

## On Resistance in Anti-Colonial Marxist Writings<sup>1</sup>

### SUR LA RÉSISTANCE DES ECRITS MARXISTES D'ANTI COLONIAL

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**Abstract:** Postcolonial Studies as a field of academic enquiry has often neglected the writings of Marxist anti-colonial writers in the insurgent national liberation movements. This essay analyzes the strategic ideas of anti-colonial resistance by focusing on negritude as ethnic identity in writings by Aimé Césaire and Léopold Senghor and national culture in Amilcar Cabral and Frantz Fanon. It argues that these Marxist anti-colonial writers' strategies of resistance are mainly based upon a relatively unproblematized notion of ethnic or national identity, which, though suspicious of essentialist politics of identity, is in accordance with the political urgency of decolonization for national independence in the historical context.

**Key Words:** Resistance; Negritude; National culture; Césaire; Senghor; Cabral; Fanon

**Résumé:** Les études de post-colonial comme un champ de la recherche académique a souvent négligé les écrits des auteurs marxistes d'anti-colonial dans la rebelle contre les mouvements de libération nationale. Cet essai analyse les idées stratégiques de la résistance anti-coloniale en se concentrant sur la négritude que l'identité ethnique dans les écrits par Aimé Césaire et Léopold Senghor et de la culture nationale dans Amilcar Cabral et Frantz Fanon. Il fait valoir que les stratégies de lutte ces écrivain marxistes anti-coloniale sont principalement basées sur une notion relativement pas encore problématisé d'ethnique ou d'identité nationales identité ethnique, qui, bien les essentialiste politique de l'identité suspensions, est conforme avec l'accordance avec l'urgence politique de la décolonisation pour l'indépendance nationale dans le contexte historique.

**Mots clés:** Résistance; Négritude; La culture nationale; Césaire; Senghor; Cabral; Fanon

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

As suggested by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, with the exception of Frantz Fanon being identified as “the founding father of Third World liberationist discourse,” the enabling and inhibiting effect of the success of Said’s Orientalism has led to a neglect of a range of earlier anti-colonial writers in the early and mid 20th century such as Edward Wilmot Blyden, Joseph Caseley-Hayford, C. L. R. James,<sup>3</sup> Amilcar Cabral, and others (14-15).<sup>4</sup> In fact, these early anti-colonial writers have made significant contributions to theorizing resistance in contemporary postcolonial studies. Therefore, this essay aims to analyze the anti-colonial writings of four Marxist figures, Aimé Césaire, Léopold Senghor, Amilcar Cabral, and Frantz Fanon, examining their elaboration on ethnic identity and national culture as a base to initiate resistance against colonial and imperial dominations, especially the notion of negritude as a controversial category of politics of identity.

## 2. REEVALUATING NEGRITUDE: CESAIRE AND SENGHOR

Questions of nativism easily come to mind for a study of these early writers. The most fundamental idea of nativism lies in its belief of and quest for an authentic ethnic identity or an uncontaminated national origin before the colonial encounter, which is idealized in the nationalist resistance movement for independence. Negritude<sup>5</sup> is usually taken as an example of nativist or essentialist philosophy and movement and has got enormous attacks and denunciation from the day of its emergence.<sup>6</sup>

When the West Indian poet Aimé Césaire initially used the word negritude in his 1939 poem “Cahier,”<sup>7</sup> writing that “My negritude is neither tower nor cathedral/ It plunges into the red flesh of soil/ It plunges into the blazing flesh of the sky,” he means it as an assertion of African values embodied as the “red soil” and “blazing sun” rather than the European values represented by “tower” or “cathedral” (*Return to My Native Land* 75). Nevertheless, Césaire cannot be simply criticized as proposing negritude as a form of nativism because of this poem. His very being as a synthesis of European culture and African values<sup>8</sup> does not necessitate his defining negritude as the romanticized quest for an irretrievable ethnic or national origin in the distant past of Africa. In Césaire’s writings negritude is meant as a historically constituted cultural concept, as he comments in an interview:

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<sup>3</sup> Said makes an excellent study on C. L. R. James. Explicating his theory of resistance in a related analysis of George Antonius, Ranajit Gaha and S. H. Alatas as “voyage in” intellectuals, he argues that James’s work is “original and creative” and “only apparently dependent on a mainstream discourse like history, political science, economics or cultural criticism” (“Third World Intellectuals” 27-50, *Culture* 245-261).

<sup>4</sup> Actually, a few studies did appear in the 1960s and 1970s before the advent of postcolonial studies. Yet it is true that postcolonial studies have paid less attention to these writers and activists. For recent notable studies see Parry, “Resistance Theory”; Childs and Williams 39-59.

<sup>5</sup> It was originally claimed as “the francophone equivalent of Pan-Africanism and a distinct current in African national consciousness and cultural nationalism” (Irele, “Theory of Negritude”; qtd. in Parry, *Postcolonial Studies* 45). Sartre writes a preface for Senghor’s anthology of poems and elaborates on the poetry of negritude as “antiracist racism,” and the most revolutionary in its time (326). For more discussions on negritude and Pan-Africanism see Irele, “Defence of Negritude,” “Negritude”; Baron; and Lambert.

<sup>6</sup> The Nigerian Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka critiques negritude because it “accepted the dialectical structure of European ideological confrontations but borrowed from the very components of its racist syllogism” (127). Paul Gilroy examines the dangerous obsession with ‘racial’ purity in black resistance politics and proposes “the inescapable hybridity and intermixture of ideas” through showing how different nationalist cultural history fail “when confronted by the intercultural and transnational formation” called “the black Atlantic.” He concludes with a critique of Afrocentrism understood as “the idea of tradition as invariant repetition rather than a stimulus toward innovation and change” (*Black Atlantic* x-xi, 187-196; *Against Race* 9-133). For another similar criticism see Parry, *Postcolonial Studies* 44.

<sup>7</sup> This poem was initially published in the French Journal *Volontés* in Paris and did not cause any attention until its English translation appeared in 1956. For more studies see Irele, “Negritude” 346; and Hale 134-136.

<sup>8</sup> In an interview Césaire discusses his own cultural itinerary: “For me surrealism was the high road to Negritude, since it leads at one and the same time to freedom and to the black man. [...] And so it was by adopting a European technique—that’s the paradox—that I became an African, that I achieved the hoped-for welling up of the black self [...]” (Decraene 64). For more discussion on this point see Irele, “Negritude” 339.

West Indians can neither ignore nor rewrite their history. The Amerindian, even the Indian component, the African foundation and the three centuries of life in common with France, all that makes up an indivisible whole. How do you slough that off, I mean one or another of these elements, without impoverishing reality, without sterilizing it? The wealth and originality of the West Indies are the fruit of that synthesis. (Decraene 64)

By this it cannot be understood that Césaire's negritude is aimed to construct an exclusive or racialized politics of identity that seeks a pure ethnic and cultural origin of the African natives before the white settlers' invasion. What he emphasizes is the complex nature of the constitution of the colonized subjectivities through the intertwining colonial encounter between the African cultural heritage and the European values.

Actually, what negritude embraces in its conception of identity and anti-colonial liberation is not an exclusive upholding of the African values but that of the oppressed of different races in the whole world, as Césaire writes:

Our Africa is a hand out of a gauntlet,  
it is a straight hand, palm outwards  
fingers tightly pressed together.  
It is a swollen hand  
a wounded open hand  
held out  
Brown, yellow, white  
to all the hands, the wounded hands  
of the world. ("Greetings"100)

This poem expresses the intention to unite all those oppressed people in the world to struggle against the colonial domination and oppression regardless of their racial colors. The nature of being dominated and manipulated by European colonialism constitutes the strongest common ground that unites them together as "the wounded hands of the world."

It is worth noting here that, Césaire's poems frequently use natural images like the earth but seldom allude to historical or geographical ones. Césaire does not identify negritude or the black personality with a certain fixed essence of the ancient civilization of Africa. As he explains:

I refuse to pass my swellings off for authentic glories. And I laugh at my old childish imaginings. No, we have never been amazons at the court of the King of Dahomey, nor princes of Ghana with eight hundred camels, nor doctors at Timbuctoo when Askia the Great was king, nor architects at Djenne, nor Madhis, nor warriors [...] washers, small time shoeshiners, at the most fairly conscientious witch-doctors, and the only record we hold is our staying-power in wrangling over trifles [...]. (Return 66-67)

This explanation demonstrates Césaire's personal disbelief and disinterest in those legendary "authentic glories" of his pre-colonial ancestors and the complex implications his notion of negritude contains. Negritude does often refer to the quest for the past African heritage for building black personality in order to resist the assimilation by the Western values, but Césaire's project focuses more on future as identification with the present rather than a distant, unified and idealized ethnic authenticity of pre-colonial cultures and societies. In addition, Césaire does not take the nation as the unproblematic site of resistance because it is "a bourgeois phenomenon" (*Discourse* 57).

Césaire's notion of negritude is further elaborated in a historical framework by another important writer in the decolonization movement. Léopold Senghor, the well-known black intellectual in Senegal, arguing against those accusations of negritude as racialism and self-negation because of its simple reversal of white/black dichotomy, defines negritude as "the sum of the cultural values of the black world" or "a certain active presence in the world, or better, in the universe" (*African Reader* 179). Senghor's definition of negritude is not as static and closed as critics of nativism usually claim since he never excludes the actuality and desirability of cross-cultural fertilization, insisting that it is "essentially relations with others, an opening out to the world, contact and participation with others" (*African Reader* 180).

According to Senghor, negritude can be seen as both “an instrument of liberation” and “a humanism of the twentieth century.”<sup>9</sup> This proposition seems contradictory in its adoption of Western humanism as a critical weapon for anti-colonial liberation. However, what Senghor means by humanism is that it must be a new humanism, produced as a consequence of active responses to its European conception:

The paradox is only apparent when I say that negritude, by its ontology (that is, its philosophy of being), its moral law and its aesthetic, is a response to the modern humanism that European philosophers and scientists have been preparing since the end of the nineteenth century [...]. (African Reader 182)

What this explanation reveals is the original and ultimate aim of the emergence and development of negritude as a strategic construction of ethnic and national identity to respond and resist the European colonialist discourses and ideologies. Later Senghor characterizes European humanism as “essentially static, objective, dichotomic” and founded upon “analysis and conflict” (emphasis original), and the African one as “mobile, yet unique” and seeking “synthesis” (African Reader 182). Therefore, negritude cannot be taken as a fixed and essentialized category of politics of identity but a variable human construction produced in active response to European humanism.

In his poems, Senghor writes with a style marked by dominant use of African rhythms and symbols. Sartre writes a preface for Senghor’s anthology of poems and elaborates on the poetry of negritude as the most revolutionary of its time because of its “antiracist racism.” This way Senghor elaborates on negritude as an effort of the colonized blacks to re-possess a distinctive culture and history of their own, without the intention to cater for the assumed absolute superiority of European civilization. Maybe it is Senghor’s dependence on the somewhat oversimplified dichotomy between whites and blacks that gets negritude much criticism. In consequence, Senghor’s elaboration of negritude can be further traced as an “intellectual evolution from the antiracist racism of early Negritude to a position where he called on black Africans ‘to assimilate rather than be assimilated,’ to take the best of European civilization and use it for their own purposes” (Hymans, qtd. in Vaillant 157).<sup>10</sup>

Up to now, the concept negritude has covered a variety of meanings due to many debates it has aroused since its appearance in the late 1930s. It could mean the distinctive black style as well as the psychological attitude toward the world. It also refers to the effort to build a more positive black identity in its militant rejection of the assumed superiority of white Europeans. The concept of negritude needs to be understood in the concrete historical and social circumstances of its emergence and evolution. Firstly, this concept is originated in active response to a specific historical situation, marked by the black people’s miserable condition of being despised and oppressed in a world dominated by the white Europeans. Therefore, its original purpose is to resist the French policy of assimilating the black people intellectually and despising them morally. The black elites felt assimilated intellectually but not socially and could not identify their culture fully with that of the white Europeans. Consequently, as an alternative way out of this alienation, they resort to their African values as a foundation to build identity as a strategy of anti-assimilation. As Senghor remarks:

Early on, we have become aware within ourselves that assimilation was a failure; we could assimilate mathematics or the French language, but we could never strip off our black skins or root out our black souls. And so we set out on a fervent quest for the Holy Grail: our Collective Soul. (“What is Negritude?” 54)

What Senghor implies here is that, though acknowledging the European influence on their elaboration of negritude as politics of identity, the black cannot be fully assimilated as the French colonizers has expected. Negritude as the product of the colonial encounters between the black Africans and the European whites comes into being as a strategic construction of native identity to resist the colonialist ideology.

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<sup>9</sup> Césaire comments on Senghor’s humanism in an interview as: “the meeting point of Greco-Latin Negro-African humanism. He has transcended the apparent antinomy of two different cultural worlds and has become their living synthesis” (Decraene 69).

<sup>10</sup> For more studies on Senghor and negritude see Ba; and Markovitz. Different from Ba and Hymans, Markovitz argues that because of his elitism Senghor’s concept of negritude is less a protest against the French than a means to link French and African elites, including no program for change and specific analysis of colonial exploitation. This argument is ahistorical in its neglect of the role negritude movement has played in nationalist struggles.

Senghor describes its immense debt to the West: "Paradoxically, it was the French who first forced us to seek its essence, and who then showed use where it lay" ("What is Negritude" 54).

Examined in such a broad historical perspective, negritude can be approached as a movement of reaction against the Western cultural and ideological domination underlying its political domination and economic exploitation rather than as a set of nativist, abstract philosophical ideas about the black essence. The reaction appears as the culmination of the black people's collective experience of being dominated in their historical contact with the white colonizers. Despite the fact that its quest for African values in asserting the black identity might be suspicious of nativism or an essentialized longing for pure ethnic authenticity, negritude's historical significance as a social and cultural movement in the African nationalist struggle for independence must be examined and evaluated properly. As an intellectual movement negritude emerged out of strong emotional conflicts in its reaction to the Western culture, so its framework of ideas, its literature and ideology are generally progressive and constructive for understanding the intertwined nature of the colonial encounter and the possible alternative strategies for anti-colonial resistance.

### **3. THEORIZING NATIONAL CULTURE: CABRAL AND FANON**

If Césaire and Senghor elaborate on the strategy of resistance in terms of an ethnic identity called negritude, then Cabral and Fanon attempt to discuss national culture as a possible and necessary site for initiating resistance in the historical context of decolonization. Amílcar Cabral was born in Guinea in 1925 and educated in Lisbon of Portugal. His speeches and articles present us with a re-examination and elaboration of imperialism and the colonial relationship from a new perspective. Most of his works concentrate on describing an agricultural society transformed under the impact of the colonial domination and a guerrilla war fought against the Portugal imperial power. Cabral understands the value of culture as an indispensable factor in resisting foreign domination, because the imperial domination can only be maintained by a perpetuated, organized repression of the cultural life of the colonized. Consequently, he elaborates on culture as both an important factor in colonial domination and a crucial means to resist the colonial domination:

In fact, to take up arms to dominate a people is, above all, to take up arms to destroy, or at least to neutralize, to paralyze, its cultural life. For, with a strong indigenous cultural life, foreign domination cannot be sure of its perpetuation. At any movement, depending on internal and external factors determining the evolution of the society in question, cultural resistance (indestructible) may take on new forms (political, economic, armed) in order fully to contest foreign domination. (Return 39)

What Cabral stresses here is the significant role culture has played in the colonial conquest and the anti-colonial resistance. However, a dilemma resides in the colonial domination due to the cultural resistance of the colonized people: either to liquidate all the colonized population in order to avoid their consequent cultural resistance or to succeed in dominating the colonized country without damaging its cultural life. As a solution to this dilemma, imperialist colonial domination invented a theory of "progressive assimilation" of native people, which turns out to be near glosses of racism in denying the existence of native culture and history. According to Cabral, this strategy of assimilation is doomed to failure because the imperialist colonial domination refuses to confront the cultural reality of the dominated people. Therefore, considering the importance of cultural oppression in imperialist domination, national liberation movement can be seen as a necessary act of cultural resistance and as "the organized political expression of the culture of the people who are undertaking the struggle" (Return 40).

Cabral's elaboration of cultural resistance and liberation claims several distinctive features. First, he lays a Marxist emphasis on productive forces as the determining factor of imperialist domination and the interdependent, reciprocal relationship between the cultural situation and the economic condition. The value of native cultural resistance to foreign domination lies in the fact that culture is a vigorous manifestation of the ideological plane of the physical and historical reality of a society. The imperialist dominating usurpation of the productive forces negates the historical process of the dominated society.

Therefore the objective of national liberation is “the liberation of the process of development of national productive forces” and to reclaim the right “to have their own history.”<sup>11</sup>

Second, Cabral does not take technology as the absolute criterion to judge the degree of cultural development. The material condition of a certain society is always the bearer and creator of its culture no matter how developed it is. Furthermore, he understands culture not as a perfect and finished whole but as an expanding and developing phenomenon highly interdependent and reciprocal with other cultures. The native culture cannot keep its integrity after the colonial encounter and must assimilate positive aspects of foreign culture, as he suggests:

A people who free themselves from foreign domination will be free culturally only if, without complexes and without underestimating the importance of positive accretions from the oppressor and other cultures, they return to the upward paths of their own culture, which is nourished by the living reality of its environment, and which negates both harmful influences and any kind of subjection to foreign culture. (Return 42)

Rather than suggesting a total rejection or acceptance, what Cabral stresses here is the need to make a critical analysis and reevaluation of other cultures so as to complement the sound growth of one’s native culture. The other urgent task is to put African cultures in the framework of universal civilization, not to determine their superiority or inferiority but to determine “in the general framework of the struggle for progress what contribution African culture has made and can make, and what are the contributions it can or must receive from elsewhere” (Return 42).

Third, Cabral frequently reminds of the heterogeneous nature of the colonized culture and foregrounds popular culture as a foundation for initiating anti-colonial resistance. Culture has a mass character and is not uniformly developed. Different from Césaire and Senghor, Cabral differentiates between the elite and popular culture and stresses the latter as the crucial location for producing resistance for national liberation, suggesting that “[t]he liberation movement must furthermore embody the mass character, the popular character of the culture—which is not and never could be the privilege of one or of some sectors of the society” (Return 42). In consequence, Cabral puts the question of cultural resistance into the totality of social structure. The complex varieties of social and ethnic groups complicate the effort to engage with cultural resistance in the liberation movement. The imperialist colonial domination makes efforts not only to create a system in repressing the native culture but also to provoke the cultural alienation of a part of the population, either by the policy of assimilation or by making a social gap between the indigenous elites and the popular masses. The section of petite bourgeoisie assimilates the colonizer’s mentality and looks down upon the cultural values of its own people. What they need is to decolonize their mind—“reconversion of minds” or mental set—in their daily contact with the people in the liberation movement. Furthermore, Cabral warns the danger these culturally alienated elite intellectual have to confront: they might put their class interests against the aspiration of the people and scarify the masses to “eliminate colonial oppression of their own class and to re-establish in this way their complete political and cultural domination of the people” (Return 43). Nevertheless, the diversity of social and ethnic groups does not necessarily prevent the formation of a new national culture. Achieving the cultural unity of several social groups is of key importance for the liberation struggle. According to Cabral, this unity can be achieved on two bases: making “total identification with the environmental reality and with the fundamental problems and aspirations of the people” and then promoting “progressive cultural identification of the various social groups participating in the struggle” (Return 59).

Finally, Cabral elaborates on the armed struggle as an efficient instrument to develop the cultural level of both the bourgeoisie leaders and the popular masses. The armed resistance for independence implies a great cultural progress when it becomes “not only a product of culture but also a determinant of culture” (Return 59). Thus cultural resistance becomes an integral and determining part of the armed struggle in national liberation movement.

As an early anti-colonial writer, Cabral has made great contribution to theorizing resistance. His critical analysis of the diversity of social and ethnic groups and class structures is illuminating even to the present discussion of resistance in postcolonial studies. His thoughts function as a forewarning of the

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<sup>11</sup> For another study on Cabral and Marxism and socialism see McCulloch. For discussions on Cabral’s theory of national liberation from a political perspective see Ntalaja.

disillusionment entailed by the decolonization project conceived as a simple transfer of political power from the European colonizers to a national bourgeoisie ruling class. National liberation for Cabral implies both national revolution (a people's struggle against colonial domination) and social revolution (which seeks to destroy capitalist structure and replace it with socialist one). He defines national liberation as "the regaining of the historical personality of that people, its return to history through the destruction of the imperialist domination to which it was subjected" ("Weapon" 102). The national liberation must free the process of developing the national productive forces once usurped by imperialist colonial domination. Accordingly, national liberation is understood to be more than a transition from colonialism to neo-colonialism, with the postindependent states still trapped in imperialist economic domination and manipulation. Considering the present world situation of global capitalism, Cabral's viewpoint is still valid and intellectually enlightening.<sup>12</sup>

Another important figure in the early anti-colonial writings further develops Cabral's thoughts on national culture and liberation. Frantz Fanon, the Martinique-born psychiatrist and activist for the Algerian national liberation movement, conducts a persistent critique of negritude in his discussion of national culture. Compared with other early anti-colonial writers, Fanon has enjoyed much more critical attention in postcolonial studies.<sup>13</sup> As Fanon's later works like *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), *Toward the African Revolution* and *A Dying Colonialism* (1967) are more directly related to the historical context of African decolonization and thus of greater significance to understand his thoughts on anti-colonial resistance, the following analysis will focus on these later works, especially *The Wretched of the Earth*, because of its direct elaboration on questions of national culture and resistance.

"On National Culture" was a statement initially addressed to an audience of the Second Congress of Black Artists and Writers in 1959 and later included in *The Wretched of the Earth*. In this essay, Fanon believes that the demand for and the affirmation of a national culture constitute a special battlefield in the national liberation movement. This demand and affirmation can be taken as an aggressive response of the native intellectual to the colonialist denial or distortion of a pre-colonial cultural life of the colonized, as Fanon writes of the desired effect of the colonial domination: "The effect consciously sought by colonialism was to drive into the native's heads the idea that if the settlers were to leave, they would at once fall back into barbarism, degradation and bestiality" (*Wretched* 169). The native intellectuals, in anxiety to shrink away from the devaluation imposed by colonial domination, naturally resort to a passionate search for a national culture existed before the colonial encounter. They have discovered dignity and glory in the past of native culture rather than felt being ashamed of it. This claim to a national culture attempts to rehabilitate the nation and serve as a justification for the development a future national culture.

However, Fanon regards what has been affirmed in the last two decades as not a national culture but a Negro literature. He critiques the danger of negritude elaborated as a concept of metaphysical essence rather than a materialist politics. Negritude might mirror and re-enter the circle of racialization and the colonial dynamics. He observes:

The unconditional affirmation of African culture has succeeded the unconditional affirmation of European culture. On the whole, the poets of Negro-ism oppose the idea of an old Europe to a young Africa [...] This historical necessity in which the men of African culture find themselves to racialize their claims and to speak more of African culture than of national culture will tend to lead them up a blind alley. (*Wretched* 171-172)

To Fanon, Negro or African-Negro culture is not a homogenous whole; they are different entities because "the men who wished to incarnate these cultures realized that every culture is first and foremost national" (*Wretched* 172). The response of native intellectuals to the colonialist degradation of native culture can easily lead to an exaltation of continental and racial cultural manifestation. Fanon comments on the homogenization of native culture:

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<sup>12</sup> For a study of globalization theory and postcolonial studies see Brennan, "From Development to Globalization."

<sup>13</sup> Responding to the overwhelming criticism, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. presents a critical review of several theorists' use and abuse of Fanon's thoughts in contemporary postcolonial studies. Focusing on Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, he argues that: "Fanon's current fascination for us has something to do with the convergence of the problematic of colonialism with that of subject formation" ("Critical Fanonism" 458). Gates finally urges a historical understanding of Fanon linking his works with the specific circumstances of Algerian decolonization process; for such a kind of analysis see Beckett.

Culture is becoming more and more cut off from the events of today. It finds its refuge beside a hearth that glows with passionate emotion, and from there makes its way by realistic paths which are the only means by which it may be made fruitful, homogenous and consistent. (Wretched 174-175)

According to Fanon, this homogenization of native culture turns paradoxically towards the past and away from the actual events of the present. What it ultimately embraces is a non-existent essence that has been stabilized and made coherent once and for all. The construction of national culture must be linked with the popular struggle of the people. As Fanon goes on to elaborate:

We must not therefore be content with delving into the past of a people in order to find coherent elements which will counteract colonialism's attempts to falsify and harm. We must work and fight with the same rhythm as the people to construct the future and to prepare the ground where vigorous shoots are already springing up. A national culture is not a folklore, nor an abstract populism that believes it can discover the people's true nature [...] A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence. (Wretched 188)

What Fanon warns here is that efforts to elaborate on the African-Negro culture as something of a coherent and static essence by delving into its distant past can be misleading in finding ways to resist the colonial degradation of native cultures. On the contrary, he lays great emphasis on the importance of the people's actual experience in anti-colonial resistance, which plays a foundational role in forming the substance of national culture in the liberation movement.

Thus for Fanon the nation becomes the necessary condition and framework for the formation and growth of national culture. In other words, it is the historical experience to fight for national existence that will ensure the condition and framework for national culture. In consequence Fanon regards national consciousness as the most elaborate form of culture. He further differentiates national consciousness from nationalism, taking the former as of an international dimension that opens a door to communication, and the latter as a metaphysical principle which seeks for a unified, idealized notion of ethnic authenticity. According to Fanon, national culture can help the nation play its part on the stage of world history because it is "at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness lives and grows" (Wretched 199).

In addition to his elaboration of "the nation" as the necessary foundation for the emergence and development of national culture, Fanon also unequivocally insists on the category of "the nation" itself as a weapon of anti-colonial resistance. As he comments with a firm confidence:

We shall show that the form and the content of national existence already exist in Algeria and that there can be no turning back. While in many colonial countries it is the independence acquired by a party that progressively informs the diffused national consciousness of the people, in Algeria it is the national consciousness, the collective sufferings and terrors that make it inevitable that the people must take its own destiny into its own hands [...] The Algerian nation is no longer in a future heaven. It is no longer the product of hazy and phantasy-ridden imaginations, it is at the very center of the new Algerian man. (Dying Colonialism 28-30)

This passage demonstrates the importance of "the nation" as a crucial concept in Fanon's analysis of anti-colonial resistance. His insistence on the people's consciousness as the main resisting site in national liberation struggle not only avoids the usual recourse to a political party as the leading agency but also foregrounds the necessary subtle examination of the collectively shared experience by heterogeneous social and ethnic groups.

Due to his elaboration of "the nation" as a site of initiating resistance, some analysts accuse Fanon with his abandonment of materialism in elaborating "the nation" concept, which they regard as a concept originated in colonialism (Williams and Chrisman 24).<sup>14</sup> Actually, this accusation is valid considering Fanon's inadequate attention to the European dimension of the origin of the concept of "the nation," which

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<sup>14</sup> For a more detailed discussion see Mowitt.

has played an important part in colonial conquest abroad in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. However, it is inappropriate in its misunderstanding of Fanon's intellectual departure from "the nation" as a European concept. As discussed previously, "the nation," as the result of the concrete historical and political experience of the colonized natives in their anti-colonial resistance, can acquire a new dimension that is different from its European counterpart. In addition, these critics do not take into account of Fanon's further interrogation of "the nation" as a problematic category in "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness" of *The Wretched of the Earth*.

According to Fanon, the national bourgeoisie of the colonized countries identifies itself with the decadence of its Western counterpart without emulating its first stages of exploration and invention. To them the national independence simply means "the transfer into native hands of those unfair advantages which are a legacy of the colonial period" (*Wretched* 122-123). Thus national consciousness is not the transparent manifestation of the innermost hopes of the people and the immediate result of the original aim of the mobilization and struggle of the anti-colonial liberation movement. Consequently, national consciousness must be transformed into political and social consciousness. Fanon concludes:

A bourgeoisie that provides nationalism alone as food for the masses fails in its mission and gets caught up in a whole series of mishaps. But if nationalism is not made explicit, if it is not enriched and deepened by a very rapid transformation into a consciousness of social and political needs, in other words into humanism, it leads up a blind alley. The bourgeoisie leaders, of under-developed countries imprison national consciousness in sterile formalism. (*Wretched* 164-165)

What Fanon's conclusion suggests here is that the achievement of national independence does not endorse the end of oppression and exploitation. The transfer of power from the colonists to the nationalist bourgeois leaders requires an immediate transformation of national consciousness into social consciousness, which focuses on the internal critique of inequalities and corruption within the border of the new nation-state. Fanon's criticism on the pitfalls of national consciousness and his suggestion of the urgent need to transform it into social and political consciousness is of great significance to theories of resistance.<sup>15</sup>

The concept of "the nation" is problematic in the situation of anti-colonial movement not only because of its colonial origin. For Fanon, the living consciousness and the coherent, enlightened action of the whole people constitute the essence of national consciousness. Contrary to those who argue that "the nation" is a quintessentially European and ultimately capitalist innovation and functions to provide an imaginary coherence for individuals seeking to ground their identities in language and geography (Anderson),<sup>16</sup> Fanon elaborates on the concept of "the nation" as the result of the concrete political and historical experience of the people shared in their resistance for national independence rather than a derivative discourse originated from Europe. The establishment of an independent nation never means the end of colonialism since decolonization is a very long process in light of the various complicated issues involved in cultural resistance. The post-independence days need to develop a social consciousness, which aims to implement an unrelenting internal critique of domination and oppression within the new nation-state.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

As the above analysis shows, the early Marxist anti-colonial writers attempt to build up an ethnic identity of negritude or elaborate on national culture as a foundation for initiating and sustaining anti-colonial resistance. It is no surprising that these discussions of strategies of resistance are mainly based upon a relatively unproblematized notion of ethnic or national identity if considering the political urgency of decolonization movement for national independence in the historical context. Though these writers try to conceptualize negritude and national culture as strategic formulations of the historical moment of

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<sup>15</sup> For example, Said has made use of Fanon in elaborating on liberation as an alternative trend within nationalism upon gaining independence in the former colonies in *Culture and Imperialism*. For more discussions on Said's critical appropriation of Fanon see the first section of Chapter 2.

<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Partha Chatterjee regards nationalism as a "derivative discourse" inherited from European political ideas through the civilizing mission of colonialism.

decolonization, their conceptions of ethnic or national identity cannot be entirely devoid of the charge of essentialist politics of identity. Therefore, it has been an important task for theorists in postcolonial studies to initiate a persistent critique of the hybridity of colonial discourse and the problematic constitution of colonized subjectivities.

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