of ethical futures beyond oppressive violence.

The Pure Negativity of Anticolonial Revolt

Fanon's claim that "[i]t is the colonist who fabricated and continues to fabricate the colonized subject" is most often linked to Sartre's *Jew and Anti-Semite* (WE 2; DT 30).¹⁵² But, a parallel between Beauvoir and Fanon, especially between Beauvoir's claim that woman is a patriarchal invention, in *The Second Sex*, and Fanon's view of the colonized as a colonial construct, has been noted by Simons Renault, Gordon, and others. I argue that the idea of the oppressed as an invention of the oppressor in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* predates Beauvoir's theory of women's oppression. A description of this constructed power relation is found in Beauvoir's critical view of the naturalized human hierarchy, which exposes the oppressor's bad faith. Similarly, Fanon's use of the verb "to fabricate" (*faire*) suggests that the oppressive situation in the colonies gives the illusion of natural fact, but it is in fact constructed to mystify economic wealth extraction – or capital accumulation – extending from the period of conquest to the period of decolonization. Fanon concludes that "[t]he colonist derives his

¹⁵¹ To further elucidate Fanon's argument, Gibson writes, "Colonial violence ... is negated not by non-violence but by counterviolence" (109). This suggests that non-violence in an anticolonial revolutionary war is incapable of opposing colonial oppression. Explicating Fanon's theorization of violence and revolution, Gibson shows that the anticolonial response must be violent. Arendt, in *On Violence* provides a different understanding. She writes, "to think of the opposite of violence as non-violence; to speak of non-violent power is actually redundant. Violence can destroy power; it is utterly incapable of creating it" (55). She therefore concurs with the view that non-violence cannot vanquish oppression, but she rejects Fanon's understanding (alongside Beauvoir's) that counterviolence produces revolutionary change, since, she argues, it results in the redoubled efforts of sovereign power to ensure that violent repression is maintained.

¹⁵² In my Introduction, I explain that Fanon cites Sartre, but does not recognize an affiliation with Beauvoir.

validity, ie. his wealth, from the colonial system” (*WE* 2; *DT* 30). The evidence of the specific economic program underlying the unethical validation of power therefore reveals the ‘fabrication’ of colonial authority, which suggests that it cannot belong to a natural order.

More of Beauvoir’s terminology emerges in Fanon’s description of the colonized as having the status of a “thing” (*WE* 2; *DT* 30).¹⁵³ In Beauvoir’s language, the oppressed are “Things” reduced to their facticity. Fanon redeploys this term to argue that the colonized subjectivity is transformed into being from the status of an object or “thing” via the liberation struggle. Moreover, Fanon uses Beauvoirian terms to demonstrate that the movement of decolonization – like Beauvoir’s movement of freedom – “alters being” and creates “a new language and a new humanity,” which is ultimately “the creation of new men” (*WE* 2; *DT* 30). But this new creation story is unlike the ones of the monotheistic religious traditions, which, Fanon argues, like Beauvoir, associate human inventions with “supernatural power” (*WE* 2; *DT* 30). Paradoxically, Fanon cites the biblical verse “The last shall be first” to symbolize the pure negativity of anticolonial revolution (*WE* 2; *DT* 30). But the concretization of the biblical phrase demands the recognition that the oppressive situation “reeks of red-hot cannonballs and bloody knives” (*WE* 3; *DT* 30). In other words, violence is woven into the fabric of the situation and subjectivity of colonialism. He writes, “For the last can be first only after a murderous and decisive confrontation between the two protagonists” (*WE* 3; *DT* 30). Fanon’s two prototypical figures, the colonizer and the colonized, exude the moral underlying this maxim: when the colonized begin “to smash every obstacle encountered,” they destroy the totality of the colonial situation, which controls not only their external environment but also their internalized psyche (*WE* 3; *DT* 30). Hence, the struggle between them is destined to be violent.

Heeding Beauvoir’s call to break idols, Fanon’s colonized subjectivity breaks apart the colonial world.¹⁵⁴ In other words, decolonization requires breaking through the formidable barriers of power via violent actions. Any type of agitation confronting colonial power will find itself on the side of the colonized protagonist, violently opposing the colonizer. Only through an active confrontation with power does the colonized realize that its historical force extends backward to “time immemorial,” making its concrete realization in the present also an ancient, universal story of liberation (*WE* 3; *DT* 30). Thus, opening the future time through revolutionary action recasts the

¹⁵³ This does not set aside other influences, such as Césaire, in particular his concept of *chosification*, which is more precise in its critique of colonial oppression.

¹⁵⁴ As previously stated, Gordon attributes Fanon’s “breaking of idols” to Nietzsche. I add Beauvoir as an influence.

historical record. The purely negative revolt of the colonized receives its historical legitimacy, once it sets in motion the radical repudiation of colonial power. Fanon concludes that only a confrontation with power can lead to freedom for the colonized peoples. This confrontation will inevitably be negative, and it will take shape as a violent revolt.

The Manichean Situation in the Colonies

The Manichean world is “compartmentalized” across its entire organization. Just as Beauvoir divides the oppressive situation into two “clans,” so does Fanon divide it into two. He writes, “The colonized world is a world divided into two” (*WE* 3; *DT* 31). Fanon is attentive to the particularities of this binary relation. In this regard, he describes the state militarism specific to the colonial situation. In the colonies, Fanon asserts, the police force and the military, whose functions are ostensibly separated in the West, become unified into a police/military force, allied to colonial politics. Since the Western separation of powers does not apply to the colonies, state violence is compounded by the militarization of the police force. The colonial police force, drawing on the resources of the military, administers the political projects of the colonizer. Consequently, colonial violence subjects the colonized peoples to a hyper-brutality via a chimerical structure of power. The Manichean situation cannot maintain itself without a militarized police force, which represses dissent. Fanon’s description of the colonial police force mobilizes Beauvoir’s concept of the politics/police alliance, to address the colonial situation, thereby elucidating the colonial inheritance at the core of modern policing methods. While Beauvoir identifies the indiscriminate ‘peacetime’ violence of modern policing, Fanon suggests that its antecedent is found in colonial policing, which fuses police and military powers to control colonized peoples, in the absence of a declaration of war, and without a foreseeable end for its brutal methods.

Like Beauvoir’s colonial administrator, the figural form for the seriousness of colonial projects, Fanon’s ‘government agent’ embodies seriousness in the colonies, inflicting the brutal methods of colonial policing, which “uses a language of pure violence” (*WE* 4; *DT* 31). Consequently, the agent “brings violence into the homes and minds of the colonized subject” (4; 31). Both the public and private space in the colonized or ‘native’ sector is therefore vulnerable to police violence, which makes it “not complementary to the European sector” (*WE* 4; *DT* 31). In effect, there is no free existence for the colonized; rather, the ‘native’ sector is “superfluous,” where “people are piled one on top of the other, the shacks squeezed tightly together” (*WE* 3-4; *DT* 31-32). Not only the sector but also the people become “superfluous,” and therefore prepared for

brutalization. The atemporality of oppression in the Manichean world dehumanizes its inhabitants by ensuring that they lack the resources to live other than as “a form of dying,” piled like corpses in death camps.¹⁵⁵

This lack of resources includes the basic necessities of human life: it is “a famished sector, hungry for bread, meat, shoes, coal, light” (*WE* 4; *DT* 32).¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, the ‘native’ sector is racialized, in keeping with the naturalized racial hierarchy. The destitution of the colonized therefore becomes a sign of their “innate” depravity; thus, they lose their human attributes of uprightness and ‘free unfurling,’ leading to the colonial description of the sector as “a sector of niggers (*nègres*), a sector of towelheads (*bicots*)” (*WE* 5; *DT* 32). The racialization of the colonial world divides peoples along the lines of “what species, what race one belongs to” (*WE* 5; *DT* 32).¹⁵⁷ Race therefore remains crucial for determining social, political, and economic status, since colonization relies on pseudo-scientific categories of race to justify its oppressive power. Fanon writes, “You are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich,” an equivalence that falsely justifies racializing wealth as white to exclude non-white peoples. Any Marxist analysis, Fanon concludes, must be “slightly stretched” to address the colonial situation (*WE* 5; *DT* 32). In other words, the Marxist concept of revolution must address the question of the racialization of wealth in the colonial world.

The bounded structure of oppression in the colonies induces a violent confrontation. Fanon writes,

The violence which governed the ordering of the colonial world, which tirelessly penetrated the destruction of the indigenous social fabric, and demolished unchecked the systems of reference of the country’s economy, lifestyles, and modes of dress, this same violence will be vindicated and appropriated when, taking history into their own hands, the colonized swarm into the forbidden cities. (*WE* 5-6; *DT* 33)¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ For Beauvoir, the living consciousness of the oppressed experiences life as a form of death. Fanon develops this idea for the colonial situation, with allusions to the Nazi death camps.

¹⁵⁶ This section recalls my reading in Chapter 1 of Beauvoir’s description of the Nazi death camps.

¹⁵⁷ Fanon extends Beauvoir’s view that mass death is normalized by the exercise of oppressive force. Fanon sees in the preparation of the ‘native quarters’ for the conditions of living death a parallel to mass exploitation and death in the Nazi concentration camps. The historian Domenico Losurdo links the Nazi model of genocide to colonial policies and practices of death and oppression (283). Samuel Kalman, in *French Colonial Fascism: The Extreme Right in Algeria, 1919-1939*, traces the historical trajectory of the French Right in colonial Algeria, to conclude that settler culture in the interwar period constructed an overlapping anti-Semitic and racist narrative that promoted the idea of French Algerian racial superiority, apart from the anti-Semitic doctrines of the far-right in metropolitan France. As a result, this parallel racialization of the Jew and the Arab developed into a redoubled form of fascism. Kalman argues that the racial extremism of the local authorities in Algeria nurtured fascist ideologies specific to settler politics. This elicits a critique of ‘settler colony’ fascism, originating in the French interwar period. Hence, Fanon’s understanding of an interconnected history of fascist and colonial violence is also found in an examination of far-right colonial politicians in Algeria.

¹⁵⁸ The original French for the phrase “the colonized swarm into the forbidden cities” is “*la masse colonisée s’engouffrera dans les villes interdites*.” Fanon uses the word “*masse*,” which subverts its pejorative connotation in the context of the

While the scale of colonial destruction often goes unnoticed in the West, Fanon describes the fact that it covers the entirety of lived existence for the colonized. It is not a matter of simply forcing a people to occupy a certain sector, however miserable. More tragically, it involves the planned destruction of every economic, cultural, and social formation, a cultural ‘genocide’ aimed at the psychic destruction of colonized peoples.¹⁵⁹ Fanon subverts the dehumanizing colonial stereotype of the “swarm” to suggest that, following the substitutive logic of decolonization, the “swarm” paradoxically discloses the humanity of the colonized, regaining their right to exist in the world, by reclaiming the space to exist.

The only possible response to the absolute destruction of the social fabric is therefore to break the power structure that wrought it, by overturning the geographical stratification imposed by it, which would then erase the border entirely, reuniting territory and peoples outside the divisive politics of colonialism. Accordingly, for Fanon, any action taken to reclaim forbidden space will require wresting it away from the heavily armed colonial power, by appropriating its means. This action would destroy the border separating the “native” from the European sector. But, Fanon adds, the event of decolonization has first to be imagined before it can be fought: it is therefore first conceived in a dream “[t]o blow the colonial world to smithereens” (*WE* 6; *DT* 33). Thus, the fight against oppression demands that the colonized first conjure up what they aim to establish, before bringing it into existence, by storming the European quarters.

Beauvoir believes that lynching in the US Jim Crow South must be absolutely opposed, since any remaining vestige of the racial hierarchy threatens to revive defunct archaisms in living consciousness. Fanon further corroborates this notion that archaic forms of racialization imperil the goal of universal liberation in the colonies. Hence, by dehumanizing the colonized other, the colonizer, in bad faith, justifies the racialized other’s exclusion from the concept of ethics. Characterizing the colonized as “impervious to ethics” leads the colonizer to assume that the colonized are constitutively unreceptive to the value of ethical liberation (*WE* 6; *DT* 33). Thus, they pose the threat of an “absolute evil,” equivalent to a biological threat to human life, which must be

anticolonial struggle. Moreover, he suggests that the mass struggle calls for the “engorgement” of space, thereby subverting the colonial metaphor of “invasion.” Richard Philcox translates “*masse*” with the verb “swarm” to approximate the negative connotation. In the English translation, Fanon’s use of the verb “swarm” underscores an effort to invert the colonial vocabulary, thereby making it speak for the gains of mass protest.

¹⁵⁹ As my article “Diagnosing the Sociopolitical Wound: Frantz Fanon and Catherine Malabou” explains, Fanon views psychic pain as a consequence of colonial racism. I argue that Fanon invites Malabou’s concept of psychic destruction, which relates psyche to catastrophe, to conclude that the psychic life of the oppressed is permanently altered by the experience of oppressive violence. Political oppression functions like a physical blow to the head, triggering irreversible changes in personality.

annihilated like an infectious disease (*WE* 6; *DT* 33). Certainly, the metaphors of biological racialization were familiar to European readers, who had heard these terms used in anti-Semitic forms of racialization, alongside the racialization of non-white peoples in the colonies. In effect, Fanon shows that the dehumanization of the racialized other, which enables an unethical validation of power, persists in the post-WWII world.

Drawing on the French political discourse of the early 1960s, Fanon illustrates that French politicians such as Monsieur Meyer, General Charles de Gaulle and François Mauriac continued to validate defunct racial hierarchies, by describing the dangers lurking in the bodies of racially non-white peoples, which, they declared, threatened to “penetrate” and “defile” the white race, since, accordingly, only the ‘white race’ possessed the human attribute of ethics, which had to be defended against the so-called corruption of racial mixing.¹⁶⁰ As Fanon shows, the colonial vocabulary is replete with examples of poison, infection, and disease, ascribed to non-white peoples. The colonizer thus describes non-white peoples as a threat to human existence. This leads the colonizer to annihilate non-white values, via, for example, evangelization, which Fanon associates with the chemical agent DDT that destroys parasites (*WE* 7; *DT* 34). Not only are the colonized categorized as infectious, thereby endangering the triumph of humanity deemed to be the white race, but they are also written into a bestiary of “zoological terms” ascribed to them through allusions in, for example, de Gaulle’s “yellow multitudes” or Mauriac’s “brown, black and yellow hordes that will soon invade our shores” (*WE* 7-8; *DT* 34).¹⁶¹ Just as Beauvoir repudiated the characterization of the

¹⁶⁰ *The Broadview Anthology of Social and Political Thought* notates an excerpt from *The Wretched of the Earth*, which includes these lines. The editors note that Charles de Gaulle was the leader of the Free French during the Nazi occupation, and later, President of France. Mauriac was a French novelist and 1958 Nobel prize winner (193, Note 3 & 4). Fanon shows that, despite their celebrated status in post-WWII France, they openly espouse racial and colonial tropes, evoking contagion to describe non-white peoples.

¹⁶¹ Gibson writes, “In settler colonialism – Algeria was not only considered a model colony but was viewed as part of France, with a European population of more than 1 million – the urban area was monitored by the modern techniques of policing, and the geographical space was divided to protect the European from infection” (108). Hence, the sequestration of the colonized gave rise to the spectres of sickness, disease, and contagion, which became associated with the dehumanized other. Gibson explains Fanon’s use of the term “cleansing force” to describe the revolutionary violence of the masses. Suggesting that Fanon describes the ejection of a poison or toxic substance, Gibson offers a translation of the French verb *désintoxiquer*, which separates it from the connotation of ethnic cleansing. It could also be argued, following Gibson’s reading, that Fanon attempts to subvert the metaphor of contagion, commonly found in racist and fascist characterizations, by redeploying it against the oppressor, to suggest that the “cleansing” is inverted and enacted by the colonized. In this case, Fanon reverses the meaning of the colonial metaphor by subsuming it into an anticolonial vocabulary, overtaking the lexical authority of the colonizer. Nevertheless, the word “cleansing” elicits a reading of Fanon, which suggests that he was susceptible to the rhetoric of ethnic cleansing. This wording has resulted in the debunking of Fanon as an ethnonationalist, despite the evidence of his rejection of this view. In *What Fanon Said*, Lewis Gordon, drawing on Fanon’s references to Aristotle, suggests that Fanon uses the word cleansing “in the sense that Aristotle used the term *catharsis* in his discussion of tragic drama in his *Poetics*” (115). Gordon asserts that Fanon’s figurative use of the term cleansing must not be interpreted literally. He therefore rejects the criticism that Fanon invests violence with an inherent “revolutionary” or ethical value, via the cleansing metaphor (118).

Jewish victims of the Holocaust as “animal hordes,” Fanon argues that the vocabulary of racialization invites the practices of annihilation into the colonies via the language of dehumanization. Not only does military repression enforce the racial hierarchy, but also “a rearguard campaign in the fields of culture, values, and technology, etc.” reinforces the practices of racialization, despite scientific debunking (*WE* 9; *DT* 35).¹⁶²

Thus, the Manichean situation in the colonies produces a specific colonial vocabulary, which isolates the races from one another, according to pseudo-scientific terms, in order to unethically justify the denial of basic resources to sequestered population, which recalls the organizational structure of the concentration camps in Europe. The parallel between the dehumanization in Nazi death camps and the “native sectors” of the colonies elucidates a shared rationale for the exploitation and expendability of individual and collective existence. While Beauvoir describes the mathematical equation employed by the perpetrator of genocide, which reduces the value of human life to a zero, Fanon shows that the practice of genocidal violence in the colonies involves reducing ‘native’ existence to non-human origins, in order to justify death and oppression, while ensuring that the dismantling of non-Western cultures will lead to the annihilation of their collective value in the present and future. This prepares specific populations, along with their cultural triumphs, for death and destruction. Fanon concludes that the oppressed can only regain their powers of temporalization by redeploying the means of violence introduced into the sector, in an effort to break apart the compartmentalization, which prepares their lives and histories for annihilation.

Revolution from Below

Fanon takes up Beauvoir’s attentiveness to the concrete situation and historical particularity of lived experience, to investigate the concrete realities of oppressed peoples in the colonies. In so doing, he foregrounds the value of recognizing specific revolutions. I have argued that Fanon’s focus on particular revolutionary movements in the colonies moves beyond Beauvoir’s more general view, which critiques racial and colonial oppression by observing larger historical patterns. Missing in her philosophical view of liberation is an investigation of the particularity of colonial oppression, which reveals the fact that the revolt against power is generated not from a position of exteriority, but rather from the heart of the subjective experience of suffering and deprivation in the colonies.

¹⁶² As explained in my Introduction, Said’s work, which is preceded by Fanon’s critique of Western values, argues that an amassed colonial archive of knowledge produces the phantasmatic other in Western consciousness.

Fanon describes the violent conflicts, which emerge within the oppressive situation in the colonies, to draw out the unethical alliances between the colonizer and the colonized intellectuals, on the one hand, and, on the other, the various permutations of mass struggle against colonial power. Fanon sees one of the first signs that the colonizer feels threatened by the revolutionary power of the colonized in the colonizer's proclamations of Western supremacy, exuded in cultural symposiums. Hence, an examination of the colonizer's language reveals signs of an emergent struggle. In this case, the amplification of Western supremacy rankles the colonized masses, who are sickened by the reproduction of Western values, causing them to regurgitate these values, which recalls the experience of the protagonist in Sartre's *Nausea* (*WE* 8; *DT* 35).¹⁶³

Yet, the bourgeois elite in the colonial world continues to extoll Western values, in contrast to the peasant majority, who directly experience the impact of colonization on their bodies and their environment, since they are the stewards of the land's life-giving properties. Fanon writes, "All he has ever seen on his land is that he can be arrested, beaten, and starved with impunity; and no sermonizer on morals, no priest has ever stepped in to bear the blows in his place or share his bread" (*WE* 9; *DT* 35). In other words, an incommensurable gap appears between the bourgeois activities taking place in cultural symposiums and the brutalization of the masses. Hence, the concrete forms of criminalization, assault, and hunger are concealed in the bad faith consciousnesses of the bourgeois elite.

Amidst oppression, the symposiums extolling the values of an abstract universalism are unrelated to the visceral experience of violence. Thus, the anticolonial revolution originates in the experience of hardship endured by the peasantry. The moment at which the colonized peasantry no longer withstands its oppression marks the turning point for the revolutionary movement. Fanon writes, "[The colonizer's] look can no longer strike fear into me or nail me to the spot and his voice can no longer petrify me" (*WE* 10; *DT* 36).¹⁶⁴ Hence, neither the objectifying Look nor its power of

¹⁶³ Pal Ahluwalia's "Fanon's Nausea: The Hegemony of the White Nation" elucidates Fanon's reworking of Sartre's *Nausea* in *Black Skin, White Masks*, to describe the clinical symptoms of racial oppression.

¹⁶⁴ Fanon's self-identification with the peasantry is revealed by his use of the first-person possessive, "me," Ranjana Khanna claims, in *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism*. She traces the evolution of Fanon's anticolonial consciousness, which begins with his ambivalent identification with the French, in his first published article "The North African Syndrome," and ends with his embrace of the collective "we" in *The Wretched of the Earth* (176). By another route, Judith Butler, in "Violence, Non-Violence: Sartre on Fanon," returns to *Black Skin, White Masks*, to revisit Fanon's use of the second-person pronoun "you." This, she concludes, shows that the dialogical I-You relation provides a constitutive relationality, beyond the exclusionary "we" in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Butler therefore concludes that beyond Fanon's self-constituting violence in *The Wretched of the Earth* lies the more radically constitutive sociality of the I-You relation, which leaves violent methods behind. Therefore, Butler is hopeful that non-violent methods will triumph after the end of the colonial period. Following Butler, I argue that Fanon's restitutive logic of the *Book of Revelations* ("the last shall be first") in "On Violence" progresses toward a non-violent, or less violent, future, if read either through Butler's reversal

speech can effectively prevent the colonized from actively seeking ethical freedom.¹⁶⁵ The temporality of revolution is triggered once the atemporal zone of oppression is repudiated. In this regard, Fanon elevates the revolutionary peasantry above the bourgeois elite, to propose that the peasant masses are at the origin of revolutionary activities in the colonies.

Fanon concludes that, in order for the colonized intellectual to transcend the colonial system, he must reject his given role as “the sentinel on duty, guarding the Greco-Roman pedestal” – hence, he must refrain from mimicking the seriousness of the colonial system, which designates him as the servant of Western idols. Only after renouncing his seriousness may the colonized intellectual rediscover a lost connection to the land and people, but not until “this artificial sentinel is smashed to smithereens” (*WE* 11; *DT* 37).¹⁶⁶ Once the colonial idols are destroyed, the previously colonized intellectual clears a space to elevate the organic value of the peasantry over bourgeois values: “He will discover the strength of the village assemblies, the power of the people’s commissions and the extraordinary productiveness of neighborhood and section committee meetings” (*WE* 11; *DT* 37). Thus, Fanon concludes, a reconversion of the colonized intellectual back to indigenous social and political systems must occur to achieve an anticolonial victory.

Thus, the pragmatic solidarities that are the result of community-based actions overtake the abstract values of universalism. When colonized intellectuals no longer idolize Western values, they adopt not only the French existentialist concept of original freedom, but also the philosophical concepts guiding traditional African institutions (*WE* 12; *DT* 37-38).¹⁶⁷ If the elite does not renounce

of texts, or, indeed, through Fanon’s final appeal for a new humanism, at the end of *The Wretched of the Earth*. I explore this reading in Chapter 4. This theoretical understanding rests on the need to adjudicate the border between violence and non-violence, which may lead to questions about what constitutes this division.

¹⁶⁵ Fanon draws on Sartre’s concept of the Look in *Being and Nothingness* to describe the state of consciousness following the impact of oppressive relations. In the case of the colonized subjectivity, Fanon argues, self-consciousness is negatively affected by the colonial gaze. The moment whereby the gaze no longer produces this negative self-transformation marks the point of return to the site where subjectivity forms itself, apart from its oppression. This enables the colonized to remake themselves into anticolonial revolutionaries.

¹⁶⁶ As previously noted, Gordon acknowledges Nietzsche’s influence on Fanon’s description of the breaking of idols. I add Beauvoir as an influence.

¹⁶⁷ In a decolonial move, Fanon implicitly suggests that the concept of ethical existence has more than one legacy (other than French existentialism), since African institutions, which traditionally bind collectivity to individual freedom, stand apart from Western individualism. Outside the West, self-reflexive, autonomous practices draw together individual and collective forms of freedom. An implicit tension exists in Fanon’s writing between need to appropriate the Western tools of liberation, borne of the absolute destruction of indigenous systems, and the possibilities for non-Western forms of liberation. In *Globalization and the Decolonial Option*, Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar argue that, while Fanon asserts his colonial critique in the terms of European philosophy, contemporary approaches to the study of colonization require a delinking from Western genealogies, in order to recognize the non-Western points of origin and historical legacies of philosophical concepts. Following Mignolo and Escobar, I take Fanon’s brief remark on the African origins of existential freedom as a harbinger for today’s decolonial delinking, with decolonial options in regard to theorizing liberation.

its affiliation with colonial authority, however, it poses a threat to decolonization, since it works to restore colonial power.¹⁶⁸ Hence, the local bourgeoisie stands in the way of liberation for the masses. A second violent clash occurs between the national bourgeoisie and the peasantry in the nation-building phase: the former cling to their privilege by rekindling the networks of colonial power, while the latter engage in violent revolt, opposing their political leaders on the one hand, and the colonial power on the other, since one is invested in the other, and vice versa.

Fanon's "world of statues" draws on the Beauvoirian figure of the serious man, to describe the colonial army generals and engineers, who impose "[a] world cocksure of itself, crushing with its stoniness the backbones of those scarred by the whip" (*WE* 15; *DT* 40). Thus, colonial rule leaves scars on the biological body and psyche of the colonized.¹⁶⁹ These scars symbolize the repression of an original freedom. Fanon argues that this repressed freedom therefore reemerges as fantasy, in dreams of "aggressive vitality." This leads to "the period when black turns on black," in which "periodic bloody fighting between tribes, clans, and individuals" justifies the oppressor's actions (*WE* 15-17; *DT* 40-42). In other words, internecine conflicts, which liberate aggression negatively, reaffirm colonial power, since they provide evidence to support the colonizer's belief in the natural fact of inferiority. Moreover, this infighting persuades the colonized that the colonizer's view of them is correct. Thus, the creed of historical fatalism persists in the colonial world. In contrast to the fatalism that follows in the wake of self-destructive activities, Fanon implicitly argues that the solidarities of revolutionary movements enable individuals and collectivities to generate new social and political systems, which transcend the fatalistic worldview. Thus, the autonomous movement of

¹⁶⁸ In the final section of "On Violence," Fanon describes the conflict between the bourgeois elite and the masses. This shows that the colonial situation persists in the period of decolonization. The relation between the 'comprador' class and the departing colonizer is cemented in the nation-building phase. The peasant therefore uses the tools of violence, not only against the colonizer, but also against the bourgeois elite, who equally stand in the way of their liberation.

¹⁶⁹ Fanon's metaphor of the scar elucidates the impact of colonial violence on the colonized body and psyche. Hence, the colonized body bears a general exposure to violence, evident in its constitutive disfigurements. Butler's analysis of Sartre's preface further elaborates on the central metaphor of the scar in *The Wretched of the Earth*, which, she argues, for Sartre, is doubly charged. Firstly, the scars of the colonized "reflect back the colonizer to himself, and in this way become instrumental to the European task of self-knowledge." Butler adds that, while, on the one hand, the scars are "instrumental" for triggering the self-reflexivity of the European, on the other, "the scars and chains are understood as signs of an unfolding historical logic, one that conditions and drives the agency of the colonized as they oppose colonialism by every means possible" (*VNV* 216). Hence, the "scars and chains figure in at least two ways, *both* as the effects of criminal deeds *and* as the motors of history" (*VNV* 217). But Butler concludes that the latter affirmation of an anticolonial insurgency, on the part of Sartre, falls short of allowing for the colonized to access the tools of self-reflexivity, since it assumes that counterinsurgent violence is "determined or mechanized," instead of self-reflexive (*VNV* 219). In this regard, Fanon, against Sartre's preface, proposes that revolutionary violence in the colonies reflects an original anticolonial consciousness beyond a mechanistic determination. Following Butler on Sartre, I argue that Fanon provides another concept of liberation, beyond Beauvoir (and Sartre), which foregrounds the originality of the anticolonial movement.

the masses, who oppose their leaders' efforts to restore their colonial masters to power, is constitutively a revolution from below. Fanon concludes that the concept of revolution from below is essential for an anticolonial understanding of liberation vis-à-vis Beauvoirian ethics.

The Concrete Determinations of Violent Revolution

My reading of Fanon's "On Violence" demonstrates that an investigation of the particularity of colonial violence corroborates the legitimacy of violent revolution in the colonies. Fanon provides a philosophical method for examining the legitimate use of revolutionary violence, by focusing on the actual histories of oppressive violence. Thus, he concludes that critically interpreting concrete forms of oppression generates an understanding of negative actions as the consequence of an exposure to violence, irrespective of any moral condemnation. I argue that Fanon draws on Beauvoir, since Beauvoirian ethics argues for the legitimacy of revolutionary violence under temporally delimited conditions. To theorize revolutionary violence, Beauvoir turns to the historical evidence of violent resistance. Her understanding of revolutionary violence vis-à-vis the historical record is crucial for Fanon's later development of a concept of ethics, which allows for the validation of anticolonial violence. In this regard, he views violent revolt against the colonizer as ethically justified, vis-à-vis Beauvoirian ethics.

Regardless of the dangers implicit in justifying revolutionary violence, both thinkers cannot view the possibility of ethical liberation apart from the historical realities of the twentieth century wars, which provide evidence that ethical liberation may be borne of violent revolutions. They conclude that the fact of violence cannot be disregarded, since political revolutions have liberated humanity, despite the risks of reactionary counterrevolutions, or the negative impact of violent legacies. If a nonviolent, or less violent, world were possible, Beauvoir and Fanon assume that – in the context of absolute oppression – it could not emerge without a violent struggle.

CONCLUSION: Recognizing Revolution Today

Beauvoir and Fanon provide an existential ethics of liberation, which validates violent revolutionary responses, in light of the concrete evidence of oppression. Their respective critiques argue for the legitimacy of revolutionary violence as imbricated in an understanding of the oppressive situation. In other words, they view revolutionary violence in relation to the oppressive situation that triggers it. But, I argue, today's revolutionary movements remain illegible, since the suffering and deprivation of ever greater numbers of people, alongside the destruction of natural environments, have not been

adequately investigated as a colonial legacy. I conclude that the critical concepts needed to make sense of contemporary political violence, and the permutations of resistance which inexorably accompany it, must be developed, since today's forms of critique have not provided adequate theorizations of oppression, revolution, and liberation.

Presently, new forms of oppressive violence are being prepared, beyond strictly twentieth-century colonial forms.¹⁷⁰ This promises an escalation of oppression and death, with tragic consequences for ethical existence. Identifying – or demystifying – these new forms of power becomes a necessary ethical activity and goal for critics and intellectuals. In order to provide ethically valid responses to oppression, affirm the existence of new revolutionary movements, and question the legitimacy of violent resistance, a new understanding of revolution is needed. I suggest that it will not be possible to form a critical language to identify instances of revolt against absolute oppression without drawing on the genealogies of dissent. Beauvoir and Fanon, I argue, belong to a dissenting tradition, whose philosophies and strategies may help to hold today's authoritarians to account. I argue for the mobilization of their existential ethics not only to critique oppressive power, but also to affirm the existence of new social and political movements. This also requires heeding their call to affirm the historical legitimacy of past revolutions against authoritarian power, in an effort to further the goals of ethical liberation in the present world. Furthermore, Fanon's concrete existential ethics demands an understanding of revolution from below. Thus, I argue, examining the concrete realities of violent oppression and the forms of revolution they trigger is crucial for comprehending legitimate responses to oppressive violence.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ In *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, Derrida explicates the contemporary phenomenon of the de-territorialized or virtual sovereign force, which renders defunct the colonial project to occupy territory. The colonial phase is therefore surpassed by a “technoeconomic power or political control that has but a minimal need for territory” (105-106). Today's forms of violence therefore correspond to a radically transformed power. Derrida concludes that these changes demand a rethinking of international law and institutions. He suggests that they require a ‘philosopher’ “who analyzes and then draws the practical and effective consequences of the relationship between our philosophical heritage and the structure of the still dominant juridico-political system that is so clearly undergoing a mutation” (106). In this regard, he argues that the genealogical inheritance of (Western) philosophy must be commandeered for critical interpretations of the shifting plane of politics, currently metamorphosing into newer forms of violent power, which surpass the violent forms of colonial systems. The philosophical project cannot therefore be separated from a critique of this mutating politics, with its new forms of violent oppression. I argue that Derrida inherits the Beauvoirian and Fanonian critique of modern power to foreground the need for a philosophical understanding of new forms of power.

¹⁷¹ Speaking on the question of legitimacy vis-à-vis terrorist acts, Derrida states, “A ‘philosopher’ would be one who seeks a new criteriology to distinguish between ‘comprehending’ and ‘justifying.’ For one can describe, comprehend, and explain a certain chain of events or series of associations that lead to ‘war’ or ‘terrorism’ without justifying them in the least, while in fact condemning them and attempting to invent other associations. One can condemn unconditionally certain acts of terrorism (whether of the state or not) without having to ignore the situation that might have brought about or even legitimated them” (106-107). Derrida suggests that the use of violence does not call for a reactive condemnation of terror, which disregards the *situation* that produces the violent act. An investigation of the situation, he argues, might reveal a legitimate claim in the absence of an ethical validation. He concludes that today's ‘philosopher’

A critical language is needed to comprehend revolutionary violence vis-à-vis ethical liberation. Since death and destruction in the contemporary world remain unaccounted for in public discourse, it becomes necessary to create a new understanding of the oppressive experience. This then raises the question of the legitimacy of violent revolutions, wherever they occur. But it does not justify the use of violence in situations where the tools and formations for non-violent methods are accessible, to hold oppressive power to account. Both Beauvoir and Fanon are attuned to the complications arising within ambiguities and antinomies, and thus they provide guidance on averting any simplistic interpretation, which bypasses the concrete realities shaping the permutations of revolutionary forms. It becomes important to set aside any categorical interpretation. I argue that the ethical legitimacy of non-violent revolutionary movements supersedes violent methods. Wherever non-violent methods can be imagined, then they must be mobilized to avert the legacy of violence, evident in the modern history of revolutions. I thus conclude that today's self-reflexive, autonomous insurrectionary movements – both violent and non-violent – are not yet legible. Hence, the possibility for rethinking the legitimacy of revolutionary violence rests on the construction of a new critical concept of revolution. This would shed light on today's revolutionary responses to contemporary forms of oppressive power.

In Chapter 3, I argue that the Beauvoirian ethical prototypes of the intellectual, artist, and politician are appropriated by Fanon, to elucidate the concrete forms of ethical action in the colonies. Fanon constructs the ethical subjectivities of the colonized intellectual, the colonized artist, the revolutionary artist, and the revolutionary leader, thereby contrasting the bad faith actions of intellectuals with the higher ethical forms associated with the anticolonial revolution.

must study the concrete situation to arrive at an understanding of the violent response as legitimate. Derrida, I suggest, draws on Beauvoir and Fanon to argue for a new criteriology dependent on the concrete validation of violent action. But Derrida addresses the phenomenon of terrorism in general, while Beauvoir and Fanon justify revolutionary violence vis-à-vis mid-twentieth century social and political movements of liberation. Hence, their call for an ethical validation of movements aimed at ethical liberation stands apart from Derrida's effort to make sense of state and non-state terror, which reflects a mutating sovereign power. This supersedes the period of colonial modernity critiqued by Beauvoir and Fanon.

CHAPTER 3: THE INTELLECTUAL, ARTIST, AND POLITICIAN: THREE BEAUVOIRIAN PROTOTYPES FOR FANON'S ANTICOLONIAL REVOLUTION

Both Beauvoir and Fanon call on the intellectual to move beyond the limits of objective truth, in order to validate subjective experience. They respectively critique the intellectual for repressing subjective experience to create objective values. This, they argue, weakens the potential to make ethical choices, since objective values do not prioritize ethical actions and goals. In this regard, redefining the intellectual project to corroborate the goals of ethical freedom is essential. The problem, in their view, is that the timeless value of an objective truth cannot claim an ethical validity, since it fails to reflect lived realities. The focus on objectivity, Beauvoir and Fanon implicitly argue, weakens ethical choice, thereby ceding space for the development of oppressive practices.

In Beauvoir's hierarchy of ethical prototypes, the intellectual falls one rung below the artist, the highest form of ethical subjectivity. Beauvoir places the figure of the artist on the top rung, since the artist, unlike the intellectual, fulfills ethical goals, by inviting a relation to the other, and an open future in its artistic projects. No other ethical prototype reaches such heights of ethical freedom beyond the serious world. Artistic projects alone draw on subjective experience, thereby creating the conditions for the emergence of an ethical existence beyond the oppressive state.

In Part 1, I argue that Beauvoir contrasts the intellectual with the artist, to foreground the importance of the artist for the triumph of an ethical world. This has repercussions for theorizing the liberation struggle, since it calls not only for upholding the value of artistic freedom, but also for inviting artistic values into all manner of ethical projects, including political ones. Beauvoir thus addresses the "man of action" – or politician – who, she argues, must also emulate artistic methods in political projects aimed at ethical liberation. Her figure of the artist therefore provides a resource for moving beyond bad faith activities. But, I argue, while Beauvoir theorizes the prototypical behaviours of good faith in relation to an ontological understanding of oppressive pasts, thereby corroborating her characterization of the highest ethical forms, she does not grasp the existential concept from the viewpoint of the subjective experience. Fanon, on the other hand, appropriates Beauvoir's ethical prototypes, in order to provide an existential concept viewed from within the actual histories of oppression. Thus, he reconfigures the ethical subjectivity to address the lived realities of the oppressive experience.

In Part 2, I show that, while Fanon adopts Beauvoir's figures of the intellectual, artist, and politician, to address the colonial situation, he also departs from them, to provide a concrete

existential ethics, with its origins in the subjective experience of the oppressive situation. He therefore moves Beauvoir's ethical figures onto the terrain of lived realities. This leads Fanon to propose his own set of ethical prototypes, specific to the colonial situation: the colonized intellectual, the colonized artist, the revolutionary artist, and the revolutionary leader, all of whom originate in the anticolonial liberation struggle. Their actions and goals directly reflect the concrete situation and lived experience of colonization. Fanon offers a new understanding of liberation as initiated from below. In other words, Fanon's existential concepts materialize via the actual histories of the oppressed, rather than from a purely ontological understanding.

Certainly, Beauvoir created her prototypical figures in response to the problems of abstract philosophizing, which, she believed, suppressed the concrete situation and lived experience. She draws on violent ontologies to show that the categorical imperative wrongly suppresses contingencies. But, I argue, her prototypes are not imbricated in any particularities. They are levelled down to crystallize certain behaviours, which assume a shared point of origin. Fanon, on the other hand, investigates these figural types as living consciousnesses, whose specific experiences form the basis of specific actions vis-à-vis liberation. Hence, judging the form of ethical engagement demands a deeper reflection on the concrete situation. Fanon concludes that liberation cannot be theorized apart from lived realities, since the concept of ethical freedom cannot be separated from subjective experience.

Yet, Beauvoir's critique of the intellectual is critical to her concept of ethics, since it demonstrates that the artist moves beyond the real dangers to ethical freedom posed by objective values. In Chapter 2, I argued that the existential ethics of Beauvoir and Fanon provides a critical concept of revolution, which links specific forms of oppression to particular permutations of resistance. In this chapter, I show that both Beauvoir and Fanon view artistic creation as the constitutive mode of revolution. In other words, the artist, who invites alterity, reconstitutes subjectivity to reflect the interrelational structure of existence. This realization that ethical existence demands a relation to the other prepares subjectivity to enact revolutionary transformations in the social and political world. These thinkers therefore assert that artistic methods must be mobilized for political resistance. Since revolution concurs with artistic creation, Beauvoir argues that the figure of the artist embodies the highest form of ethics, while Fanon adopts this very principle, with the caveat that new artistic forms are needed for anticolonial movements. Revolution cannot therefore be brought into existence without the artistic creativity that summons interrelationality. This

interrelational principle of artistic projects is therefore essential for revolutions, and it consequently universalizes the struggle for liberation.¹⁷²

Fanon concludes that the struggle for ethical freedom in the colonial world illustrates that anticolonial movements must be recognized for their development of an ethics of liberation. To illuminate the central role of anticolonial revolutionary movements in the universal struggle for liberation, Fanon summons the Beauvoirian figures of the intellectual, artist, and politician, thereby crystallizing the specific forms of ethical subjectivity that originate in the colonial situation. Hence, Fanon appropriates Beauvoir's ethical prototypes to provide an ethics of liberation that builds on the ethical victories of anticolonial revolutions.

PART 1: The Intellectual, Artist, and Politician in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*

The Intellectual and the Artist

In Derrida's deconstructive terms, the non-closure of subjectivity resists totalitarianism.¹⁷³ Beauvoir presages Derrida when she writes that the ambiguity of the ethical subjectivity transcends the serious world. In her concept of ethics, however, Beauvoir consigns the intellectual to the serious world, arguing that "many intellectuals seek their salvation either in critical thought or creative activity" (*EA* 73; *PM* 86). But, they exclude an ontological understanding of existence, thereby mirroring the actions of serious men. While intellectual projects are born out of the anguish of negativity, Beauvoir argues, the state of anguish is often suppressed by intellectuals in an "attempt to fulfill

¹⁷² Revolution therefore coincides with artistic creation. In other words, there cannot be a revolution without the artistic creative mode, explains Catherine Malabou in her lecture "Life and Prison," presented at the European Graduate School in 2018. She links Roland Barthes' definition of literature as "permanent revolution" (which draws on Trotsky) to Michael Hardt's understanding of artistic creation as universally emancipatory. But, then, Malabou suggests that the revolutionary potential of the creative mode is "challengeable," since it is criticized by black intellectuals, notably the Afro-pessimism of Frank Wilderson, for whom black liberation cannot be founded on existing revolutionary ideals, in which the prison (the oppressive state) becomes the site of emancipation, since the black inmate is already in a state of nonbeing, as the "living dead." In this view, the interrelational principle becomes an exclusionary concept, erasing the "redoubled captivity" of black lives, unable to generate the revolutionary effect of creative power, which would presume a shared concept of existence. Malabou quotes Wilderson: "black time is no time at all, no place at all." Accordingly, deprived of this revolutionary potential, black subjectivity cannot liberate itself "from within" – more precisely, from within the oppressive system, which assumes a subjective potential or living state; rather, it remains an ontological absence with no positive relational identity. Falling short of concurring with Wilderson, however, Malabou concludes, "Philosophy does not take into consideration lives excluded from revolution." Fanon's theory of anticolonial revolution, which aims to transcend non-recognition and nonbeing, toward a concept of interrelational freedom, falls outside the limits established by Wilderson.

¹⁷³ In *Rogues*, Derrida provides a critical view of the democratic, to suggest that an ambiguity in the concept of freedom arises between self-mastery (*ipse, autos*) and the "empty opening of a future of the very concept." Thus, Derrida inherits preceding definitions, but maintains an "autoimmune" indeterminacy within the concept (25 - 41). Beauvoir proposes that the artist, a figure of ethical freedom, is constituted by an indetermination within the prototype, which – like Derrida's critique of freedom as sovereign ipseity – opposes the idea that it is limited to itself.

themselves outside the world” (*EA* 73; *PM* 86). In other words, the intellectual represses the self-reflexivity needed to construct ethical values. Thus, rather than pursuing the artistic mode of analysis, the intellectual replaces the inherent negativity of anguish with a pure positivity in the form of an objective truth. Hence, the intellectual correlates objective truth with an “independence of mind” (*EA* 73; *PM* 87).¹⁷⁴ Thus, Beauvoir’s intellectual acts in bad faith, by drawing the materials for contemplation from the world, and existing within its given forms, while assuming an exclusive separation from it.

The intellectual avoids the subjective imposition on thought by embracing objective truth. This results in the rendering of a partial truth as the positive presence of an objectivity, which no longer requires the recognition of subjective choice within the act of contemplation. Thus, the intellectual project separates thought from conflicting evidence. Since the figure of the intellectual does not allow its claim of truth to be questioned by externalities, it adopts aspects of tyranny, even as it claims to oppose tyrannical forces, by underlining its status vis-à-vis ethics. In Beauvoir’s view, the tyrannical nature of actions appears in their appeal to totality, the setting up of one’s own salvation, and the absolute avoidance of pure negativity. In submitting to all of these criteria, Beauvoir’s intellectual crystallizes a figure of bad faith.

The seriousness of the intellectual project therefore stands in contrast to the revolutionary potential of artistic creation. By turning away from the essential negativity of critique, Beauvoir’s intellectual works toward serious goals. Even as the isolated state of contemplation affords a loophole for intellectuals to escape from the sources of their ideas, Beauvoir concludes, they must still be held to account for their ethical failures. As Beauvoir writes, “the independent man is still a man with his particular situation in the world, and what he defines as objective truth is the object of his own choice” (*EA* 74; *PM* 87). In other words, the intellectual, who convinces himself that the objective value he creates is unrelated to any type of subjective intervention, fails to acknowledge the specific circumstances of his own situation. Hence, the self-reflexivity needed to acknowledge the

¹⁷⁴ Beauvoir writes, “Critical thought attempts to militate everywhere against all aspects of the serious but without foundering in the anguish of pure negation. It sets up a superior, universal, and timeless value, objective truth. And, correlatively, the critic defines himself positively as the independence of mind” (*EA* 73; *PM* 86-87). In other words, the intellectual assumption of timeless value in the objective truth is unethical, since ethics is inseparable from the temporal world. The intellectual or critic wrongly separates himself from the world, by projecting himself above it, for the creation of purely positive values, unrelated to the negative project of critique. Edward Said draws on this critique of intellectual objectivity, when he writes, “No one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, or a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of a society” (*Orientalism* 10). In Said’s view, all fields of knowledge are embedded in the concrete circumstances of their production.

partiality implicit in ideas and projects is avoided: a critical description of historical particularities is therefore needed to invalidate the assumption of a pure objective truth.

This ethical failure leads the intellectual to serve ideals of which he may remain oblivious. Beauvoir writes, “If he does not assume the subjectivity of his judgment, he is inevitably caught in the trap of the serious” (*EA* 74; *PM* 87). Unaware of the consequences of this choice, the intellectual becomes “the shameful servant of a cause to which he has not chosen to rally” (*EA* 74; *PM* 87). Unlike Beauvoir’s lower prototypes of bad faith, where freedom is deployed in acts of servitude to ideals, with disastrous consequences for free existence, however, the intellectual does not consciously acknowledge serving a particular cause. Instead, he positions himself beyond all social and political engagements in the world. Because he elevates himself above the temporal world, Beauvoir writes, “[h]e does not have to choose between the highway and the native, between America and Russia, between production and freedom” (*EA* 73-74; *PM* 87). Importantly, Beauvoir’s historical references include allusions to colonial history, among other examples of oppressive regimes, namely from bloc politics and the class struggle. All highlight the unrecognized need for historical particularities to validate intellectual projects.

Thus, Beauvoir implicitly suggests that the exclusion of colonial history is the result of unethical practices, which attempt to render the evidence of colonial violence in the modern world external to intellectual thought. Reflecting on oppressive situations from the viewpoint of an objective, hence atemporal, truth allows the intellectual to remain indifferent to all present situations of oppression.¹⁷⁵ If the mode of deliberation is unaffected by actual histories of oppression, then the intellectual is not compelled to enact a revolutionary decision or political program. The Beauvoirian intellectual believes that ideas do not depend on the existence of any particularity. Thus, Beauvoir concludes, the intellectual project, which stands apart from temporal truths, has no ethical value. In times of violence, the indifference shown by intellectuals toward the violent realities of the oppressed passively supports the existing regimes of power.

In Beauvoir’s typology, the intellectual coincides with universal Man. Beauvoir argues that since the intellectual concurs with the universal, ideas and concepts refrain from engaging critical interventions. The notion of universal truth, she argues, depends on the falsehood of “pure

¹⁷⁵ In *How to Read Beauvoir*, Stella Sandford translates the French word *intemporelle* as nontemporal, to evoke the idea of an absolute separation from temporality (25). I use the translation “atemporal” to describe the oppressive state. Both, I believe, are plausible translations of the French word, which connotes the state of existing outside the limits of temporality.

description.”¹⁷⁶ Beauvoir writes of the intellectual, “He does not merely describe. He takes sides” (*EA* 74; *PM* 87). Hence, her revelation that the intellectual project offers a partial or subjective truth disrupts the notion of universal truth. Influenced by the ideas of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir argues that the phenomenological description demands the presence of Cartesian self-doubt.¹⁷⁷ Her criticism of intellectual thought is that it extinguishes the self-reflexive mode of philosophical inquiry, by distancing itself from subjective experience.

Beauvoir views the figure of the artist or writer as the source of creative activity, which inspires ethical action in the world, because, unlike the intellectual, artists “do not propose to attain being” (*EA* 74; *PM* 87). The artist constructs a work of art that refrains from offering a totalizing or purely objective worldview. Even as the definitive form of the creative project assumes the status of an “absolute object” or a finite work of art, it does not assert an objective truth. In the finished work of art, “existence is confirmed and establishes its own justification” (*EA* 74; *PM* 88). Moreover, its absolute form paradoxically reveals the partiality or incompleteness of being, which is the state of being itself. But, Beauvoir warns, the artist is not immune to the lure of seriousness. For if the artist regards the work of art as “an idol,” or retracts the exigency of validation, the figure of the artist turns back toward seriousness (*EA* 74-75; *PM* 88). Thus, there is no given or natural predisposition, enabling the artist to escape the ruse that the intellectual sets up via objective truth. Nonetheless, Beauvoir emphasizes the fact that artistic projects are more likely to produce revolutionary effects in the social and political world.

In works of art, partial truths are revealed as absolutes, which precludes any attempt to universalize particularities. Indeed, the artist’s appeal to subjective experience in the work of art ascribes an objective value, but the finiteness of the work of art disrupts any assumed objectivity, since validating subjective realities triggers self-reflexivity. Artists, as well as those who emulate artistic sensibilities toward otherness through an exposure to art, are thus more likely to act ethically

¹⁷⁶ Beauvoir is influenced by Husserl’s rejection of the concept of mathematical exactitude in philosophy. Sara Heinämaa explains Husserl’s critical view of Descartes’ scientific perspective for philosophy. Husserl, against Descartes, argues that the problem for conceptualizing the meaning of science arises from the inaccurate view that science is purely mathematical. Husserl’s phenomenology, Heinämaa writes, seeks to describe pure experience, not “in the sense of clear or transparent, but in the sense of being presuppositionless, free from assumptions about existence and non-existence” (13). Heinämaa proposes that Beauvoir is influenced by Husserl’s phenomenology, which describes a relation to the world and its beings. In this regard, the phenomenologist temporarily suspends a relation to, or separates from, the world in order to constitute its meaning, freed from assumptions. Heinämaa draws on Husserl’s concept of “pure description” to explicate Beauvoir’s phenomenological search for truth through evidence and relation, which is separate from the notion of a pure objective reality.

¹⁷⁷ See both my Introduction and Chapter 1 for discussions of Beauvoir’s Cartesian concept of self-doubt. Heinämaa’s understanding that Beauvoir’s philosophizing draws on the Cartesian concept of self-doubt, to argue for the importance of self-reflexivity vis-à-vis freedom from reflexive attitudes and beliefs, is crucial for my dissertation.

when the situation demands it. Creating or contemplating a work of art triggers actions aimed at ethical freedom. The artist is therefore definitively opposed to the suppression of ambiguity in works of art.

In times of extreme violence or crisis, the distinction between the intellectual and the artist becomes more apparent. For Beauvoir, this divergence is most notable amidst colonialism, fascism, and Nazism. In Chapter 1, I suggested that these historical convergences allow Beauvoir to provide a phenomenological understanding of universal oppression. The Beauvoirian artist foregrounds an ethical relation, unlike the intellectual, whose bad faith manifests as an indifference to the oppressed. Likewise, she adds, the figure of the aesthete turns back toward seriousness.

Beauvoir describes bad faith in terms of the aesthetic subjectivity, which adopts the attitude of ‘pure aestheticism,’ that is, contemplating an aesthetic value in the absence of any explicit political position, during the urgent crisis of European wartime violence. Like the intellectual, the aesthete reveals the limits of objectivity.¹⁷⁸ Beauvoir views the active pursuit of the aesthetic attitude in oppressive situations as an act of bad faith, similar to the bad faith choices of the intellectual. Her description of the dangers of aestheticism exposes the way in which an aesthetic interpretation of works of art can signal an act of bad faith, in cases where aesthetically contemplating the object becomes an alibi for not taking a political position against oppression. These figures of bad faith lead Beauvoir to question the limits of aesthetic representations of oppression, arguing more generally that these artistic works must assert an ethical relation to the plight of the oppressed. It is essential to keep in mind that, for Beauvoir, oppression cannot be set aside, neither by the intellectual, nor by the artist or aesthete. An ethical commitment demands that the present crisis be aesthetically conceived – albeit not prescriptively.¹⁷⁹

Bad Faith and the Nazi Occupation

Beauvoir is acutely aware of the dangers to ethical existence posed by the Nazi Occupation. Stella Sandford writes that, notwithstanding Beauvoir’s own criticism that *The Ethics of Ambiguity* is too

¹⁷⁸ Beauvoir provides a figure of the aesthete, but she assumes that the intellectual, who adopts an aesthetic attitude, commits similarly grave ethical errors.

¹⁷⁹ In *Part III* of *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, Beauvoir contextualizes aesthetics in relation to Nazi and colonial histories. Yet, she believes that the artistic representations of sweatshops mirror the aesthetic attitude in situations of capitalist exploitation. Beauvoir uses the French phrase “*les bagnes d’enfants*,” which suggests labour camps in the context of capitalist exploitation, but it has a slightly different connotation in the translated term sweatshops, which does not necessarily connote child labour, but alludes to exploited factory work in general. In any case, the subjective experience is erased to preserve aesthetics in artistic representations of factory workers and industrial labourers. For Beauvoir, pure aestheticism exposes the aesthete’s passive support for the oppressive system (*EA* 83; *PM* 97).

abstract, it “mirrors, philosophically, the social and political turmoil of its time.” More precisely, Sanford adds, it constitutes “a philosophical rendition of some of the most acute social and political dilemmas of its time” (*How to Read Beauvoir* 23-24). Published in the immediate post-WWII period, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* offers a critical response to the historical phenomena of occupation, collaboration, and resistance in France. Sanford concludes that contemporary critical literature, condemning her writing as abstract, does not take this turmoil into account, which would explain Beauvoir’s often “hyperbolic” style of philosophical questioning, and the political assertion underlying her generalized concept of the tragic ambiguity of existence. It is thus important to situate Beauvoir’s pressing questions in French history, where Nazism, the revelations of the death camps, collaboration, and resistance underlined the political urgency of her early existentialist outlook. Hence, Beauvoir’s critique of the prototypical intellectual, artist, and aesthete, for the reason of their bad faith, cannot be separated from the historical reality of WWII. Her phenomenological study of bad faith therefore finds that an active engagement with aesthetic value conceals a contemptible collaboration with the Nazi regime.

Beauvoir’s critical description of pure aestheticism reflects her effort to shed light on the collaborationist actions of those who claim the ethical value of artistic freedom as an alibi. Her three characterizations of the aesthete – the Italian art-lover, the tourist, and the French intellectual – foreground the dominant view that aesthetics is detached from the historical particularity. Not only the artist or writer, but also the aesthete is therefore prone to venerating works of art amidst wartime atrocities. Beauvoir most pointedly criticizes the indifference of the French intellectual, whose adoption of the aesthetic attitude, that is, the practice of contemplating ideas or artwork, while avoiding an engagement with the political situation, lacks an ethical validation. The French intellectual, she argues, separates the aesthetics of literature, art, and poetry from the Nazi Occupation, which, for Beauvoir, renders this French intellectual a Nazi collaborator. While the aesthetic attitude invites an escape from ethical action, by deceptively claiming the noble status of artistic creativity, Beauvoir argues that the external view of historical events that it affords constitutes an escape from the temporal world, and subsequently from the ethical responsibility to oppose oppressive violence.

While she illuminates the figure of aestheticism by examining its withdrawal from the temporal world, Beauvoir views the collaborationist French writer as the most damning form of pure aestheticism. For Beauvoir, the mathematical equation, whose calculus is “an impersonal version [of history] that equalizes all situations,” reduces the phenomena of concentration camps to

an equivalence with picturesque landscapes (or, likewise, collapses unequal positions of wealth and poverty) (*EA* 80; *PM* 94). The view that transcends concrete particularities, she writes, falls outside ethics, since, in this formulation, “men are always disclosing being, in Buchenwald as well as in the blue isles of the Pacific, in hovels as well as in palaces”; because all subjectivities appear as equally free, the aesthetic view levels all positive or negative historical variations, which therefore suppresses an acknowledgement of oppressive violence (*EA* 80; *PM* 94). Because the subjectivity that adopts the aesthetic attitude views all situations as equivalent, it “apprehends them only in the indifference of their differences; it excludes any preference” (*EA* 80; *PM* 94). In other words, it formulates a hierarchically privileged disinterest in regard to oppressive situations. Acknowledging the existence of oppression would demand an ethical commitment to address it. Beauvoir finds a ‘calculative’ indifference in the aesthetic subjectivity, which parallels her earlier critique of the serious man’s calculative formula for mass death, which absolves responsibility for atrocities.¹⁸⁰ Viewing art of any kind as purely aesthetic effectively depoliticizes both the historical legacies of those works of art, and the present situation, which recalls the calculative formula of mass atrocities. Hence, a similar logic of erasure is at work in both the genocidal overseer and the pure aesthete.

The first figure under analysis is that of the Italian aesthete, “the lover of historical works” during the Italian Occupation (*EA* 80; *PM* 94). Beauvoir calls this figure an “intellectual Florentine,” who believes that the atrocities of the Second World War are merely “temporary events,” unrelated to the perpetuity of Italian works of art (*EA* 81; *PM* 95). Viewing these objects apart from the temporal world allows the Florentine to assign them an atemporal value, which leads him to become “skeptical about the great uncertain movements which are stirring up his country and will die out as did the seething of the centuries that have gone by” (*EA* 81; *PM* 95). The aesthetic attitude, in its disregard for the historicity of works of art, expresses itself as an indifference to the present situation, thereby absolving aesthetes of responsibility for present atrocities.

While Beauvoir affirms the fact that ethics cannot be enacted vis-à-vis the past, she implicitly suggests that the historicity of oppression is found in present situations of violence. Beauvoir argues that the aesthetic subjectivity, during the war, convinced itself that the present tense was the “future past,” which demanded no political commitment, since the atrocities committed under the gaze of the aesthete were already subsumed by the historical record (*EA* 81; *PM* 95). Beauvoir then links the art enthusiast to the tourist, who remains detached from the destination, observing works of art

¹⁸⁰ In Chapter 2, I analyze Beauvoir’s serious man, whose calculative logic produces mass death.

apart from their context. The practice in tourism of equalizing works of art, without acknowledging their historical particularities, extends Beauvoir's critique of the aesthete, to further illuminate the features of bad faith in the aesthetic attitude as a common practice in the Western world.

But the harshest criticism of aestheticism is reserved for the French intelligentsia, in particular for the indifference of "certain" intellectuals toward the Nazi Occupation of France. Beauvoir writes,

Many Frenchmen also sought relief in this thought in 1940 and the years which followed. 'Let's try to take the point of view of history,' they said upon learning that the Germans had entered Paris. And during the whole occupation, certain intellectuals sought to keep 'aloof of the fray,' and to consider impartially contingent facts which did not concern them. (*EA* 81; *PM* 95)

Beauvoir thus opposes the elevation of the contemplative life above present atrocities, which, she argues, allowed certain French intellectuals to passively avoid critiquing political oppression during the Nazi Occupation. This turns the intellectual project with its aesthetic attitude into a work of collaboration. For Beauvoir, how individuals act or fail to act in extraordinary times presents an opportunity to assess the practice of ethical freedom. The fact of the Nazi Occupation, therefore, affords an examination of ethical action, or lack thereof, in Beauvoir's inner circle of French intellectuals and writers.

The French intellectuals and writers who avoided dissent during the Nazi Occupation are condemned as collaborators by Beauvoir. In her view, by not dissenting, the intellectual condoned oppressive violence, since not actively resisting oppression passively supports it. Thus, intellectuals and writers become a part of the power structure, where their detached critical positions on "contingent facts" do not confront the oppressive forces. Because they take positions that support the regime by not denouncing it, they are invited to publish and promote their views. Those others, who openly critique it, are pursued by the oppressor through legal, economic, political and military means, thus ensuring that they lack the critical support of the media, academia, and other intellectual resources. The figure of the artist, the highest form of ethical subjectivity, is therefore under greater threat in extraordinary times, where greater violence is exercised over the oppressed. In such times, many writers actively or passively allow their artistic projects to reinforce the regime in power. Hence, the Nazi Occupation affords an examination of the bad faith practices of artists, writers, and aesthetes, whose actions must be scrutinized to invalidate their presumed ethical aims.

Politics and Ethics

While Beauvoir critiques intellectual seriousness to illuminate the value of artistic freedom in the construction of ethical goals, she also politicizes the ethical subjectivity, in order to demand that political actions be judged vis-à-vis ethics. Beauvoir takes the figure of the political leader onto the terrain of present struggle, to show that the actions of politicians can be judged in regard to their enactment of ethical freedom. Like the work of art, the pragmatic actions of the politician must have an ethical aim. But, since the projects of the “man of action” rarely assume an intention to invite a relation to the other, they result in dangerous ethical errors, thereby escalating oppression, death, and destruction in the world at large. Beauvoir’s “man of action” is thus under scrutiny for this ethical failure. Beauvoir exhorts political leaders to consider her concept of ethics vis-à-vis their actions and goals, urging them to learn from the artist, in order to give the political act an ethical value, thereby averting the negative consequences of devastating political errors.

Beauvoir proposes that her concept of ethical subjectivity is relevant to all human endeavours. The artistic sensibility is thus capable of being emulated in every free action, which involves the risk of failure, while its success is never fully accomplished. Arguing that “art and science do not establish themselves despite failure but through it,” she reiterates her point that the artist, and by extension the scientist, produces finite works, emerging from failed efforts (*EA* 140; *PM* 161). In her words, “It is interesting to pursue this comparison; not that we are likening action to a work of art or a scientific theory, but because in any case human transcendence must cope with the same problem: it has to found itself, though it is prohibited from ever fulfilling itself” (*EA* 140; *PM* 161). Thus, free action shares with the work of art the need to commit itself absolutely as an incomplete value.

Furthermore, this ethical commitment must take place in the present. Beauvoir offers the example of the periodization of art, to point out that classicism occurs much later, not at the moment of its creation. The time at which an artist produces a work of art, or a scientist makes a discovery, heralds it as “a total expression of the world,” which is an absolute value, existing only in the present (*EA* 140-141; *PM* 162). Beauvoir compares the work of art to the project of self-transcendence, to argue that, like the work of art, “man must in any event, assume his finiteness; not by treating his existence as transitory or relative but by reflecting the infinite within it, that is, by treating it as an absolute” (*EA* 141; *PM* 162). ‘Man’ therefore, like a work of art, absolutely asserts itself as finite, which expresses the infinite via the limits of its present activities.

The idea that an action cannot be treated as transitory or relative is essential for Beauvoir, since, like the serious man, or the aesthetic attitude, any action that remains indifferent to its present situation excludes the living consciousness from its means and ends, in favour of allotting present actions to the past – or a future anterior – even as they are in the process of being enacted, thereby placing them outside present struggles. In contrast, Beauvoir emphasizes the absolute value of the present action. She writes, “There is an art only because at every moment art has willed itself absolutely; likewise, there is a liberation of man only if, in aiming at itself, freedom is achieved absolutely in the very fact of aiming at itself” (*EA* 141; *PM* 162). In other words, acts of liberation occur in the present tense, just as the work of art asserts itself absolutely at the very moment of its creation. A relativistic account consigns action to its status as an equivalence, which ensures that it cannot liberate the present, and the future it reflects.

Like Fanon’s metaphorical “clipped wings,” which characterize the nascent, inchoate free expressions silenced by colonial oppression, the liberating promise of ethical action “cannot attain itself if it denies itself at the start; action cannot seek to fulfill itself by means which would destroy its very meaning” (*EA* 141; *PM* 162-163).¹⁸¹ Thus, in the oppressive situation, which refuses to let subjectivity express itself freely through liberating actions, thereby silencing nascent movements, ideas or projects, “there will be no other issue for man than rejection” (*EA* 141; *PM* 163). The only available space and time for the act of rejection is the present moment. In contrast, the relativistic attitude of “political realism,” for example, views the present as purely transitory, and therefore off limits to any contestation of power (*EA* 141-142; *PM* 163). The negativity essential for the contestation of power is restricted to the present moment.

Beauvoir’s emphasis on the present is crucial for the development of revolutionary politics, both at the level of pure revolt and in all oppositional activities. Whereas pure negativity eliminates the antinomy of action in favour of revolt, antinomies return “as soon as freedom again gives itself ends which are far off in the future” (*EA* 142; *PM* 164). In the aftermath of a revolution, Beauvoir argues, the return to the positive must “involve negativity, it must not conceal the antinomies between means and end, present and future; they must be lived in the permanent tension” (*EA* 143-144; *PM* 165). Yet, the danger of a recourse to seriousness looms in the aftermath of revolution, since those who fought for their liberation risk reiterating the act of negation, once they enter the scene of their liberation with its competing antinomies; in many cases, they are unable to transcend

¹⁸¹ In Part 2, I refer to Fanon’s metaphorical “clipped wings,” which, I suggest, draw out the negative impact of oppression on the body and psyche of the oppressed, stymied in the pursuit of the formative activities of liberation.

the pure negativity that originally won their freedom. Thus, the post-revolutionary situation must invite the “man of goodwill” to continually question various means and ends via self-critique. Hence, there can be no practical counsel for liberation struggles, other than proposed methods for the man of action to achieve it.

Beauvoir’s politician navigates a volatile landscape of antinomies, which forces him to take sides, unlike the intellectual, who avoids an engagement with the world altogether. In order for the political act to be ethical, Beauvoir suggests that the politician must employ artistic methods, to arrive at a course of action. Like the artist who reflects on an artistic creation without expecting it to furnish “any ready-made solutions,” or like the scientist who ruminates on discoveries without a fixed outcome in mind, she writes, “it is useful for the man of action to find out under what conditions his undertakings are valid” (*EA* 145; *PM* 167). Beauvoir urges the man of action to reflect on his actions, by considering their concrete effects in advance. If a critical analysis of political action is not conducted, she concludes, there is a much higher risk that such actions will work against the aims of ethical liberation. For Beauvoir, the politician must make an ethical choice based on an analysis of the concrete situation.

Moreover, this involves integrating the sensitivities of the biological body and psyche. In other words, the ethical choice must also regard the essential concretion of meaning in “the joy of existence,” where “the movement toward freedom assumes its real, flesh and blood figure in the world by thickening into pleasure, into happiness” (*EA* 146; *PM* 168). Thus, an action cannot exist independently of the sensations experienced in the physical and physiological world. Just as art garners pleasure, or, in Beauvoir’s example, an old man drinking wine does the same – so too must the means and ends of political acts bring about the conditions for pleasure and happiness.

But the politician, who invites the experiences of pleasure and happiness into the world through ethical choices, cannot overlook the unethical activities of the oppressors, who condone cruelty toward others. In a struggle to prevent their violent takeover of power, the politician is pressured into repressing the actions of the oppressors, in order to save the freedom of “each one.” For Beauvoir, where evil exists, that is, where ‘the enslavement of other men’ is present, the violent act is justified if it “opens concrete possibilities to the freedom which I am trying to save” (*EA* 147-148; *PM* 170). In saving freedom for all, the politician-turned-liberator then decides whether the ‘unethical’ oppressors, who instill the conditions of enslavement, must be violently opposed. While it is a matter of deciding “in the darkness,” violence is not justifiable in any case where it employs “the pretext of ignorance to deny freedom” (*EA* 149-150; *PM* 172). In other words, remaining

unaware or unknowledgeable about the concrete situation cannot justify the refusal of freedom for others. In this case, violating freedom would contravene the orientation of humanity toward an open future, “that [man] must want beyond what he knows” (*EA* 150; *PM4* 172). The repudiation of knowledge is therefore a sign that the man of action is moving toward authoritarian values, and away from ethical action.

In Beauvoir’s specific overture to the world of action, she reflects on the political maneuvering of postwar politics. In France, she writes, “we think that we are not the master of our own destiny” (*EA* 150; *PM4* 172-173). In post-WWII politics, therefore, parties do not make decisions, but rather predictions in regard to how the future will be borne out “by foreign powers,” while focusing on “the bit of indetermination which still escapes their foresight” (*EA* 150; *PM4* 173). Likewise, citizens “no longer consider the vote as the assertion of their will but as a maneuver” (*EA* 150; *PM4* 173). The idea of a collective solidarity – along the lines of Fanon’s national consciousness – is thus set aside by the inflection of bloc maneuvering. Hence, electoral politics becomes peripheral to the international power structure, which controls and manipulates smaller categories, rendering futile the participation of citizens in the structure of decision. The larger issue of democratic freedom, conceived in and through national consciousness, is therefore at stake in the post-WWII situation, where freedom is under attack by the newer forms of domination by international power. For Beauvoir, it becomes a matter of reasserting an ambiguous ethics, outside the maneuvering that silences the democratic subjectivity.

The politician cannot appeal to reflexive values for an ethical end. In establishing an end, Beauvoir writes, “we are not authorized to decide upon this end a priori” (*EA* 153; *PM4* 176). In other words, an absolute value in the present cannot be validated by the reflexive past. Beauvoir’s existential ethics promulgates “the rejection of all previous justifications which might be drawn from the civilization, the age, and the culture; it is a rejection of every principle of authority” (*EA* 153-154; *PM4* 176). In criticizing the conservatism that reflexively adopts customs and conventions, Beauvoir makes the case that an “original solution” must come out of the present relation of “the other and ourself,” where the self-other relation generates the “universal fact” of humanity (*EA* 154-156; *PM4* 177-179). Arguing that privileged solidarities emerge to address specific struggles, such that “the negro fight[s] for the negro, the Jew for the Jew, the proletarian for the proletarian, and the Spaniard in Spain,” Beauvoir concludes that, in every case, “the assertion of these particular solidarities must not contradict the will for universal solidarity and each finite undertaking must also be open on the totality of man” (*EA* 156; *PM4* 179). The pre-established “Form” is incongruent

with the particularity – or content. Therefore, Beauvoir assumes that the particularity forms the subjectivity capable of emulating the universal struggle for liberation (*EA* 157; *PM* 180).

In the above context, a “political choice is an ethical choice; it is a wager as well as a decision” (*EA* 160; *PM* 184). The method for deciding on the course of a political act is “analogous in this respect to scientific or aesthetic methods” (*EA* 164; *PM* 188). It requires “confronting the values realized with the values aimed at, and the meaning of the act with its content” (*EA* 164; *PM* 188). In other words, if the politician appropriates artistic methods, he becomes responsible for making ethical choices. Where he decides to make sacrifices, however, the politician most often employs violent means without engaging in the necessary self-reflexivity. Indeed, violent action most often occurs as a reflex at the moment of decision, but a vigilant reflective understanding of its use, which accepts the ethical consequences of sacrifice, must be fostered. One of Beauvoir’s points of reference in this regard is the violent methods of the French Resistance, whose aim was not the conquering of Germany, but rather “their purpose was to create such a state of violence that collaboration would be impossible” (*EA* 162; *PM* 186). The political revolt must understand that its use of violence should be critically interrogated for its concrete goals, prior to the enactment of these methods; in this case, the Resistance used violence to prevent the collaborators from achieving victory for Nazi Germany.

But Beauvoir is aware that politicians rarely take ethics into account. A common refrain in Beauvoir’s analysis of politics is that “the politician, contrary to the scientist and the artist, and although the element of failure which he assumes is much more outrageous, is rarely concerned with making use of it” (*EA* 164-165; *PM* 188). In other words, the politician does not reflect on the spate of failures to establish ethical values. It is a pressing matter that they should do so, explains Beauvoir, since the consequences of political decisions can be devastating. She therefore exhorts the politician to act ethically, despite her own sense that the power structure lacks an ability to learn from the ethically superior forms of subjectivity. Even if it seems innocuous, a lack of self-reflexive thought on the part of the political leader is capable of leading to the worst offenses, such as is borne out in the Italian writer Curzio Malaparte’s example of young Nazis “plucking out the eyes of live cats” (*EA* 165; *PM* 189). The insensitivity of concrete forms of power can make ambiguous ethics an outward impossibility. Thus, an action chosen without any self-reflexivity in regard to ethical concerns will forget the meaning of its goal or “will take on an unforeseen meaning,” leaving space for it to be appropriated for the actions of another more sinister figure (*EA* 165; *PM* 189). The political act therefore demands “vigilance,” a constant awareness of how actions are aimed at

ethical freedom (*EA* 165-166; *PM* 189-190). Consequently, vigilance must oppose the repression of ambiguity.

The politician's lack of ethical concern surfaces in the evidential examples of death and oppression, which lead to tyranny. Accordingly, the aim of tyranny to repress ambiguity is destined to fail, since "ambiguity cannot fail to appear on the scene; it is felt by the victim, and his revolt or his complaints also make it exist for the tyrant" (*EA* 166; *PM* 190). In other words, the tyrant is confronted by opposition, which may lead him to question, even abandon, his goals or himself, or, in a sinister turn, to "continue to blind himself only by multiplying crimes and by perverting his original design more and more" (*EA* 166; *PM* 190). Thus, if the tyrant begins with the aim of establishing particular ends, those projects are thwarted by the evidence of the victim's negativity. If he persists in reaching for those goals despite the evidence against them, he will forcibly silence the opposition, and, consequently, he will be led astray from his initial project. In this manner, the man of action who had originally willed a project in freedom turns against that very freedom, by setting up ends according to his own will, while repressing dissent. Hence, he begins to rely on totalitarian forms of governance, and may even become a dictator (*EA* 166; *PM* 190).

The main problem, according to Beauvoir, is that the politician lacks the self-reflexivity needed to make ethical choices. She urges the politician to exhibit the way of life of the yogi, writing that "[i]f the fusion of the Commissar and the Yogi were realized, there would be a self-criticism in the man of action which would expose him to the ambiguity of his will, thus arresting the imperious drive of his subjectivity and, by the same token, contesting the unconditioned value of the goal" (*EA* 166; *PM* 190). In her amalgamation of figural types, the yogi cultivates the self-reflexivity requisite for ethical choices. Therefore, the yogi's self-awareness delivers an antidote to the seriousness implicit in the prescriptive figure of the Soviet Communist leader, or the Commissar. Beauvoir views the yogi as ethically superior to the Commissar, thereby sharing with the artist the self-critique requisite for ethical action. Her proposed fusion of prototypes would cause the Commissar to contest the values posited in political projects. Beauvoir likens the yogi to the artist, supporting her idea that the artist invites self-critique. The politician could therefore adapt yogic or artistic sensibilities, in order to make his political acts reflect ethical means and ends.

On the other hand, the tyrant enters a state of inertia, which makes him evermore deadly. In spite of the vigor of his drive to enforce his projects at any cost, the politician-turned-tyrant is affected by a death drive, reflected in his "laziness," which leads him to choose "the line of least resistance" (*EA* 167; *PM* 191). Languishing in a state of inertia, the tyrant finds it "easier to throw

a hundred men, ninety-seven of whom are innocent into prison, than to discover the three culprits who are hidden among them,” or “to kill a man than keep a close watch on him” (*EA* 167; *PM4* 191). Without a consideration of the ethical value of “each one,” the incarceration of large numbers or the killing of a suspect moves the politician inertly toward a police state, “which officially flaunts its radical contempt for the individual and which loves violence for its own sake” (*EA* 167; *PM4* 191). In this regard, where the police implement the tyrant’s aims, the political act loses the ethical freedom it initially willed. Once he gives up his freedom, the tyrant multiplies the forces of violent repression.

Beauvoir elucidates the dangerous alliance between politics and police violence: “The thing that goes by the name of political necessity is in part the laziness and brutality of the police” (*EA* 167; *PM4* 191). Thus, police brutality inverts the democratic freedom that values the individual, by applying the notion of equivalence, which produces mass imprisonment or death, as a sign of political expediency. The justification for the interdiction of individual value hides the unethical act behind it, thus abetting the formation of a dictatorship, which, in contrast to ethics, uses mass incarceration to repress the ambiguity of existence. “That is why it is incumbent upon ethics not to follow the line of least resistance,” concludes Beauvoir (*EA* 167; *PM4* 191). When a political act aims at its chosen end, by resorting to police repression, it jettisons its ethics. The blustering, buffoonish personality of the dictator aims to turn laziness into a virtue, against the exacting criticisms of opponents, while their arrest bolsters the popular view of his leadership.

In Beauvoir’s view, there cannot be any type of opposition to a dictatorship that does not include negative actions. She cites the examples of antifascism’s response to fascism, and fascism’s response to socialism (*EA* 167; *PM4* 191). She argues that dictatorships produce the conditions for an absolute negation. But another type of opposition emerges in peacetime, which involves the acceptance of the objectives of the leading party, but not the “subjective movement that aims at it” (*EA* 167; *PM4* 191). In other words, in post-revolutionary governments, the objectives are accepted by both sides, while disagreements emerge over how to implement them. Beauvoir claims that, in this regard, a political party opposition can effectively hold power to account, since the “perpetual contestation of the means by the end and of the end by the means” reflects an ethical vigilance, as long as the means employed by the opposition do not renege a commitment to ethics by reverting to the tactics of the revolutionary wars, thereby holding them up as serious goals for the present and future (*EA* 167; *PM4* 191). Certainly, in the immediate post-WWII period, Beauvoir entrusted party politics with the possibilities for ethical liberation.

But, Beauvoir concludes, the opposition, in times of tyranny, must absolutely reject the tyranny and crimes of a dictatorship, with a liberating action, which calls for the use of tyranny and crime, in order to forcibly wrest power away from the dictator. Beauvoir states that it would be “absurd” to oppose an act of liberation if it employs crime and tyranny, since liberation cannot exist outside the “dialectic that goes from freedom to freedom through dictatorship and oppression” (*EA* 168; *PM4* 192). The caveat for the revolutionary subjectivity fighting against tyranny is that, if it allows “the liberating movement to harden into a moment which is acceptable only if it passes into its opposite,” it could transform itself into the dictatorship it initially opposed (*EA* 168; *PM4* 192). This is the real danger, Beauvoir argues, since the aim of the liberating act is to keep tyranny and crime “from triumphantly establishing themselves in the world” (*EA* 168; *PM4* 192). Thus, Beauvoir argues that the use of tyranny and crime by the liberation struggle can be justified only if it asserts an ethical freedom against the domination of tyranny and crime, which is why the movement against tyranny “must therefore be kept alive” in purely negative revolts against dictatorships (*EA* 168; *PM4* 192). Consequently, a revolutionary action that employs “crime and tyranny” against a dictatorship can be justified ethically, if it upholds ethical freedom for all as its end, but not the dictator’s oppressive goals (*EA* 168; *PM4* 192).

Beauvoirian Ethical Prototypes for Fanon’s Anticolonial Critique

Beauvoir’s figures of the intellectual, artist, and politician allow for an understanding of ethical responsibility at the higher end of her hierarchy of prototypes. Certainly, the historical context of the post-WWII period allowed Beauvoir to discern the gap, not only between intellectuals and artists, but also between artists opposing the regime, and those collaborating with it. It also allowed her to suggest that an ethics for political action would be needed for an ethical world. Hence, Beauvoirian ethics highlights the figure of the artist in the struggle for liberation. Beauvoir also deploys the figure of the artist, in order to exhort the politician to ethically validate the means and ends of political projects. In Part 2, I argue that Fanon draws on Beauvoir’s intellectual, artist, and politician for his anticolonial critique, thereby transforming these three Beauvoirian prototypes into the figures of the colonized intellectual, the colonized artist, the revolutionary artist, and revolutionary leader.

PART 2: Fanon’s Anticolonial Prototypes in “On National Culture”

In Part 2, I argue that Fanon reformulates the Beauvoirian prototypes to reveal the historical variants of the colonized intellectual, the colonized artist, the revolutionary artist, and the

revolutionary leader. Fanon explicates the ethical failure of the colonized intellectual, along the lines of Beauvoirian seriousness. A major example of this reversion to seriousness is found in the Negritude poet, who opposes colonialism, but paradoxically assimilates colonial ideals, to produce black universalism. Hence, the Beauvoirian prototypes, once immersed in the contingencies of concrete realities, generate volatile, hybrid forms of ethical action. This deepens an understanding of how Beauvoir's more general prototypes are reconfigured by an exposure to actual histories. To illustrate these prototypes, Fanon sheds light on specific intellectual and artistic projects, which reiterate serious goals, on the one hand, and, on the other, engage in particular permutations of resistance against them. I elucidate Fanon's anticolonial ethics through a reading of "On National Culture," published as a chapter in *The Wretched of the Earth*. However, it was originally presented at the Second Congress of Black Writers and Artists in Rome, in 1959, under the title "The Political Leader as Representative of a Culture."

Addressing black artists at the Congress of Black Writers and Artists, Fanon critiques Negritude, drawing on the Beauvoirian figure of the intellectual to elucidate the bad faith activities of the "the cultured class of colonized intellectuals" (*WE* 147; *DT* 156). While the colonized intellectual venerates Western cultural histories with the typical zeal of an intellectual seriousness, Fanon finds that such forms of veneration are complicated by efforts to oppose the dominance of Western ideals. But, he argues, while they appear to be oppositional, they in fact reiterate the claims of the colonizers. Hence, Fanon critiques Negritude, but maintains that, despite its intellectual seriousness, it nonetheless generates an artistic creativity, which triggers further efforts to liberate black subjectivity. Fanon argues that Negritude is a "necessary" stage in the dialectical progression of black subjectivity, even as it assimilates the Western ideal of universalism for black existence.

Despite the historical necessity of Negritude, however, Fanon is critical of its intellectual and artistic projects, which separate aesthetic values from the realities of political oppression. Like the colonized intellectuals who openly idealize the West, therefore, Negritude poets risk alienating the masses, despite efforts to assert subjectivity apart from Western supremacy. Hence, Negritude shares affinities with the seriousness of the colonized artist, including writers, painters, and sculptors, whose Western metaphors, landscapes, and abstract forms are unrelated to the lived experience of colonized peoples. Fanon thus argues that Negritude's desire to reconstruct the precolonial world does not address the current situation. In contrast, Fanon's revolutionary artist parallels the Beauvoirian prototype of the artist, thereby mobilizing the creative mode of revolution, to enact projects aimed at making ethical freedom exist in the world. The new revolutionary art

forms depart from the seriousness of all prior artistic endeavours, since they reflect the living consciousness, or “national consciousness,” of colonized peoples. Thus, Fanon’s revolutionary artist brings the “nation” into existence, by creating a “national culture,” which moves beyond colonial ideals. Hence, the link between art and politics is made evident.

Fanon sets up a similar contrast between the intellectual and the artist to Beauvoir: the colonized intellectual and artist echo the serious worldview, on the one hand, and on the other, the revolutionary artist and leader embrace artistic freedom, in order to open up an ethical future beyond colonial oppression. Fanon foregrounds the conflicting temporalities of the colonized intellectual and the revolutionary artist, to argue that artistic freedom is needed for the development of a liberated consciousness. But Fanon significantly alters the Beauvoirian figures of the intellectual and artist to reflect the historical particularities of colonial experience. He therefore moves beyond her prototypes, by showing that historical contingencies are reflected in specific forms of ethical action. Fanon validates intellectual and artistic projects by gauging their relevance to the time and place in which these cultural and artistic works were generated, reflecting his own involvement with black artistic communities and forums, most notably at the Second Congress of Black Writers and Artists in Rome in 1959.

Finally, I show that, in a parallel reading to Beauvoir’s “man of action,” Fanon critiques the seriousness implicit in politicians, who abide by colonial values. “Within the political parties, or rather parallel to them, we find the cultured class of colonized intellectuals,” writes Fanon (*WE* 147; *DT* 157). In other words, the “cultured class,” to which many intellectuals and artists belong, remains an outcropping of the bourgeois elite: both intellectuals and artists are thus classed among the intellectually serious subjectivities, heirs of the colonial world. In contrast, Fanon’s militant revolutionary leader emerges to fight for the liberation of the masses, by leaving behind the serious world of the colonized intellectuals. In the following sections, I argue that Fanon, influenced by Beauvoir’s ethical prototypes, crafts a new understanding of the ethical subjectivity as imbricated in the actual histories of oppressive existence. Hence, the validation of the ethical subjectivity cannot be made outside the lived realities of liberation struggles.

A Critique of Negritude

Fanon’s colonized intellectual and colonized artist belong to the political class, whose allegiance remains to the colonial power. Hence, both the colonized intellectual as political leader and the colonized artist are similarly predisposed to seriousness. The main difference between the colonized

artist and the political leader is that the colonized artist's complete immersion in colonial values to the exclusion of the revolutionary present stands in contrast to the politician's preoccupation with present action to the exclusion of the past. Negritude poets present a variation on the activities of colonized artists by their aesthetic consummation in a future anteriority, effectively eliminating "the present history of their oppressed people" (*WE* 148; *DT* 158). As a clinical psychiatrist, Fanon offers a medical diagnosis of the Negritude artist's psychic alienation: the cultured intellectual displays a nervous condition, whose symptoms include an exaggerated passion, which indicates a fear of total assimilation, resulting from close proximity to colonial values. Hence, against colonialism's cultural dominance, the cultured intellectual reactively establishes the Negritude movement.

Fanon's 1959 talk addresses black diasporic writers and artists, who viewed Negritude as central to the project of liberating black subjectivity. Fanon certainly does not dismiss the essential role of reimagining the past through cultural investigations, such as the Negritude movement, instead claiming that, not only does it constitute an integral part of "the promise of a national culture," but it restores a "psycho-affective equilibrium" (*WE* 148; *DT* 158). Thus, the Negritude movement plays a positive role in the liberation struggle, assuaging the psychic aftereffects of colonial violence.¹⁸² Fanon affirms its role, but warns that it must remain a passing stage of the revolution. Certainly, Fanon views Negritude's focus on racial difference as a response to the "perverted logic" of colonialism, which, in order to control the present and future of colonized peoples, "turns its attention to the past of the colonized people and distorts it, disfigures it, destroys it" (*WE* 149; *DT* 158). Fanon thus concludes that Negritude responds to colonial power, yet colonial power dictates the terms of the anticolonial critique. Because European colonization annihilated the precolonial world, the revolutionary artist attempts to wrest black subjectivity from the colonizer's dehumanizing tactics, by reiterating its exclusionary terms. The racialization of culture in the period of revolution is therefore an effect of the history of colonization.

The inherited racial hierarchies delimit the cultural investigations of the Negritude movement, inhibiting any creative project aimed at liberating subjectivity from these hierarchies. The 'cultured intellectual' is thus caught within a predetermined means and end, in which "he is expected to demonstrate the existence of a "'Negro' culture" (*WE* 150; *DT* 159). Fanon places blame for the "racialization of thought" on European intellectuals, "who have never stopped placing white culture

¹⁸² In "Diagnosing the Sociopolitical Wound," I analyze Fanon's diagnosis of the psychic trauma engendered by colonial history.

in opposition to the other noncultures” (*WE* 150; *DT* 159). Their divisive tactics led to Negritude as a concept, which “was the affective if not logical antithesis of that insult which the white man had leveled against the rest of humanity” (*WE* 150; *DT* 159). In this regard, the cultured intellectual is compelled to validate the colonizer’s “unconditional affirmation” of European culture by making a similar claim for African culture (*WE* 151; *DT* 159-160). As a consequence, the parameters for cultural knowledge are set by colonialism, giving rise to, for example, the African Society for Culture, which mirrors the European Society for Culture “that threatened to turn into the Universal Society for Culture” (*WE* 152; *DT* 161). Hence, once the colonizer recognizes that the ultimate aim of establishing itself as a universal is challenged by the presence of other cultures, it asserts its cultural supremacy by claiming itself as universal.

Arriving late to the scene of this cultural debate, whose parameters are determined by European dominance, the African intellectual is drawn into a culture war, which he is bound to lose, since his presence reinforces the fact of his previous absence. In response to this unequal situation, the Negritude movement defines an assimilationist goal by “taking its place on an equal footing in the universal arena, armed with a culture sprung from the very bowels of the African continent” (*WE* 152-153; *DT* 161). In other words, Negritude attempts to redress the negative effects of colonial racism by creating a parallel universalist discourse, delimited by a specific racial and colonial history. Negritude therefore demands black universalism, but it faces limitations, since black Americans reveal different historical situations (*WE* 153; *DT* 161).¹⁸³ To underline how this limitation challenges Negritude, Fanon writes that, at the Second Congress of the African Society for Culture, “the black Americans decided to create the American Society for African Culture” (*WE* 154; *DT* 162). In response, Fanon proposes that “the historicizing of men” rises above endeavours to create universal values, which are in themselves historically produced as racial categories through colonial dominance (*WE* 154; *DT* 162).

In this regard, Negritude symbolizes a divergence between Fanon’s method of foregrounding historical particularities, and Beauvoir’s prototypical forms, since the colonized intellectual and artist are faced with a choice, which is not completely free: either assimilate Western universal theories by embracing Western ideals – or assimilate them to construct black universalism, as a racial value. The latter attempt at liberation results in a return to the assimilationist demand for

¹⁸³ Fanon describes the freedom rides in the American South, as forms of political organizing that demand cross-racial solidarity, thereby opposing any type of innate racial unity, which suggests that black resistance as a cultural matrix in the United States is different from the universal black subjectivity of Negritude (*WE* 154; *DT* 162).

an exclusionary racial concept. But, despite Negritude's return to the assimilationist aims of colonial history, Fanon views it as an essential stage for black liberation. In effect, despite the fact that black universalism does not escape colonial history, but rather reiterates its racial categories, it remains an ethical project with revolutionary effects. Fanon therefore implicitly suggests that Beauvoir's distinction between the intellectual and the artist is hybridized in the figure of black writer or artist, whose works of art aim at ethical liberation, but fail to escape colonial history. Even as Negritude remains a "necessary" dialectical stage, however, Fanon warns of a descent into seriousness, if intellectuals, writers, and artists permanently pursue exclusionary universalisms, rather than address current social and political realities.

Hence, Beauvoir's serious man reappears in Fanon's "bards of negritude," in whom "the attitude of the colonized intellectual sometimes takes on the aspect of a cult or religion" (*WE* 151,155; *DT* 160, 163). The veneration of Negritude, in spite of its historical limitations, Fanon suggests, holds back black liberation by upholding colonial values in lieu of self-transcendence. Fanon's cultured intellectual therefore embraces an intellectual seriousness, which separates the lived experience of colonial oppression from the effort to "make European culture his own" (*WE* 156; *DT* 164). In other words, Fanon draws on Beauvoir's concept of intellectual seriousness to argue that Negritude produces a total truth, within parameters predetermined by European culture. Because this practice does not engage in "the anguish of pure negativity," which would have instigated a challenge to political oppression, the colonized intellectual avoids confronting the present reality of oppression, by escaping into the past, where he "lose[s] himself, come what may, among his barbaric people" (*WE* 155; *DT* 163). But the intellectual appeal to an African past does not change the parameters for judging cultural value. The markers of civilization are already encoded in "the many illustrious names in the civilization of the occupier," which determines the conditions for any cultural engagement, including opposition to it (*WE* 157; *DT* 164).

Fanon, as a psychiatrist, regularly diagnoses the psychic disequilibrium of the colonized intellectual. He diagnoses symptoms such as "an exaggerated sensibility, sensitivity, and susceptibility," which erupts like "a muscular reflex," causing the intellectual "to inflict injury on himself, to actually bleed red blood and free himself from that part of his being already contaminated by the germs of decay" (*WE* 157; *DT* 164-165). In other words, the Negritude movement relives the physical and emotional trauma of violent racial and colonial histories, leading to a "single-handed combat" of the colonized subjectivity against itself as a negative concept (*WE* 157; *DT* 165). While these self-inflicted wounds will later become the "scars," reconstituted for the

anticolonial subjectivity, they are not yet cauterized in the dialectical stage of Negritude. Restoring psychic equilibrium demands the ability to affirm the open wounds of colonial oppression and suffering. Hence, the subjectivity of Negritude cannot help but inflict injuries, which lead to “bleed[ing] red blood,” despite protestations for equality.

Fanon proposes that the search for a past unaffiliated with the present will always approximate “a banal quest for the exotic,” since it invokes a “rediscovery” without a substantive gain in knowledge, which would have reinstated black existence (*WE* 158; *DT* 165). The impact of this faulty rediscovery is contradictory. On the one hand, it revokes nascent developments in the present, that is, “it means clipping those wings which had been left to grow” (*WE* 158; *DT* 165). The colonized intellectual’s pursuit of exoticism has the effect of silencing the inchoate forms of freedom and liberation in the present, which surpass the limits of mythicism. Yet, these inchoate forms provide the first signs of potential future movements, which might effectively launch a revolt against contemporary manifestations of historical power, if left to grow. But, the positive effect of Negritude is that the fiery, exteriorized display of anguish, even the return to a reconstructed primitive stereotype, contains traces of these future movements, which is why the exaggerated expressions of Negritude poets do not go unnoticed by the colonizer, who senses that the project of assimilation is being challenged. In order to quell this revolutionary energy, the colonizer urges Negritude to vent its frustration, since it offers a distraction from the structure of oppression, implicit in such affective displays.

From Colonized Intellectual to Revolutionary Artist

Fanon’s figure of the colonized intellectual draws on the Beauvoir’s prototypical figure of the intellectual, whose bad faith obstructs the creative mode of revolution. The colonized artist, he argues, similarly obstructs the creative movement toward liberation. Fanon describes the dialectical movement, from the assimilationist and “pre-combative” stages to the “combat stage,” at which point, the colonized artist becomes the revolutionary artist. To leave behind colonial art forms, the artist must invite the national consciousness of the colonized peoples into works of art. Fanon provides literary examples to trace the development of the national consciousness: in the assimilationist phase, colonized writers reiterate European art forms; in the pre-combative phase, Negritude flourishes; and, in the combat phase, a diverse revolutionary literature overtakes the preceding art forms. In this phase, the artist becomes “the spokesperson of a new reality in action” (*WE* 159; *DT* 167). Fanon argues that “the existence of the nation is not proved by culture, but in

the people's struggle against the forces of occupation" (*WE* 159; *DT* 167). In other words, if works of art remain separated from lived experience, they lose their currency, since the radical changes wrought by revolutionary movements have already transformed the social and political consciousness of the people. Assimilationist works of art are therefore revealed to be anachronistic, since they obstruct revolutionary efforts, once the revolution is underway.

Beauvoir is critical of the intellectual for permanently secluding himself in the world of contemplation, thereby separating intellectual projects from lived realities. I argue that Fanon deploys Beauvoir's critique of the intellectual to explicate the intellectual seriousness of the colonized artist, whose works of art are detached from the concrete situation of the colonized peoples. In the colonial context, if the colonized artist mimics the colonizer's language and style, the work of art is "strangely reminiscent of exoticism," rendering the artist "like a foreigner," observing the local culture through "mummified fragments" (*WE* 160; *DT* 167). Like Beauvoir's critique of an aestheticism that cuts the objective value off from its historicity in the present, Fanon's colonized artist may even act like a common colonial tourist, viewing indigenous artwork as primitive relics, already surpassed by modernity.

Colonized intellectuals pursue customs, not culture, concludes Fanon. Opposing the reification of custom to the dynamism of culture allows Fanon to criticize the Negritude revival of lost traditions, arguing that it "is not only going against history, but against one's people. When a people support an armed or even political struggle against a merciless colonialism, tradition changes meaning" (*WE* 160; *DT* 167). Hence, traditions are unstable forces, which must be self-reflexively reconstituted, to address present realities. In the case of the colonies, this is particularly evident. For example, Fanon states that the traditional "technique of passive resistance," if employed in the Manichean situation could be "radically doomed" (*WE* 160; *DT* 167).¹⁸⁴ In other words, an unquestioned adherence to inherited practices, even ones from past revolutions, are destined to fail, if they are not responsive to the present situation. Any reified technique becomes a custom, with no impact on the present situation. In contrast, culture, irreducible to the reified content of custom, reflects the mutable, shifting ground of past and present. It therefore weaves the ongoing social and political movements, which throw traditions into question, into the process of creating new subjectivities, with armed struggles that further destabilize traditions. Fanon's description of the

¹⁸⁴ Fanon revisits his earlier critique of violent revolution in "On Violence," which I described in Chapter 2, to argue here that a detailed study of historical particularities is needed to validate violent methods, with the understanding that non-violence cannot eliminate the Manichean relation. For Fanon, non-violent forms of resistance cannot effectively oppose the totalitarianism ascribed to the colonial situation.

customs versus culture dualism recalls Beauvoir's warning of the ethical dangers posed by the reification of custom, as opposed to the cultural dynamism, which drives the progress of human existence.¹⁸⁵

Fanon examines artistic movements in the colonial period, in order to identify the processes of reification, which infiltrate works of art to the detriment of subjective validation, beginning with the visual artist, who "confined himself to stereotyping details," without accounting for the "enormous radical transformations" brought about by anticolonial revolutions (*WE* 161; *DT* 168). Next, the colonized painter is viewed painstakingly reconstructing "a point by point representation of national reality which is flat, untroubled, motionless, reminiscent of death rather than life" (*WE* 161; *DT* 168). The painter's "careful renditions of truth" detach the aesthetic pursuit from the lived experience of oppression. Likewise, the colonized poet employs verse forms and imagery, similarly unrelated to mass experience. In contrast, Fanon cites the Haitian poet René Depestre for his commitment to political struggle, and René Char, a poet of the French Resistance, to corroborate his claim that the only method for the poet to transcend histories of oppression is to make the people "the subject of his creation" (163).¹⁸⁶

Fanon also foregrounds the pedagogical value of reading the revolutionary poets, by analyzing the poem "African Dawn" by the Guinean poet Keita Fodeba, which describes the life and death of a villager forced to fight in British wars, only to be killed upon returning to the African colonies. He reads this poem at length, to suggest that the poetic summoning of the subjective experience of colonial violence humanizes, and therefore universalizes, the suffering of oppressed peoples. Revolutionary poetry therefore creates a consciousness of solidarity amongst colonized peoples. The poetic language that details the subjective experience of a colonial massacre has the effect of bringing other experiences of colonial violence to mind. Fanon writes, "This is Sétif in

¹⁸⁵ When traditional songs, dance, and costumes at local festivals "are ceremoniously produced for the edification of indifferent tourists, they are no more than a boring documentary, even an odious mystification," writes Beauvoir, echoing her earlier criticism of the tourist's aesthetic attitude (*EA* 101; *PMA* 117). On the contrary, she argues, past objects of cultural value are integrated into the present and future. But cultural objects from the past, if valued above the present, result in an indifference to their histories of exploitation and genocide. For example, if the historical patterns of needlework are not in themselves valued, but rather "the civilization they represent" is venerated, to the exclusion of the histories of worker exploitation, which produced such objects, then their cultural value is degraded. Beauvoir adds this devastating parallel example: "We also know that the Nazis made very handsome bindings and lampshades out of human skin" (*EA* 102; *PMA* 118). Hence, the ability to value objects at the expense of their historical situation may lead to macabre, perverted interpretations of aesthetic value, as in the products of Nazi concentration camps.

¹⁸⁶ Fanon writes, "The French poet René Char fully understood this when he reminds us that 'the poem emerges from a subjective imposition and an objective choice. The poem is a moving assembly of decisive original values, in topical relation with someone whom such an undertaking brings to the foreground'" (*WE* 162-163; *DT* 169). Thus, affirming the particularity of the subjective experience in the work of art liberates the concept of existence. This allows the poetic to rise to the level of the universal.

1945, Fort-de-France, Saigon, Dakar, and Lagos” (*WE* 167; *DT* 173). The reading of this poetry dignifies the subjective experience of colonization, thereby drawing attention to the universal structure of injustice. Furthermore, the poetic understanding invites international solidarities, which suggests that a concept of interrelational ethics beyond the limits of colonial history is possible. But it must be found via an active engagement with revolutionary art.

Fanon does not suggest that the artist or writer erase history. Rather, Fanon argues that the purely aesthetic representation of the past remains outside present struggles.¹⁸⁷ The past must instead become a part of the living consciousness. He writes, “When the colonized intellectual writing for his people uses the past he must do so with the intention of opening up the future, spurring them into action and fostering hope” (*WE* 167; *DT* 174). Hence, poetry, literature, and other art forms must show the link between past values and present action. Consequently, Fanon implicitly argues that a pedagogy for the oppressed must include the study of the arts. In his words, “Understanding the poem is not only an intellectual act, but also a political one” (*WE* 167; *DT* 173). Hence, reading poetry becomes an insurrectionary act, which invites the revolutionary struggle. Fanon draws on anticolonial examples to describe the rise of national cultures during the ‘combat stage,’ in which universalized notions of race, such as Negritude, become irrelevant. In effect, while the colonized artist produces works of art unrelated to the masses, the revolutionary artist “commit[s] himself body and soul to the national struggle,” by creating works of art in which the subjective validation of lived experience is foregrounded (*WE* 167; *DT* 174). Hence, artistic creation coincides with “a combat for culture,” with revolutionary effects (*WE* 168; *DT* 174).

The Revolutionary Artist and National Consciousness

For Fanon, works of art in the anticolonial period invite the evolution of a national consciousness. Hence, political solidarity coincides with forms of artistic creation. In opposition to the Negritude concept of black culture, which essentializes racial identities, Fanon argues for the need to construct national cultures, which, despite sharing colonial histories across national borders, possess distinctive cultural values, in contrast to the colonizer’s abstract concept of racially identical cultures in the

¹⁸⁷ Fanon’s view of the past parallels Beauvoir’s. Beauvoir writes, “The past is an appeal: it is an appeal toward the future which sometimes can save it only by destroying it” (*EA* 102; *PMA* 118). If the past addresses the present, its legacy is preserved and adapted as a value for present struggles. But it loses this validation when it holds back the present and future world, since to seek its preservation under these circumstances, risks condemning its past triumph. It then becomes an obstructionist element, which hinders the goals of ethical freedom in the present. In this regard, its past liberating effect can only be saved through its present destruction.

colonial world. The concept of the anticolonial nation thus invokes a future beyond colonial oppression. In this regard, the anticolonial nation is essential for “the future of humanity,” since the recognition of previously disregarded histories raises human existence – as a revised concept of the human – above the colonial forces of dehumanization, engrained in the idea of racial identities (*WE* 169; *DT* 175). Fanon therefore argues that nation-building allows the colonized to be freed from the racialization of culture under colonialism, via political acts of solidarity, aimed at establishing new concepts, subjectivities and institutions. The nation therefore generates the temporalization of an ethical subjectivity, linked to the struggle for universal liberation. Fanon’s relation between national consciousness and universal liberation grounds Beauvoir’s understanding of the interrelation of “specific struggles” joining the universal struggle in the colonial situation.¹⁸⁸

The artist shapes a work of art out of lived experience, inclusive of violence. Fanon writes, “The Algerian national culture takes form and shape during the fight, in prison, facing the guillotine, and in the capture and destruction of the French military positions” (*WE* 168; *DT* 174).¹⁸⁹ The revolutionary artist must thus focus on national activities, despite international goals. He concludes that, “[t]here is no common destiny between the national cultures of Guinea and Senegal, but there is a common destiny between the nations of Guinea and Senegal dominated by the same French colonialism” (*WE* 168-169; *DT* 175). He thus concludes that political solidarities in post-independence nations are separated from the development of new cultural forms, which “would not be absolutely identical,” due to discrete temporalities (*WE* 169; *DT* 175). By bringing the concrete situation of revolution into artistic endeavours, however, the revolutionary artist invites subjectivity to engage the powers of temporalization for the invention of new ideas, cultures, subjectivities, and institutions.

Fanon deals a final blow to Negritude by critiquing Léopold Senghor and Jacques Rabemananjara, two major poets-turned-politicians of the Negritude movement, in order to draw attention to their dangerous political projects. Fanon underlines his opposition to Negritude by stating that “[t]here can be no rigorously identical cultures” based on the colonial concept of race

¹⁸⁸ In Chapter 2, I argued that, in Beauvoir’s concept of revolution, intra-group solidarities, amongst, for instance, civil rights movements, anti-fascism, and socialism, are imbricated in the struggle for universal liberation.

¹⁸⁹ In Malabou’s lecture “Life and Prison,” she considers Lenin’s view of the prison as the university of political revolutionaries. In *State and Revolution*, Lenin writes that the coercive state apparatus of the bourgeoisie, deployed against the proletariat, triggers the proletarian revolution against the state. In the third chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*, entitled “The Trials and Tribulations of National Consciousness,” Fanon draws on this Leninist concept, to describe the pedagogy of anticolonial revolutionaries in colonial prisons. I do not pursue this reading here, but I explicate the role that Fanon ascribes to the revolutionary artist, who must invite the concrete realities of violent oppression, including the experience of incarceration, into works of art, thereby affirming the actual histories of the colonized peoples.

(WE 169; DT 175). Fanon therefore criticizes Senghor's attempt to bring Negritude into the school curriculum of Senegal. For Fanon, "Negroes' are in the process of disappearing, since those who created them are witnessing the demise of their economic and cultural supremacy" (WE 169; DT 175). Fanon therefore demonstrates that his critique of Negritude is crucial for uncovering the real dangers of its political enactment. Accordingly, Fanon argues that any political strategy, which reinvigorates anachronistic values in the social and political world, threatens to obstruct the dialectical dismantling of the colonial worldview.

Fanon deepens his critique of Negritude by addressing new political developments in post-independence Africa. After indicting Senghor, now the president of the Republic of Senegal, he turns his attention to the Madagascan poet Jacques Rabemananjara, whose poetry appears in Senghor's 1945 anthology of works by African poets in the French colonies, *Anthologie de la Nouvelle Poésie Nègre et Malagache*, to point out the fact that "today a minister in the government of Madagascar, who toed his government's line to vote against the Algerian people at the United Nations General Assembly" refuses to support the goals of political liberation in Algeria (WE 169; DT 175). Fanon points out the dangers of a Negritude poet-politician, refusing international political solidarities against colonial power: "Rabe, if he had been sincere with himself, should have resigned from the government and denounced those men who claim to represent the will of the Malagasy people. The ninety thousand dead of Madagascar did not authorize Rabe to oppose the aspirations of the Algerian people at the UN General Assembly" (WE 169; DT 176). Fanon criticizes these two Negritude poet-politicians, whose artistic pursuits of black culture are isolated from acts of political solidarity.¹⁹⁰

Hence, the fusion of the Negritude poet and politician does not lead to liberation from colonial power. In fact, Fanon's critique of the separation of the political leader from mass movements echoes Beauvoir's separation of the politician from an artistic opening to the other. She therefore invites political leaders to deploy artistic methods for their political projects. To conclude his account of Senghor's and Rabemananjara's actions, Fanon states that political leaders should "stubbornly refuse to indulge in self-satisfaction at the top," which implicitly suggests that Rabemananjara's political decision displays the arrogance of a hierarchical leadership style, vis-à-vis the revolutionary masses in Madagascar, who waged a violent struggle for independence from French colonization (WE 170; DT 176). This criticism recalls Fanon's rejection of authoritarianism,

¹⁹⁰ Fanon implicitly suggests that these poet-politicians fail to philosophize in the manner of Beauvoirian ethics. In other words, they do not make their political decisions with attentiveness to their impact on the oppressed.

inherited from the very colonial hierarchies, which, he suggests, still play a role in post-independence politics. Next, I examine the troubling reiteration of colonial methods by post-independence politicians, whose actions reflect serious attitudes toward mass struggles.

The Artist and Mass Struggle

Fanon concludes his talk at the Congress with a section entitled “Mutual Foundations for National Culture and Liberation Struggles.” This concluding statement functions as a type of manifesto for artists to revoke the systematized destruction of culture, which took place under colonial rule, by creating original artistic works. In order to accomplish this end, the artist is called upon to act in solidarity with liberation struggles. Because colonization produces a state of “cultural obliteration” by an enforced and systematic demand that the colonized “confess the inferiority of their culture,” the colonized react to their oppression in various ways (*WE* 170-171; *DT* 177). For example, the masses keep their traditions, while artisans employ a “stereotyped formalism,” and “the intellectual hurls himself frantically into the frenzied acquisition of the occupier’s culture, making sure he repudiates his national culture, or else confines himself to making a detailed, methodical, zealous, and rapidly sterile inventory of it” (*WE* 171; *DT* 177). Such creative activities reinforce the cultural supremacy of the colonizer, since they do not directly confront it.

Following Beauvoir’s critique of the intellectual’s failure to forge a relation to the other, and an open future, Fanon writes that “the colonized subject is ineffectual precisely because the colonial situation has not been rigorously analyzed” (*WE* 171; *DT* 177-178). Calculating the value of colonized cultures as a “zero” through the practice of cultural annihilation ensures the colonizer that an open future cannot exist for the colonized. In other words, the revocation of cultural validation effectively cuts artists off from the power of temporalization that would enable the decolonization of artistic projects. The annihilationist impulse of the colonizer, reflected in acts of cultural ‘genocide,’ is constituted by an oppressive violence, which ensures that colonized peoples are deprived of the temporality needed to create their own futures – the culture of the colonized is therefore “a culture under interrogation whose destruction is sought systematically” (*WE* 171; *DT* 178). Thus, Fanon argues, there can be no cultural value established outside an objective understanding of precisely how that annihilation takes place, including its present and future ramifications. Only a rigorous analysis of colonial history could rid the colonized subjectivity of its legacy of cultural inferiority. Any attempt to reimagine or reconstruct precolonial pasts, without

confronting the colonizer's political project of cultural annihilation, only serves to reinforce its supremacy.

Despite the dearth of analysis, however, Fanon notices "signs that the veil is being lifted from the national consciousness" (*WE* 171; *DT* 178).¹⁹¹ In the colonial situation, he writes, the first forms of creativity occurred in "clandestinity," by recuperating cultural fragments, in order to contest the annihilation of the cultural inheritance (*WE* 171; *DT* 178). While such projects constituted acts of freedom, they could not in themselves challenge oppression. Several generations removed from the event of colonization, such cultural forms had not yet developed through the temporal shifts and transformations of cultural dynamism. Fanon writes, "After a century of colonial domination culture becomes rigid in the extreme, congealed, and petrified" (*WE* 172; *DT* 178).¹⁹² Moreover, the 'petrified' state of culture triggers "a defensive reaction, nonspecific, anarchic, ineffective" (*WE* 172; *DT* 178). In other words, the attempt to form subjectivity through ossified fragments from the precolonial past, prior to the traumatic event of colonization, has the effect of disempowering colonized peoples. Instead of drawing on the past for a relation to the present, the colonized rediscover annihilated structures of thought, thereby reproducing a sense of their own annihilation, which triggers undirected, explosive bouts of anger, or "aggressive behavior," without reference to a past or a future (*WE* 172; *DT* 178). This behavior is reactionary, lacking the creative energy to productively restore a concept of dignity, whose avenue, according to Fanon, would inexorably lead to a direct confrontation with the oppressive power.

Fanon suggests that the trigger for revolutionary action lies in the extreme privations of dignity, which "increasingly force the colonized into open, organized rebellion" (*WE* 172; *DT* 178). In the first confrontation with the colonizer, the masses become aware that the oppressive situation is being challenged internationally, which reveals the power of international movements for liberation. The technological apparatuses of communication therefore accelerate the progress of mass movements, by disseminating stories of revolution. Revolutionary action coincides with a growing awareness of the successes of anticolonial struggles in other parts of the colonial world. Fanon writes, "International events, the collapse of whole sections of colonial empires and the inherent contradictions of the colonial system stimulate and strengthen combativity, motivating and invigorating the national consciousness" (*WE* 172; *DT* 179). Once the international struggle for

¹⁹¹ Fanon's use of the word 'veil' suggests an allusion to W.E.B. Dubois's concept of double-consciousness in *The Souls of Black Folk*.

¹⁹² In "Reflections on Fanon and Petrification," Douglas Ficek examines Fanon's use of the term "petrification," which describes the arrest of dialectical progression under colonial power.

liberation is instilled in the oppressed, consciousness views itself on the stage of world history, waging its war, not only against its own privation, but also for the universal struggle. This “new universalism” politicizes the protection of specific cultural values, by taking a political position against the ‘false universalism’ of the colonial power, which consciously aims at the destruction of other cultures.

The impact of revolutionary movements on aesthetics can be judged by examining the volume, genre, and themes of works of art, which Fanon traces through a study of literary genres, beginning with poetry and tragedy, then turning to “novels, short stories, and essays,” which “transcend the lament” (*WE* 173; *DT* 179). Fanon implicitly critiques Negritude, to suggest that it is in the process of being transcended by newer forms of literary expression, which more effectively reflect the experience of colonized peoples. The fact that the colonizer had once “encouraged such endeavours and facilitated their publication” is further evidence for Fanon that the Negritude movement is outdated and politically ineffectual— but beneficial to the colonizer, since it constitutes “an act of catharsis” which “avoid[s] dramatization and clear[s] the atmosphere” (*WE* 173; *DT* 179).¹⁹³ While its cathartic effect reinvigorates colonial power, the change in literary genre provides further support for Fanon’s claim that combat literature is relevant to the anticolonial struggle. Once the lamentations stop, he writes, “[t]hen comes the call for revolt” (*WE* 173; *DT* 179). It therefore triggers a dialectical progression, which moves inexorably toward liberation.

“Combat literature” no longer addresses the colonizer, neither through the reproduction of European cultural norms, nor through the related “ethnic or subjectivist categories,” such as Negritude. The new mass audience is created through the works of art themselves, which bring “a new type of man” into existence, by giving the subjective imposition on the objective world an aesthetic value (*WE* 174; *DT* 180). Rather than repudiating ancestral traditions, however, artists and writers adapt them to the critical analysis of oppression. Fanon exemplifies the recuperation and inclusion of indigenous artistic forms in the context of revolution through a reference to Algerian storytellers, who, from 1952-1953 onward, “radically changed both their methods of narration and the content of their stories” (*WE* 174; *DT* 180). The evidence of the synergy between the creative arts and the concept of liberation is that artists are arrested by oppressive forces. Fanon writes, “Colonialism knew full well what it was doing when it began systematically arresting these

¹⁹³ In Chapter 2, I explicated Beauvoir’s criticism of writers feted by regimes of power. Fanon makes a parallel claim, by suggesting that colonized artists, including those associated with the Negritude movement, produce works of art that do not contest colonial values. Consequently, their publication is sought by colonial authorities.

storytellers after 1955” (*WE* 174; *DT* 180). The storyteller, who no longer confines stories to the distant past, becomes politically dangerous to the authorities. This art form, now employing the present tense, had previously been “turned inward” – oppressively silenced; but it suddenly breaks free into the contemporary social and political consciousness “channeled in every direction” (*WE* 174; *DT* 180). The artistic project is therefore aimed at creating an opening to the past and future, thereby inviting the excluded generations of poets and artists back into a liberated consciousness. The previously excluded “social misfits such as outlaws and drifters are rediscovered and rehabilitated” (*WE* 174; *DT* 180). Thus, new artistic movements recognize the value of those whose exclusion was produced through the colonial power structure.

A similar process of liberation takes place across different art forms. The sculptor, for example, loosens the previously “congealed, petrified forms”; “[b]y bringing faces and bodies to life, by taking the group set on a single socle as creative subject, the artist inspires concerted action” (*WE* 175; *DT* 181). The originality of these new forms confounds “[t]he colonialist experts [who] do not recognize these new forms and rush to the rescue of indigenous traditions” (*WE* 175; *DT* 181). Amidst artists reinventing the art form, the colonizers become “the defenders of indigenous style,” rejecting the innovative form (*WE* 175; *DT* 181). Fanon draws on the example of jazz in the US to illustrate this logic, arguing that the new styles of music do not conform to white aesthetic standards (*WE* 176; *DT* 181-182). They manipulate and indemnify particular types of ‘black culture’ against a contemporary, fluid aesthetics of the emotive, physical, intellectual, and psychic subjectivity, which creates a new national culture.

The Revolutionary Leader and National Culture

Beyond the artistic works of literature, painting, sculpting, etc., artistic values must also be present in political forms of struggle aimed at ethical liberation, concludes Fanon. For Fanon, the anticolonial liberation struggle, which generates the national consciousness, exudes an artistic value. Hence “national culture” invites ethical liberation. “A culture is first and foremost the expression of a nation, its preferences, its taboos, its models,” Fanon famously states (*WE* 177; *DT* 182). In underscoring the essential role of the nation in the development of culture, Fanon links the national stage to the universal struggle for liberation. It therefore constitutes a decisive stage within the dialectical progression, whereby subjectivity repudiates the objectifications foisted upon racialized peoples, regardless of nationalities. The nation becomes a non-hierarchical, non-messianic site of worship, beyond reflexive values.

Fanon argues that the concept of the nation “unlocks culture and opens the doors of creation,” which then “will provide culture with the conditions and framework for expression” (*WE* 177; *DT* 183). The tabula rasa, the site where the temporalizing consciousness forms itself, is the national consciousness that constitutes free existence. Like a specific literary genre giving expression to the present situation, or a sculptural form disclosing the subjective imposition of objective realities, the figure of the nation unleashes free existence. The danger that its liberating nature could be sacrificed for the serious value of nationalism must therefore be opposed, Fanon argues, by the requisite openness of national culture toward alterity. Fanon’s concept of nation therefore invites other cultures, to ensure the non-closure of subjectivity, thereby guaranteeing the temporalization of freedom beyond closure.¹⁹⁴ Fanon thus states, “It is also the national character that makes culture permeable to other cultures and enables it to influence and penetrate them” (*WE* 177; *DT* 183). In other words, national culture allows for the absorption of differences, to counteract the impact of the homogenization of culture under a monoethnic or monocultural identity, reminiscent of the colonial practice it endeavours to transcend.

The seriousness of a new ethnonationalism would condemn newly independent nations to the historical “dead end” of the colonial project. In contrast, Fanon’s national culture comprises the power to form and reform itself, only if it does not remain an “inwardly turned” unformulated idea, unable to give birth to itself through the concretion of form. In Fanon’s words, “[t]he restoration of the nation must therefore give life in the most biological sense of the term to national culture” (*WE* 177; *DT* 183). Fanon the psychiatrist offers a prescription to the oppressed: national consciousness, he argues, has a restorative power to heal the bodily and psychic wounds of destructive histories.

For Fanon, the liberation struggle is “the greatest cultural manifestation that exists” (*WE* 178; *DT* 183). At the highest end of ethical existence, it mobilizes the interrelational principle, thereby emulating the ethical character of the Beauvoirian artist. Via the intersubjective relation, the concept of humanism is reformed, to generate a “new humanity, for itself and for others” (*WE* 178; *DT* 183). Here, I argue, Fanon’s ideas intersect with Beauvoir.¹⁹⁵ The revolutionary leader must therefore creatively generate “the objectives and methods of the struggle,” rendering these particular

¹⁹⁴ In Part 1, I link Beauvoir to Derrida. It is also worth considering a link between Fanon’s concepts of the tabula rasa and national consciousness, and Derrida, since Fanon also demands an opening to alterity and futurity. In *Rogues*, Derrida constructs an idea of democratic freedom, which demands an aporetic opening to the other, despite the ‘autoimmune’ dangers.

¹⁹⁵ Fanon does not cite Beauvoir here, yet her existential humanism similarly demands a relation to the other. I argue that Fanon’s call for a new humanism via the self-other relation is dialogically related to Beauvoir.

forms of political organization the consequence of a concept of a new humanism, which invites the self-other relation (*WE* 178; *DT* 183-184).

Fanon ascribes the highest ethical value to the creativity of the liberation struggle. He writes, “The merit of this type of struggle is that it achieves the optimal conditions for cultural development and innovation,” by producing “exceptionally inventive cultural manifestations (*WE* 178-179; *DT* 184). If the liberation struggle expresses the highest form of ethical freedom, then “[n]ational consciousness is the highest form of culture” (*WE* 179; *DT* 184) – since cultural expression requires temporalization. Fanon contrasts this notion with Marxist dialecticism, which assumes that “[h]umanity ... has got past the stage of nationalist claims,” transcended by internationalism, a reading that would relegate the colonized to a secondary status relative to the European proletariat (*WE* 179; *DT* 184). For Fanon, human value is concretized in cultural inventions that form themselves at the site of national consciousness, which, simultaneously, revokes the universal humanism that justified colonial oppression.

But national culture reverses its ethical gains if it separates itself from other national cultures. In contrast to customs, culture provides the requisite conditions for the making of an internationalism beyond the proletariat. Fanon writes, “National consciousness, which is not nationalism, is alone capable of giving us an international dimension” (*WE* 179; *DT* 184). To avoid the seriousness of nationalism, national consciousness, Fanon argues, must make space for inchoate forms to develop into future movements. It must also question unconsciously held convictions, in regard to its present understanding. In Fanon’s words, “Self-awareness does not mean closing the door on communication. Philosophy teaches us on the contrary that it is its guarantee” (*WE* 179; *DT* 184). Here, Fanon follows both Beauvoir’s Cartesian concept of self-critique, as well as her critique of abstract philosophizing, which demands the invocation of evidence and communication. While the colonized intellectual, in pursuit of Western values, idolizes the colonial past, Fanon’s national culture embraces a relation to the other and an open future.

Beyond national culture, Fanon invites an openness toward all African cultures, which provides a philosophical guarantee for the existence of a “Negro-African” culture. But, it is not based on any “metaphysical principle.” It is rather a matter of necessity, during a period of crisis and vulnerability in the direct aftermath of colonial oppression (*WE* 179-180; *DT* 184-185). Thus, Fanon moves beyond Negritude. Certainly, in 1959, when Negritude was an existing cultural movement, underlining its role in the dialectical progression of black culture enabled the idea that the

advancement of black African solidarities amongst cultures was possible, via African and Third World political unity.¹⁹⁶

Fanon concludes his talk with an allusion to Beauvoir's ethics: "If man is judged by his acts ... the most urgent thing today for the African intellectual is the building of his nation" (*WE* 180; *DT* 185). In effect, the need to judge actions in relation to ethics is described by Beauvoir, but Fanon universalizes her ethics by including African intellectuals, artists, and politicians. For African intellectuals, Fanon concludes, political solidarity amongst African nations will "necessarily lead to the discovery and advancement of universalizing values," which exceed the false universalism of the colonial world (*WE* 180; *DT* 185). Meanwhile, other national movements outside Africa, in the period of decolonization, accelerate the progress of humanity toward universal liberation. Thus, Fanon implicitly argues that theories of liberation must acknowledge the anticolonial struggles that deploy the concept of the nation against Marxist internationalism. Fanon writes, "It is at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness establishes itself and thrives" (*WE* 180; *DT* 185). A Marxist internationalism that subsumes the particularity of national culture therefore does not address the critical role of national consciousness in the newly independent nations of the colonial world.¹⁹⁷ Thus, national consciousness allows anticolonial efforts to transcend colonialism, while designating a universal ground of appeal for ethical liberation.

From Beauvoir's Ethical Figures to Fanon's Anticolonial Leaders

By examining Fanon's anticolonial figures, I have demonstrated that investigating the actual histories of anticolonial revolutions leads to an understanding of specific forms of ethical action. Following Fanon, I conclude that the actions of the anticolonial revolutionaries cannot be judged apart from their concrete histories of oppression. Beauvoir's ethical prototypes are based on an ontological study of historical oppression, and thus they stand at a distance from the subjective experience of contingent struggles. But Fanon transforms these prototypes to reflect the particularities of the anticolonial struggle. In so doing, he provides a series of historically contingent prototypes

¹⁹⁶ Fanon attended the 1955 Bandung Conference in Jakarta, Indonesia, a meeting of political leaders, which aimed to organize non-aligned states into an Asian-African political union, against colonialism and the Cold War blocs.

¹⁹⁷ John Mowitt sees in Fanon's national consciousness a refusal to follow the Marxist concept of the proletariat as vanguard, thereby reformulating the vanguard as a "people's consciousness of its existence as a nation" (168). But, according to Mowitt, this important "mnemonic space of popular resistance" also has revolutionary effects in politics, since it aligns subjectivity with independence, thereby providing "the structure of the Algerian subject in the historical struggle for independence" (168-169). Fanon's concept of national consciousness therefore provides the space for the development of a revolutionary politics via a reimagined subjectivity.

immersed in the violent realities of the colonial world: the colonized intellectual, the colonized artist, the revolutionary artist, and the revolutionary leader.

Fanon revokes colonial power, by providing a concept of ethical subjectivity for the anticolonial struggle. In so doing, he reverses the hierarchization of human value in the colonial world, by affirming the fact that ethical action emerges from below, that is, from the consciousnesses of intellectuals, artists, and revolutionaries, alongside the masses, all of whom are embedded in the lived realities of the oppressive situation. The suppression of racial and colonial hierarchies called for in Beauvoir's existential ethics is therefore enacted in Fanon's theorization of the intellectual, artist, and revolutionary leader, whose actual histories demonstrate that the triumph of the ethical world is not possible without the struggles of the colonized peoples against their oppression. The concept of liberation cannot therefore be theorized from the top down, since the revolution is fought and won by the oppressed from below – against their oppressors.

CONCLUSION: Intellectual Seriousness, Artistic Freedom, and New Revolutions

Beauvoir and Fanon both provide critiques of intellectual seriousness that underline the exigency of ethics for the development of intellectual projects. They conclude that an intellectual project, which suppresses the subjective experience to assert an objective truth, must be rejected, since it lacks validity, according to Beauvoirian ethics. In my reading of Beauvoir and Fanon, I have drawn attention to their respective demands to hold intellectuals to account for their commitment, or lack thereof, to the oppressed. Following Beauvoir and Fanon, I argue that examining the actions of intellectuals vis-à-vis the oppressed is crucial for determining ethical validity. I thus conclude that this mid-twentieth century existentialist critique of the intellectual provides tools for analyzing the role of intellectuals and intellectual projects vis-à-vis current and nascent forms of oppression.

I return to my Introduction, in which I cite Stella Sandford's call for the discipline of philosophy to acknowledge its historical resources. She asserts that actual histories, rather than objective values, must generate new forms of knowledge, since the validation of objectivity obfuscates the recognition of ontological realities. Hence, she concludes that knowledge must be liberated from the dominance of objectivity. Both Beauvoir and Fanon argue that the possibility for existential freedom lies in the affirmation of the concrete situations and lived experiences of the oppressed. I therefore argue that a critical investigation of these concrete situations and lived experiences is crucial for the development of new forms of knowledge, liberated from the

dominance of objective values. If intellectuals do not acknowledge the historical resources of their ideas, they reiterate inherited objective values, which further the goals of oppressive power.

In times of violence, constructing new ideas and concepts that corroborate the lived realities of the oppressed becomes an act of dissent, while the reiteration of objective values supports the oppressive regime, by not opposing it. Furthermore, the production of knowledge vis-à-vis Beauvoirian ethics calls for a new understanding of ‘intelligence’ beyond the exaltation of objective values. Hence, a new concept of ethics must rethink the commonly-held view of intelligence to show that once it is separated from ethics, it can no longer be recognized as intelligence. Existential ethics theorizes the linkage between action and ethics. In this regard, an ethical intelligence must be validated on the basis of social and political commitments to ethical means and ends.

Furthermore, Beauvoir and Fanon implicitly argue that protecting artistic freedom is essential, since ethical freedom cannot exist without it. Wherever artistic freedom is threatened, new authoritarian systems become ascendant. Wherever intellectuals, artists, journalists, and writers are persecuted, dissent is silenced.¹⁹⁸ The ethical response to the threat against artistic freedom is found in acts of resistance to oppressive power. The suppression of artistic freedom therefore demands that critics, artists, and writers protect the right of dissent against the encroachment of authoritarian power. Beauvoir criticized the unethical behavior, during the Second World War, of writers, who placed their ideas above a response to wartime violence, while Fanon took the colonized intellectual to task for abetting the revival of colonial ideals. In both cases, intellectuals and writers were wrong to assume that they were liberated from worldly commitments. Thus, they acted unethically, by failing to defend ethical freedom against tyranny. This behavior is considered complicit in the oppressive project, which ultimately aims to annihilate intellectual and artistic freedom. The ethical

¹⁹⁸ In *Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, Derrida relates the increasing numbers of refugees in the 1990s to the persecution of more and more “intellectuals, scholars, journalists, and writers” (6). He argues that, wherever sovereign nation-states silence dissent, oppressive violence increases. Furthermore, this type of suppression proliferates with the democratization of technologies, which enable the tele-technological voice to project itself via an increasingly decentralized, non-dominant form of communications. Not only writers and artists, he writes, but also all forms of intellectual engagement in mass society require the protection of the right of dissent against state surveillance. Alarmed by the rise of violent oppression globally, Derrida writes, “The victims of these are innumerable and nearly always anonymous, but increasingly they are what one refers to as intellectuals, scholars, journalists, and writers – men and women capable of speaking out (*porter une parole*) – in a public domain that the new powers of telecommunications render increasingly formidable – to the police forces of all countries, to the religious, political, economic, and social forces of censorship and repression, whether they be state-sponsored or not” (5-6). Hence, the persecution of critics and writers increases, while police power appropriates the judicial role – and the anonymity of both perpetrator and victim produces a state of powerlessness. Derrida suggests that Walter Benjamin’s warning of an unaccountable spectral police force is amplified “in an age of new teletechnologies” (14). Hence, any new demand for the protection of artistic freedom must examine teletechnological communications, in order to define the parameters of surveillance, enabling the modern police to oppress those who speak out.

value of artistic freedom, Beauvoir and Fanon conclude, must be defended against tyrannical forms of power.

Finally, Beauvoir and Fanon respectively argue for the appropriation of artistic values – or “aesthetic methods” – by political revolutionaries, for the invention of new social and political struggles. Certainly, Fanon’s focus on the nation as the anticolonial revolutionary form has been superseded by the rejection of national sovereignty as the site of revolutionary justice. Therefore, national liberation is no longer the goal of new movements, which oppose purely national solutions to global forms of oppression. New movements seek a non-sovereign, alternative global concept, which heralds a new form of political organizing.¹⁹⁹ But the traces of these new systems are not yet understood and must be made apparent in critical work aimed at drawing attention to the transformations of revolutionary activity toward new forms of political organization. Thus, the movement from Fanon’s national consciousness as a revolutionary form to the present-day critique of national sovereignty invites a new understanding of liberation beyond Fanon. Linked to the demand for ethical liberation, however, is the need to recognize the negative effects of the *longue durée* of colonial oppression in the contemporary world. Any new understanding of liberation will require an acknowledgement of colonial history and its injustices.

In Chapter 4, I propose that Beauvoir and Fanon provide manifestos for future ethical action. I suggest that they deploy the form of the manifesto to urge transformations in the social and political world. Their conclusions therefore call for making manifest what is wrong in the current moment and what an ethical future would need. By underlining the importance of existential ethics and humanism for the making of present and future social and political struggles, I suggest that Beauvoir and Fanon offer a critical inheritance for new revolutions.

¹⁹⁹ In “Today’s Bandung?,” Michael Hardt describes the 2002 World Social Forum in Porto Alegre as the “distant offspring” of the 1955 Bandung Conference, with important differences (112). According to Hardt, while the Bandung Conference united the political leaders of the Third World in solidarity against colonialism and the Cold War, the historical alignment of revolution with the concept of the nation is superseded by today’s horizontal networks, which reject national sovereignty as the site of revolutionary justice, including oppositional party politics and centralized forms of governance. Hardt criticizes the dearth of Asian and African participants in Porto Alegre, but believes in the “network of the multitude,” which suggests that revolutionary movements are moving toward a non-national, non-sovereign alternative to global capital. This outweighs the dependence on state sovereignty by twentieth-century anticolonial and anti-imperialist struggles (117).

CHAPTER 4: MANIFESTOS FOR FUTURE ACTION: FROM BEAUVOIR'S CONCEPT OF ETHICAL ACTION TO FANON'S ANTICOLONIAL LIBERATION STRUGGLE

The existential ethics of liberation is linked to revolutionary actions and goals aimed at enacting ethical freedom in the social and political world. I compare Beauvoir's "Conclusion" in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* to the concluding chapters of Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*, to argue that both existentialist thinkers bind the concept of ethical liberation to actual struggles for liberation. These conclusions show that existential humanism and ethics are linked to ethical action. I call these concluding statements "manifestos" for future action, since both Beauvoir and Fanon orient their respective readers toward ethical actions, which move beyond the definitions of pasts and futures invoked by oppression. Indeed, the form of the manifesto provides a political platform for the enactment of the concept of ethical liberation. The mobilization of the manifesto form, for the dissemination of the philosophical concept of liberation, follows in the tradition of modern revolutions.²⁰⁰ Thus, Beauvoir and Fanon advance 'existentialist' manifestos, which demonstrate the potential revolutionary effects of existential freedom. In this regard, they address not only intellectuals, artists, and politicians, but also mass society. In so doing, they implicitly suggest that the existential ethics of liberation is essential for all humanist projects.

In Part 1, I argue that Beauvoir mobilizes the manifesto form, in order to move her ethics from the plane of pure ontological description to a prescriptive, yet ambiguous, ethical program. This leads her to argue that a critique of idealism may become a revolutionary project. I argue, however, that despite this critique, Beauvoir does not directly engage the concrete unfolding of liberation in the lives of the oppressed. Hence, even as Beauvoir's humanism moves beyond the abstract, it is not yet situated in the particularities she endeavours to address. Consequently, even as she demands that a critique of idealism be conducted to revolutionize the philosophical method, her ethics is supported by what I call a *non-particular* ethical subjectivity. In other words, she draws out an ontological understanding of subjectivity, which calls for the enactment of existential ethics, but it lacks an account of concrete particularities and lived experiences. I argue that the *non-particularity*,

²⁰⁰ Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto* is a central legacy for the rhetorical form of the manifesto, but the longer tradition originates with the French and Bolshevik Revolutions in Western genealogies. In artistic movements, André Breton's *Surrealist Manifesto* (1924) attempts to turn an artistic and literary movement toward the enactment of its values. I argue that, in the tradition of both political and artistic manifestos, Beauvoir and Fanon create existentialist manifestos, aimed at soliciting readers of philosophy to ambiguously enact existential freedom in the social and political world.

which characterizes her subjectivity of ethical liberation, risks reiterating the hierarchical concept of existence, with its exclusion of marginalized and oppressed peoples.

In Part 2, I argue that Fanon's appropriation of the Beauvoirian manifesto offers a different concept of ethical liberation, corroborated by concrete histories of oppression. In other words, Fanon situates his theoretical figures of revolution in actual, lived realities. In contrast to Fanon, Beauvoir's ethics assumes a non-particular concept of subjectivity for existential humanism. The danger of Beauvoir's formulation is that it may lead to the non-recognition of existences, not already recognizable as forms of existence in the inherited concept of the human. Fred Moten, for instance, discovers that undercommon forms of black life remain at the borders of the concept of existence within institutional identities.²⁰¹ In effect, the de facto universal threatens to overtake Beauvoir's concept of humanism, since the 'non-existent lives' of others repressed in the abstract universal remain outside the concept of the human, if they are not directly invoked, which leads the oppressor to resume the role of ethical subjectivity, vis-à-vis the status of the non-particularity. In order to oppose the restoration of the oppressor as liberator, Fanon suggests that affirming the other's lived experience is essential for existential ethics to transcend past oppression.

Thus, while Fanon appropriates Beauvoir's manifesto in his own conclusions, the result is that, in faithfully following it, he sharply departs from it, since his critical description of oppression foregrounds the actual histories of the oppressed. I argue that the conclusion of *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) is more obviously influenced by Beauvoir, since it invokes political action on a similarly broad historical scale, whereas the conclusion of *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), with its psycho-affective understanding of existence, calls for the enactment of the concept of interrelational freedom. I therefore reverse the chronology of these texts, to demonstrate that Fanon advances a

²⁰¹ I draw on Fred Moten's concept of the undercommons to describe new solidarities at the edges of power structures. The movement within black studies to address anti-black histories is evident in the work of Fred Moten, Frank Wilderson, Saidiya Hartman, and Christina Sharpe, amongst others. Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake* views the contemporary proximity of Black life to death in terms of a slave past, which, she argues, "produces black death and trauma" up to the present (8-11). This suggests that the specific histories of black slavery elicit a recurrent form of oppression, which continually excludes black existence from the concept of the human. Much of this new work draws on Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, notably Fanon's theorization of black exclusion. This scholarship permits the rethinking of black existence, despite institutional limitations. I draw on Moten – and the concept of black non-existence – to suggest that the Beauvoirian *non-particular subjectivity* may lead to the reiteration of inherited power relations, not despite but because it offers a critique of power that does not foreground the actual subjects of oppression. This has repercussions for the enactment of revolutions, since to enact a revolution from the standpoint of non-particularity does not allow for the recognition of previously excluded forms of subjectivity – which, in fact, are at the origin of new revolutionary movements. Moten implicitly suggests that the undercommons must be mobilized to enact new revolutions.

concept of interrelational freedom in his earlier *Black Skin, White Masks*, which moves beyond the violent catharsis demanded of the oppressed in *The Wretched of the Earth*.

In so doing, I follow Judith Butler, who proposes that, in the conclusion of *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon's first and second-person pronouns, "I" and "you," emphasize the interrelational bond, which defines the concept of the human beyond the abstract universal. First, the self-address of the "I" to itself establishes a bond between the first-person "I" and itself as a "you," via the split subjectivity. This self-affirmation then leads to the mode of direct address in the second-person, which solicits the other for a dialogical encounter.²⁰² This allows subjectivity to address itself as its other, an address of the self to itself, prior to addressing the self to its other. Butler suggests that the I-You mode of address in *Black Skin, White Masks* generates a "constitutive sociality," beyond the self-constituting violence of the anticolonial revolution called for in *The Wretched of the Earth* (28).²⁰³ In other words, the mode of direct address, with its social dimension, summons an interrelational freedom beyond violent catharsis.

As stated in Chapter 2, Fanon's restitutive logic of the *Book of Revelations* – "the last shall be first" – is transformed into justice, if read through Butler's reversed chronology of Fanon's texts.²⁰⁴ The call to bring the concept of interrelational freedom into an existential ethics of liberation is most evident in *Black Skin, White Masks*, but it is also present in the "Conclusion" of *The Wretched of the Earth*, where Fanon calls for a new humanism, to invoke a future beyond the cathartic or annihilative project that purges the failure of the interrelational principle of freedom in the colonial period.

Concrete versus Ontological Existential Ethics

Fanon reveals the failure of abstract universal humanism to account for the actual histories of colonized peoples. For Fanon, colonial power disavows the humanity of the colonized, thereby exposing the fault lines of universalist theories. Hence, Fanon concludes, an abstract universalism, which projects an ideal future for the whole of humanity, not only has no place in the histories of colonized peoples, but it also, reactively, drives death and destruction, since the sovereign imposition of an abstract ideal incubates the mythic and psychic properties of the other in the racialized and

²⁰² Here, I draw the term "dialogical relation" from the field of dialogical phenomenology, which views the I-You relation as a constitutive identity. See Beata Stawarska, *Between You and I: Dialogical Phenomenology*.

²⁰³ I cite Butler's "Violence, Non-Violence: Sartre on Fanon" at length in this chapter.

²⁰⁴ Arguing that Fanon's new universal begins where decolonization ends, Butler writes, "This would mean that, philosophically, *Black Skin, White Masks*, would have to follow *The Wretched of the Earth* (VNV 21).

colonized imaginary of the West.²⁰⁵ Therefore, the concept of Man, celebrated in European humanism, produces an indifference to the non-West, which validates annihilationist attitudes and practices vis-à-vis the racialized and colonized other.

Certainly, Beauvoir also repudiates abstract universal humanism. But, despite her effort to critically dismantle it, she constructs a subjectivity enacting existential freedom without providing the space needed for the oppressed to reconstitute the idea of the universal themselves. As stated, this *non-particular* subjectivity does not name the subjectivities of the oppressed. Fanon, on the other hand, calls for a concrete ethics, which prioritizes the subjective experience, thereby asserting that the ethical subjectivity has a specific, concrete form, which is that of the colonized. While both existentialist thinkers concede that the elevation of abstract universalism over lived realities leads to oppressive violence, Fanon forges a direct link between the actual histories of racial and colonial oppression and the enactment of the concept of ethical liberation.

I demonstrate that Fanon provides a concrete existential ethics, as opposed to Beauvoir's ontological existential ethics. I call Beauvoir's existential ethics ontological, since she draws out a relation between the concept of subjectivity and its ontological description. I argue that this important shift away from the abstract universal allows Fanon to rethink Beauvoirian ethics along the lines of concrete realities. Thus, he appropriates Beauvoirian ethics but leaves behind her concept of the non-particular subjectivity enacting ethical liberation. Fanon therefore summons the concrete situations and lived experiences of the oppressed for the making of Fanon's New Man. Indeed, Fanon fashions the self-reflexive subjectivity out of the historical resources of the oppressed, in order to redefine the concept of liberation from within the lived experience of oppression, and the specific forms of revolution it generates.²⁰⁶ The historical failures of racialization and colonization, Fanon concludes, call for concrete manifestations of existential freedom – they call for a violent catharsis on the one hand, and, on the other, an invitation to interrelational actions and goals.

²⁰⁵ The spectral, deathly figure awakens a fear of the other. Hence, the production of the other as a spectre leads to the proliferation of mythicisms vis-à-vis objectified racial and colonial differences.

²⁰⁶ Fanon links his concept of liberation to its concrete enactment. Similarly, Beauvoir links her ethics to ethical activities and goals. They both invoke a form of revolution that assumes an active negation of the oppressive power. Hence, passive forms of resistance are not intelligible within existential ethics. But, I argue, their attentiveness to bodily and psychic sensitivities and sensibilities suggests that a future concept might develop beyond an emphasis on action.

Beauvoir and Ethical Freedom

In Beauvoirian ethics, ethical ambiguity is dependent on the other's freedom. As Ann Murphy explains in *Violence and the Philosophical Imaginary*, "This agonism is the condition for the possibility of the emergence and recognition of my identity, my projects, and my own freedom, all of which are only intelligible against this agonistic intersubjective backdrop" (106). Hence, the principle of interrelational freedom via agonistic relations is central to Beauvoir's ethics. But, Murphy notices a tension between a descriptive ontology of ambiguity and the call for the concrete realization of a prescriptive ethics. Consequently, Murphy identifies a "reticence to move from description to prescription alongside an explicit, normative demand that oppression must be resisted at any cost" (109). I argue that this reticence results in a grasp of the ontological over the prescriptive.

Following Murphy, I argue that, while Beauvoir's "Conclusion" of *The Ethics of Ambiguity* does attempt to enact this shift between ontology and revolution, via the manifesto form, Beauvoir's theory of ethical engagement does not call on actual subjectivities to generate concrete forms of revolutionary action. Thus, she invokes concrete particularities, but does not enact them, since her focus is on asserting an ontological understanding of ethical existence. On the other hand, Fanon advances Beauvoirian ethics by showing that the particularities of colonial oppression generate specific, concrete forms of revolutionary action.

A Critique of Kantian Ethics

Importantly, Beauvoir opposes her ambiguous ethics to the Kantian categorical imperative, which she criticizes for its concept of freedom that transcends contingency, even as she shares Kant's notion of ethical agency. Beauvoir rejects Kantian reason, thereby affirming contingencies for her understanding of human failure. Therefore, as Murphy explains, in *Violence and the Philosophical Imaginary*, "the difference between existentialist and Kantian ethics lies not in the understanding of ethical agency, but in the various aspirations to which this elaboration of ethical agency gives rise": while Kant strives for the transcendence of ambiguity, Beauvoir embraces its realization (103-104). In effect, Beauvoir rejects Kant's transcendental ethics, instead affirming the notion that the human condition unfolds within temporalities, marked by violence and failure. Thus, a categorical law is untenable for Beauvoirian ethics. Her ethics offers a concept of the human viewed as a contiguity of "ethical successes and failures [that] are neither transparent nor absolute" (105). Contrary to Kant, Beauvoir argues that the indeterminacy of ethical action generates conflictual relations, which must

not be suppressed by the imposition of a categorical imperative. This would effectively stifle the pursuit of ethical freedom.

Fanon's critical view of the Kantian universal law corroborates Beauvoir's affirmation of historical contingency in her concept of ethics, which nonetheless preserves the exigency of ethical action inherited from Kant. David Marriott investigates Fanon's critique of Kantian ethics, particularly its recognition that colonial oppression imputes divisions of racialized and colonized subjectivities, leading to activities of "indeterminate negation" (238). Consequently, the historical determinations of oppressive violence trigger the revolutionary responses of the oppressed. Marriott writes, "Colonial power reveals the limits of Kant's categorical law here understood as the autonomous imposition of duty" (239). In describing Fanon's critique of Kant, Marriott suggests that Fanonian ethics uncovers the fact that the realities of oppressive existence destabilize the Kantian duty to enact an ethics, which assumes a dependence on sovereign authority. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon claims, "One duty alone: That of not renouncing my freedom through my choices" (cited by Marriott, 229) – choices determined by the Beauvoirian ambiguities that Kantian ethics transcends, thereby suppressing free existence. Therefore, I argue that Fanon advances Beauvoir's critique of Kant. Following Marriott, I suggest that Fanon critiques Kantian ethics for suppressing contingent realities, with negative effects for the racialized and colonized other. Marriott argues that Kantian ethical law is, for Fanon, transformed by colonialism into "a will to power based on racial exclusion" (239). Hence, the destructive outcome of the universal is that it results in racial and colonial oppression. Faith in the universal is therefore inimical to the decolonizing movement, which liberates consciousness from the will to power of the colonizer, understood to relegate the racialized and colonized other to a state of non-existence.

Corporeality and Existence

Beauvoir attempts to move beyond the universal by recorporealizing existence. Since human existence cannot be separated from the biological body, Beauvoir's concept of freedom is essentially embodied. Ruth Groenhart comments on Beauvoir's view in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* that freedom is paradoxically constricted yet liberated by its finite corporeality, or its embodiment (73). On the other hand, Emily Parker refrains from using the word 'embodiment,' since it assumes that freedom is constituted by "a distinct consciousness or a non-bodily affectivity" situated outside the body, thus eliding Beauvoir's concept of ambiguity, which demands the affirmation of "specific bodies" for free existence to be realized in concert with a requisite "plurality of singularities" (87-88).

Therefore, the singularity cannot be repressed or disciplined, nor can it be isolated from the freedom it expresses, as if it were the freedom itself.

In light of Beauvoir's notion of biological freedom, in which the constraints of finitude appear alongside futurity, it is evident that her concept of freedom assumes that the concrete determinations of finite existence can be explosive, engendering both negative and positive actions, which nevertheless are judged in regard to their progressive movement beyond facticity. Therefore, Beauvoir shows that the living consciousness is constituted by its biological structure, whereby the temporalizing effects of activity enable the predeterminations of factual existence to be transgressed, despite manifest organic limitations. Hence, existing hierarchies are an affront to the goal of ethical existence, which demands the liberation of consciousness from the limitations imposed upon it.

Fanon follows Beauvoir with a psychiatric assessment of existential liberation. He provides a psycho-social understanding of the body, which underlines the task of investigating the biological structure of revolutionary activities. Fanon foregrounds the histories of racialization and colonization, which expose the structure of biological oppression. His investigation shows that particular biological bodies are severely impacted by the destructive social and political systems of slavery and colonialism. The negative effects reverberate within all relational structures, dependent on existing ontologies for the imposition of inherited, naturalized hierarchies of power. Hence, colonial power cannot be understood outside the negativity it generates in the explosive racialized and colonized biological body, rejecting its predetermination in the colonial worldview, with revolutionary effects.

Hence, Fanon investigates the psychic and bodily experience of the colonized subjectivity, in order to trace the organic movement of the oppressed subjectivity toward liberation via concrete struggles. For Fanon, the concept of liberation originates in the oppressive experience. Hence, the lived experience of oppression brings liberation into existence as a biologically engrained conscious life force, positioned against the psychic and biological destruction engendered by oppressive systems.²⁰⁷ Any new concept of liberation, he implicitly argues, cannot be understood outside the

²⁰⁷ Butler, reflecting on Fanon's concept of violent revolt as essentially self-making, asks whether the historical conditions of colonization delimited the definition of self-making to violent negation. However, Butler explains, in her rereading of the conclusions of both *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*, that Fanon invites an open future beyond the historical limitations of oppressive realities, which suggests that new theories of liberation after colonization would no longer require violence "as a pure instrument" (VNV 18). Her conclusion, of course, is dependent upon an adjudication of the border between violence and non-violence, raising legitimate questions in regard to her view of separating them in this manner.

boundaries of the physical and physiological world, whose limits cannot be overcome by existence, while free existence can only materialize within its limitations, as the very limitations which it endeavours to transgress.

Existentialist Manifestos

Chapter 4 proposes that Beauvoir and Fanon provide existentialist manifestos, which attempt to press the ethical subjectivity into actions aimed at ethical liberation in the social and political world. Indeed, the rhetorical form calls for making manifest certain actions and goals that move toward a more ethical future. I argue that Fanon puts the concrete situations and lived experiences of the oppressed into the context of Beauvoirian ethics, in order to draw attention to the concrete forms of ethical action requisite for the making of a more equitable future.

Following my reading of their respective manifestos, which aim to connect existential ethics to liberation struggles, I end my dissertation by arguing that there is an urgent need for a new concept of ethics. New theories of liberation, I conclude, must critically inherit, amongst other philosophical traditions, the anticolonial understanding of existential humanism and ethics. I argue that putting Fanon into the context of Beauvoirian ethics may provide guidance for the new liberation struggles, emerging to confront the resurgence of violence, the recurrence of oppressive power, and the *longue durée* of colonial racism in the contemporary world.

PART 1: Beauvoir's Manifesto for Ethical Action in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*

Beauvoir and the French Intelligentsia

In her "Conclusion" to *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, Beauvoir opposes the dissenting views of her colleagues in regard to the value of existentialism.²⁰⁸ This suggests that her primary audience are the members of the French intelligentsia, embattled in the arguments for and against existentialism, which circulated within a particular intellectual milieu. One of the main accusations against existentialism made by French intellectuals was the claim that it was solipsistic. Beauvoir defends her existential humanism against this counterclaim. She argues that, even as it entrusts the individual with the "power of laying the foundations of his own existence," it cannot be a solipsism, "since the individual is defined only by his relationship to the world and to other individuals" (EA 169; PMA 193). She concludes that her existential humanism is not individualistic, since it is dependent on the

²⁰⁸ Beauvoir first unveils her defense of existentialism in *Part I* of *The Ethics of Ambiguity*.

agonism of “his freedom” and the “freedom of others” (*EA* 169; *PMA* 193). The opposing view, she alleges, accuses existentialism of reflecting the “anarchy of personal whim,” an accusation which she refutes by insisting that the individual “exists only by transcending himself, and his freedom can be achieved only through the freedom of others” (*EA* 169-170; *PMA* 193). If it is viewed as a type of individualism, it is because the individual “finds his law in his very freedom” (*EA* 170; *PMA* 193). More precisely, because the individual is tasked with acting freely vis-à-vis others, he defines his project only by choosing freedom, in the absence of a definitive or categorical ethical program. Importantly, this individual cannot view himself outside a relation to the other. The sole prescriptive law is therefore the imperative of an ambiguous but socially-constituted free choice.

Precisely because Beauvoir’s claims are directed at her opponents, challenging the accusation made against existentialism takes precedence over investigating the concrete particularities of oppression. Instead, she opposes her critics, who accuse existentialism for its individualism. In an effort to defend her ethics, Beauvoir explicates the role of contingent facticity. It is precisely this concept of contingent facticity that will be transformed by Fanon in his writings, to address the importance of concrete racial and colonial histories in existential ethics.

Contingent Facticity and Liberation

Beauvoir is committed to the idea that oppressive existence constrains the concept of liberation. This leads her to reject the notion of a purely positive ethics, evident in her critique of Kantian ethics, which she views as suppressing the concept of negativity in ethical agency. Instead, her ethics coalesces a “constructivist movement” with a “negative movement which rejects oppression for oneself and others” (*EA* 170; *PMA* 194). The act of negation renders contingent facticity as the foundation for ambiguous choices. Beauvoir writes, “In construction, as in rejection, it is a matter of reconquering freedom on the contingent facticity of existence, that is, of taking the given which, at the start is there without any reason, as something willed by man” (*EA* 170; *PMA* 194). She assumes that both positive and negative projects are ethical if they are aimed at winning both individual and collective freedom. Each struggle is understood in terms of its contingent facticity, and, because activities are finite, the struggle for freedom remains limited by contingencies. This requires the continual reassertion of ethical activity in new projects. Hence, contingent limits are never permanent and demand ethical responses. Furthermore, since activities exist in tension with one another, ethics cannot validate any single activity without an understanding of the contingencies. Thus, the negative movement against oppression cannot be rescinded within the concept of ethics.

Beauvoir responds to her critics by arguing that the permanent tension of ethical action belies the opportunism of a reactionary individualism, which sets up serious ends.

The fact of this tension restricts free choice. Beauvoir writes, “a conquest of this kind is never finished; the contingency remains, and, so that he may assert his will, man is even obliged to stir up in the world the outrage he does not want” (*EA* 170; *PM* 194). In other words, ethical agency demands a confrontation with oppressive power, despite the desire to keep it at a distance. Where the assertion of freedom affronts the oppressive force, subjectivity is inexorably drawn into a conflict with the oppressors. Beauvoir argues that no shelter provides a bulwark against the perpetual struggle to win freedom. Thus, by invalidating her existential ethics, Beauvoir concludes, her critics disregard the agonistic concept of freedom, which demands an engagement in conflictual relations. This disregard, she implicitly argues, is an act of bad faith, since the non-recognition of contingent facticity allows for the furtherance of oppressive power.

Differentiating Truth and Falsehood

The ethical dangers of objectivity are evident in the bad faith activities of the intelligentsia. Beauvoir responds to her contemporaries by arguing that transcending ambiguity casts the concept of the human outside temporality. Since her critics believe that “to exist for Mankind is to remain where one is,” they perceive existentialism as “running after itself on an endless tread mill” (*EA* 170; *PM* 194). Consequently, her critics embrace a messianic concept of existence, which does not unfold in the temporal world. Thus, they mistakenly view ethical activities as superfluous, given the apparent figure of Man. This abstract ideal, they believe, must not be subjected to criticism. This results in the concept of transcendence becoming “a game of illusions” (*EA* 171; *PM* 195). In other words, nothing new can be created in a world whose existence is predetermined by its apparent character. Beauvoir reverses the arguments of her critics by describing all idealisms, including the objective definition of “Mankind,” as illusory, since lived experience contradicts idealistic determinations. Inverting the objections to her philosophy allows Beauvoir to declare that the real ruse is the notion of a pure objective truth.

Beauvoir argues that faith in objective truth devalues lived experience, thereby invalidating an ethics dependent on concrete particularities. If an ethics addressing lived experience is marginalized, there remains no credible arbiter of truth claims, which creates the space for the proliferation of purely objective values, lacking the criteria for ethical validation. Since both truth and falsehood are concretely determined, Beauvoir argues, it is impossible for “Mankind” to be

misled by the fact that “it is precisely Mankind which creates the criteria of true and false” (*EA* 171; *PMA* 195). Thus, truths are not indisputable “totalities” beyond human determination; instead, they are the result of concrete actions, judged by their ethical means and ends.

Because humans are inherently fallible, their truths may also be perverted for unethical means and ends, which subsequently obscure the meaning of the false, since, where truths are perverted, their opposite collapses, leaving no clear distinction between true and false. An ethical danger presents itself at this stage of relativizing truths, leaving open the possibility of presenting lies as truth. This calls for the reassertion of ethical values capable of distinguishing lies from truths. Beauvoir suggests that humans intuitively know that it is impossible to escape the fact that they construct their own truths, which remain true only insofar as they are ethically validated. Against her critics, she asserts that the given world has been determined through human activity, and thus can be challenged by present and future actions, which may even dispute today’s accepted foundational truths to the extent that they may be exposed as falsehoods, which would then demand their negation to defend ethical freedom against misappropriating human value for unethical ends, under the guise of unvalidated objective truths with no bearing on lived existence.

A Critique of Classical Philosophical Systems

Rewriting classical philosophy for the present world begins, for Beauvoir, with Plato. She makes the case that critiquing the history of philosophy is essential for abolishing idealisms, which are opposed to her ethics. Beauvoir returns to Plato to dispute the authority of the gods over the so-called deceptive nature of art. She writes, “In Plato, art is mystification because there is the heaven of Ideas; but in the earthly domain all glorification of the earth is true as soon as it is realized” (*EA* 171; *PMA* 195). If, for Plato, art conceals the divine truth, Beauvoir’s inverted paradigm of the heavens on earth proposes that art and other human endeavours, which invite an ethical relation, produce truths as human values, discernible in temporal activities. She writes, “Let men attach values to words, forms, colors, mathematical theorems, physical laws, and athletic prowess; let them accord value to one another in love and friendship, and the objects, the events, and the men immediately *have* this value; they have it absolutely” (*EA* 171; *PMA* 195). Only by asserting freedom through concrete activities in the temporal world can truths exist; outside such an engagement, in, for example, an appeal to the heavens, truth cannot be validated, since it is not temporally realized.

Because the heavens do not provide any ethical guidance, humans are confined to lived time, outside of which no meaning can be established. Thus, the finiteness of human life determines that

inherited truths are subject to the present and future, which either affirm or reject their validity. Truths are justified absolutely only in and through the place and time in which they establish themselves. Hence, “[t]his justification, though open upon the entire universe through space and time, will always be finite” (*EA* 171; *PM* 196). In other words, the infinite is recognizable only from within the finite form. Beauvoir concludes, “Whatever one might do, one never realizes anything but a limited work, like existence itself which tries to establish itself through that work and which death also limits” (*EA* 172; *PM* 196). Thus, efforts to validate truths are limited by the finiteness of lived existence, which constrains any appeal to permanence. Hence, Beauvoir proposes that an ethics must repudiate the messianic concept and return to the concept of the infinite as discernible within finitude, effectively recanting the idealities prevalent in Western genealogies.

Evading the concept of finitude is the habit, Beauvoir argues, of traditional philosophical systems, which relegate truth to a messianic future.²⁰⁹ In her view, these philosophical systems provide the “consolations of death” to living subjectivities, thereby degrading their value in the present.²¹⁰ Thus, philosophical systems that universalize truth are inherently destructive of life and are aimed at death insofar as they erase ambiguity for control over the production of truth. In contrast to destructive philosophical systems, Beauvoir argues that “existentialism proposes no evasion. On the contrary, its ethics is experienced in the truth of life, and it then appears as the only proposition of salvation which one can address to men” (*EA* 172; *PM* 196). Hence, the redemptive promise of truth is only available to humanity in the form of an ethics that reflects lived existence. Contrary to divine salvation, *earthly salvation* is realized for the living, whose concept of truth draws on the resources of lived existence. To rethink the validity of systematic philosophical systems, Beauvoir mobilizes “Descartes’ revolt against the evil genius,” which causes subjectivity to radically doubt itself, turning the self-evident nature of truth against itself. Hence, subjectivity asserts itself in projects of self-doubt (*EA* 172; *PM* 196). Therefore, she concludes that “it is up to each one” to act ethically against contingent constraints (*EA* 172; *PM* 197).²¹¹ She therefore exhorts ethical subjectivities to follow the Cartesian project of radical self-critique, by questioning their complicity in perpetuating dogmatisms.

²⁰⁹ Beauvoir cites Hegel in her critique of Western philosophical systems. But, as Sara Heinämaa writes, “Kierkegaard’s critique of Hegel is the primary context for understanding Beauvoir’s mistrust in systematic philosophy” (11). Thus, following Kierkegaard, Beauvoir opposes systematic philosophy – which she attributes to Hegel.

²¹⁰ Beauvoir opposes the “end of history” doctrines implicit in the theoretical systems she critiques. Again, her main reference is Hegel.

²¹¹ Beauvoir assumes that her addressees possess a certain degree of freedom, which they are not in the midst of deploying ethically, since she believes that ethical agency cannot be ascribed to the absolutely oppressed.

Deeming that the destructive effects of systematic philosophies are evident in the oppressive political systems to which they give rise, Beauvoir returns to the idea that the life drives counter the death drives of tyrannical systems. She writes, “And in fact, any man who has known real loves, real revolts, real desires, and real will knows quite well that he has no need of any outside guarantee to be sure of his goals; their certitude comes from his own drive” (*EA* 173; *PM4* 197). In this regard, she suggests that subjectivity is intuitively aware that when its actions aim beyond contingent facticity, it transcends an appeal to tyrannical forms of power. Its free expression as such, Beauvoir suggests, triggers the life drives, generating affective sensitivities in the psyche and body, which become a resource for future ethical projects, against the coldness and insensitivity demanded by serious goals. Hence, the “outside guarantee” of idealisms cannot generate an ethics of liberation, since it occupies a position external to the temporal world. Instead, she argues that humans have the ability to save existence for a paradise on earth for the living, against the notion of the heavens. If her idea of paradise designates that all sources of human dignity, including health, wellness, happiness, pleasure, etc. exist for “each one,” then the paradisaic future of human existence is dependent on the revolutionary goal of ending oppression.

An Ethics for Mass Struggle

While Beauvoir’s “Conclusion” refutes the theses of her fellow philosophers, her address extends beyond her colleagues, to include “each one,” which suggests that her existential ethics is important for the masses. This leads Beauvoir to end her manifesto by invoking mass struggle. Thus, she urges her readers, now assumed to be everyone, to follow these ambiguous precepts: not to flee from freedom but assume it by choosing positive and negative projects aimed at ethical liberation; never to believe that ethical actions are conclusive; and, finally, to assume failure by struggling against it. Hence, revolting against oppressive forces requires the mobilization of “each one,” despite the limitations of contingencies, since freedom is realizable only within the finite project, outside of which the concept of abstract freedom produces oppressive violence.

In Part 2, I argue that Fanon situates Beauvoir’s appeal to “each one,” to show that, if the embrace of existential freedom is truly universal, it must address the concrete particularity of colonial history and anticolonial revolution. Hence, the anticolonial revolution concretely realizes Beauvoir’s prescriptive call for the dissemination of existential ethics across the entirety of the social and political world.

PART 2: Fanon's Manifestos: From Anticolonial Revolution to Interrelational Freedom

I now turn to Fanon's conclusions to both *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*, in order to argue that Fanon transforms Beauvoir's existentialist manifesto for new manifestos addressing the histories of racialization and colonization. An important distinction between Beauvoir and Fanon is found in their respective audiences. While Beauvoir defends her existential ethics against its critics, Fanon addresses the racialized and colonized peoples, who are excluded from the concept of liberation. Certainly, an examination of both conclusions reveals Fanon's ongoing dialogical relation with Beauvoir's concepts. *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth* were written nine years apart, a fact which is noticeable in the departures and resonances between the two texts. Examining Fanon through the lens of Beauvoir allows for an understanding of Fanon's conclusions in relation to Beauvoirian concepts. I argue that Fanon advances Beauvoirian ethics, by connecting the subjective experience of colonial oppression to the self-reflexive movement of the anticolonial subjectivity toward liberation. While the later publication, *The Wretched of the Earth*, argues for the cathartic annihilation of colonial oppression through a quintessential death struggle, the earlier text, *Black Skin, White Masks*, discovers within existential humanism the concept of interrelational freedom.

Fanon claims that the absolute negation of colonial power is needed before the I-You dialogical relation may enact the concept of interrelational freedom. The anticolonial revolution alone does not immediately lead to an ethical future, but it is requisite for an ethical future. Fanon proposes a more circuitous path to liberation, which calls on the racialized and colonized other to first invite itself into existence via a direct address to itself, in order to repudiate its status as non-existence under colonial rule. Hence, through a subjective split, the racialized and colonized other must address its own body as a "you," with the goal of de-objectifying it. In this regard, the self-address taking place within the split subjectivity enables the racialized and colonized other to regain a sense of itself as existence, prior to embarking on the search for truth via communication with others.

As stated in my introductory section to this chapter, I follow Judith Butler's reversed chronology of Fanon's texts, to propose that Fanon envisions a non-violent, or less violent world. I also follow Julietta Singh, who is attentive to the prominence of love and non-violence in Fanon's work, despite his backing of revolutionary violence. Singh, citing Nigel Gibson, concludes that Fanon's existential humanism is oriented by a non-violent, intersubjective concept of existence, a fact that has been obscured by the popular interpretation of *The Wretched of the Earth* as a paean to

violence. I therefore reread Fanon's ideas across these two texts by following both Butler and Singh, to conclude that Fanon imagines an ethical future beyond the need for violent reprisals.

Butler mainly focuses on Sartre's preface to *The Wretched of the Earth*, but she also considers Fanon's legitimation of violent revolution, in relation to his embrace of intersubjective freedom. Butler suggests that the link between self-creation and violent negation, shared by Sartre and Fanon, marks out the limits of what was imaginable "in 1961" during the Algerian war (VNV 18). These limitations also include, according to Butler, the masculine concept of fraternity, found in Fanon's demand for the revolt of the gendered, colonized man against the oppression of his assumed masculinist subjectivity, thought to be 'emasculated' by European power.²¹² But, despite the assumed masculine subjectivity in Fanon's concept of anticolonial revolution, Butler believes that Fanon, perhaps unintentionally, concludes with the promise of another future, beyond all existing predeterminations of subjectivity, including race, gender, and nation, with transcendent possibilities. Hence, a rereading of Fanon reveals an existential demand for the temporalization of free existence, with an invitation to an unknown, and unknowable, future, beyond all determinate identities. In light of Butler's identification of this particular existential position, I argue that this reading of the concept of an open future in Fanon's theory of liberation must also acknowledge the role that Beauvoirian ethics plays in Fanon's writing.

Fanon foregrounds the concept of an open future by invoking the second-person "You." As Butler explains, this mode of address, which founds the communicative relation, is not simply a rhetorical strategy, since it transcends the constitutive boundaries of the third person, which typically consolidates control over the naming of the other. Yet, the consolidated "we" of *The Wretched of the Earth*, with its imagined anticolonial solidarity, embracing the masculine concept of fraternity, is viewed by Fanon as essential to the violent negation of colonial oppression, which precedes the opening beyond oppressive existence, signaled by the second-person. The "we" therefore demands the closure of the relation to the other, thereby rejecting the interrelational mode of address. Butler writes, "According to the argument of *Wretched*, if I am living as the colonized, then to open the door of my consciousness is only possible through the closing of the door of the other's. It is a life or death struggle" (VNV 20). Thus, closure to the other is requisite within the logic of anticolonial violence, since only this closure allows for a "new notion of the human that will not be based on racial or colonial oppression and violence" (VNV 20). The objectification of the other is implicitly

²¹² As Butler notes, Rey Chow and others have traced the prevalence of the masculine concept across Fanon's writings (VNV 18-19).

assumed in the appellation of the “we.” Hence, the “we” holds the “constitutive sociality” implicit in the I-You relation at a distance. But, Fanon does not completely exclude it. Rather, he brings it back at the end of his conclusion to *The Wretched of the Earth*, arguing for a new version of man, or a new concept of the human, which would demand a genuine universal solidarity beyond the closure of the “we.” If there can be a non-violent or less violent future, it exists only within the yet-to-be concept of the “new man” beyond anticolonial revolution.

While traces of relational possibilities beyond the closure of violence can be detected in Fanon’s imagined future for a new man in *The Wretched of the Earth*, they are more fully in view in *Black Skin, White Masks*. As Butler explains, Fanon explicitly calls on the “you” for the concept of intersubjective freedom. But, prior to arriving at the fulsome meaning of this concept, as Butler points out, Fanon stipulates that the racialized and colonized other must first address itself as a “you.” This is especially important for black subjectivity, which suggests that the struggle for black existence must be won, prior to the transcendent possibilities of any new constitutive social relation. In other words, the racialized and colonized “I” must be reconstituted and asserted as existence prior to a possible interrelational freedom.

Butler describes Fanon’s self-address as “the most insurrectionary of his speech acts, allegorizing the emergent self-constituting powers of the colonized, unconditioned by any historical or causal necessity” (VNV 20). Hence, unlike the dialecticism of the decolonizing movement, conceived as a historical necessity, Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* detects the pursuit of freedom in the living consciousness, whose self-affirmation as existence becomes the most revolutionary act, since it reconstitutes subjectivity against the violence of objectification. Hence, the self-reflexive address constructs black subjectivity, thereby inviting transcendent possibilities for black existence.

Fanon’s existential humanism brings the oppressed and the marginalized, whose absence produces their oppression, into the concept of liberation. Furthermore, he suggests that rethinking humanism demands a critical interpretation of the psychic and bodily experience. This is especially true for the histories of colonization, which excluded – and still exclude – certain bodies from the concept of the human, thereby justifying their suppression in the definition of Man. In the following sections, I read the conclusions of *The Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skin, White Masks* respectively. I argue that, while the former invokes anticolonial violence, the latter calls for an intersubjective relation. As manifestos, these conclusions mobilize the political platform, in order to illuminate the ethical failures of colonial power and provide guidance for anticolonial liberation movements. Hence, the consolidation of the “we” against the colonizer precedes the direct address to the “you.”

Arriving at the “you,” however, cannot occur without an account of the colonizer’s ethical failure and the project of negation which it entails.

Enacting the Anticolonial Revolution: The “Conclusion” of *The Wretched of the Earth*

In the “Conclusion” of *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon urges his readers to foster solidarities by invoking the collective “we,” which doubles as a fraternal address to his “comrades” and “brothers,” indicating a shift from the first person and second person in *Black Skin, White Masks* (WE 235-236; DT 239). Moreover, the “Conclusion” of *The Wretched of the Earth* explicitly employs the rhetorical form of the manifesto, whose style is closely aligned with Beauvoir’s conclusion to *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. More than a rhetorical strategy, the manifesto allows the philosophical project to announce a prescriptive, though ambiguous, ethical program.

Fanon composes an original manifesto as a guideline for the conduct of the anticolonial revolution. He presses the colonized peoples to pursue neither the “useless laments” of Negritude nor the “sickening mimicry” of the colonized intellectual (WE 235; DT 239). In the opening lines of this conclusion, Fanon famously states, “Let us leave Europe which never stops talking of man yet massacres him at every corner of the world” (WE 235; DT 239).²¹³ In contrast to the abstract love of humanity implicit in the universal humanism also critiqued by Beauvoir, Fanon draws attention to the cumulative toll of individual deaths worldwide brought about by European colonization. According to Fanon, the failure of this European humanism is found in the evidence of massacres, which contradict the declarative love for humanity, extolled in the concept of Man. Fanon therefore corroborates the existentialist critique that faith in the abstract universal is linked to largescale death and destruction. Hence, he calls for new projects, which do not repeat Europe’s ethical failures.

Fanon furthers the existentialist critique of humanism by arguing that its failure is most clearly on view in colonial history. Fanon writes, “For centuries Europe has brought the progress of other men to a halt and enslaved them for its own purpose and glory, for centuries it has stifled virtually the whole of humanity in the name of a so-called ‘spiritual adventure’” (WE 235; DT 239). He argues that, since the idea of European progress is founded on the anti-humanist foundation of

²¹³ This line from *The Wretched of the Earth* is well cited in the critical literature on Fanon. See, for instance, Sylvia Wynter’s quotation of this line in “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument.” Wynter draws out Fanon’s critique of colonialism, to underscore the linkage between colonial power and the delimitations of universal humanism, which suggests that Fanon’s effort to rethink humanism sets the stage for today’s task of constructing a new concept of the human. I would add that Fanon’s search for a revised concept of the human must be understood in relation to Beauvoir’s existential ethics and humanism.

enslavement, it must be ethically invalid. Beauvoir argues that “the enslavement of other men” must be absolutely opposed (*EA* 147; *PMA* 169). Fanon moves from this general declaration of opposition to all forms of enslavement to his empirical point that Europe prevented the progress of non-European social, economic, and political systems, which destroyed the ability of colonized peoples to determine their own futures.

The theft of resources and technologies, as well as slavery and labour exploitation, led colonial projects to uphold efforts that willed the extinction of other worldviews, such that they would be unable to effectively revolt against the Western appropriation of the concept of humanity for itself, as distinct from the colonized other. Hence, progress as a serious goal turned the other regions of the world into what Beauvoir calls “abandoned zones,” or atemporal worlds incapable of generating human value in the eyes of the sovereign (*EA* 55; *PMA* 66). The authoritarian violence of the colonial system is described by Fanon in the language of adventure, which recalls Beauvoir’s prototypical adventurer, who passionately fulfills a desired, personal outcome no matter the toll of death and destruction. Hence, Fanon’s critique of European progress as a spiritual adventure concretizes the image of Beauvoir’s prototypical adventurer, a figure of bad faith, whose character lives on in the colonial imagination.

The Longue Durée of Colonial Oppression

Fanon argues that past forms of colonial oppression trigger new forms of violence in the ostensibly postcolonial world. This replicates the oppressive structure. Hence, an absolute rejection of the colonial system is needed for ethical liberation. If the spiritual subjectivity of the colonizer mirrors Beauvoir’s prototypical adventurer, European progress as a spiritual adventure will remain indifferent to the death and destruction of colonized peoples, in the pursuit of its own goals.²¹⁴ Taking the personal glories of the adventurer as its namesake, Fanon proclaims, the European adventure is “now teetering between atomic destruction and spiritual disintegration” (*WE* 235; *DT* 239). He forewarns of a European project directing the death drive toward its own annihilation. Even its achievements cannot be thought of as progressive, he believes, since they are the result of mass exploitation and death. As Beauvoir writes, “A freedom which is interested only in denying freedom must be denied” (*EA* 97; *PMA* 113). In its denial of freedom for others, therefore,

²¹⁴ I return again to Achille Mbembe’s concept of the *longue durée*, which elucidates the reverberations of colonial history in the present moment, to analyze Fanon’s view that the dangers facing the colonial world extend beyond the limits of the colonial period, since colonial power persists after its official end. Even attempts to gain liberation from colonization may become dangerous if they take the form of colonial projects.

European progress cannot in itself be considered progressive. If solicitations from others are essential to Beauvoirian ethics, then the ethical subjectivity will form itself at the site of solicitude. But since it has denied freedom for others, Fanon argues, “Europe has denied itself not only humility and modesty, but also solicitude and tenderness” (*WE* 235; *DT* 239). In other words, its lack of regard for others has made it incapable of supporting the empathetic relation, which sustains and protects life. Europe’s defence of certain values, such as those associated with individualistic pursuits, nurtures an intoxicating power that lacks the ability to establish limits on its destructive impulse, triggering an unchecked death drive, which ultimately turns against itself.

The ideals of progress may profess an abstract love of humanity, but they are contradicted by the evidential record of violent oppression. Fanon writes, “Its only show of miserliness has been toward man, only toward man has it shown itself to be niggardly and murderously carnivorous” (*WE* 236; *DT* 239).²¹⁵ Inverting the mythicism of cannibalism in the white imagination exposes the predatory character of Europe, whose serious projects consume and destroy life, in order to objectively realize certain goals of progress over others; this concept of European progress is realized through exploitation and death. The resulting values of European progress are therefore corrupted by “the price of suffering humanity has paid for every one of its spiritual victories” (*WE* 236; *DT* 239). In effect, European values are invalidated by the violence of their self-serving means and ends. Fanon therefore takes Beauvoir’s argument that the denial of freedom for others cannot support an ethical project into account in his description of the marauding character of colonial power, with its oppressive methods, which thereby invalidates the declarative liberating action of European progress.

Fanon implores the former colonies to not repeat the ethical failures of an imperialist Europe, which would result in similar outcomes of death and destruction. Fanon writes, “We can do anything today provided we do not ape Europe, provided we are not obsessed with catching up with Europe” (*WE* 236; *DT* 239-240). To describe the negative act of mimicry, Fanon employs the verb “to ape,” an allusion to the dehumanization of black existence, to warn that a very real danger haunts the former colonial world, which is that it will endeavour to reproduce European ‘victories’ for itself. Thus, Fanon concludes, the revolution against colonial oppression cannot be won by becoming an equal of the colonizer; for to become an equal would be to remain subservient. Fanon

²¹⁵ Fanon’s image of cannibalistic consumption in the West invites a critical analysis of the consumption and destruction of non-human life and the natural world. Hence, while the colonial project rationalizes the oppression and death of human life for the purposes of destruction and consumption, it also justifies exhausting the life-giving properties of the biological and natural world.

warns that if the former colonies direct all of their actions into the service of European progress, they will endanger the modern world by allowing its ethical failures to triumph.

Moreover, since the formerly colonized would perpetually arrive late to these values, which were not originally theirs, they would be forever marked by their inferiority.²¹⁶ Finally, an adherence to these values by the colonial world would preclude any alternative, outside the colonizer's worldview. In evidential terms, the former colonies risk reproducing the injustices of empire for themselves, while propping up the efforts of their former colonizer to disseminate new regimes of terror in the world. Hence, a postcolonial liberation cannot create the conditions for free existence, if it repeats the record of ethical failures on view in colonial history.

Resisting the Lure of the Colonial Past

A reverence for the past is also at work in the former colonies, not for the lost precolonial world, but rather for the order and governance of the colonizer in times of crisis. Fanon warns of the dangers of nostalgia in turbulent times. As Beauvoir writes, ideals act as a false bulwark against "an uncertain future whose values have not yet been won" (*EA* 98; *PMA* 114). Social and political instability in the period of decolonization puts the newly liberated nation at risk of deploying an oppressive force reminiscent of colonial power, thereby adopting the violent methods of the colonizer. Fanon's allusion to the dehumanized "aping" of mimicry elucidates the possible reversal of liberation in the period of decolonization. Since the civilizational structures of the colony were liquidated by colonial history, the colonized no longer register the possibility of any movements of liberation issuing from ancestral pasts.²¹⁷ In effect, they exist without their past, which, as Beauvoir explains, presents subjectivity with an annihilated landscape of values. In her words, "the fact of having a past is part of the human condition; if the world behind us were bare, we would hardly be able to see anything before us but a gloomy desert" (*EA* 99-100; *PMA* 116). In the former colony,

²¹⁶ Alia Al-Saji, in "Too Late: Racialized Time and the Closure of the Past," provides a concept of "racialized time," to explicate the sense of arriving late in a world of predeterminations. This negatively affects transcendent possibilities for the racialized other in the present and future. Al-Saji draws on Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, and Latin American thinker Aníbal Quijano, to argue that the processes of racialization and colonization reconfigure the past, splitting the colonizer's access to temporalization off from the anachronistic, racialized time of the other (2).

²¹⁷ In "Diagnosing the Sociopolitical Wound: Frantz Fanon and Catherine Malabou," I read Fanon and Malabou to propose that the destruction of the precolonial world by colonial oppression is experienced in the present as a sense of psychic rupture. Thus, the precolonial past cannot gesture toward a different future, external to the imposition of colonial values, thereby leaving the colonized without a past or future beyond the oppressive state.

the precolonial movements of liberation were erased by colonization. Hence, the present search for truth depends on the values established by the oppressor.

For this reason, Fanon argues that the search for truth in the former colonies must seek a different “model, schemas and examples” (*WE* 236; *DT* 240). While the temptation to pursue European wealth presents itself to the former colonial world, Fanon argues that the façade of its liberated exterior hides the horrors of exploitation, and the death drive it triggers. He writes, “When I look for man in European lifestyles and technology I see a constant denial of man, an avalanche of murders” (*WE* 236; *DT* 240). Hence, human feats, whose positive outcomes are found in European lifestyles, depend on the sacrifice of others. Western values therefore mask unethical means and ends. Echoing Beauvoir, Fanon writes, “Man’s condition, his projects and collaboration with others on tasks that strengthen man’s totality are new issues that require genuine inspiration” (*WE* 236; *DT* 240). Like Beauvoir, Fanon believes that the search for truth must be achieved through questioning and communication with others. New projects therefore cannot be inspired by overarching values, but rather by concrete interactions amongst particular individuals and groups, working in solidarity to liberate themselves from past and future oppression.

The Dangers of Mimicry

In this anticolonial manifesto at the end of *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon calls on the former colonial world not to become Europe, but rather to “endeavour to invent a man in full, something which Europe has been incapable of achieving” (*WE* 236; *DT* 240). In other words, since Europe has not successfully established a concept of the human that does not dehumanize others, it becomes the ethical responsibility of the colonized world to engage in new projects for universal freedom that do not model themselves on past failures. For Fanon, the glaring example of ethical failure borne of mimicry is the United States, which, he states “has become a monster where the flaws, sickness, and inhumanity of Europe have reached frightening proportions” (*WE* 236-237; *DT* 240). Fanon urges the former colonial world to examine the evidence of the ethical failure of a former colony embracing European goals, which illustrates how perfecting European values triggers the macabre reconstruction of the worst aspects of European progress. Thus, he concludes, the creation of a “third Europe” in the former colonies would lead to ever greater tolls of death and destruction in the world (*WE* 237; *DT* 240).

If the European project is universalized, then the destructive impulse ingrained in the death drive will become ascendant in the wake of European dominance, alleges Fanon. Alluding to Hegel,

Fanon reinterprets the spiritual destiny of Europe not as a dialectical movement toward liberation, but rather as a namesake for enslavement, which mirrors Beauvoir's criticism of Hegel in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. He writes, "It is in the name of the Spirit, meaning the spirit of Europe, that Europe justified its crimes and legitimized the slavery in which it held four fifths of humanity" (*WE* 237; *DT* 240). Since the majority of the world's population was exploited as a means to fulfill specific goals, Fanon claims that the Hegelian philosophical statement on the spirit is contradicted by the violence, which spans the entire spectrum of modern history. Thus, he concludes, the "strange foundations" of the European spirit are revealed in its histories of enslavement and exploitation (*WE* 237; *DT* 240). Beauvoir's critique of Hegel is therefore advanced by Fanon, who asserts that Hegel's concept of spiritual destiny obfuscates the evidence of violent oppression.

The concept of an abstract humanity restricts its definition to itself, for which it seeks evidence in the so-called empty landscape that surrounds it. Hence, the concept of the human as purely in itself corroborates its claim by turning the outside world into what Beauvoir calls "abandoned zones" (*EA* 55; *PM4* 66). Fanon makes a similar argument: during the colonial period, the European concept of humanity further isolated itself, while seeking an ostensibly ethical justification through an inauthentic search for evidence "in places that were increasingly arid and increasingly inaccessible" (*WE* 237; *DT* 240). Hence, the non-European world was emptied of life-giving properties, which set it apart from the concept of existence, thereby opening it up for exploitation. In this regard, European progress reflects Beauvoir's figure of the colonial administrator, the serious man who "stubbornly engulfs his transcendence in the object which bars the horizon and bolts the sky. The rest of the world is a faceless desert" (*EA* 54; *PM4* 66). The colonial adventure is thus described by Fanon as a serious march across a deathly landscape, which excludes the recognition of humanity outside Europe, thereby closing off any ethical validation that could be established in light of the solicitation of the fellow humans and worlds it encounters.

In its march across other worlds, Fanon argues, Europe lost sight of humanity. He writes, "Consequently, it was natural that the chances of encountering man became less and less frequent" (*WE* 237; *DT* 240). Thus, the acts of dehumanization triggered by European colonization turned the concept of humanity against itself, once the colonizer was no longer able to recognize humanity where it was encountered. The serious man thereby risks a descent into the sub-human attitude, after losing the ability to conceive of "man" where humanity exists. Once it cuts itself off from the other, subjectivity enters into "[a] permanent dialogue with itself," which turns thought into a circular "agony," since its attempt to grasp freedom is detached from "the reality of man as a living,

working, self-made being” (*WE* 237; *DT* 240). Fanon shows that non-communicative worlds are separated from the temporalities of lived existence. This is mirrored in philosophical concepts, which suppress the lived realities of the oppressed, in an effort to project idealisms. Moreover, the inherent tension of existence is subdued by abstract values, separated from the ontological truths that define human existence. In effect, the oppressor is also stymied by the atemporal world of oppression, since violent actions against the other obstruct the inexorable movement toward ethical freedom.

A Critique of the Class Struggle

Nonetheless, Fanon’s understanding of European progress does embrace the revolutionary history of the class struggle, while assessing its failures. Referring to the bourgeois faith in abstract ideals, he writes that the European workers were called upon “to smash this narcissism and break with this denial of reality” (*WE* 237; *DT* 240). Yet, they were unable to establish effective solidarities, choosing instead to believe that “they too were part of the prodigious adventure of the European spirit” (*WE* 237; *DT* 241). Hence, according to Fanon, the workers retreated from the Marxist concept of revolt, which left them ethically and spiritually defeated in the face of the counterforces, which assimilated them into the very European project that they had initially resisted. Therefore, Fanon concludes that even as “[a]ll the elements for a solution to the major problems of humanity existed at one time or another in European thought,” Marxist revolt was never realized, which, Fanon assumes, would have taken “the problem of man to an infinitely higher plane” (*WE* 237; *DT* 241). Thus, the failure to overthrow bourgeois dominance strengthened the concept of the abstract spirit, leading to its ascendancy. Hence, Fanon reasons that Europe cannot be entrusted to overthrow itself.

Consequently, Fanon urges the colonial world to assume the revolutionary position against European power. Calling on the colonial world to witness the “stasis of Europe” where “dialectics has gradually turned into the logic of the status quo,” he writes, “Let us re-examine the question of man. Let us re-examine the question of cerebral reality, the brain mass of humanity in its entirety whose affinities must be increased, whose connections must be diversified and whose communications must be humanized again” (*WE* 237-238; *DT* 241). For Fanon, since every aspect of human life has been colonized by European values, a Beauvoirian search for truth through questioning and communication with others is requisite for the creation of a concept of the human that would be responsive to the finite world, with its concrete forms and meanings. The ethical

responsibility of the colonial world is therefore to decolonize human existence through forms of radical critique, since the colonizer cannot be entrusted to destroy its own advantage.²¹⁸ Rather than focusing on its past, however, the colonized should interrogate the present manifestations of colonial oppression, in order to abolish them, and create new social, economic, and political systems, which genuinely reflect the concept of universal liberation, with a direct impact on the masses.

A Reconstructed Hierarchy

Fanon warns the colonial world that attempts to compete with Europe will fail to end existing forms of brutality. Crucially, “[t]he notion of catching up must not be used as a pretext to brutalize man, to tear him from himself and his inner consciousness, to break him, to kill him” (*WE* 238; *DT* 241). Any attempt to catch up to Europe will fail to establish the goal of universal liberation, since it will reconstruct the colonial hierarchy in new forms. Fanon evokes the dangers of a reconstructed hierarchy, which reorganizes the human concept into a “caravan” led by the former colonizer, effectively locking the “Third World” into a futile quest to become a “Third Europe.” Fanon writes, “It is not a question of stringing the caravan out where groups are spaced so far apart they cannot see the one in front, and men who no longer recognize each other, meet less and less and talk to each other less and less” (*WE* 238; *DT* 241). The metaphor of the caravan draws out an image of a reconstructed hierarchy, which inherits the racial and colonial hierarchy, but no longer requires biological definitions to support it. Furthermore, while the caravan gives the appearance of an egalitarian organizational model, it lacks the intersubjective relation: the leader faces away from, and no longer requires a relation to the followers, while the followers are separated from one another. This leads to the breakdown of solidarities, and the subsequent undermining of ethical existence. In effect, social isolation invites the furtherance of oppressive forces.

This turn away from human value, Fanon argues, has shown itself capable of producing a “bloodless genocide whereby one and a half billion men have been written off” (*WE* 238; *DT* 242). Thus, even where there have not been direct acts of hatred, enslavement, or exploitation, which typically provide evidence for the recognition of genocidal crimes, the disregard of the other’s existence also constitutes a genocidal act, since it prepares populations for death and oppression. If

²¹⁸ In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir defends the position that women’s liberation struggles are primarily fought by women. She argues that a personal and collective stake drives particular individuals and collectivities to oppose specific forms of oppression. In Chapter 2, I describe Beauvoir’s assertion that specific peoples oppose specific forms of oppression. Fanon, I argue, makes a parallel claim, by showing that the personal and collective stake of the colonized peoples is linked to the specificity of anticolonial struggles.

the postcolonial future reiterates this failure of intersubjectivity, then all forms of genocidal violence are possible, where the worst crime detaches the concept of the human from the human misery it creates. Thus, Fanon urges the colonial world to not inherit a European legacy “by creating states, institutions, and societies that draw their inspiration from it” (*WE* 239; *DT* 242). Attempts to do so are seen by Fanon as a “grotesque and generally obscene emulation” (*WE* 239; *DT* 242). If Africa wishes to pursue European progress, Fanon forewarns, it would be advisable to let Europe continue its rule instead of mimicking its exercise of power, since the triumph of a system is founded in its originary movement. Drawing on the Beauvoirian prototype of the artist, which expresses the highest ethical form, Fanon urges colonized peoples to emulate artistic projects. Only the creative principle can generate a concept of the human, which would annihilate the European legacy.

Fanon lauds the potential for original social and political systems to reflect the burgeoning, new “Third World,” while warning that otherwise the Third World will end by reflecting Europe back to itself, which would trigger a state of revulsion in Europe proper, once it has had the opportunity to view its monstrous proportions reflected back. Hence, Fanon concludes *The Wretched of the Earth* with an appeal to the collective “we,” his “comrades” and “brothers,” for a putative masculine solidarity to “create a new man” – which would make the Third World the site where subjectivity forms itself apart from the histories of colonization (*WE* 239; *DT* 242). As Butler argues, however, while this collectivity embraces anticolonial violence as a masculine endeavour, it does not define future iterations of subjectivity, since, implicit in Fanon’s writing is the invitation to move beyond existing gender, racial, and national identifications.

The Legitimacy of Anticolonial Violence

Beauvoir’s strategy for ethical liberation is at work throughout Fanon’s anticolonial manifesto in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Beauvoir’s explicit position against oppression assumes the collective responsibility to recognize the negative movements of oppressed peoples as legitimate ethical claims, while ensuring that any positive construction works toward ethical ends. Revolutionary action is therefore ethically privileged in that it engages the tension of existence to establish the concrete forms and meanings of liberation. Fanon concretizes Beauvoir’s general call for collective action and redirects it to elucidate the collective will of the colonized peoples. In so doing, Fanon links anticolonial violence to the concept of ethical liberation. For Fanon, the contingent facticity of the racialized and colonized subjectivity determines its ambiguous methods of revolt. Thus, Fanon

proposes that, if colonial forms of tyrannical violence threatens the existence of colonized peoples, violent revolt becomes legitimate.

A Critique of Systematic Philosophy

Fanon appropriates Beauvoir's critique of systematic philosophy to draw out the destructive effects of certain philosophical systems. While Beauvoir opposes the notion of pure objectivity, Fanon examines how the dominant faith in objective truth leads to the oppression of racialized and colonized subjectivities. While Beauvoir calls predetermined foundational truths into question, insisting that every truth defend itself ethically, Fanon questions the validity of universal humanism by showing its ethical indefensibility in the face of the realities of death and destruction in the colonies. Moreover, he regards non-recognition as the crime of a "bloodless genocide" (*WE* 238; *DT* 242). Hence, Fanon moves beyond Beauvoir's general exhortation to radically critique reflexive truths, by showing that the concrete particularity of the anticolonial struggle enacts the prototypical death struggle.

Furthermore, Fanon mobilizes Beauvoir's critique of religious idealisms to demand an overthrow of colonial ideals. Appropriating Beauvoir's criticism of a persistent religiosity in Western philosophical genealogies leads Fanon to reveal a hidden alliance between the humanist appeal to abstract ideals and the activities of empire-building. Like Beauvoir, he views human salvation in the work of liberation, but his focus on the anticolonial struggle suggests that, not only do philosophical genealogies need to be reinterpreted in light of existential ethics, but the destructive impact of those genealogies on the colonized needs to be acknowledged and repudiated. In general, Beauvoir contrasts systematic philosophies to Cartesian forms of self-critique. But she also acknowledges that the real danger of systematic philosophies is the political systems to which they give rise, that is, to the concrete manifestations of tyranny and oppression in the world. Thus, beyond a refutation of certain philosophical systems, Beauvoir proposes a strategy for revolution. Fanon marshals this critique to argue that colonial systems reflect the political stakes of conceptual systems, which historically produce abstract idealisms. Rethinking the past must therefore inspire the colonized subjectivity to form itself apart from quasi-religious humanist ideals, by committing itself to an anticolonial revolution against the reiteration of such ideals.

Inviting Interrelational Freedom: “By Way of a Conclusion” in *Black Skin, White Masks*

Black Skin, White Masks and *The Wretched of the Earth* were written nine years apart. Yet, both conclusions provide manifestos for future action, respectively urging the reader to regain liberation via concrete actions. But, while the conclusion of *The Wretched of the Earth* urges the collectivity to violently revolt against the colonizer, the conclusion titled “By Way of a Conclusion” in *Black Skin, White Masks* imagines an interrelational freedom beyond colonization. Hence, Fanon moves from the closure of a collective identity preparing for revolt toward an openness to the other and to the future. Fanon therefore mobilizes Beauvoir’s philosophical method of questioning and communication in the search for truth, to move from the call for a violent catharsis in *The Wretched of the Earth* to the principle of interrelational freedom in *Black Skin, White Masks*, with its transcendent possibilities for a new universal, beyond the failure of universal humanism. I follow Butler, who inverts the chronology of Fanon’s texts to foreground Fanon’s appeal to a constitutive sociality beyond violent catharsis.²¹⁹ Butler draws attention to Fanon’s prayer to his own body in *Black Skin, White Masks*. She proposes that the self-reflexive address, encompassing the first and second person via the split subjectivity, reaffirms existence against its oppressive state. This leads to a self-reflexive movement toward liberation, which resists historical suppression. Furthermore, the direct address to one’s own body elucidates the relation of subjectivity to itself, resulting in an insurrectionary existence, a revolution within the psyche and body of subjectivity against its oppressive reality. In this regard, Beauvoir’s Cartesian concept of self-critique offers a philosophical method for bringing the oppressed other back into existence. Fanon mobilizes the concept of self-critique to regain the agency of the colonized.

Fanon’s existential ethics establishes that black subjectivity, as body and consciousness, self-reflexively reconstitutes itself as existence, prior to seeking a relation to the other. Butler calls this solicitation of subjectivity to itself an insurrectionary act. To transcend the negative effects of oppressive violence, Fanon argues, black subjectivity must view itself existentially, with the caveat that its self-making invites the other of itself, as alterity and futurity, or that which exists beyond its present ontology. Singh corroborates this view of Fanon’s effort to highlight the essential role of body and consciousness in the affirmation of existence, by stating that his postcolonial vision of a future beyond the “racial politics of colonization” is immanent in his reflections on the potential for

²¹⁹ Butler proposes that both texts be read together, but she reads *The Wretched of the Earth* prior to *Black Skin, White Masks*. Rather than reading these texts chronologically, she places Fanon’s analysis of the intersubjective relation in *Black Skin, White Masks* ahead of the violent catharsis called for in *The Wretched of the Earth*, to view intersubjective freedom as a post-revolutionary ethical goal.

intersubjective freedom (52). Hence, self-reflexivity prompts efforts to invite a future beyond existing racial and colonial hierarchies.

Consequently, the mode of direct address may invite the “constitutive sociality” of an interrelational being. The conclusion of *Black Skin, White Masks*, therefore, departs from the collective closure of *The Wretched of the Earth*, to invoke the constitutive sociality generated via the I-You dialogical relation. Furthermore, Fanon describes the movement of self-reflexivity toward interrelational freedom via solidarity, since ethical freedom cannot be individualistic; rather, this type of self-critique affirms the proliferation of liberation movements, reflecting the scope of tyranny and oppression across the modern world. Fanon implicitly argues that a self-reflexive understanding of colonial violence must take the modern experience of violence into account as a whole, in order to revolt against it in its entirety.

Self-Reflexivity vis-à-vis the Past

Certainly, the struggle for liberation cannot isolate the body and consciousness from its past, since the lived experience of oppression is historical, which therefore reveals an openness of the present to past histories of oppression and revolution. Hence, investigating the relation of the past to living consciousness is crucial for an understanding of ontological realities. The self-reflexive consciousness therefore rethinks the linkage between historical experience and its present manifestation. Furthermore, this search for truth draws out the connections amongst multiple oppressive experiences, which clears the ground for solidarity. Against the dehumanization ensuing from colonial history, Fanon declares, “I am a man, and I have to rework the world’s past from the very beginning. I am not just responsible for the slave revolt in Saint Domingue” (*BSWM* 201; *PNMB* 183). Implicit in this effort is the project to rethink the past across all modern histories of oppression. Like Beauvoir’s call to rethink Western philosophy from Plato onward, Fanon believes that rethinking the modern world’s past begins by questioning the foundational truths of universal humanism – what he calls the “strange foundations” of the Hegelian Spirit (*WE* 237; *DT* 240). Interjecting them with diverse colonial experiences questions the validity of these foundational truths.

Once the colonial past is critically investigated, its racial and colonial categories become defunct. Thus, they cannot be invited back into new projects, including attempts to universalize the racial categories of Negritude. Rethinking the relevance of past oppression to present struggles leads to the recognition, not only of historical slave revolts, but also all revolts against enslavement across

the entire spectrum of human existence, since the effort to establish liberation is universal. Fanon writes, “every time a man has said no to an attempt to enslave his fellow men, I have felt a sense of solidarity with his act” (*BSWM* 201; *PNMB* 183). Fanon alludes to Beauvoir’s general claim that fighting enslavement wherever it exists is a universal endeavour. Like Beauvoir, Fanon views specific battles against oppression in relation to universal liberation. Thus, human liberation demands a disengagement from the hierarchies that prevent its realization.

Importantly, the self-reflexive movement toward liberation leads to the development of solidarities amongst diverse struggles for liberation. In contrast, pasts that are inimical to the evolution of universal liberation must not remain within living consciousness. Emphasizing the necessity for a theoretical departure from the past through his epigraph from Marx with its refrain to “let the dead bury the dead” – in addition to his ongoing engagement with Beauvoir’s refutation of reflexive values – Fanon establishes the fact that precolonial pasts are absolutely irretrievable, even as they were “unjustly ignored” over the course of centuries of colonial exploitation (*BSWM* 201; *PNMB* 183). Because they were annihilated through the destructive force of colonization, they cannot be authentically revived, alleges Fanon. Hence, Fanon disengages the revolution against colonial oppression from the desire to reconstruct black subjectivity out of the remnants of annihilated pasts; to recreate pasts, which cannot in effect be recreated, due to their absolute erasure over the course of colonial history, he suggests, perpetuates colonial power, by reaffirming its grip on historical values. Fanon proposes an anticolonial subjectivity that heralds an opening to the future, while the second-person mode of direct address invites the other into itself, first as itself, via the split subjectivity, engaged in its own self-making, and then in relation to the other, which forms a constitutive sociality, beyond the orthodoxy of received third-person categories.

Separation and Relation: Structuring Third World Solidarity

Fanon views separate anticolonial struggles in relation to one another, to conclude that Third World solidarity provides the conditions for the revolution against colonialism, which is an international phenomenon. Hence, Fanon’s addressee, “the world of you,” in *Black Skin, White Masks*, looks beyond Europe to the rest of the colonial world. In fact, the addressee is not clearly identified, which leaves room to speculate, as Butler does, weighing the possibility that Fanon addresses either the colonized or the yet-to-be “world of you,” which includes the European. The latter suggests that any prior separation must become, or is already, a relation to the other.

Beyond Butler's speculation over whether Fanon addresses the colonized or Europe, it is worth considering the matter in relation to Third World solidarities. Fanon brings ostensibly separate anticolonial struggles into relation in the conclusion of *Black Skin, White Masks*. In this regard, separate struggles against European colonialism are not isolated events; instead, solidarity with other anticolonial movements expands the scope of the concrete forms and meanings of liberation against the very oppressive forces of racialization and colonization that aim to foil attempts at solidarity. Hence, Fanon refers to the genocidal violence perpetrated against the Vietnamese peoples in the Indochina war. Drawing connections amongst the many acts of colonial violence across the modern world provides the foundation for a more effective response to colonial power. This counteracts the colonial strategy of preventing a relational understanding of oppressive violence. Hence, Fanon shows that linking the multiple anticolonial revolutions together creates the space for an international solidarity of colonized peoples.

In Chapter 1, I showed how Beauvoir and Fanon embrace the immediate post-WWII view that the histories of colonialism, fascism, and Nazism are interrelated. I concluded that they understood the need for a comparative analysis of modern forms of violence. In this regard, Fanon relates the colonial violence in Indochina to the violence of the Second World War, to affirm the need for a comparative understanding of colonial oppression. For Fanon, the comparative study of modern forms of violence reveals the linkage between the genocidal past and recurrent forms of violence. Furthermore, he draws attention to wars outside Europe, where European power escalates its genocidal activities in the post-WWII period. This view invalidates the idea of a conclusive victory over genocidal violence, putting an end to the post-WWII assumption that the termination of genocide concurs with the end of the Second World War. In the supposed linear narrative of Western history, the victors and victims are reconstituted into an exclusively European peace, which disavows the schema of colonial oppression that perpetuates the racialization of geopolitics, in an effort to obscure the revolutionary activities of colonized peoples, which in turn precludes an understanding of their actions outside racial divisions.

Fanon therefore contests the uncritical positivity of an ethical ascendancy in the post-WWII period, by illuminating the recalibration of colonial violence in the political interventions of post-WWII Europe. Fanon is also attuned to the importance of the Indochina war in the anticolonial imagination. It held the promise of new international solidarities between African and Asian peoples, culminating in Fanon's own effort to form a political union at the Bandung Conference, with a view to constructing a "Third World" alliance against colonialism and cold war bloc politics. Fanon

believed that European colonization must be rejected wherever it existed, including in the racial abstraction of “a so-called Asian attitude toward death” which disavows the revolutionary sacrifice of the Vietnamese people (*BSWM* 202; *PNMB* 184). Once it becomes clear that the multiple, worldwide anticolonial revolutions constitute concrete expressions of universal liberation, every separate struggle grows in stature, in the eyes of both the oppressed and the oppressor.

Beauvoir proposes that the concept of sacrifice at work in violent revolutionary wars denies the possibility of ethical freedom in the present. It thus invites a future for ethical freedom, by asserting freedom over tyranny via tyranny. Fanon demonstrates how this concept is manifest in the Indochina war. He writes, “The Vietnamese who die in front of the firing squad don’t expect their sacrifice to revive a forgotten past. They accept death for the sake of the present and the future” (*BSWM* 202; *PNMB* 184). Fanon argues that racializing sacrifice in situations of war is a result of the colonial language of naturalization, which invalidates the affirmation of an existential position vis-à-vis oppression and revolution. Instead, Fanon describes the phenomenon of sacrifice by appropriating Beauvoir’s idea that wherever sacrifice occurs in situations of oppression, the absolute rejection of the oppressive situation, which cuts subjectivity off from the present and future, is illuminated. In Fanon’s terms, the act of sacrifice asserts its liberation from the power that stifles its ability to project itself into the present and future. Indeed, recognizing the revolt of the Vietnamese people under the colonial occupation is relevant insofar as it reflects the concept of liberation. Hence, the sacrifice of Vietnamese people in the Indochina war expresses universal freedom, which therefore contradicts the common perception in the West that anticolonial movements are unrelated to the moral victories of the anti-fascist, anti-Nazi movements in Europe.

But Fanon also reproaches Negritude for racializing values, at the expense of creating worldwide anticolonial solidarities. Hence, Fanon writes, “[m]y black skin is not a repository for specific values” (*BSWM* 202; *PNMB* 184). His repudiation of racial hierarchies interrogates the many attempts to preserve the racialization of ethical value, which leaves aside the need for a revolt against the brutality of racial and colonial oppression. This leads Fanon to firmly reject Negritude in both of his concluding statements.

On the Danger of Negritude amidst Revolution

Fanon argues that the concept of liberation is universal, but its realization demands specific revolutions. While Fanon notes the dangers of mimicry amidst revolution in both *Black Skin, White Masks*, and *The Wretched of the Earth*, the conclusion of *Black Skin, White Masks* first proposes that

Negritude cannot halt the forces of mimicry, threatening to overtake burgeoning efforts at liberation. In politics, he writes, black liberation is thwarted by the fact that “[t]he black man wants to be the white man” (*BSWM* 202; *PNMB* 185). It is his “one destiny”: he views the white as superior “and all his endeavours aim at achieving white existence” (*BSWM* 202; *PNMB* 185). Hence, the phenomenon of black subservience to white ideals must be rejected. If the black seeks liberation by venerating the white, then white ideals remain ascendant. But a similar turn toward seriousness occurs with Negritude, whose attempt to create black ideals keeps in place the oppressive violence directed at the “man of color” (*BSWM* 203; *PNMB* 185).²²⁰

A Case for Reparations

When Fanon suggests that reparations must not be pursued, he has Negritude in mind, since, for Fanon, Negritude exudes a sense of bourgeois alienation in its demand for reparations. Thus, Fanon writes, “I have neither the right nor the duty to demand reparations for my subjugated ancestors” (*BSWM* 203; *PNMB* 185). Fanon argues that black liberation demands forgetting past injustices, rather than integrating them as grievances into the fabric of a new worldview. This, he believes, would continually bind colonized peoples to a view of the past as the site of grievance, hindering possibilities for transcendence. Indeed, his rejection of reparations is aimed at the Negritude movement. This leads him to avoid posing the question of whether past injustices rematerialize in

²²⁰ Sylvia Wynter explains that terms such as Third World, Minority and people of color replaced colonial language after political independence was granted to the former colonies, or, in the case of the United States, at the end of segregation (28). Fanon uses of the term “man of color” in *Black Skin, White Masks*. It could be argued that this reflects an early adoption of this postwar term, but it is more likely that it was in current usage to define racialized subjectivities in early post-WWII France. In regard to Fanon’s definition of the term “black,” as Jonathan Webber explains, “One aspect of the book [*Black Skin, White Masks*] where we must acknowledge an incompleteness is Fanon’s use of the terms ‘black’ and ‘white’ to refer to groups of people. He often treats these terms as synonymous with ‘colonized’ and ‘colonizer,’ suggesting that he intends his analysis to apply specifically within a colonial context. This is not to say that he considers it to apply equally to all colonial systems” (134). Webber identifies the prominence of the French Caribbean context of *Black Skin, White Masks*, but adds that what Fanon meant by “black” is debatable, since, in his early work in “The North African Syndrome,” he also treated “Arabic men in the French colonies of north Africa” (135). His terms clearly reference colonial France and the French colonies in general. I would add the fact that Fanon also brings Madagascans into *Black Skin, White Masks*, notably in Chapter 4, entitled “The So-Called Dependency Complex of the Colonized.” Even as he does not explicitly refer to Madagascans as black, the term accommodates them, not only for Fanon, but also for Senghor. Madagascans are included in Senghor’s anthology, where they are nonetheless referred to as Madagascans, apart from black subjects (*négres*). According to Webber, “we should also bear in mind [Fanon’s] intention that this analysis has broader application, especially given that its deep structure is a form of existentialism and therefore rests on an understanding of human existence itself” (135). Hence, Fanon’s “incompleteness” in regard to the definition of ‘black’ enables it to move beyond its initial context and cover other regions of the colonial world. The term “Third World” appears in the “Conclusion” of *The Wretched of the Earth*, to foreground the potential for a postcolonial solidarity. Fanon therefore opposes the political solidarities of the “Third World” to a potential “Third Europe,” which would reinvest and expand colonial forms of oppressive power in the postcolonial world.

the living consciousness of those who have historically been excluded from temporalizing possibilities, thereby obstructing any future transcendence. I suggest that his rejection of reparations does not concur with his critical analysis of belatedness, which views the racialized and colonized other as arriving late within the configuration of modernity that reproduces their exclusion. Finally, and importantly, I argue that it does not concur with Fanon's later demand in *The Wretched of the Earth* for financial reparations paid by Europe to the postcolonial states.²²¹ The question of whether reparations could be a part of an effort to create equitable conditions for free existence is not pursued until his demand for financial reparation. This suggests that Fanon views accepting and not accepting reparations as leading to similar patterns of exclusion.

Certainly, Fanon's aim is to annihilate the colonial situation, such that its negative effects no longer stifle ethical goals. I argue that Beauvoir's concept of a tangible, earthly paradise offers a resource for imagining the possibility of equitable ethical relations in the postcolonial world. Her reading could help to find, in early Fanon, reconciliatory possibilities that might bring it closer, for example, to today's African-American demand for economic reparations. But such reparations, if we follow Fanon's argument, would not be needed, once ethical actions and goals establish the conditions for Beauvoir's earthly paradise. In other words, any project of reparation would become irrelevant once liberation has been won. The question is as follows: if liberation has not yet been won, then might reparations help to bring it into existence? I argue that a new understanding of reparations is needed to transcend Fanon's concerns vis-à-vis the negative effects of grievance.

²²¹ Even in *Black Skin, White Masks*, as Chris Buck points out, Fanon does suggest that he must reject reparations, since he is able to "exist absolutely" without them (*BSWM* 205; *PNMB* 187). Buck considers a different scenario in which he was not able to "exist absolutely." Would he then accept reparations? (126). In regard to Fanon's later work, Buck writes that Fanon "implicitly invokes a forward-looking defence of reparations according to which the purpose of taking reparations involves providing a material foundation for radical freedom, and the means by which these reparations are taken avoid constraining freedom by positing an essentialist identity" (136). But, Buck argues, Fanon does not explain how reparations might avoid those constraints. Buck draws connections between Fanon's demand for reparations, which is simultaneously constrained by the positing of an essentialist identity (even as Fanon does not explain how it might be possible to accept reparations without constraining freedom) – and current debates about US slavery reparations. Buck proposes that Sartre in *Critique of Dialectical Reason* offers a method of conceptualizing race in "non-essentialist terms," which thereby resolves the contradiction at the heart of Fanon's refusal of reparations (136). I argue, in the context of my dissertation, that Beauvoir's concept of the earthly paradise must also be viewed in relation to Fanon. This suggests that if Fanon accepts the ethical demand for the creation of Beauvoir's "earthly paradise," then reparations cannot be renounced, without constraining freedom, since existential freedom may only appear once the material conditions for a better future are put in place.

The Necessary Choice: Denouncing Colonial Racism

The *longue durée* of colonial racism prompts the anticolonial consciousness to invalidate its present manifestations. Hence, critiquing colonial racism creates a rupture with oppressive existence. Fanon mobilizes Beauvoir's Cartesian concept of self-critique to propose that a revolt against oppression calls for the denunciation of colonial racism. Revolution is therefore imbricated within the living consciousness, which maintains its freedom to exist as itself, while simultaneously remaining open to the future and world, thereby inviting further forms of revolution. The revolution against servility, waged by self-reflexivity, is therefore insurrectionary, prior to any direct political action.

Fanon argues that oppressive situations must be denounced, in order to reject the state of servility they demand. He draws on the example of the French stereotype of African soldiers in post-WWII France. He writes, "If the white man challenges my humanity, I will show him by weighing down on his life with all my weight of a man that I am not this grinning Y a bon Banania figure that he persists in imagining I am" (*BSWM* 203; *PNMB* 185-186).²²² Even as "there is no black mission," which specifically aims at establishing black values, black subjectivity is attuned to the political struggle against the racialization of colonized peoples, which proves its existence as universal (*BSWM* 203; *PNMB* 185). In effect, the racialized subjectivity is pressed into a political revolt, even if it wishes to retreat, or evade the confrontation. The choice is not open to the racialized subjectivity to not repudiate its racial objectification, since any perceptible demonstration of the living consciousness rebukes it.

Black subjectivity is thus inexorably pressed into a revolt against racial and colonial objectifications. Appropriating Beauvoir's ambiguous ethics, Fanon explains that, even with no definitive program, ethical duties essentially assert themselves against serious goals. In this case, it is not the duty to prove oneself to the white man, but rather "to demand human behavior from the other" (*BSWM* 204; *PNMB* 186). Consequently, no other course of action is available to black subjectivity than to revolt against the idea of white existence, thereby forcing the oppressor to belong to a shared understanding of ethics. Fanon writes, "There is no white world; there is no white ethic – any more than there is a white intelligence" (*BSWM* 204; *PNMB* 186). Fanon thus deploys Beauvoirian ethics to oppose the racialization of ideas, concepts, values etc. Fanon demands the destruction of whiteness as a concept, that is, the destruction of the philosophical claim that humanity is racialized. In effect, Fanon concretizes Beauvoir's linkage of systematic philosophy to

²²² In Chapter 1, I analyze Fanon's repudiation of this French advertisement for a chocolate mix, with its stereotypical portrayal of a North African WWI soldier, with exaggerated, racialized physiognomic features.

the death drive, by illustrating how classical philosophical systems, whose foundation rests on an abstract concept of the human, cannot be separated from the empirical evidence of racial and colonial violence.

Being thrown beyond facticity is an activity that originates within the situation, claims Beauvoir. It is therefore the situation that determines the free action, which, for Beauvoir, designates the highest subjective expression of ethics, no matter the nature of its concrete manifestation. Drawing on Beauvoir's idea that moving beyond facticity is an act of philosophical liberation, Fanon describes this will to freedom as a metaphorical Kierkegaardian "real leap" into an open future. Hence, liberation from reflexive pasts becomes an act of faith, which extends existence beyond the finiteness of existing ontologies. Fanon thus concludes, "I must constantly remind myself that the real *leap* consists of introducing invention into life," even as such leaps of faith appear as unintelligible, abstruse activities in the present moment, which remains "mired by the determinations of the past" (*BSWM* 204-205; *PNMB* 186). In Fanon's words, "I am not a slave to slavery that dehumanized my ancestors" (*BSWM* 205; *PNMB* 186). In the spirit of Beauvoir's refutation of past values, which corrupt ethical actions, Fanon claims that the history of slavery does not determine the liberating actions of the present and future. Hence, liberation demands the invention of post-slavery and postcolonial subjectivities, which exceed all past forms of oppression. Therefore, an oppressive past does not absolutely determine an oppressive present and future, even as the oppressive situation cannot be evaded in the choices open to the descendants of slavery and colonialism in the present. Hence, Fanon imagines a future beyond all racial and colonial determinations, rendering access to the powers of temporalization open to all.

Interrelational Freedom: Imagining an Earthly Paradise

Opposing the need for self-reflexivity produces a faith in messianism, which, both Beauvoir and Fanon argue, projects the concept of liberation outside the limits of temporality. Together, they offer another concept of salvation. Beauvoir views subjectivity as ensuring its own salvation ("[I]t is up to him to assure it within his own existence; this existence is conceivable ... only as an affirmation of the future, but of a human future, a finite future" *EA* 129; *PM* 149). Fanon deploys Beauvoir's concept of earthly salvation to argue for elucidating the site of salvation in its concrete forms. Thus, the struggle for liberation cannot be found, for Fanon, in the search for lost precolonial artefacts, but rather through the invention of alternative social, economic, and political systems, which aim to alleviate the persistent conditions of slavery, evident in "the lives of eight-

year-old kids working in the cornfields of Martinique and Guadeloupe” (*BSWM* 205; *PNMB* 187). Thus, liberation from the legacy of slavery depends on the overthrow of existing forms of systemic violence, which are the result of exploitative pasts, extending back to the inception of the system of enslavement during the ‘childhood’ of interracial relations. But it also demands the creation of new pragmatic, organizational structures, to better the concrete conditions for life on earth.

In lines that are deeply indebted to Beauvoir, Fanon writes, “The misfortune of the man of color is having been enslaved. The misfortune and inhumanity of the white man are having killed man somewhere” (*BSWM* 205; *PNMB* 187).²²³ Returning to his earlier, uncited reference to Beauvoir’s philosophical statement on childhood in his conclusion allows Fanon to draw a parallel between the misfortune of the adult, whose childhood taught subservience, and the misfortune of the modern human, to have once been both victim and perpetrator of slavery, a contingent fact, which now marks off the childhood of interracial relations, thereby perpetuating these relations in the living consciousness of the ‘man of color’ today, while, at the same time, reflexively pressing the white man into the replication of his original projects of death and destruction, which ultimately work against the universal struggle for ethical liberation.²²⁴

Indeed, the *longue durée* of slave histories is evident not only in the slave-like conditions on the contemporary plantation, but also in current rationalizations of Western supremacy, since, as Fanon writes, “still today they are organizing this dehumanization rationally” (*BSWM* 205; *PNMB* 187). Hence, the recurrent rationalization of oppression risks the return of archaisms in the present and future. This echoes Beauvoir’s call to absolutely destroy archaisms, in order to ensure that they do not obstruct the progressive movement toward liberation. The liberation struggle must therefore end the power of oppressive pasts to reconstitute themselves in the present. This requires present and future revolutions against the reflexive repetition of inherited systems of oppression.

The existentialist concept – man “is not” – is taken up by Fanon to argue for the recognition of a black existential subjectivity, in which “[t]he black man is not. No more than the white man”

²²³ In both my Introduction and Chapter 1, I discuss Fanon’s missing citations of Beauvoir. As previously stated, Fanon does not mention Beauvoir by name, but he cites her concept of childhood twice in *Black Skin, White Masks*, first in “The Lived Experience of the Black Man”, and then in his concluding chapter, to argue that the violent foundations of modernity impede revolutionary efforts to transcend colonial power. In Chapter 1, I cite Lewis Gordon’s criticism of Fanon, in regard to his elision of Beauvoir.

²²⁴ In the last lines of the conclusion in *Black Skin White Masks*, Fanon writes, “At the start of life, a man is always congested, drowned in contingency. The misfortune of man is that he was once a child” (206). The regressive movement toward the contingent facticity that marks off childhood is evident in the adult’s rebuke of transcendent possibilities beyond factual limitations. This is clearly a reference to Beauvoir, who theorizes the relation between childhood and seriousness, as shown in Chapter 1.

(*BSWM* 206; *PNMB* 187). This requires rethinking black subjectivity as constituted by both failure and possibility, like white subjectivity. Fanon argues for an openness to new movements, ideas, and strategies for black liberation beyond Negritude. Whiteness is thus not ethically privileged, nor are future possibilities reserved for the white man alone. Fanon addresses his conclusion to both black and white readers as follows: “Both have to move away from the inhuman voices of their respective ancestors so that a genuine communication can be born” (*BSWM* 206; *PNMB* 187). Beauvoir’s “inhuman gods” of the serious world are invoked in Fanon’s characterization of the “inhuman voices,” which reiterate reflexive attitudes toward racial and colonial difference, obstructing the path to a postracial, postcolonial future. In response, questioning and communication with others is viewed as essential to the concept of liberation. For Fanon, activities aimed at liberation invite a relation to the other as future and alterity. Furthermore, they demand the eradication of racial and colonial ideas, projects, movements, etc., thereby leveraging the concept of an interrelational freedom for the development of an earthly paradise.

Hence, the concept of interrelational freedom is essential for the liberation struggle, with Beauvoir’s earthly paradise for all as the ethical goal. Fanon concludes, “It is through self-consciousness and renunciation, through a permanent tension of his freedom, that man can create the ideal conditions of existence for a human world” (*BSWM* 206; *PNMB* 188). The self-reflexive movement toward liberation leads to the repudiation of oppressive force, which makes it crucial to the ethical project. Moreover, communication with others creates the reciprocal relations requisite for the emergence of the concept of the human after the end of universal humanism. Fanon thus corroborates Beauvoir’s understanding that an equitable social relation, rather than transcendental idealism, is the pre-condition of a liberated world.

This would require not only new philosophical ideas, denouncing the naturalization of given conditions, but also the recognition of the unquantifiable truths that reside in the sensitivities of body and psyche, outside of which any ethical action loses its meaning. Beauvoir intimates that ethical action cannot be realized outside the drive toward pleasure and happiness, while Fanon explores complex bodily and psychic sensitivities when he poses the question, “Why not simply try to touch the other, feel the other, discover each other?” (*BSWM* 206; *PNMB* 188). In opening subjectivity to the other, through the sensitivities of the body and psyche, Fanon suggests that the oppressive situation impedes liberation for all by suppressing the psychic and biological realities of lived existence, which reveal an inherent sociality, experienced in and through the life drives. Indeed,

when the abstract universal defines human existence, it represses the life drives, resulting in the ascendancy of death and oppression.

Questioning and Communication

Fanon's address to "man" in the second person "you" regains a lost reciprocity between black and white subjectivities. This elicits an intersubjective encounter, thereby exceeding reflexive third-person categories. He writes, "Was my freedom not given me to build the world of *you*, man?" (*BSWM* 206; *PNMB* 188). Redefining the concept of the human through affective bonds leaves behind the abstract universal. It also suggests that the life drives are central to new ideas, movements, and projects, against the cold rationalization of the objective world, which produces the other as a spectral, deathly figure. Fanon concludes by way of an invocation to the psychic and bodily openness of subjectivity to the future and alterity, which, he implicitly argues, is essential for rethinking the concept of the human. Fanon's appeal to the "open dimension of living consciousness" echoes Beauvoir's search for truth via questioning and communication (*BSWM* 206; *PNMB* 188).

Indeed, the final lines of Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* offer a solicitation to the practices of both self-critique and intersubjectivity: "My final prayer: O my body, always make me a man who questions!" (*BSWM* 206; *PNMB* 188). A prayer to one's body and consciousness comprises a meditation on existence as essentially self-reflexive, presupposing faith and love in oneself, which must exist in relation to the alterity and futurity conjured by the question. Hence, the mystical invitation to philosophize generates the quasi-religious elevation of an ethics over all forms of mastery. Following Fanon, I argue that a new concept of the human must therefore make interrelational freedom via self-critique and intersubjectivity exist as a bodily and psychic reality in concrete forms. The permanence of the question ensures that any new concept of the human retains an indeterminacy – the future and alterity continually reconstitute it.

CONCLUSION: The Future of Existential Ethics

Following both existentialist thinkers, who account for concrete realities to substantiate ethical action, I argue for an ethics attentive to the lived experience of the oppressed. In so doing, I demonstrate that Beauvoir and Fanon provide possible historical and critical resources for interpreting contemporary social and political crises. In order to address violent ontologies, I argue, liberation must today be thought in relation to the resurgence of violence, the recurrence of

oppressive power, and the *longue durée* of colonial racism. Drawing attention to the urgency of ethics, I show that existential humanism comprises an anticolonial inheritance for radical black politics, feminism, environmental justice, and anti-fascist and anti-capitalist movements.

By theorizing the linkage between Beauvoirian ethics and Fanon's anticolonial critique, I have developed an understanding of existential ethics and humanism as a central legacy for the new critical concepts needed to make sense of the dangers posed by contemporary forms of oppressive power. In his 2019 Holberg lecture, Paul Gilroy invokes a return to the mid-twentieth century concept of ethics, with a view to developing a critical response to the resurgence of oppressive forces. Following Gilroy, I argue that Beauvoir and Fanon provide philosophical resources for the development of a new concept of ethics. Even as today's movements follow existential ethics, however, they precede it, by anticipating new concepts that respond to present realities. I believe that the anticolonial inheritance of Beauvoir and Fanon pushes today's new critical projects toward a revolutionary future.

The concept of interrelational freedom, developed by both Beauvoir and Fanon in their existential ethics, is crucial for rethinking ethics vis-à-vis not only the finiteness of existence, but also the essential role of the dialogical I-You relation, requisite for the development of an ethical future. Of course, these concepts also have a genealogy, linked to past theories and histories of modern revolution. Any new theorization will exceed its past iterations, since it must address contemporary crises. I conclude that investigating the questions of oppression, violence, and revolution today cannot be separated from the work of *critically* inheriting the genealogical tradition, which renders certain ideas archaic, and therefore destructive to the development of new movements. Hence, the critical inheritance of past theorizations of ethics demands the rejection of archaisms, and the integration of values pertinent to current liberation struggles.

Certainly, the movement for reparations has emerged as an important part of contemporary struggles for liberation. I have argued that the Beauvoirian concept of an earthly paradise provides a method for rethinking the connection between liberation and human dignity. Importantly, however, Beauvoirian ethics does not demand reparations. But Fanon, in the conclusion of *Black Skin, White Masks*, explicitly rejects them, believing that any form of reparative justice would instill anger and resentment at the expense of the requisite forgetting demanded of revolutions.²²⁵ Yet, Fanon's early

²²⁵ The movement for reparations by African-Americans, for example, as put forward by Ta-Nehisi Coates, specifically solicits financial reparations. Despite Fanon's concern that reparations inhibit existential freedom, however, my reading of Fanon's existential ethics elicits an understanding of these contemporary demands for justice.

work does acknowledge the fact that the concrete determinations of interrelational freedom, outlined in Beauvoir's concept of the earthly paradise, remain limited by historical oppression. Moreover, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, he demands financial repayment from Europe. As discussed, Fanon's rejection of reparations is complicated by his later demand for reparations. In both rejecting and demanding reparations, Fanon suggests that any form of reparative justice must contend with the constraints on freedom put in place by reparations. Yet, he implicitly suggests that these barriers would be wiped away once humanism triumphs. I conclude that a new concept of ethics today must validate reparations vis-à-vis ethical freedom, in order to bring about the conditions for this triumph.

Fanon's understanding of psychic and biological vulnerability is crucial to rethinking the dialecticism of body and world for a new concept of ethical liberation. Butler theorizes vulnerability as the site where a new concept of the human forms itself, after the failures of abstract universal humanism. This shared understanding of existence as fragile and finite attempts to transcend the dangers of inheriting the defunct human hierarchies. Hence, any new concept of existence demands a reckoning with the physical and physiological limitations of living consciousness. It also calls for a reversal of hierarchical thinking, by constructing concepts on the foundation of concrete realities, as opposed to the imposition of values. Thus, I return to my Introduction, in which I argued that Butler's theories of vulnerability and precarious life inherit the philosophical insights of existential humanism. I therefore conclude that a new understanding of ethical liberation must mobilize the concept of vulnerability for solidarities against the recurrent phenomenon of human hierarchization, redeployed in nefarious efforts to validate the return of oppressive forces.

Today, writers and thinkers must oppose the return of the defunct concept of the human hierarchy, with its origins in racial and colonial pasts. Gilroy describes the lingering "half-life of fascism," which threatens to become ascendant. Historian Domenico Lusardo opposes current movements within the discipline of history that rethink fascism as an ethically justifiable revolutionary force against democratic values. This revisionism, Lusardo argues, effectively normalizes racial and colonial violence, alongside fascism, by constructing socialist and communist histories as ethically compromised. This, Lusardo argues, creates the space for a neoliberal triumphalism, since neoliberalism, once unbridled of colonial and Nazi pasts, positions itself as the victor against the 'tyrannies' of socialism and communism. Lusardo concludes that, today, the counterrevolutionary forces deceptively view democratic movements as counterrevolutionary.

The ethical response to this deception, Lusardo implicitly suggests, must be to 'demystify' today's reinvestment in the ideas of colonial and fascist totalitarianism, which justifies the

annihilation of dissent in the democratic majority. The silencing of dissent is needed for a neoliberalism inheriting the aims of the colonial project, in order to expand and extract capital, by destroying human existence, including the natural world, which sustains and nurtures life on earth. Neoliberal ideology therefore excludes Fanon's *les damnés* from the concept of the human, still racialized, and still economically, socially, and politically oppressed, with the goal of consuming and destroying limited resources, on which all forms of life – present and future – depend. Today's revolutions call for a greater solidarity, since the destruction of biological existence must be opposed, not by a top-down imposition of values, but by the solicitation of diverse existences, from the ground up.

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