The Wretched of the Earth: Summary

Preface:

The preface is written by 20th-century French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre. He begins by describing the world's population as consisting of "men" and "natives." The "men" are the citizens of colonial empires; the "natives" are the colonized people. Sartre does not really believe "natives" are lesser than "men." He is demonstrating one of Fanon's points: colonialism dehumanizes people.

Frantz Fanon's analysis is summarized by Sartre when he says: "The peasantry, when it rises, quickly stands out as the revolutionary class." All the other classes, such as "the puppet bourgeoisie" and "the urban proletariat" then "fall into line" with "the rural masses."

Sartre denounces the crimes of European settlers in Algeria. He specifically addresses the vigilantism, or acting without official legal authority, during the Algerian War of Independence (1954–62). There was violent popular resistance to decolonization in Algeria: "The motorhorns [car horns] beat out *'Al-gér-ie fran-çaise*' while the Europeans burn Moslems alive." *Algérie française* is a French, pro-settler slogan meaning "French Algeria," or "Algeria for the French." Regarding the murders, Sartre asks, "Now, which side are the savages on?"

Addressing a European audience, Sartre claims Fanon's book is not addressed to Europeans: "He speaks of you often, never to you." Instead Fanon's book is addressed to colonized people. Sartre adds, referring to colonized people in the third person: "His aim is to teach them to beat us at our own game." Sartre welcomes this development. He agrees with Fanon that violent revolution teaches colonized people how to be human: "By their ever-present desire to kill us ... they have become men." He also believes this is ultimately good for Europeans: "We in Europe too are becoming decolonized." He means decolonization will change the mindset of Europeans: "The settler which is in every one of us is being savagely rooted out." These changes will enable colonizer and colonized alike to create "another story: the history of mankind."

Analysis

Sartre notes Frantz Fanon's book "had not the slightest need of a preface." He is perhaps aware of the effect of a European preface to Fanon's book. It could seem as though a book by Fanon, "the native," needs the approval of an influential European. He claims he wrote the preface "to bring the argument to its conclusion." This conclusion is the decolonization of Europe, the process of having "the settler which is in every one of us ... savagely rooted out." He predicts this too will be a violent process, rather than just a shift in attitudes: "You will have to fight, or rot in concentration camps." The "you" Sartre addresses is Europe. His predictions have not been borne out, or not yet.

Sartre simplifies Fanon's analysis, perhaps too much so. The peasantry does emerge as "the revolutionary class." In the countryside the spark of violent resistance is spontaneously lit. However, Fanon shows this spark is not enough by itself. It is overly optimistic to say, as Sartre does, *all* the other classes in the colony "fall into line with the stand made by the rural masses." On the contrary, Fanon gives many examples of divisions between classes, and of groups "falling into line" with the settlers. The peasantry does need to be joined by the native intellectual and urban proletariat, Fanon shows. And it is true Fanon does not condemn any entire class as hopeless, except perhaps the class he calls the "national bourgeoisie." However, "the stand" made by the rural masses is only the beginning, Fanon argues.

Decolonization, in Fanon's definition, means replacing settlers with natives. This is described in Fanon's first chapter. The next part of the struggle is to change the society rather than

simply shuffle around the personnel. Otherwise the result is "a simulacrum of phony independence" in which exploitation and domination continue.

Chapter 1: Concerning Violence

World Cut in Two

Frantz Fanon begins with an axiom: "Decolonization is always violent." An *axiom* is something regarded as self-evidently true, a statement forming the basis for an argument. Decolonization is the process by which a colony attains independence and becomes its own sovereign nation. Fanon points out decolonization has many political flavors. It can be called "national liberation" or "the restoration of nationhood," but it is always violent. Decolonization is always violent because colonization is violent. Thus, violent conquest engenders a violent rebellion.

Fanon also describes decolonization as the substitution of one "species" for another. He puts the word "species" in quotation marks because settlers and natives actually belong to just one species, the human species. But Fanon refers to native and settler as separate species to show how starkly different the two groups are. "The colonial world is a world cut in two," Fanon writes. This division has two separate spaces, "the settler's town" and "the native town." The settler's town is one Fanon describes as "well-fed" and "easy-going." It is "a town of white people, of foreigners." The "native town," also called the "Negro village," the "medina," and the "reservation," is in contrast "a place of ill fame."

The colonial world is also cut in two in a conceptual or abstract way. Not only are there two "species" and two spaces, there are also two forces. As Fanon writes, "The colonial world is a Manichean world." Manicheanism was a religion of dualism in 3rd-century Persia. Dualism is the belief there are two opposing principles ordering the world. Dualism often designates one force as good and the other as evil. Thus, Fanon is saying the colonial world is split into two opposing principles or forces: settler and native. The native is viewed as the evil force: "The settler paints the native as a sort of quintessence of evil."

One figure tries to cross the divide between worlds. This figure is "the native intellectual," whom Fanon also calls "the colonized intellectual." The native or colonized intellectual often has ties to "the bourgeoisie of the colonialist country." *Bourgeoisie* is a word of French origin, and refers to the middle class or the propertied class. The native intellectual has an interest in decolonization, but often in order to profit from continued exploitation. The native intellectual stands to gain equally from "yesterday's colonialism" and from "the loot of whatever national resources exist" under "today's national governments."

The native wants to take the settler's place. As Fanon writes, "The native is an oppressed person whose permanent dream is to become the persecutor." The symbols of colonial power, such as "the police, the bugle calls in the barracks, military parades and the waving flags," have a double effect on the native, "inhibitory and stimulating." That is, the reminders of colonial power inhibit the native's rebellion, keeping him in place: "Don't dare to budge" is the message. But the symbols of colonial power also have a "stimulating" effect, exciting the native's desire. "Get ready to attack" is the other message.

Forces against Decolonization

Colonial rule raises in the native "an anger which he [the settler] deprives of [an] outlet." The anger seeks an outlet in dreams, myths, and intertribal violence. All these are substitutes for the overthrow of colonial rule. When it comes to the overthrow of colonial rule, elites in the native country hope it may occur without violence. They talk a big game but are meek in action. As Fanon writes, "They are violent in their words and reformist in their attitudes."

Fanon examines the ways nationalist parties can hamper the cause of national liberation. A nationalist party, in this context, is one favoring the overthrow of colonial rule and the establishment of a sovereign nation. But the nationalist parties of the colonial world are often formed on the model of political parties in the colonizing power, or "mother country." Such parties are urban—they focus on workers. In the mother country, the workers are downtrodden, and so a workers' party promises the triumph of the downtrodden. In the colony, workers are often relatively privileged—they get along in the colonial system, though they'd like to get along with a bit more pay. "Affranchised slaves," Fanon calls them, meaning slaves with the right to vote.

Another group enters the debate, the "colonialist bourgeoisie." Fanon is referring to the settlers who own property and are well off in the colonies. It is the bourgeoisie who promote the principle of nonviolence. The colonialist bourgeoisie favors nonviolence, Fanon argues, because they favor their continued wealth and status, right along with "the intellectual and economic elite of the colonized country." Nonviolence, in Fanon's view, is not a superior moral principle, but a mask for self-interest.

In contrast to the urban intellectuals, "the peasants alone are revolutionary, for they have nothing to lose and everything to gain." The "starving peasant," writes Fanon, "is the first among the exploited to discover that only violence pays." The "nationalist bourgeoisie," in contrast, are among the last of the exploited to discover violence is the only way to end colonial rule. The nationalist bourgeoisie—the well-off natives—favor compromise. They don't want all the bridges blown up, because they want their position to remain secure. They have "taken very good care never to break contact with colonialism." This means the people in the rear guard of the decolonization struggle—the people who do the least to end colonial rule—end up participating in most of the negotiation talks. They favor reform. Reformists are skeptical the native really can fight the colonist with his army and superior weapons. In discussing this point, Fanon compares the original guerrilla fighters—the Spaniards fighting off Napoleon in the 19th century—to colonized people: "The Spanish campaign ... was a very genuine colonial war."

Fanon points out the colonies are not just sources of raw materials: "The colonies have become a market." Therefore, the colonial powers have economic interests in a reformist, nonviolent transfer of power. This viewpoint is also aided by "the inevitable religion," the religion of the colonizers, which teaches nonviolence and turning the other cheek. Another force against full liberation is the "colonial governments" that, surprisingly, favor rapid decolonization. "Quick, quick, let's decolonize," say these governments, but only as a way of shifting the decolonization movement "toward the right, and to disarm the people." These governments believe an abrupt, formal transfer of power could take the steam out of the decolonization struggle.

The Spark and the Cold War

Fanon questions the cause of violence in the colony when he asks: "What makes the lid blow off?" He says it is often a shocking act of repression and lists several instances of violent repression by colonial governments, including the town of "Sétif in Algeria." In 1945 Sétif was the site of a violent uprising against colonial rule, resulting in the deaths of around 100 Europeans. In retaliation, 6,000 to 8,000 Muslims were slaughtered. When there is a spark like Sétif, the colonized people realize "their liberation must, and can only, be achieved by force."

The Cold War affects the decolonization movement, writes Fanon. The Cold War refers to the competition between the United States and the Soviet Union, the capitalist and communist superpowers, respectively. The war was so named because it was fought using ideology, propaganda, and proxy wars rather than physical combat. The United States has an interest in hurrying decolonization along, the better to defang its rhetoric of power to the people. That is, Fanon argues the United States fears decolonization could be a propaganda coup for communism, an "opportunity for socialist propaganda to infiltrate among the masses and to contaminate them."

Violence in the International Context

In this chapter Fanon describes the international political relationship between newly independent nations and former colonial powers. The formerly colonized nations are often called "underdeveloped," as if they were weak seedlings not yet fully grown. This assumes the colonial powers are properly developed nations. Fanon points out the wealth of the European and American development was built by the colonies. "European opulence ... comes directly from the soil ... of that underdeveloped world." The European standard of living is achieved "with the sweat and the dead bodies of Negroes, Arabs, Indians, and the yellow races."

It is not enough for the settlers to pack up and leave Africa, Asia, and South America behind, argues Fanon. Fanon sums up one of the European attitudes: "Since you want independence, take it and starve." But the settlers owe their former colonies reparations payments, argues Fanon. This is not only a matter of money, though money is certainly part of it. Fanon further demands the former settlers "help ... rehabilitate mankind." This means "reintroducing mankind into the world, the whole of mankind"—a human race no longer divided into settler and native.

Analysis

Frantz Fanon analyzes violent rebellion as originating with violent rule. In the native's violent uprising against the colonizer, the violence is a force that originally stemmed from the colonizer. Fanon is not offering a moral justification of violent revolution. He is simply saying dehumanizing violent oppression eventually has violent consequences. But within lies an implicit moral argument: the violent settlers deserve what they get. However, Fanon's interest does not lie in morally justifying violent uprising. His overall aim in the book is to show how spontaneous uprising can be channeled into a revolution that truly changes humanity.

Fanon is writing about the struggles of colonized peoples, particularly in Africa and Asia, after World War II. The historical process of decolonization involved many people, but in Fanon's philosophical style of writing, these people are condensed into single individuals such as *the* native and *the* settler. Turning groups of people into representative figures transforms them into something similar to fictional characters. Their adventures are not false, but they are gripping in the way fiction can be gripping. Another way Fanon makes his narrative gripping is by using the first person, "I." Events are sometimes described from the first-person perspective of a native. For example, Fanon describes the native's realization of autonomy this way. "His [the settler's] glance no longer shrivels me up nor freezes me." Moreover, "his voice no longer turns me into stone." These novelistic, first-person, sensory details make the narrative of revolution engaging.

It is tempting to see something autobiographical in this use of the first person. No doubt Fanon had had the experience of being gazed upon as alien by Europeans. He encountered antiblack racism in France, first as a soldier in the French Army and then as a medical student.

However, the first person in *The Wretched of the Earth* is not always the native. In discussing the fate of underdeveloped nations, Fanon writes, "Everything's going badly out there since we left." Here the first-person plural is the voice of the colonizers. Additionally, Fanon probably did not personally have all the experiences ascribed to the native in this book. He was not a peasant, for example.
Seen from one perspective, this first chapter is just the beginning of a three-part narrative. The chapter focuses on the violent uprising and the origin of this violence in colonial rule. The second chapter shows how peasants must be joined by urban forces and the rural guerrilla war must be brought to settlers' cities. The third chapter analyzes postwar independence and how to move forward. (The remaining chapters add to the analysis, but the narrative of revolution ends with chapter three.) However, seen from a different perspective, the first chapter tells the entire story in which Fanon looks ahead to postwar independence and to international relations.

There is an echo of dependency theory in Fanon's analysis of the colonial situation. Dependency theory is a political and economic theory of the special path underdeveloped nations must take. In contrast to dependency theory, the standard political view of underdeveloped nations followed the development theory. Underdeveloped nations would modernize after their contact with Western developed nations. Their agrarian economies would become modern and industrial, following the same path as European countries. So the underdeveloped nations were just behind their peers, like a student left behind a grade or two in elementary school. In contrast, dependency theory analyzes the international system to show how wealth flows from the colonies and former colonies to the colonial powers. It claims colonized nations have a different path to take. Such nations are structurally different than the modernized First and Second World nations. Third World nations are different because they have been economically exploited by First and Second World nations. Putting people to work in coal mines to fill the pockets of European or American investors changes the process of modernization. These arguments were made by Latin American intellectuals under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA). Their point was not that underdeveloped nations should be celebrated for their lack of a modern standard of living. Modernization remained the goal, but the point is it cannot happen in the same way it did for the colonizers.

Fanon rejects the traditional view of modernization when he says, "We are not obsessed by the desire to catch up with Europe." His views are aligned with dependency theory when he points out the wealth of Europe is built up "with the sweat and the dead bodies of Negroes, Arabs, Indians, and the yellow races."

Fanon has a bitter and sharp analysis of postcolonial governments. He argues the native intellectual is in favor of "nationalizing the robbery of the nation." When a colonized country takes back an industry from foreign interests, this process is called *nationalization*. For example, an extractive industry like coal can be taken away from an international coal corporation and placed in the ownership of a new nation. Fanon's phrase "nationalizing the robbery of the nation" is an interesting one. The idea of nationalization implies a kind of justice: the profits will be retained by the people who do the work. Fanon shows nationalization can mean simply getting a different group of exploiters. This passage also points to a tension in Fanon's narrative. In 1961 when Fanon was writing this book, there were already many examples of former colonies devolving into neocolonialism, the continuation of colonial rule by other means after independence has been formally achieved. But there may not have been any examples of a nation turning out the way Fanon envisaged. Therefore, his descriptions of the way things work will eventually have to turn into prescriptions. At such

moments Fanon is no longer narrating what has happened, or what necessarily happens over and over again. He is now speculating on what could or should happen. He also looks ahead, in this first chapter, to the ultimate aim of the revolution. This aim is not just to establish independence for the colony. It is also to "rehabilitate mankind."

Chapter 2 : Spontaneity: Its Strength and Weakness

In this chapter Frantz Fanon turns away from the international stage to focus on the process of decolonization. He claims decolonization is an uneven process. There is a "time lag" between the leaders of "nationalist parties" and "the mass of people." In the colonized countries the mass of people are peasants. The leaders of nationalist parties, by contrast, are educated "town dwellers." One might expect Fanon to say the time lag means the urbanized, educated people are ahead of their less modern siblings in the countryside. But he argues the opposite is the case. The "native intellectuals, who have studied in their respective 'mother countries,'" adopt the attitudes and goals of the settlers. The peasants in the countryside are thoroughly anticolonial and are ahead of the city dwellers in revolutionary fervor.

The nationalist parties of colonized nations are modeled on parties in the "mother countries." But the colonial situation is different. Those older parties focus on the most radical, revolutionary element of society in the home country: the worker. In Europe, a factory worker could be considered one of "the wretched of the earth." But in the colonies the workers are the ones "most pampered by the colonial regime." (These are not factory workers but bureaucrats and professionals. There are few or no factories in the colony.) These workers hold the revolution back because they stand to lose so much. They would like everything to stay as it is, except with themselves on top. Therefore anticolonial struggle in the colony cannot be modeled on class struggle in the mother country. It must begin with the peasant.

Fanon does not see peasant life through rose-colored glasses. Under colonialism peasant life is impoverished and hard. It is shut out from the benefits of colonialism. Moreover, the colonial powers often try to intensify the "petrification" of peasant life, says Fanon. By "petrify," he means to harden the peasant's premodern ways, which are full of "marabouts, witch doctors, and customary chieftains." (A marabout is a North African hermit or monk.) But the conflict between the urban worker and the peasant is not "the old antagonism between town and country." It is a conflict between those shut out from "the advantages of colonialism" and those reaping the rewards.

The answer is not to leave everything in the hands of the rebellious peasant. Fanon says the nationalist parties do exactly this. They turn their backs and are content to let others fight it out. Any rebellion carried out solely by the isolated peasantry is doomed, according to Fanon. He proposes a solution. Police repression causes the native intellectual to flee the town. The peasant welcomes him, and both are changed by this encounter. This union of peasant and urbanite is Fanon's solution. Ultimately, this union will enable the spontaneous uprising to be channeled into a successful revolution. This revolution not only throws off the colonial ruler, it also changes the structure of the new nation.

However, much of the rest of the chapter concerns the many ways the revolution can falter. Parties based on "ethnic or regional differences" can spring up, or the occupying power negotiates decolonization treaties with "the party ... it considers to be the most 'reasonable.'" This "reasonable" party is made up of educated urban people. Its goal is not to overthrow colonialism but to "com[e] to a friendly agreement with it."

The spontaneity that drove uprisings in the countryside is "condemned ... to self-repudiation." Fanon claims spontaneous outbursts of rage and violence will only get the revolution so far. To reach meaningful social change, the urban classes and the peasants must come together. Fanon then describes the kind of joyous guerrilla warfare that follows. The "rebel leaders"

turn away from the countryside and "bring the war into the enemy's camp ... into his grandiose, peaceful cities." The colonists also step up their game. They attempt to divide the population. Fanon notes in Algeria the *lumpenproletariat*—the poor and unemployed living in shanty towns—often joined the French Army, where they were tasked with beating back the revolution. Against these divisions Fanon counsels unity. He also points out hatred cannot be the basis for the way forward. It "cannot draw up a program."

Analysis

The narrative thread in the first three chapters is occasionally downplayed in favor of analysis. This second chapter describes the successful overthrow of the colonists. But this story is occasionally overshadowed by consideration of the potential missteps. Readers are warned the war of national liberation cannot happen overnight, "spanning the gap at one stride." To prepare readers for the long struggle, Frantz Fanon describes the ways the colonial power regroups and fights harder.

In describing the colonial power's redoubled efforts, Fanon mentions the "petrification" of peasant life. He says the colonial rulers intensify this petrification, the better to intensify the antagonism between urban workers and rural peasants. Fanon uses the word *petrify* to explain how premodern ways of life in the country are inflexible, rigid, and hard as stone. In this discussion he also makes clear his own judgment: he favors modernization. One could imagine another, more multicultural view of rural North African life. For example, the witch doctors could be venerated for their traditional wisdom. But this is not Fanon's view of the peasantry. In this he follows Karl Marx (and most of the world). In *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), Marx declares the urban bourgeoisie dominates the countryside: it "has subjected the country to the rule of the towns." This is a good thing, Marx says, because the bourgeoisie has "rescued a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life." *Idiocy* does not only mean stupidity. The root of the word, *idio*, refers to what is individual, separate, or isolated. Fanon too would like to rescue his countrymen from "the idiocy of rural life," although he does not want to turn them into town dwellers. His book is aimed at freeing the colonized peoples, rural and urban alike, from isolation and seeing them join all of humanity. At heart Fanon's vision is universal.

This chapter's title refers to the "strength and weakness" of spontaneity. One of the weaknesses of the countryside's spontaneous uprising is its reliance on hatred. Hatred spurs the native to rise up after such outrages as the massacre at Sétif. But hatred alone is not enough. For one thing, hatred is easily disarmed in the colonial context. Fanon notes the way the colonials, afraid of the uprising, begin to address the native as "Mister." He remarks, "Hatred is disarmed by these psychological windfalls."

Chapter 3: The Pitfalls of National Consciousness

This chapter demonstrates the many ways decolonization can turn into neocolonialism. Neocolonialism means the colonial power is still in charge, although on paper the new nation is independent. (In the first chapter Frantz Fanon gives an example of neocolonialism in the president of the then-newly-independent country of Gabon. That president had said, "Between Gabon and France nothing has changed; everything goes on as before.") In this chapter Fanon also describes the right way for the new government to rule.

According to Fanon, the people holding the nation back are the educated urban professionals. The author refers to this class as the "national bourgeoisie." They are doctors, lawyers, and clerks. Fanon notes they are not business owners, but pampered employees. Once the colonizer is overthrown, this class sees itself as the natural one to dominate the new nation's government. But the national bourgeoisie are pitifully small and cannot sustain this role. Moreover, the "innermost vocation" of this national bourgeoisie is "to keep in the running and

to be part of the racket." Rather than build the new nation, the national bourgeoisie want to step into the settler's now-empty place. They do not want to develop the nation's industrial capacity, for example. They are content to let the nation go on growing cash crops for Europe and providing a tourist trade (including sex tourism). As Fanon writes, the national bourgeoisie "take on the role of manager ... and set up [the] country as the brothel of Europe."

The national bourgeoisie also indulge in promoting the interests of their own ethnic groups. Fanon agrees it can be liberating to insist on an all-African or all-Arab ruling class. But when the national bourgeois does this to hold onto the settler's power, the call to Africanize the ruling class becomes distorted into ethnic favoritism and tribalism, "a heartbreaking return to chauvinism in its most bitter and detestable form." In this chaotic situation the bourgeoisie may try to unify the nation through a strong leader, but this quickly devolves into a dictatorship. The dictator's true purpose is "perpetuating the domination of the bourgeoisie." Because the colonial economic structures do not change, the poverty of colonial times continues and even worsens: "The immense majority ... continue to die of starvation."
Fanon sets out his proposals. The peasants should be given a real political education, not just speechifying and agitation. The party's leaders should avoid the capital. Fanon believes centralizing government and business in the capital strengthens the national bourgeoisie, the very class holding the nation back. Therefore, Fanon calls for a truly decentralized nation that does not ignore the countryside: "There must be decentralization in the extreme." The "interior, the backcountry" should become "the most privileged part of the country." Ultimately, the new nation must be governed "by the people and for the people, for the outcasts and by the outcasts."

Analysis

Frantz Fanon makes a compelling case for the self-interest of the national bourgeoisie. He also brings to the workings of neocolonialism a novelistic eye for nuance. Here he describes one nationalist bourgeois who wants to profit after liberation has been won: "His honesty, which is his soul's true bent, crumbles away little by little." It is easy to cynically imagine a dishonest person profiting from the nation's misery. But Fanon says this man's "soul's true bent" is toward honesty. In describing the decay of the man's soul, Fanon displays a subtle sense for tragedy.
At this point in the narrative of the revolution Fanon is no longer describing what happens every time. The formula for much of the rest of the book seems to be: given these conditions, here is what happens. For example, given the violent domination of a colonized people, violent overthrow will follow. But by 1961, when Fanon was writing, there was a great deal of empirical evidence of the many ways the newly independent nations could falter. Thus, at the end of the chapter Fanon is describing what should happen.

Fanon's solution for curbing the influence of the national bourgeoisie is reasonable and mild: keep national government out of the big city, and integrate the rural population into government. In the early years of the United States, just after the American Revolution (1775–83), a similar principle was followed for the siting of national and state capitals. However, other revolutions have proposed far harsher solutions, with disastrous results. In 1976–77 in Cambodia, dictator Pol Pot (1925–98) understood the importance of the countryside for revolution. He had people transported to work in the agricultural fields, and those who resisted were executed. (Over the course of Pol Pot's regime, from 1975 to 1979, it is estimated 1.5 million Cambodians were either executed or died from starvation or overwork.) Also, in the late 1960s and early 1970s China's Chairman Mao Zedong (1893–1976) sought to reduce urban elitism, root out bourgeois infiltrators in the party, and promote

rural agricultural production. He did this through a movement called the Cultural Revolution. The movement involved verbal and physical attacks on intellectuals and cultural workers, and forced labor in the countryside. These disasters cannot be laid at Fanon's feet, but they are examples of where similar ideas have led.

Chapter 4: On National Culture

As the postscript states, Frantz Fanon originally gave this chapter as a speech to the Second Congress of Black Artists and Writers in Rome in 1959. To an international group of artists and writers he laid out reasons why an international black culture is not viable. He ultimately believes only the struggle for nationhood can form the basis of culture.

Fanon starts by discussing the way "the native intellectual" reacts to colonialism. Colonialism does not just hold "a people in its grip." Colonialism also "turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it." In turn, native intellectuals research the past and find proof of a rich and glorious history. But in doing so the native intellectuals recover the past of Africa or of black people all over the world. Such efforts include the 20th-century literary movement known as Negritude. The Negritude movement sought to create a literature separate from European culture, with its own values drawn from black life and culture.

Fanon is sympathetic to these efforts. He values the cultural sphere, saying the efforts of native intellectuals are "not a luxury but a necessity." But ultimately, he finds limitations in Negritude and other attempts to define a global black culture. He says the problems confronting black American writers like Richard Wright and Langston Hughes are different from those of someone like Léopold Senghor. (Senghor was a leader of Negritude and the first president of Senegal.) The United States and Senegal are historically distinct, and they have different national cultures.

Fanon rejects Negritude and similar efforts because they accept the colonial worldview. In the book's first chapter he had remarked, "The colonial world is a world cut in two." Negritude accepts this division and just turns the hierarchy upside down. Also, native intellectuals are drawn to the idea of a universal black culture because they learned to value universalism in their European-focused educations: "The native intellectual will try to make European culture his own." Fanon sees becoming a Europhile native intellectual as attractive but doomed.

According to Fanon, rather than imitate European culture or promote a global black culture, native intellectuals must realize their culture is national. He quotes the Haitian poet René Depestre and Guinean poet Fodéba Keita as examples of poetry born of national struggle. He also believes national culture cannot give birth to the nation. Poetry will not free the nation. The struggle to free the nation creates national culture.

Analysis

Marxists are sometimes accused of having too mechanistic a view of history. Their belief in dialectics makes them expect history to follow a lockstep pattern. This is not the case with Fanon's first three narrative chapters, but it might be the case with this chapter. Fanon is aware of the richness of the Negritude literary movement. In his homeland of Martinique he was taught by one of the leading figures of Negritude, the poet Aimé Césaire. Although Fanon is internationalist in his outlook, he nonetheless rejects Negritude. He refuses to promote a global movement before there is a nation. That is, for there to be an international literary movement, the component parts must be independent *nations*. He refuses to proceed out of order, having black writers participate in a black international movement except as representatives of duly formed, independent postcolonial nations. He turns his back on not

only Negritude, but on any other cultural succor that could come from the African diaspora. The concept of African diaspora is based on the term *diaspora*, meaning the dispersion of a people to parts of the world other than their homeland. The term *African diaspora* was used by scholars as early as the 1950s and 1960s, although the Negritude writers did not use it. There is an order to things, for Fanon: first the nation, then the international cultural movement.
However, Fanon's hardheadedness has its benefits. Anyone following Fanon's ideas cannot mistake writing literature for political action. Fanon was well aware literature could have political dimensions. His praise for Depestre and Keita shows this. But he was adamant that building a nation—undertaking a revolution—could not be done by proxy, in novels and poems.

Chapter 5 : Colonial War and Mental Disorders

Introduction

In this chapter Frantz Fanon gives case histories of numerous patients he treated for mental disorders from 1954 to 1959. This period covers his work as chief of staff of the psychiatric ward at Blida-Joinville Hospital, which ended in 1956. The rest of the cases are drawn from his work with the Army of National Liberation. Fanon demonstrates how the war for Algerian independence affects the mental health of the participants and bystanders in Algeria. The patients he sees are both European and Algerian.
Fanon points out the war is just a special and intense case of the pressures colonialism has already placed on people. Even before the war, colonialism was already "a fertile purveyor for psychiatric hospitals," writes Fanon. This means colonialism caused many people mental problems severe enough to require hospitalization.

The hospitalized patients, in turn, illustrate particularly intense instances of the way colonialism shapes people. That is, they show how everyone in Algeria is affected by colonialism. The dehumanizing aspect of colonialism, Fanon writes, forces people to constantly ask themselves, "In reality, who am I?"

Fanon contrasts colonialism with other forms of military domination. French men under German occupation, he says, "remained men." This is not true in Algeria, Fanon claims. Colonization views the colonized people as part of nature. Like "the palm trees and the camels," Algerians "make up the landscape, the *natural* background to the human presence of the French."
The war in Algeria is also different from other wars, writes Fanon. There was already significant psychiatric literature on war trauma after the first and second world wars. But in contrast to those wars, "this colonial war is singular even in the pathology that it gives rise to."

Fanon discusses some scientific-psychiatric terminology. He says "clinical psychiatry" would consider the patients he describes as people with "reactionary psychoses." This means their mental illness is a response to an event. In the cases Fanon describes, those events are "the bloodthirsty and pitiless atmosphere," the widespread "inhuman practices" of colonial war, and the sense "people have of being caught up in a veritable Apocalypse." He also believes these patients are worse off than people with garden-variety psychoses not brought on by a colonial war. "The future of such patients is mortgaged," he writes.

For the rest of the chapter Fanon discusses his case studies in groups he names Series A, B, C, and D. Series D is followed by a discussion of Algerian criminality.

Series A

Fanon gives case histories of five psychiatric patients who had "mental disorders of the reactionary type," meaning their disorders were reactions to events. Three of the patients are Algerian and two are European. All five are reacting to events in the Algerian war of national liberation.

Case number 1 is of "impotence in an Algerian following the rape of his wife." The patient, B—, had been active in the nationalist cause. After a crackdown, he fled the city and "joined the nearest band of Maquis." Maquis are rural guerrilla fighters. He left behind his wife and infant daughter. In revenge, French soldiers raped his wife.

After two years with the guerrilla fighters, B— received word about his wife. She asked him "to forget her, for she had been dishonored." Soon after, B— experienced impotence.

Fanon quotes at length from B—'s statement. Their marriage had not been a love match, and he hadn't felt very close to her and had thought of leaving her. Sometime after the rape he realized "they'd raped her *because they were looking for me*." She had not talked to the police, even after the rape. Moved by her sacrifice, B— thinks of staying with his wife with renewed dedication. At the same time, he finds it hard to get past the rape. He also considers his daughter sullied by the rape. Talking to Fanon seems to make him feel better.

The second case is of "undifferentiated homicidal impulsions." The patient, S—, a villager, had been on the sidelines of the war. His only involvement had been to occasionally give aid to guerrilla fighters. The French decide to punish his whole village for aiding the guerrillas. They burned the houses, beat the women, and shot 29 men. S— was also shot but, remarkably, survived.

His symptoms are a feeling of persecution and also frequent outbursts of murderous intent. He feels unsafe when anyone is behind him, and he often swears he will kill everyone. He is convinced the Algerians around him "are really Frenchmen" in disguise. He attacks fellow patients, nurses, and others. His symptoms gradually lessen.

The third case is of "marked anxiety psychosis of the depersonalization type." The patient, Dj—, was a soldier in the ALN (French for *Armée de Libération Nationale*), Algeria's Army of National Liberation. He received word his mother had been killed. In an act of somewhat unfocused revenge, Dj— murdered the wife of a violent colonialist. The colonialist had not killed Dj—'s mother himself, and his wife in any case was a civilian. Dj—'s superiors in the ALN disarmed him, but he was not put on trial. When Fanon treats him, Dj— is suffering from nightmares in which he is visited by his murder victim. Eventually the nightmares disappear, but in Fanon's opinion Dj— is still very disturbed and needs more time to heal.

The fourth case is A—, a European policeman, who is treated for "behavior disturbances." At night he closes the shutters despite the Algerian heat and stuffs his ears with cotton. He does these things "to make the screams seem less piercing." Although a civil policeman, A— had worked on torture and interrogation of Algerian guerrilla fighters. A— is particularly haunted by the screams of "the ones who died at the police headquarters." A— crosses paths at the hospital with someone he had personally tortured. This sets off a crisis in A— and in the torture victim, who attempts suicide. A— is eventually allowed to retire to France.

The fifth case is also a European, R—, a police inspector who has begun abusing his wife and children. Like A—, he has been a torturer. He seems to see it as a technical problem: how much torture to apply in order to make a prisoner talk. "It's a question of personal success," he tells Fanon. "You have to have a flair for it," he adds. He can discuss it calmly and even

coldly. But he is falling apart in the rest of his life, arguing with his wife and hitting his children.

R— was denied sick leave. He did not want "a psychiatrist's certificate" stating he needed time off. So Fanon attempts to treat him "while working full time." R— asks Fanon "to help him to go on torturing Algerian patriots" without suffering any symptoms. R— would like to be able to torture "without any prickings of conscience, without any behavior problems, and with complete equanimity."

Series B

In this section Fanon considers five cases of mental disorders; some are individuals and some are groups. Fanon categorizes their mental disorders as originating in "the atmosphere of total war which reigns in Algeria."

The first case is of two Algerian teenage boys, ages 13 and 14, who killed a European boy, one of their schoolmates. They were arrested and they confessed. The 13-year-old remarks of their victim, "He was a good friend of ours." The 14-year-old asks Fanon difficult questions. He notes "Algerians are killed every day," and yet, he asks, "So why are only Algerians found in the prisons?" Fanon points out the other crimes are no reason for them to have killed their schoolmate. But Fanon cannot answer the boy's questions, either.

The second case is of a 22-year-old man who suffers "accusatory delirium and suicidal conduct disguised as 'terrorist activity.'" The man had been focused on his career as a maker of copy machines. On "the first of November, 1954," Fanon remarks, he was "absorbed by strictly professional problems." November 1, 1954, was the first day of the FLN-led war for Algerian independence. (The war started during the night of October 31, 1954.) As the war continues the young man begins to think everyone considers him a traitor. He withdraws from contact and stays shut up in his room, refusing food. One day he hears voices accusing him: "Traitor, traitor, coward ... all your brothers who are dying." He leaves his room and wanders the streets. French police treat him with deference because he looks European. He takes this too to be a sign they are in on the plot. At a police station he throws himself upon a soldier and tries to take his gun, shouting, "I am an Algerian." The police question him, but they eventually realize he is mentally ill. He is sent to the hospital.

The third case is a young French woman who has developed neurotic problems. Her mental illness stems from the death of her father, a civil servant, in an ambush. Her father had participated enthusiastically in the repression of the FLN. Algerians were tortured in her house, the woman says. "In my heart," the woman states, "I knew ... those Algerians were right."

One day the young woman was told her father had been injured. He had been on a military expedition when his unit was ambushed by the Army of National Liberation. She went to the hospital and found him in a coma. He died shortly thereafter. At his funeral he was lauded as a hero, and the young woman was sickened. The French government offers her a pension, but she says, "I don't want their money. It is the price of the blood spilt by my father."

The fourth case considers "behavior disturbances in young Algerians" under age 10. These are refugees whose parents are fighting for independence, or whose parents were killed in the war. They exhibit various symptoms of what they have suffered in war: a fear of loud noises, sleeplessness, and an enjoyment of sadistic games.

The fifth case is of "puerperal psychoses among the refugees." The word *puerperal* refers to childbirth. These are refugee women who became mentally ill around the time they were to give birth. Many of them are refugees from the French government's "burnt earth policy." (Also known as "scorched earth policy," burnt earth is a military strategy aimed at destroying everything that might help the enemy guerrillas: shelter, crops, livestock, and so on.) There is also an "atmosphere of permanent insecurity," owing to the French troops bombing and machine-gunning Algerian civilians. The women have such symptoms as agitation, rage, and delusions.

Series C

In this section Fanon details the emotional and intellectual consequences of torture, as well as mental disorders resulting from torture. He discusses groups of people this time rather than individual patients.

The first group discussed, "Category No. 1," consists of people tortured for the purpose of getting them to talk. In the language of the colonial forces, this is "preventive torture," presumably because it will prevent guerrillas' actions from succeeding. To preserve the torture victims' ability to talk, the torturers have tried to leave them in a condition capable of speech. Nonetheless, the victims are traumatized by the experience.

Fanon further subdivides this group into two categories: "1. Those who know something. 2. Those who know nothing." In hospital settings Fanon generally only runs into the second group, people who were tortured and then eventually released because they knew nothing. He never sees the first group in hospitals. Algerian patriots, as Fanon calls them, who talk to the torturers are "killed immediately afterward." Those patriots who do not talk under torture tend not to seek hospital treatment, apparently.

Fanon describes the various torture techniques used to retrieve information. These include soapy enemas administered with high water pressure (often resulting in death), anal penetration with bottles, and others.

The torture survivors exhibit various symptoms: depression, loss of appetite, and an inability to stay still. Emotionally, they suffer a staggering feeling of injustice. They also exhibit "indifference to all moral arguments." Instead, "force is the only thing that counts."

In "Category No. 2" are those who have been tortured with electricity. They have three responses. The first is cenesthopathy, or the experience of abnormal sensations. These patients feel pins-and-needles sensations, as if electricity were still being applied to them. The second response is emotional. The patients feel depressed or lack the will to do anything (abulia). The third response is an electricity phobia. Some of the tortured are afraid to touch light switches or electrical appliances.

The third category consists of those who had been given "truth serum," or Pentothal. Fanon notes many doctors and psychiatrists collaborate in the torture of Algerian patriots. In the case of Pentothal, they pose as non-torturers, presenting themselves as neutral or friendly medical personnel. They give vitamin injections or other harmless injections for a few days. Then "the intravenous injection of Pentothal is given. The interrogation begins."

Fanon then describes the psychiatric symptoms. These are not the immediate effects of the Pentothal injection; they are the delayed effects of having been questioned on Pentothal. The effects include "verbal stereotypy" (saying the same thing over and over again, such as "I

didn't talk"). Others suffer "clouded" perception, unable to say for sure whether a certain object exists. Other symptoms are a fear of private conversations, and wariness.

The fourth and final category Fanon analyzes consists of those who have been brainwashed. "Brainwashing" means using psychological torture techniques to get people to accept radically different beliefs than their own. Fanon subdivides this category into intellectuals and nonintellectuals, because they are brainwashed in different ways. He briefly describes the methods, although his main interest is in how people are affected by the torture afterwards.

Intellectuals are pressured to become collaborators, says Fanon. They are asked to draw others into fruitless debates about basic principles. Other brainwashing methods include drilling certain principles into the tortured, such as "Algeria is not a nation" and "Algerian patriotism is nonsense." Another brainwashing method for intellectuals is the "pathological communal life," that is, keeping the intellectual surrounded so they have no chance for solitary reflection.

The responses to these forms of torture include an aversion to all discussions in which three or more people are present. Another response is an inability to make any concrete statement. For the brainwashed, any positive statement is immediately followed by its opposite.

Fanon describes the brainwashing of nonintellectuals much more briefly. They too are expected to adopt anti-FLN beliefs. For example, they are ordered to shout over and over they do not belong to the FLN, or to shout "Long live France." These commands are enforced by physical torture. The mental symptoms afterward are "not serious." Such patients simply require physical rest.

Series D

Fanon considers psychosomatic disorders. The usual definition of psychosomatic disorder is a bodily disorder with its origins in mental disorder. Fanon defines them as bodily disorders "favored by a conflicting situation." This enables Fanon to locate the problem in the conflict between settler and native, rather than in a conflict between different parts of the patient's mind. Faced with an unbearable conflict, the patient succeeds in diverting their focus onto a bodily malady.

Criminal Impulses Found in North Africans Which Have Their Origin in the National War of Liberation

This discussion of Algerian criminality focuses on "criminal impulses ... [with] their origin in the national war of liberation." Fanon wants to return every Algerian to "the full stature of a man."

Fanon first reviews the lengthy psychiatric literature on Algerian, North African, and African criminality. A large body of scientific literature was devoted to showing how African nervous systems, African moral dispositions, or African brains were predisposed to crime: "born slackers, born liars, born robbers, and born criminals." Fanon is quoting Dr. Carothers, an expert from the United Nations' World Health Organization, who claims the African "makes very little use of his [brain's] frontal lobes." Carothers concludes, "All the particularities of African psychiatry can be put down to frontal [lobe] laziness."

The theories are marked by "[intellectual] poverty and absurdity." But Fanon does not deny the existence of crime in Algeria. He analyzes Algerian criminality in two ways. First, the alleged laziness and petty thievery at work are the Algerian's only way to resist the crushing discipline of work in a colonial system. In an exploitative system, "laziness" may be the only way for the Algerian to resist total domination. Second, Fanon shows Algerian crime against

other Algerians is a displaced aggression against the French. He compares the colonial situation to a concentration camp, where "men killed each other for a bit of bread." Likewise, the colony is a world where every native has become the enemy of every other. Thus, an "Algerian's criminality [is] ... the direct product of the colonial situation." Finally, Fanon puts Algerian criminality in perspective by showing crime has diminished greatly during the war of liberation.

Analysis

From the first chapter Frantz Fanon has been concerned with how the colonized people are affected by their encounter with the colonizers. In earlier chapters Fanon represented the encounter in an abstract, stylized way. Thus, in earlier chapters *the* settler comes face to face with *the* native, and the settler refuses to recognize his or her humanity. The result of this refused recognition is an inferiority complex in the native. For a time, he believes he is an animal, or evil, just as the settler says.
At the outset of this chapter Fanon again summarizes this encounter in abstract, conceptual terms. Colonialism is "a systematic negation of the other person." Colonialism is determined "to deny the other person all attributes of humanity." In reaction, the native does not know who they are. "In reality, who am I?" the native asks themselves. But for the rest of this chapter Fanon leaves these ideal, abstract types behind. Instead of the native he describes actual case histories, even if they are anonymous. Even the sections or series describing groups of patients are still based on actual case records.

This shift from the abstract to the actual does several things. It provides testimony about the effects of colonial violence, particularly the torture of suspected guerrillas. The use of actual psychiatric cases also shows the depth of the damage. The wealth of detail also gives Fanon a chance to show how colonial domination has different psychological effects from just any military occupation. Finally, Fanon's analysis of the "colonized personality" indirectly suggests the potential for a new and fully human personality after the end of colonialism. With these aims in mind, Fanon shows how numerous symptoms can be explained as reactions to colonial violence. The cases involve either reactions to specific acts of violence, or reactions to the general atmosphere of violence.

Fanon's analysis of Algerian criminality is another departure from the style of the rest of the book. He cites Carothers's theories at great length. The depth of Fanon's commitment to Freudian psychoanalysis is debated by scholars, but Fanon's scorn for Carothers's theories of the African brain may show some influence of psychoanalysis on Fanon. Psychoanalysis is a form of psychotherapy promulgated by 20th-century Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud (1836–1939). Freud believed mental disorders were caused by deep-rooted mental conflict, often stemming from childhood or infancy. But Fanon also has other reasons to reject Carothers. The focus on African brains and "frontal [lobe] laziness" ignores an enormous social fact: the native exists under the domination of the settler.

Fanon finds the source of most Algerian criminal behavior in colonialism. Because of the tremendous cost of aggression toward settlers, the colonized turn against one another. Fanon displays a subtle turn of mind in his analysis of petty crimes under colonialism. The colonialist view of such minor crimes is to classify them under a general personality trait of the native: "disrespect for the law." One pro-native line of defense might be to downplay these petty crimes, to say they are not so bad. Fanon turns this around. He shows there is a seething hatred at work under the most trivial trespasses of one native against another under colonialism. For example, Fanon points to some trivial-sounding crimes: "to steal dates or to allow a sheep to eat the neighbor's grass." Those petty crimes are actually "attempts at

murder," Fanon claims. On the one hand, they are murderous in intent because life under colonialism is precarious for the native. The level of poverty and malnutrition is such that a minor theft of food or grazing could have serious consequences. On the other hand, to call the crimes murderous is to adequately assess the violence engendered by colonialism.

Chapter 6 : Conclusion

Frantz Fanon's conclusion is a rousing call to action. He calls on "brothers" and "comrades" to turn away from Europe. Europe is doomed, "swaying between atomic and spiritual disintegration." Moreover, he claims "the European game has finally ended; we must find something different." He also advises against trying to catch up to Europe. Instead he says, "What we want to do is go forward ... in the company of Man." Going forward means not imitating Europe but creating something else: "We must invent and we must make discoveries." Ultimately, these efforts will benefit all of humanity.

Analysis

The Wretched of the Earth begins in reaction to the settler as the native reacts to the settler's violence. The conclusion calls on the citizens of the new nation to stop reacting to Europe. Frantz Fanon mildly denigrates Europe, as if to downplay its importance. Europe is in "stasis," no longer changing and creating history. Europe's "game has finally ended." The continent is finished and "should not make such a song and dance about it." Fanon wants the citizens of the new nation to no longer orient their actions according to what the former colonial powers are doing. On the contrary, the Third World should strive for a new beginning.

Fanon also stops using the terms "the settler" and "the native." The conclusion is void of these two figures that played such prominent roles in the rest of the book. Those figures belonged to the colonial world, "a world cut in two." Instead, Fanon uses the first-person plural, addressing a "we" consisting of Third World "comrades." "For Europe, for ourselves, and for humanity," Fanon writes, "we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man."

(This summary is taken from this website: https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Wretched-of-the-Earth/summaries/)