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Primo Levi and Frantz Fanon: The Seizure of Human Dignity, Reprisal, and Thereafter

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Primo Levi and Frantz Fanon:
The Seizure of Human Dignity, Reprisal, and Thereafter

Senior Project submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
Of Bard College

By
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

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I dedicate this work to my dear Mother, Lori Nessel, and my late Father, John Cicero, who watches over us. You two have gifted me an opportunity to enrich my life in all aspects through knowledge – a gift that is rare in this chaotic world.

I am forever indebted to your sweeping love.

I only hope to make you both proud.

Love,

Your son.

Preface

This project will compare the writings of Italian Holocaust survivor, Primo Levi and the anti-colonialist revolutionary, Frantz Fanon. The goal of this study is to assemble a comprehensive understanding of these intellectuals – in their differences as well as their similarities – through two primal texts: *The Wretched of the Earth*, by Frantz Fanon, and *The Drowned and the Saved*, by Primo Levi. The study will proceed to apply this understanding of these intellectuals, and furthermore their responses to experiencing the human condition in its most desperate desires for freedom and redemption, to the human condition today. Indeed, the thoughts of Primo Levi and Frantz are influential components of modern culture.

This study will proceed in four chapters: namely, *Rationality*, *Memory*, *Violence*, and *Modernity*. Through these four lenses of social participation and organization, both authors have brought with them tremendous insight and influence on groups of people. This study explores not only the different influences on history, but their contribution to the larger phenomena of the current political climate. These authors are an ideal manifestation of the contrasts between ideology, theology, and rationality in the face of central twentieth century experiences. Frantz Fanon's combat against colonialism and its underlying racist motor is as much a defining experience of humanity as Primo Levi's struggle with the ghost of the Shoah and the events that enabled the Holocaust.

History has proven that memory, both collective and individual, can act as a trigger for revolution – the question at stake is the extent to which violence is appropriate, or furthermore beneficial, to the revolutionaries. There are limits to both a rational approach to humanity, but the path to modernity is a contested one. Primo Levi and Frantz Fanon give voice to these internalized discussions and shed light on the pros and cons of revolution in the 20th century, and its impact on modern politics.

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Introduction

Two Very Different Views on Violence

Violence is typically understood in either a social or political context; in either context, violence is generally accepted as a potential means, but never as a potential end. The natural ends, justified by the means, of the individual come into collision with law in a cyclical style. Not only is violence created by law, it is preserved by the continuing practice of law as a violent mean to an organized end. However, in Walter Benjamin's famous *Critique of Violence*, he posits violence is a human response to a natural condition. Violence, due to its binary qualities of reaction and precaution, must be flexible to the particularities of different situations. Violence as a theory and inherent human response to oppression is thus, a feature of humanity, not a production of a specific set of laws. Indeed, it is law itself that denotes violence not only as its protector, but as its necessary counter-evil.

Primo Levi is an Italian Jewish chemist and author who is a survivor of Auschwitz. Frantz Fanon was an active member of the Algerian national liberation front as a psychiatrist-revolutionary and writer born in Martinique. Both of these authors have been recognized as key intellectuals in their respective circumstances, and thus they share not only an immediacy to the consequences of the situation at hand, but a deep stake in its reparations. That is, their immediate personal histories as the oppressed carry a heavy influence over their muse of a world in which they may live freely. When Levi and Fanon contemplate an appropriate response to the robbery of their human dignity, they arrive at different extremes. The philosophies of Primo Levi and Frantz Fanon, despite the similar trends in their oppression – such as empowerment through racism and a dangerous dehumanization of the oppressed – manifest in very distinct responses to the tragedy inflicted upon them. These divergences – most notable over the issue and utility of

violence, but prevalent on many levels - will prove central to thoughts that are influential components of modern culture.

Primo Levi is a secular thinker; he sees rationality as a human tool. Frantz Fanon, however, is a very ideological and theological intellectual. Whereas Primo Levi sees violence as a human flaw, Fanon sees violence as more of a tool to achieve justice for a people that deserves it. He is more essentialist in his view of Africans and their plight against colonialism than Primo Levi is towards his fellow Jews. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon does not address specifically the means of the violence that he preaches. Instead he fantasizes about the ends as an Africa that surpasses Europe and demonstrates an unprecedented social equality to the world. In reality, the ends alone do not justify the means, but both Primo Levi and Frantz Fanon are shaped in large part by their oppression.

Levi and Fanon are both testimony to a human condition that is often remembered only through the lenses of the West. When we think of the Holocaust, we think in terms of good and evil. When we contemplate life under the direct oppression of colonialism, we think in black and white. Fanon and Levi, despite their differences, both break through this barrier and deliver the reality of tragedy from the voices of those who live it. While both Levi and Fanon are exploring the possibilities of redeeming their individual and collective humanity, they have very different understandings of the situation. Primo Levi has searched to ground his arguments in rationale and morality. Frantz Fanon is responsive; in between the face of Algerian liberation and the somber reality of decolonization, Fanon has developed a psyche of revenge. He plans to use colonial means to defeat colonialism. Dissimilarly, Levi rejects violence as a mean of liberation. Levi describes the violence that was used to torment the Jews in the "Lager" as "futile violence". For Levi, violence almost always has a purpose, even if that purpose was the means to an end,

such as war and murder. Instead, the violence that he experienced in the Lager served no true purpose.

Primo Levi, always remaining faithful to his secular rationality, adopted a coherent understanding of power as violence and violence as power. The two, for Primo Levi as for Walter Benjamin, are one in the same. Primo Levi's inclination for a reality grounded in transparency and historical evidence separates him from many intellectuals with more theological ideas. Levi, thanks to his obsession with history as it relates the facts, does not see violence as a feasible mean for a just end. In his view, much like in Benjamin's, a force of violence in reaction to violence already done will only spin the new social organization, and inherently bring about more violence. Levi is concerned with violence as a human problem, rather than exclusively Jewish. The articulation of his concept of the Grey Zone in *The Drowned and the Saved*, is testimonial to his unique transparency and rationality in testifying to the Holocaust.

Thus, it is precisely Levi's rational understanding of violence that allows him the possibility of criticizing Israel in its inappropriate violence. Other, more theological thinkers are blinded by their obligations to nationality. However it is not only the theological but also the ideological that Levi is pinned up against. Consider the Fascist and Communist ideologues who refused traditional religion but embraced a new "secular" religion of the state or of their race in 20th century Italy. Another ideological comparison is exemplified well in the life of another Holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel, who came to the fore of humanitarian values around the globe. Although Wiesel would never openly label himself an Israeli Nationalist, his refusal to criticize Jewish violence on behalf of the Israeli government is the embodiment of his ideological, ethno-centric and theological values. Wiesel, who while alive was hailed for his humanitarian values

that he did voice, has been remembered amongst intellectuals for his insubordination in the human fight against injustice. His policy towards Israel was exemplary of the relationship that many theological and ideological intellectuals hold towards their state.

Frantz Fanon, by most standards, is a Marxist. Fanon believes in the political use of violence, but not in terrorism or barbarism. His plan is to use violence as a means of ending the colonial process of decolonization. He encourages violence with the goal of bettering African standing in the world. There is no desire to be overly destructive or barbaric in this endeavor. However, Fanon sees the utility of violence here as a necessary mean of defeating racism. Racism for Fanon is a product of a structural hierarchy; the white man is economically leveraged over the black man, as if sitting on the light end of a seesaw. In order to upend that hierarchy, he encourages violent means to bring new economic potential to the people of Africa. Law and justice are possible through a revolutionary use of violence for Frantz Fanon.

Both authors have their identities called into question. All of the memories of the decolonization period that are central to *The Wretched of the Earth*, are from Fanon's time spent as a psychiatrist in Algeria. The French are the oppressors and Fanon is one of the oppressed. But much as Primo Levi's "true survival" of the holocaust has been challenged by ethnocentrism and theology popular amongst conservative Jews and in Israel, Fanon's identity as a "true member" of the colonized and oppressed has been challenged. Fanon is neither Algerian nor French, but his placement of himself within the face of a primarily Franco-Algerian problem shows the transient aspect of this oppression. Fanon's very influence over the revolutionary agenda proves that this oppression is a problem that affects and is effected by more of humanity. In this way, Fanon partially subscribes to the rational understanding of violence that such thinkers as Primo Levi and Walter Benjamin have sought to expose. Fanon is neither Muslim nor

French, yet he sees in himself an appropriate captain for the call to arms; albeit due in large part to the subjective law and violence of colonization and its demise.

Of Identity and Belonging

Fanon and Levi both explore questions of identity within a group – who belongs here? This is a deepening of a more consequential question, *what room is left for rationality in the redemption of human dignity?* On this matter, Frantz Fanon and Primo Levi show a demonstrable amount of friction. While both Levi and Fanon are concerned with what it meant to be robbed of their human dignity, they differ greatly in their aspirations for redemption. Frantz Fanon will redeem Africa by surpassing Europe. Primo Levi sees no redemption in any violence, rather he chooses to inquire into the depths that rationality can hardly explore through the possibility of better understanding human beings. Still his rationality grounds him in that he rejects collective consolatory discourses of redemption.

As Fanon is eager to put an end to racism, he must first end the economic structure that he sees as its motor. His goal is to bring forward a society of equals. He subscribes to Marxism in the light of his oppression, much like Primo Levi feels more Jewish after the Holocaust. Fanon, attempting to show the world a type of prosperity that Europe has not yet offered it, encourages Marxism. Fanon argues that through economic equality, equal opportunity, racial and social equality will be possible. At the core of Fanon is a sort of ethnocentrism that does not subscribe to a religion, but instead to Africa as a unifying force. Fanon's plan to use the tools of the enemy against them fails in the same essentialisms that he is trying to fight off.

While Primo Levi tries to continue rational thinking after the holocaust, the oppression that Fanon experienced induces a type of subjected reality that can only be understood through ethnocentric terms. Much like the conservative Israelis of the modern world, Fanon believes that their violence is necessitated by the real world. Violence is not a *concept* that he preaches, rather it is the most inherent real-world factor powering colonialism. Only through violence can the revolution prevail.

Levi makes one thing clear: he is an Italian Jew. He feels himself to be more Italian than anything else. The era of Benito Mussolini changed everything for the Jews of Italy. Since the mid 1800s until the rise of Fascism in the early 1920s, the Jews of Italy were the masters of their own destiny. The period of 1922-1945, in which Fascism held power in Italy, was “progressively less the story of Jewish historical developments... and increasingly an account of their treatment at the hands of the State of the society” (Sarfati IX). This anti-Semitic societal progression was empowered by the ascent of Fascism, thus the period of study here is 1922-1945. The case of Italian Jews under Fascism is different from what other European Jews experienced at the same time; the German Jews under the Nazis, Central and European Jews under authoritarian regimes in Romania, Hungary and Croatia, for instance.

Before the rise of Fascism and anti-Semitism, Jews could not be confined to a particular social or economic group or class. Jews occupied positions ranging from government and the upper class to the impoverished and everywhere in between. Judaism was not a part of their public life, but rather something that was inherently true to this dispersed group of Italians. Indeed, Primo Levi was one of many Italian Jews who in their public life were immersed in the Italian culture and society, and in their private life treated their Judaism as a familial matter of “fact” (Sarfatti 7). The Jews of Italy, while sharing common values, varied in religiosity and few

of them manifested their beliefs strongly in public. With Christianity as the official religion of the country, and Judaism amongst the other “tolerated cults”, the Jews were not persecuted on a basis of their religion until Fascism brought race to the fore of the political sphere with the 1938 anti-Semitic laws. Even though Jews in Italy in this period (before the deportations) numbered only about one in a thousand, Fascism’s demand for a clear answer to the racial question thrust their religion into the fore. Those who felt primarily Italian, like Levi, discovered Judaism in an unprecedented light during and after the Holocaust. An essential question demanded of the audience is, where is the space for rationality in “redemption”?

Rationality

Chapter 1

The case of the Italian Jews under the rule of Fascism is different from the story of the other Jews of Europe. Indeed, it is these unique circumstances that influence and shape Levi's rational approach to nationality. Unlike Fanon's take on the importance of nationality in decolonization, Levi places a large stake in serving as witness, with his writing as testimony. It is with this comprehensive approach that Levi is able to compartmentalize the Jews of Italy separate from collective memory of the static Jew (much like the static bourgeoisie that Fanon identifies in Algeria). Unlike the Jews of Germany and Eastern Europe, the Jews of Italian Fascism were already decreasing in number due to the social flux in the period between World War I and the racial laws of 1938. (Sarfatti 27).

Primo Levi's Approach to Rationality: History, Humanity, and Brutality

Primo Levi's influence on modern culture has been one of a liberal, rational release from Elie Wiesel and the conservative Jewish mentality that was born out of the Holocaust. Primo Levi stood against ethnocentrism all over the world, for it always propagated violence through innovative means. In Israel, Levi was able to uncloak the ethnocentrism that Israel was acting on and bring the historical evidence that informed his rationality to the fore of the Jewish narrative. Levi sees the Holocaust not as a solely Jewish experience, but rather as a threat to all civility within humanity. Many Jews rose from the ashes of the holocaust ready to use violence in the name of their religion, but Levi imported onto those subjects a different rationality; one of understanding the other. Elie Wiesel's *Night* illustrates the holocaust in a bath of blood and gore, exploiting the inhumanity of the Nazi camps, but neglecting the value that Levi placed in the systemization of the Holocaust. Indeed, Wiesel's memory of Auschwitz reads as something from

another planet, something humanly impossible, whereas Levi explains the same events through a trace of historical evidence and brutal reality.

Born in 1919 to a middle class Jewish family in Torino, Levi's youth was much like that of any Italian boy in the early 20th century. His family treated their Judaism as a pleasant matter of fact in a country that was overtly Catholic. Like other Italians of various religions, Levi studied the sciences and became a chemist. However, his life as an Italian chemist was cut short by Mussolini's fascism which imported a demand to the racial question. As the Jewish condition dwindled in the 1930s, it culminated in the racial laws of 1938 and Levi's own deportation.

Levi was alive long enough to remember life for an Italian Jew before Mussolini and Fascist Italy, and he does not forget that time in the development of his rationality. Levi points out the violence that the legislation of the Fascist 'Empire' brought on its own citizens on behalf of the desires of the Empire to be racially defined. In February of 1944 Levi was loaded onto the convoy that brought 650 Italian Jews out of their ghetto and to the Lagers (concentration camps). Levi's early life as a chemist, however, awarded him a considerable amount of luck in the Lagers and ultimately saved his life. Levi's argument about luck is again extremely informative to his rationality after his experience. In the Lager, luck is as essential to life as water or bread. If there had not been a need for somebody with a background in science in Auschwitz, Levi surely would have been one of the drowned.

"The Drowned and the Saved," represents Levi's ultimate effort to understand the other, to get inside the mentality of everyone who contributed; not only the mind of the oppressed, but the oppressor and the 'bystander'. The experience that he endured was outside of the scope of human-human relations, and he brings all of the elements of humanity into question in the systematic and sadistic nature of the Nazi torture. The nature of evil has been removed from the

reality of the conflict, for this violence departed from any theory already relative to the human memory.

Unlike Frantz Fanon, Primo Levi believed that a strategy had to be devised void of violence all together. The utter humiliation that characterized the Jewish oppression permeated through every institution in which an Italian Jew could be found. Everything about Fascist memory for Primo Levi is absolutely corrupted by the sadistic nature of the evil employed in the concentration camps and beyond. *Drowned*, is a culmination of Levi's efforts to understand a violence that was completely void of utility. In his writing, Levi articulates the mentality that there is no way to repair the culture that has been broken with the tools not infected by the wave of radical racism and violence of the Jewish oppression. To create something good now would necessarily be to defy all the components of the evil shadows of his own experience. Tragically, Primo Levi committed suicide not long after completing *Drowned*, his last complete work – a testament to the tragic ailments of the survivor.

Levi's rationality departs with a deep study of a collective humiliation of humanity. Within the disgrace of the Holocaust, there is a bed of guilt for the perpetrators of all degrees to share. Levi believes that the systematic nature of the Holocaust was not simply an act of madness on behalf of the Germans, but rather a unique moment in history in which an irrational amount of hate and violence was able to garner the commonsense of the people around the world-- "logic intent on evil or the absence of logic?" (*Drowned* 106), Primo Levi was determined to counter the theology that had destroyed his people; a people he barely felt a part of before their collective humiliation in the Holocaust.

The Nazi's were able to meticulously take advantage of the tools of modernity to prepare the German imagination for the Final Solution (Howe, Jan 1998). The madness of the Nazi

mentality was so viral that it penetrated the SS and turned the Jews into their agents. Levi points out that the Jews had been demonized in Germany along the lines of an inherent European Christianity for a longer span of time than is often acknowledged. The assemblage of paradoxes, culminating with Jews killing Jews inside the concentration camps “drew on a powerful tradition of German big business” (Howe, Jan 1998). Nazi logic and leadership were characterized by comfortable confusion of the ends and the means, especially as either relates to violence. The only clear element of the Nazi rule in *Drowned*, is the dehumanization of the internees in order to make killing them a lighter task. A modern society couldn't have an ethnic cleansing so tremendously violent and damning until the Nazis proved it was a true possibility in a representative society. Furthermore, it was the dehumanization of the Jews that allowed them to be seen as animals and thus treated with less decency than any human is naturally due. The rage that the Nazi's used to seduce so many people in Germany is a tragically informative measure of emotions in politics and the national mentality's capacity to weigh morals against interests.

"It is naive, absurd, and historically false to believe that an infernal system" such as the Nazis created in the camps "sanctifies its victims: on the contrary, it degrades them, it makes them resemble itself" (Howe, Jan 1998). The dehumanization of the victims was enacted not only by the oppressor, but also by the oppressed. Similar to Frantz Fanon in this way, Levi also realized that the victims were forced to torture themselves, to defile their humanity amongst each other in a foreign space.

Inside the world of the Lager, there is no more humanity. That is to say there is no existing social context through which the particular tortures of the Holocaust can be understood. A prime example of the defiling of humanity within the Lager was the role of the Kapo. The Kapos were prisoners who were lured out of the deepest trenches of any civilized society into a

false escape from the final solution. Kapos were typically violent prisoners who would be hired – that is given a shot to live – in exchange for satisfactory oversight of the labor in the camps. By getting prisoners pitted against one another, the Kapos often went to even more extreme and brutal measures to make sure that the harsh Nazi labor demands were met in order to impress their value on the SS (Goss, Jan 2019). The Kapos are the best example of the oppressed who strove to identify with their oppressors – much like the colonized elite that Fanon refuses to trust in Algeria. However, Levi finds more sympathy with the Kapos than Fanon does with the colonized elite. He sees in the Kapos a deprivation of humanity so severe that they are not even conscious of their assimilation with the Nazis. Rather, the Kapos are a destroyed group of prisoners broken by years of suffering before the Holocaust who are prone to violence.

Levi strove to never identify with the enemy, for his enemy had a face but could always change shape. The enemy of civility is the abstract hatred that fueled the Nazis and infiltrated the Jewish mind in the concentration camp. Indeed, Primo Levi would tell you that he was not a human for the time he spent in the Lagers. Still Levi tried to engage rationally with every sort of victim in the camps, for everyone who was not German in Auschwitz was a victim, but the true victims died in the fire. Only those who were ‘saved’ live to tell the story of the camps, such as Levi, but they too are not fit to judge any of the other victims. Levi does not judge those who aided the SS in the way that Fanon articulates his frustration with the static bourgeoisie and the colonized elite during decolonization. Morality is informative in Levi’s ideology about a perfect life, but he is able to keep that fantasy completely separate from his rationality. Levi knows from his own experience that ideology does not exist in the real world. To this point, Primo Levi shares none of the hope in a collective effort to restore the culture that was shattered.

Levi notes that shame and guilt came to be defining factors of the survivors of Auschwitz. The mentality of the survivors also plays a definitive role in the phenomena of collective Jewish memory. Levi and the other survivors know that there was never any historical evidence to support the ignorance claim of so many Germans. Anti-Semitism was not born with the Nazis, rather the German people had been complicit with racial jurisdiction as long as they were not the oppressed. While both Primo Levi and Frantz Fanon realize they are trapped in a situation in which the oppressor must dehumanize the oppressed constantly to enforce the norm, they take starkly different routes out of the hole.

For Primo Levi, the desire to uncover historical evidence, demonstrated a world so evil that no human contemplation could conceive of it. His chapter “Letters With Germans” in *Drowned* is the transparent indicator of his ambition to understand the other mentality, that of the oppressor. He derives from this situation that there is no divine nor human capacity to repair what has been so brutally ruptured. “For they know they are not animals. And at the very moment when they discover their humanity, they begin to sharpen their weapons to secure its victory.” (Wretched 8).

Frantz Fanon and the Redemption of Humanity

In stark contrast to Levi, Frantz Fanon states explicitly that there is a potential to redeem humanity. This is a fundamental difference between Levi and Fanon; for Levi there is no redemption in reality, they are incompatible because history is constantly evolving, time is not fixed. Levi sees redemption as, merely an ideological tool for the oppressor, a false form of reparation towards the oppressed.

Fanon believes that the revolution has to begin in the countryside, with the peasantry. The peasant class for Fanon is the only class with the drive to destroy the colonial system. In his view, the native has been colonized and thus has a certain, even subliminal allure to the position of exploitation that was only made possible within the colonial context. The process of decolonization, thus, must be utterly transformative. It is not enough for the national bourgeois to take the spot of the colonizers in their absence and continue to exploit the impoverished. The collective rationality of the Bourgeois in Fanon's eyes has been infected with the bacteria of colonialism in this liminal stage. Fanon seeks to clear the liminality and create a path forward for revolution through the forms of industry and thus collective identity that actually existed within the native context. Those industries which have been least infected by the colonial mentality for both the colonizer and the colonized are Fanon's greatest strategic interests.

In doing this, Fanon divides the native world further in two. In the fashion of an anthropological, psychological critical analysis, Fanon is able to identify the sources of revolution as those that have remained controlled by the Peasants throughout the entire colonial period. In a country, a world of order and disorder, revolution cannot wear a mask. Revolution must be bold, and utterly transformative. Fanon perplexes his rationality in memory with his ideology in the future to manifest in a transformative hope for the class that has been hurt most by history both recent and long ago. Violence is at the disposal of the peasants, for it is the only way they can purify themselves of the colonial superstructure and its future manifestations.

Unfortunately, the manifestations of that superstructure are easily visible in the modern era. Fanon's hope in the peasantry is yet to bring about a global revolution that has the potential to upend the racial-economic superstructure that presides over human history. The global immigration crisis of the 21st century is an affirmation of that superstructure's existence.

Peasantry for Frantz Fanon

The peasants value the land and where their ancestors have been buried in a way that defies colonialism and its infections in the native. The colonized are in a sense separate from the peasants, who have historically been a great resource of exploitation. In Fanon's Algerian crisis, the majority of the population were peasants with a history of oppression strong enough to create the real revolution that the Bourgeois was incapable of instilling. The peasants have the collective drive to use the violence at their disposal and thus are capable of destroying the colonial context, arriving at a real opportunity for a more equal state of humanity in Africa.

The urgency of radical change can only be born in the peasantry, for they are not only radical but conservative protectors of their historical identity. The identity is not a fixed position in time, but the peasant class carries with it the roots of the African identity that has been so bitterly tainted by racial jurisdiction in the native land by the outsider.

In my view, Fanon's perplexed belief in the peasantry to start a revolution is a romanticized contemplation of a social phenomena from which he derives a questionable amount of hope. Where Levi sees pain and suffering, Fanon sees an opportunity for the most despicable of people in the eyes of the West to transport the revolution on the country side to the cities.

Moving the revolution from the countryside into the cities would be the job of the Lumpen-Proletariat, those who carried the common values of the peasants into the cities. The most disorderly people of the foreigner's context are to be the radically revolutionary force that discover a new sort of humanism. Prostitutes, criminals, the poorest of the working class, the unenlightened – it is in this assemblage of disorder that Fanon sees the pivotal delivery of the revolution from the countryside to the cities. For in a city, there is always more work for the

poorest of the poor. Devoid from class consciousness, the lumpen proletariat are the agents of the radically new.

New meaning for the migrant peasant class

Fanon places a certain important duty on the shoulders of a class that is not so easily distinguishable. Without the support of historical evidence, Fanon aspired to reorganize the identity of the Native into specific categories, producing particular people with distinct duties to the act of revolution. Each sector of the native has a different yet painfully similar history that produced a distinct obligation to consume revolution amidst a static decolonization. By using the word static here, I am implying not that the identity of the peasant is in a timeless, fixed position, but rather that the beneficial consequences of decolonization have not yet reached the peasantry. Instead of a strong belief in the proletariat like most Marxists, Fanon instills the power of hope and vigilance in the peasantry through his writing. They are at a crucial point in their timeline; they cannot accept anything less than a complete transformation. In this regard, Fanon ascribes to the peasantry as well as the lumpen-proletariat a strong social consciousness, headlined by their mutually exclusive history of violence as law in Algeria.

The idea of a national state for Algeria is not really combatted by Fanon. Keep in mind that he is not born in Algeria, he was born in Fort-De-France, Martinique. Questions of identity come into question. Does Fanon really know the people of this country well enough? Does he understand their history in their context? Or does his European education, his place of birth, his intellectualism, his popularity make him an inappropriate face for a call to arms?

Violence

Chapter 2

Primo Levi and Useless Violence

Primo Levi makes it clear in *The Drowned and the Saved* that violence had a different meaning in the years of the Holocaust. This was not the sort of violence that could bring about real world benefits – using torture tactics is a frowned upon means of violence, but even this has clear benefits in the real world (the suspect may give up valuable information as a result of the violence done onto him). The violence propagated by the Nazis, and even at times carried out by Jews onto other Jews had no real meaning. Primo Levi famously coined this sort of brutally unnecessary violence as “useless violence” (*Drowned* 105). However, while the concept of futile violence was brought to the fore by the tragedies of the 20th century, it is not an isolated event that occurred in a vacuum. Primo Levi worked long and hard to deliver this message in *The Drowned and the Saved*, insisting that this problem was enabled by a complicated history encouraging human violence amongst cultures. The Shoah, for Primo Levi, is the prime case study in a series of universal human failures – it is the culmination of all the political and cultural premonition that found its roots in violence.

For Primo Levi, the absolute sadness that was inherently part of his experience did not drive him toward violent intentions. Primo Levi’s *The Drowned and the Saved* is a precious gem, whose message was not replicated in any other literary mind of the post-Holocaust world. The virtue of Primo Levi’s compassion and understanding drove him away from violence and all of the evil that it inherently denotes.

Primo Levi’s theory on the utility of violence is combined with his fixation on delivering testimony derived from historical evidence and rational memory. Many of the most heinous abuses of the Jewish people, such as, “the terrors of the train transports to the humiliations of stripping’s, beatings, endless roll calls, tattoos and torture,” (Howe Jan 1988) defined violence in

a new way. For violence has always had a utility, it has always been a means to an end, until now. Violence is at once the ends and the means. Once the final solution had been rendered, the pain inflicted on the Jews through the most cruel, humiliating, and unprecedented scare tactics served the Nazis as a mean only as far as it made it easier to murder the Jew once he was dehumanized. It was particularly through these extra cruelties that the Nazi mentality was able to penetrate and perplex the Jewish nationality. In Levi's own words, "Before dying the victim must be degraded, so that the murderer will be less burdened by guilt... the sole usefulness of useless violence." (*Drowned* 126).

Frantz Fanon's Perplexing Admiration for the Persecutor

Frantz Fanon believes that violence can only be understood, find its significance, and become self-coherent insofar as we can discern the history-making movement which gives it form and substance. Frantz Fanon sees in Algeria's decolonization the opportunity for a violent national revolution that would bring about not only a new humanity, but a new language, a new social context all together. In this view, the colonized have been robbed of their humanity much like both the *Drowned* and the *Saved* for Levi – however there is a process of liberation that can return Algeria to the culture, the humanity, it had in the pre-colonial period.

The world for Fanon is one divided into two overarching sectors of humanity, the oppressor and the oppressed. In his unique prose he portrays the sectors in stark contrast; "The colonist's sector is a sector built to last, all stone and steel. It's a sector of lights and paved roads, where the trash cans constantly overflow with strange and wonderful garbage, undreamed-of left overs." (*Wretched* 38). Frantz Fanon demonstrates here his own peculiarly perplexed admiration of the perpetrator.

Fanon and Levi's Views on Violence: Irreconcilable Differences?

Fanon's mix of envy, jealousy, and assimilation is precisely what Levi rejects in *Drowned*. This is a prime example of how these wounded intellectuals view the oppressor, the merits of modernity, and the relationship between racism and a historical timeline, differently.

Primo Levi utterly despised how the Nazis were able to be so organized in a modern society. Whereas Fanon manifests a certain jealousy of what the oppressor has been able to achieve in his writing. He has hope in humanity, hope in the global organization of the human population, while aware of the race-driven socio-economic superstructure that is embedded deep within the roots of the 20th century. In my chapter on Development and Modernity, I demonstrate that this very superstructure has persisted into the 21st century, and it is particularly visible in the modern global immigration dilemma.

Fanon, informed by his time as a psychologist in Algeria before writing *Wretched*, is always interested in the psychology of both the colonized and the colonizer, for one cannot exist without the other – they are codependent. Fanon goes further to say quite clearly that the colonized have “dreams of possession. Every type of possession: of sitting at the colonist's table and sleeping in his bed, preferably with his wife. The colonized man is an envious man.” (*Wretched* 59).

Within the mentality of the colonizing species, Fanon asserts that their violent appropriation of foreign land cannot ever allow them to feel at home. Indeed, the colonizer will always be a foreigner on African land. Fanon states, “it is not the factories, the estates, or the bank account which primarily characterize the ‘ruling class.’ The ruling species is first and foremost the outsider from elsewhere, different from the indigenous population, ‘the others’.”

(Wretched 40). The colonizer is first and foremost the other, the stranger on an indigenous land. By saying this, Fanon suggests that the superstructure that has remained intact throughout the colonial period; the racist global hierarchy.

One of Fanon's most informative passages on violence comes from his chapter "On Violence" in *Wretched*.

The violence which governed the ordering of the colonial world, which tirelessly punctuated the destruction of the indigenous social fabric, and demolished unchecked the systems of reference of the country's economy, lifestyles, and modes of dress, this same violence will be vindicated and appropriated when, taking history into their own hands, the colonized swarm into the forbidden cities (Wretched 40)

Fanon explains his take on violence with an overarching macroscopic lens. His point is clear, yet not specific: the only way to slow the strengthening of the superstructure is to use violence to destroy the colonizers. With the world divided in two, human and animal, the colonizers are seen as one sector of humanity – entailing social and political wealth and stability according to race and race according to prenatal tenets – as an overpowering economic class, constantly coming into conflict and thus smashing the colonized, the historically weak.

Fanon gives the example of the Church to show the penetration of the colonial mentality into the decolonization period. The Church in the colonies is a white man's Church, a foreigner's Church. It does not call the colonized to the ways of God, but to the ways of the white man, to the ways of the master, the ways of the oppressor. And as we know, in this story many are called but few are chosen. The fundamental institution of the church is fixed as a vehicle of penetration for colonial culture into the deepest values of the native society. It is not enough that the natives be Christian, they must practice Christian values in the same way as the West. Still, this

obedience can never, even in theory Fanon asserts, free the indigenous from their shackles – for they were born tied to the ground.

Unlike Primo Levi, Fanon's theory is centered on a possibility of redemption. However, redemption must be characterized by a destruction of the colonial penetration into the pre-colonial social fabric. The only way this is possible is through the means available to the people who are currently treated as animals. Colonization was violent in all of its features, instilling fear and demonizing the mentality of the colonized. For this reason, the decolonization period should too be characterized, even empowered by a purifying violence.

One large point of critique in Fanon's take on the utility of violence lies within its use of the term 'violence' itself. What exactly does it entail? Is there any violence that can be disorderly within this context, or is every violent action taken against colonial means appropriate? It is clear that he does not support terrorism and heinous crimes, but he confuses this point of clarity when he asserts that violence should be used in any way possible to rid the natives of the colonial infection. Indeed, Fanon saw this violent process as a sort of amputation from which the victim can be transformed into a state of civility. But does this assumption reflect an accurate comprehension of the consequences of violence as informed by historical evidence? One would think that Fanon should offer more on the psyche of a violent people that he called to arms.

Hence, decolonization's destructive and violent nature offers the opportunity for a total social reform that is incompatible with the colonized elite, who strive to identify with the other. Fanon offers pieces of clarity on his intentions for the means of a violent revolution, but only articulating that it must be both violent and individual to the nation state. (Wretched, conclusion).

Memory

Chapter 3

The fraudulence charge is as old as time, and it found its utility once again in challenges made against the character of both Primo Levi and Frantz Fanon. In the case of Primo Levi, his rationality and compassion for historical evidence and understanding the other actually contrasted with the collective apologetic Jewish memory of the Holocaust. Levi lived the life of the tragic survivor; although his humanity was murdered in the Lager, he arose to serve as testimony to the falsehoods that had been projected onto the experience of the victims. Indeed, the stories and testimonies of the real victims were spoiled in the gas chambers. Levi is accused of not being a true Holocaust survivor because of his incredible transparency, his indictment of so many groups of people who are presumed to be innocent in the mess. Similarly, Frantz Fanon's identity as a voice of African, specifically Algerian, revolution was questioned by many intellectuals at the time *Wretched* was written. Because Fanon is not Algerian, critics questioned how he could relate the entirety of the oppression that has reached back further than his lifetime. Born and educated in Martinique, Fanon is challenged for importing Western features into his own identity and thus disqualifying him as an appropriate leader for a radical change in the collective mentality.

Primo Levi's life was taken in Auschwitz, but he was fearless and determined to turn his shell of a human being into a testimony. Levi deplores a sensational ability to relate historical evidence and fight the fray of the collective memory in *Drowned*. Through his fatalistic view of the world, his experience is marked with a tragic and unfixable damage done, and he relates his pain powerfully through the language of the disciplined witness – rejecting apologetic tales of his experience persistently. Levi's suicide shortly after finishing *Drowned*, was the ultimate end

for the witness already deprived of their human value. Following his writing, Levi's suicide is the culmination of a dismantled faith in not only the divine, but in humanity.

Since the Jewish enlightenment of the late 18th – early 19th century, Jews were secularized and bestowed a much greater faith in humanity, much like the Enlightenment that permeated and catalyzed Europe. Levi was not overtly religious, and that is true for the majority of the Italians that were rounded up with him and sent to the Lager. Although Levi feels more Jewish after the Holocaust, it is not so much in a religious sense as it is a shared experience that defines their future. He maintains a view of the world as utterly tragic, there is little hope and no such thing as reconciliation for Levi, the rational Jew. What is done is done, and its influence can never be forgotten.

The memory of Frantz Fanon is one that has been digested through a history of colonialism. As he writes about the decolonization process, he writes with a strong memory of the violent beginnings and inevitable ends of this long drawn out process. Fanon also writes with a sort of hope, optimism, and ultimately faith, that has been totally removed from *The Drowned and the Saved*. In his own words, "any decolonization is a success" (Wretched 37). On this point, Primo Levi certainly disagrees; he would question the possibility of a successful decolonization that appropriates the tools of the oppressor for their own use.

Frantz Fanon's movement will only succeed by resorting to every means available to them. Keep in mind that these are the very mentalities that have been etched in the mind of the colonized by their history of co-inhabitation and combat. The history of French occupation of Algeria is tremendous, and Fanon is the leader of a movement that thinks the same way. The most readily available resource to the revolution is violence, for it is the first thing they

experience when they are born. Although Fanon is not born in Algeria, he remembers the violence that had become normalized in the institutions and interactions between colonizer and colonized.

Racism is violence for both Levi and Frantz Fanon, but Fanon takes it to another level. He is personally offended in a way that Levi is not (until he is challenged as a true survivor of a Lager, but this is an individual challenge). On a scale, Levi places rationality and understanding above the instinctive drive to achieve immediate alleviation that Fanon adores. Fanon writes urgently, asserting that the time is now. For Fanon, the revolution must be complete, it is so urgent that there is little room for the deep understanding that Levi proposes.

Fanon makes a bold claim about the mentality of the native. Essentially, he explains throughout *Wretched*, (*Wretched* 37-40), that a mentality of submission has overridden the revolution for as long as he can remember. This submission is constantly affording control of the decolonization process to the colonizers. The event that is the return to sovereignty, to recognized humanity, is still being organized into a global order of racism and a hierarchical scale pegging the Black African at the bottom. Furthermore, the mentality of submission in Africa is due to the visions of success in the West. Fanon saw that as conditions better over there, they inherently worsen at home.

In this understanding Fanon implies an interesting view of the world as a zero-sum subject. It is through this lens that balance in society, entailing economic equality and indigenous power, becomes incompatible with the theology of racism. Fanon's memory of abuse suggests that it is time for a return to grace and civility. The wide range of social issues that were brought onto the native – identity, nationalism, consciousness, the role of violence in

decolonization, and “language as an index of power” (Wretched 43). Fanon has been influential in the study of decolonization in the broader fields of psychiatry, philosophy, anthropology, and politics (Wretched, preface), but the collective memory of the globalized world has neglected the virtue of his theories. That is, the collective human memory has failed Fanon’s legacy in the modern day. Fields of study and institutions such as those listed above did not draw from all the varieties of intellectualism that were available in their inception and early stages, but instead allowed the mentality of the perpetrator to monopolize the process of conscious-growing.

It is worth noting that Fanon was criticized heavily for his abstract absolutism about certain unprecedented feats of his theology, ideology. Among these categories that Fanon was absolutely certain would benefit the decolonization process were the utility of violence, and the responsibilities bestowed upon the peasantry and the Lumpen-Proletariat. Jean Paule-Sartre and Hannah Arendt took the radical ideas of Fanon and expanded upon some of their fundamental features in the West. (Rahim 2018)

In Fanon’s decolonization, the bourgeoisie is charged with being complacent in this window of opportunity to achieve social change through the revolution. The national bourgeoisie in a typical Marxist society would be the greatest agents of change. In Algeria however, Fanon accuses the educated elite of keeping their knowledge, their innovation, to themselves. His goal is for all of Africa to achieve that same opportunity to enrich their lives with knowledge. It is in the void of the static bourgeoisie that Fanon builds his ideological approach to the decolonization process. Fanon also informs his memory in a manner similar to Primo Levi, in as far as he asserts that there is a very consequential amount of fault on the part of the indigenous nationality. In referring to nationality, Fanon is exploring the collective

mentality, and psychology, of the people as the subjects of a fixed superstructure. His critical analysis of the “capitalist exploitation and cartels and monopolies [as] the enemies of underdeveloped countries” (Fanon 38), which cannot be simply transferred from the colonizers to the colonized elite, and the bourgeoisie. Fanon knows that the enemy is more than just colonialism, but the mentality that it imported is one characterized by greed and vulgar methods of division and organization and tragically assimilation. Those who are infected seek to gain all the profits of exploitation that the colonial period made available to them.

Transitioning into the political sphere of nationhood and modern state-state relations, Fanon is a peculiar intellectual. Algeria was not a nation before the colonization by the French Empire. Indeed Algeria, as a defined nation, is an ambiguous sovereign territory to many, the product of European colonialism in Africa. However, Fanon is dealing with this revolution as a sort of national liberation. These terms perplex the native mentality that Fanon seeks to bring out of the world of disorder and into the realm of order and balance. Fanon is not a nationalist, as he is interested in the revolution of the African people, however, he adheres to a certain amount of nationalism in as far as he is primarily informed by and concerned with the Algerian nation. The implications of nationhood were born in the West and imported onto the Algerian people through the inherently violent institutions of colonialism. Fanon thus can be seen as an agent of colonial permeation into Africa in this respect, as his memory starts amidst an ongoing crisis for the Algerian people. Indeed, this was a major critique of Fanon by his contemporaries.

Modernity and Development

Chapter 4

The arguments made by Fanon in *Wretched* and Levi in *Drowned* have had a looming yet often neglected presence in the modern notions of development and with it modernity. The idea and furthermore policy of development was created in the West – particularly politicized in the United States – following the decolonization period. The goal of development is to bring those nation states that were born in the 20th century into the modern, industrial, globalized world through a process of betterment of living for the people. It is assumed within the theory of development that distinct societies have the potential to substantially better the lives of their citizens. However, Levi and Fanon are the voices of the severely oppressed, the voices of the inhumane acting out. History has shown that the global impoverished, those who have been at the bottom of the economic superstructure since its inception, can be dehumanized with little means to repair their shattered humanity. Located within the global immigration crisis of the 21st century is the same predominant mentality of white colonialism, and furthermore its race-bound engine, that infected the colonized elite in Fanon's Algeria. The same should be said about the levels of systematic organization to execute inappropriate violence through law and order that Levi exploited in *The Drowned and The Saved*. On a global level, the immigration crisis manifests many of the challenges that Levi and Fanon sought to overcome intellectually.

Immigration as Crisis

Globalization has brought the people of countries all around the world into contact with one another. Through new advances in technology, people are beginning to believe that with

more knowledge will come new possibilities, potentialities. Because of this, nations are revisiting nationality law, as a globalized world continues to complicate our interpretations of the citizens and the state. With global citizens looking to travel across national boundaries every day, there is a need, now more than ever, to rethink and clarify the consequences and potentialities of citizenship in the modern era. Furthermore, there are many factors today forcing people to escape their states of birth – and birth does not regularly denote citizenship. From oppressive state regimes to the globalization of Western-style industry-driven social organization, the fourth world has been trapped and exploited, while the global third world is under heavy pressure to escape “their nations”. The problem of citizenship law today is not answerable with a legal change. The problem of citizenship law in the modern era was reflected by Levi’s concerns for the problem that not only the Jews, but all of humanity faced in the wake of the Holocaust. Frantz Fanon, who aspired to establish the first society of equals, would be astonished by the ramifications of violence in the modern era.

The issue of birthright citizenship is so important in the United States it has even become a campaign issue. Donald Trump’s promise to sign an executive order canceling birthright citizenship was made without much consideration for the 14th Amendment of the Constitution, which states:

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside. No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor

deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

(Cornell Legal Information Institute).

To change the laws regarding birthright citizenship would entail a very long and costly attempt by the Trump administration to manifest some of the toughness he promised his supporters in the campaign. His pledge was a sailing assault on human morality and American constitutional law, yet consistent with nationalistic responses to the global immigration crisis. The state has never been more central to the individual today, thus citizenship as a right has been thrust into the fore of both global and national politics. Primo Levi warned his audience in *The Drowned and The Saved*, that severe nationalism had led to the holocaust, and it is the same driving force of nationalism that keeps the immigration crisis afloat. While Primo Levi was not concerned with citizenship per say, his ambition to better understand all human beings and obtain historical evidence would point away from the trends of American and global politics today.

Citizenship decides which people are under the jurisdiction of the laws of a nominal state-authority. Citizenship is at once a mix of rights and responsibilities provided to the individual by the state, and an inseparable tag by which individuals are organized within the state system. The development of other transnational organizations such as the European Union is testimonial to the growing emphasis on citizenship as a matter of identity. The identity of Frantz Fanon and Primo Levi are both questioned by their contemporaries, but and their notions of citizenship complicate the current conflict between citizenship and identity. This question of identity holds a large stake for both the state and the individual in a universalized

world. Indeed, this is a world made far more universal by the reparations and opportunities afforded in the wake of the second World War, and all that it embodied.

The incapacity to distinguish between the two senses of citizenship, as Hindess labels them in *Citizenship in the international management of populations*, complicates the notion of citizenship as it informs global social organization. The European Union grants EU citizenship to any citizen of a European Union country. As an EU citizen, the individual has the right to "live and move within the EU without being discriminated against on the grounds of [your] nationality" (European Union). Thus, the European Union poses an interesting dilemma to the standardized approach to immigration as an activity for the poor; this approach is universally applied on a general level at national borders. Conversely in Europe, where citizenship has a different implication relative to nationality, immigration across (EU) national borders can be an activity for people of any social class.

The problems that are created by the entire notions of modernity and development are seen quite clearly in the immigration crisis of the modern day. Too, it is important to understand how the idea of development evolved into the dilemma that it is today. As the newly born individual nation-states of Asia, Africa and the Caribbean sprung into existence in the wake of the second world war, a word was re-invented to universalize the path to modernity; that of development. Development has been romanticized and generally equated with the course of evolution a given country would take to maximize its potential. The objective of each state was to develop into prosperous and powerful states, while the objective of the already developed states was to continue evolving into the most powerful actors on the earth. This type of organized violence in order to stabilize a political structure is not bound to nations

as much as it was in the middle of the crises of the twentieth century. Rather, this can be seen as the evolution of violence that Primo Levi and Walter Benjamin theorized and warned us against.

While certain countries continue to develop, the rhetoric around development must be changed to fit with the times. Development today is too simplistic to accurately address the desires, and often needs, of diverse cultures and societies. Again, embodying what Primo Levi warned against – a lack of deep understanding for humanity as a collection of individuals, all subject to their greater situation. Development is currently employing the modernist perceptions of improvement in an attack against any system that may progress along different lines. On a more structural level, development necessitates strong governments around the globe, capable of protecting their citizens and securing their borders. The definition of improvement has been narrowed, and nearly removed all together from politics of inclusion and exclusion. *You can improve there, but you don't belong here*, is the common rhetoric towards immigrants in a world obsessed with 'development'. The system is flawed, and that is becoming more apparent as time continues to pass. Democracy and capitalism are now less true indicators of the betterment of peoples' lives than we make them out to be. The state of affairs today entails that we may be approaching a period of transition into a new political world order. The global population is less believing that the system which flourished in the aftermath of World War II and decolonization across Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean is appropriate for 'developing countries'. As a result, for most of the world's population, citizenship can now be understood as an obstruction of human justice more than it is a liberator. Fanon's influence over African ambitions has been quelled, and the system has fallen

into a place that Primo Levi warned would extract violence from places it is not even necessitated.

The idea that the western developmental model brings with it social justice and a substantial level of equity has crashed and burned in recent history. The African notions of equality have not been any more promising in the same time. The vast amounts of African people dying in the Mediterranean today is evidence that development is not what we often portray it to be. Their requisite to immigrate, by any means necessary, simply to survive, serves as testimony to the fact that their countries are not developing; their living standards have not improved enough for them to feel comfortable staying. Frantz Fanon's dream for the Africa that surpasses Europe and all of his ideology have faded far into the background. Indeed, the people of Africa will tell you that development is something that does not happen there; development is something that happens in Europe or America. Furthermore, the romanticizing of 'foreign aid' as a developmental tool has a second and darker side to it – if the West is able to convince themselves that living conditions in poor areas of the world, where immigration is necessitated regularly, are improving, then there is inherently more reason for citizens of those states to remain within their borders. As is proven in the case of the workers in Niger, paying a country to keep its citizens from leaving only transfers the problem of immigration slightly from the European conscience to the African conscience, and does little to alleviate any of the suffering of the global poor. The problem here clearly transcends any particular nationality and affects all of humanity. In this sense, the problems the racist engines of the Colonial period and the Holocaust have only taken a new form. Although they are less egregious than before, there has been no progress made on the engine that powers these defining moments of history. Racism

defines our politics as much today in the immigration crisis as it informed Primo Levi's decision to lean on historical evidence and understanding in *The Drowned and The Saved*. The world today has chosen the other path, nationalism and exclusionary politics have taken on the violence that was left avoid in the wake of the newly perplexed global social order.

The effects of dividing the global population into a series of populations belonging to politically independent states are best addressed by Barry Hindess in his article, *Citizenship in the international management of populations*. Hindess says that the modern political centrality of citizenship has taken a privilege of the few and disguised it as a right of the many (Hindess 3). Indeed, when thinking of citizenship, it is important to understand that citizenship was not always a subject of intense political friction. Rather, this discussion has gathered political weight in the modern era, and was catalyzed by dramatic 20th century experiences such as the holocaust and era of decolonization.

The expanding international discourse on human rights has resulted in a public perception that these rights are intrinsic to humanity and should not regard citizenship. Still, the individual in the 21st century requires protection from his state of citizenship. Rights that should have become inherent to the individual without their state after the experiences of the twentieth century. On this point, Hindess offers a fascinating idea that I expand on below: citizenship as conspiracy against the rest of the world (Hindess). The article *A Critique of Violence* by Walter Benjamin reminds us that while violence can never be a viable end, it is often sought as a means – and in more ways than seems obvious at first glance. In the case of citizenship, the means and the ends have been confused – powerful states, within which the majority of the population are citizens, are able to discriminate indefinitely against citizens of

any other state just as they are non-citizens within their own state. Violence cannot be separated from the ends as long as citizenship continues to be a primary indicator of allegiance (to the citizen state). The treatment of immigrants today all around the globe is evidence that violence is propagated by that overwhelming majority of residents who are citizens onto “intruders” who are citizens of another, or no, state.

Violence, however, takes many forms in today’s immigration crisis. States may only have jurisdiction over the population that resides within its territory, but the effects of powerful states are always felt outside of its borders. A well-articulated implementation of this notion of citizenship as conspiracy (Hindess), can be found in the recent Italian legislation regarding immigration from Libya. Here, Primo Levi would have surely voiced his disapproval as Italy has “moved to beef up Libya’s coast guard, strike deals with tribesmen who control Libya’s southern border, persuade clan-based militias to prevent boats from leaving Libya and promise Libyan mayors sources of revenue to replace profits stemming from trafficking”, in an attempt to trap the foreigner in their suffering (NYT editorial board 2017). Indeed, Italian citizenship policy now informs citizenship policy and immigration in Libya. The problem is not seen the way Primo Levi suggested – as a problem with humanity, but rather as a mess that each nation must take upon its shoulders to clean up individually, with a strong sense of the nation always incorporating race and religion.

Whereas the Mediterranean sea was formerly the greatest connection between different regions and peoples of the world, in the modern era it serves as the greatest border. In the United States, in the past the locus of immigration enforcement was at our territorial boundaries as carried out exclusively by federal immigration agents. Today, immigration

enforcement permeates American society and occurs on a daily basis throughout the country and abroad. The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 imposed new “sanctions for employers who knowingly hire undocumented workers”(IRCA 1986), demanding the citizen to begin enforcing our citizenship laws on a more intimate, cultural level. This is raw evidence of the West’s abandonment of Levi’s ideas; IRCA stands today in the face of human dignity and the ideal of understanding the individual, and all that Primo Levi stood for. The transfer of immigration enforcement from federal immigration agents to American civil institutions such as American employers, the police, DMVs, hospitals, schools and so many more agencies central to cultural life, can be seen as a deputation of the citizens, and internalization of our borders. Simultaneously, our borders have also extended beyond our territorial borders, often floating out to sea and even landing in other countries. The concept of externalizing borders was evidenced quite clearly in the recent Italy-Libya immigration deal.

Still, this violence is not confined to those two parties who sign a deal with one another. Violence disseminated by citizenship discourse is also evidenced throughout the supply chain. The demand by the global wealthy to exploit the global poor is completely incompatible with a moral understanding of citizenship as it confines people to certain types of work (or no work at all). The wealthy, including leaders of powerful states around the world, have discovered in modern history that cheaper production abroad means cheaper goods and more profits at home. People who are born in states and regions of the world, in which development and thus modernity has not reached, are confined to a very small window of opportunity to better their living conditions.

However, there is another group of people that the world of citizens sees through a scope that is often harsher than the scope of the foreign citizen – the stateless person. Again, after the establishment of the state of the Israel, and the precedent that should have produced, the orientation around a stateless people was still confused. In the case of the United States, Donald Trump's claim that, "we're the only country in the world where a person comes in, has a baby, and the baby is essentially a citizen of the United States for 85 years with all of those benefits," (CNN 2018) does not entertain the consequences of essentially disowning the large portion of people residing in the United States who are not citizens yet have children. However this statement must be understood as a genuine desire on behalf not only of Donald Trump, but also on the behalf of a good portion of the citizens that voted for him and continue to support him. The implications of changing nationality law would undoubtedly create a spike in stateless people residing in the United States. Donald Trump in this regard, can be seen as one of the leaders that Primo Levi forewarned us about, driving the country into a nationalistic hole without regard for a deeper analysis. The power of this racist drive has not suffered in modernity, again it has manifested in a new form.

Stateless people are generated around the world on the basis of law or circumstance. For example, citizenship policy in states that adhere to *jus sanguinis* creates one set of problems: in Italy, someone who was born there is not a citizen at birth and may live their entire life without obtaining citizenship – even if it is the only history they have ever known. For example, if a Chinese immigrant comes to Italy and has a child, that child will likely never become an Italian citizen. In America, children who are born to undocumented immigrants risk being separated from their parents as infants if their parents are apprehended, and their only

compensation is the citizenship that their parents were never afforded – how can we take this single concession away from a significant portion of humanity?

The United States has a complicated policy on stateless people: as a signatory to the 1954 UN Convention on Statelessness, the US can only deport stateless people on grounds of national security (Keating 2012). It is in the interest of the United States, then, to keep the number of stateless people down. “More than 43.7 million immigrants resided in the United States in 2016, accounting for 13.5 percent of the total U.S. population of 323.1 million, according to American Community Survey (ACS) data” (Migration Policy 2018). This of course is the number of immigrants under the current citizenship laws, and thus does not include all of their children, who are already legal citizens of the United States. While these people would not lose their citizenship they already have, it is impossible to imagine that massive population of immigrants in the United States would decide to stop having children (and stop crossing our borders all together). While different states have different variations of nationality law, there is an inherent danger that the population of stateless residents would rise. Most states in the world adhere to varying degrees of *jus sanguinis* nationality law – citizenship by blood. Still, it is important to note that the United States is the immigration hub of the world. At least forty five million immigrants and refugees from different ethnic and national backgrounds around the world reside within the United States. While many, likely most, of these residents may redeem nationality through right of blood to their parents’ home countries, the danger of a new stateless population based on either circumstance or law (prejudice) would pose an unprecedented threat to the developed, modern world. This is the threat that has always been

coming for capitalism, the foundations that it was built on are not strong enough to hold down the lower class that keeps the system afloat.

The effect of this would have ambiguous consequences, potentially resulting in a spike of people without any citizenship, who, robbed of their nationality, have little means to protect themselves from the greedy interests of states. Morally speaking, this would be a damning blow to the stateless cause, and the United States' interest to keep that portion of the global population as limited as possible. One must question how the Trump administration, given its moral track record, would handle the most delicate consequences of this policy change, such as a revised (and likely less moral) child deportation policy. While it is not in the Administration's interest nor scope of authority to repeal the 14th Amendment, children born in America to citizens of foreign countries or stateless people would run a higher risk of becoming stateless. This possibility alone would likely necessitate new legislation.

Unfortunately, it is not only the stateless people that have been neglected by the wealthy world. The global elite's neglect of the effects of even "peaceful" state interactions - ideally, an interaction in the general interest of the citizens of each land, represented by their state - is demonstrated in the frequency of "international tariffs, interest rates, or trade subsidies and sanctions" (Hindess 5). Indeed, the grim consequences of one state's agreement is the fruit of another. State - state interactions today can be understood as an oppression of one sector of humanity by another on account of their right of citizenship. It is important to note here, that states and their populations could not interact on such a hierarchical level if it was not for the understanding of citizenship as destiny. By destiny I mean that citizenship assumes an essential role in defining the limits of potential on the individual. Humans are born

into their citizenship; both *jus sanguinis* and *jus soli* are governed by prenatal tenets.

Substituting one for the other would not lend any more agency to humanity – rather, it would be a transfer of fate from land to blood.

Citizenship is also misleading as it relates directly to development and modernity. Citizenship grants states and individuals the right to discriminate against those without the same status. As a consequence, the only possible world in which citizenship does not necessarily entail discrimination is a Kantian one. Theoretically, if each individual nation state was a strong enough indicator of its citizens interests, they would grow stronger. In this view, the strength of the state entails the betterment of living standards and thus less forced migration. As Hindess posits, “citizens [would] have less reason to flee and other states have more reason to treat these citizens with respect” (Hindess 6). In reality, the spread of ‘development’ strategy and culture has muddled the coherence of one of its main features – state sponsored citizenship. If states were to ‘develop’ uniformly, following the western industry-driven model, in theory they may grow into strong competition with one another. Breaking from fantasy, states develop more along the way Primo Levi noted, in particular ways through different means to achieve different ends. As states continue to progress along particular paths toward their own understandings of improvement, we must be cautious not to over-simplify the meaning of citizenship to the individual.

Levi and Fanon both sought to investigate and articulate some of the key flaws inherently attached to the global hierarchical structure. Today that structure can be best criticized from its institutionalized understanding of citizenship. I argue that the type of state citizenship that we fantasize about – everyone is a citizen, and everyone stays put – is

incompatible with modern development policies. The two decades of decolonization across Africa and Asia and the second world war were highlighted with ideology and potentiality. Secular yet ideological thinkers such as Frantz Fanon highlighted the African revolutions. Now that those aspirations to develop have been rendered impossible, our understanding of citizenship must be re-examined. Citizenship, as a universal phenomenon, is now in conflict with universal human rights. Frantz Fanon warned Africa that they were subject to an unbalanced economic tie to the west in which they would be forced to suffer in light of Western improvement. All the same, the world is 'modernizing', and colonialism seems as possible today as it was in the 1950s for Frantz Fanon.

Within this context, Hindess offers another important point that I would like to expand upon. Hindess posits that states, which are politically constructed, are the bodies that grant citizenship to a politically constructed group of individuals (Hindess 7). Thus, the general subject of citizenship law is a politically constructed fraction of humanity, which is subject to change. Those who argue that citizenship is separate from politics and transcends political conceptions of popular 'identity' have been muffled by the Trump administration's genuine ambition to change U.S. citizenship law. Clearly, demands on who is a citizen and who is a foreigner are currently under a sort of political scrutiny that calls into question the "a-political" nature of citizenship.

Furthermore, the political nature of questions of identity demands another important and less flattering consequence of citizenship law. That is, following the political tenets of the modern state, and thus the people it seeks to represent, the violence that I previously described as state violence is also a manifestation of political violence. Political violence –

violence as a means to achieve political goals – is, as I have explained above, the modern political demand for a response to questions of national identity, are constructed around questions of race and blood. As “sovereign states” continue to seek the betterment of their own citizens, they naturally work against the interests of other states.

The second World War was highlighted with the beginning of a period known as decolonization. In this fifteen to twenty year span (typically assumed to be 1945-1960), thirty six new and “discrete” nation states came into existence. Surely, the individual states sought to some degree to differentiate themselves politically from their neighbors. Thus, the citizenship ascribed to new residents is, at least on some level, a political pre-natal indicator of what protection they receive from violence via the state. Conversely, the individual state, using violence as its power, seeks to protect and better its own citizens by taking advantage of any human who occupies the position of the foreigner. Indeed, any human who is not a citizen of this particular state.

Through political transactions, citizenship becomes synthesized on a cultural level throughout the majority of citizens. For example, the intense and consistent immigration flow from Northern Africa to Italy which constitutes a large part of the immigration crisis is routinely framed as an Italian problem. This framework, however, fails to acknowledge the larger scope of the migrant flow. Southern Italy and its islands are often seen by African immigrants as the door to not only Northern Italy, where capital and potential are greater, but to all of Europe. By treating the problem as a primarily (even solely) Italian problem, the system neglects the effect of citizenship through this binary relationship to the individual state. Essentially this binary relationship states that each state will produce a certain type of citizen, unique from the

citizens of all other states; in return, each individual pledges allegiance to the state that gave them identity, agency. Through this dilemma, the politics of inclusion and exclusion (Hindess 2000) become central to understanding the problem of citizenship.

The nations of the world can only be understood in relation to one another. The organization of those states, indeed what motivates them to respect one another, is located within a larger political system. The system that I am referring to is the state-system, which forces every individual nation to pursue the interests of their citizens against the interests of the rest of the human population. Because each state within the system is consistently pursuing its interests – as I have proved above, those interests need not be located abroad to affect the global community (especially the global impoverished) – the system now necessitates constant differentiation in treatment of citizens by their state and others. The current global political order and climate suggest that “such discrimination, in other words, is not only the result of decisions made by or on behalf of their own citizens but also a structural requirement of the modern state system” (Hindess 2000). Given this demand in global governance for discrimination against foreigners, it follows that difficulties attached to movement within one’s nation does not compare to the struggle of immigrants traveling across national borders. While in some countries, migration within borders can produce difficulties and create a substantial distance in social justice and equality, the basic protective laws of the state still apply to the individual in the new neighborhood. This is evidenced in the case of southern Italians traveling North to seek refuge from widespread poverty, which was the subject of the Italian “*verismo*” literary movement highlighting prominent existential thinkers and cultural analysts such as Luigi Pirandello and Luigi Capuana. These writers demonstrated through numerous works the

problems of the “Risorgimento” for Sicilians. Still, these authors demonstrated through realist style that Southern Italians may have had a more ambiguous relationship with the law as a form of protection, than did Northern Italians, yet still a far better rapport than what existed abroad.

Likewise, these dangers do not compare to the legal hostility on the behalf of state governments towards foreigners. That is, even in a hypothetical and ideal democracy, traveling from an impoverished south to the wealthy north may not rid the individual of their Southern, and thus impoverished identity. Frantz Fanon was not freed of his identity as a non-African, and Primo Levi was chained to a charge of false-identity by his fellow Jews regarding his comments on their actions in Lebanon. They will still be (to varying degrees) protected by the nation on account of their citizenship. Those traveling across international borders are not well protected when so frequently their individual interests come into conflict with the exclusive interests of the state. Where one migrating within any well-functioning nation state may be subject to social and political oppression, the rights they call upon as citizens to defend themselves are not an option for the foreigner. The foreigner is vulnerable.

In order to apply this scenario to the modern world, it makes the most sense to substitute this theoretical state for the most similar state today. While arguments that “Pax Americana is over” have been a hot topic in the 21st century, the United States today retains the greatest global influence. In 2015, the United States had 800 military bases in more than 70 countries – Britain Russia and France had a combined 30 (Vine). Surely this drastic difference in military approach must play a substantial part in coercing American influence around the globe. That is, American influence exists only through the violence that counteracts it and thus

stabilizes it's necessity. Thus, when critics of Pax Americana, such as Christopher Layne, of The Atlantic, say of American global leadership,

“Such protestations [referring to optimism from American leaders], however, cannot forestall real-world developments that collectively are challenging the post-1945 international order, often called *Pax Americana*, in which the United States employed its overwhelming power to shape and direct global events. That era of American dominance is drawing to a close as the country's relative power declines, along with its ability to manage global economics and security” (Layne 2012),

their focus does not appreciate the significance of the American military, her most violent branch.

Indeed, the United States military has maintained a substantial investment in Italy, particularly for Africa-focused operations in the South. Despite anti-military base protests from the Japanese in Okinawa, we still hold on to more than 30 bases. The United States' “temporary base” in Honduras has defied the Honduran constitution by persisting since 1982. The US military has edged into Africa; it continues to occupy Iraq and the greater Middle East, and in Southeast Asia the military establishes permanence under the guise of temporary “military exercises” (Vine 2015). Through military dominance, the United States is constantly a threat to the interests of foreign states and consequently their citizens. With this sort of dominance, it is no surprise that the subjects of the greatest scrutiny within the United States are often citizens of these regions living abroad in America. It follows again that much of the problems that are evidenced in the American state are very similar to those that handicap my theoretical

example. As the US seeks out the “interests of its citizens”, it often does so through militaristic means and in direct contrast to the interests of an extremely significant portion of the global population. Like the theoretical state, the United States greets the peoples of these states, and moreover these regions, with a degradation of humanity at our doorsteps. Thus, citizenship gains exponential importance in American grand strategy as it confines people to states. In order to contain the complexities of our involvement in Iraq, we aim to strengthen the state’s ability to contain its citizens and prevent them from supporting less acceptable societies that breed anti-American terrorism.

Perhaps the greatest neglect of citizenship discourse is the general failure of modern society to identify citizenship law as a primary constituent in the political evolution of societies into modern states. As borders continue to take on new natures as demanded by the state, the understanding of citizenship as a true benefit to the individual becomes less true for humanity as a whole. Within the political regime of the state system, citizenship will continue to pose challenging questions to a globalizing world. As long as development and modernity are romanticized, as a successful and sustainable mean to better citizens, there will persist a substantial majority of the global population that are exploited by the wealthy. These concerns, when coupled with humanitarian concerns that I voiced in this article, substantiate a serious dilemma in the modernizing world that is too easily overlooked and was in fact evidenced earlier in recent history by both Frantz Fanon and Primo Levi.

Conclusion

For Frantz Fanon, the decolonization of Africa can only be successful if it deliberately executes all of the culture that has been infected by the colonizers. This includes not only colonizers, but also the colonized elite who are irresistibly drawn towards the colonizer, with a natural ambition to take their place. Thus, Fanon believes that a successful decolonization will be characterized foremost by violence particular to the needs of the nation.

Decolonization was supposed to be a beautiful and enlightening experience for Africa. This is an idea the West has latched onto and refused to let go of in order to continue the exploitation of the global impoverished. Fanon's experience was one of subliminal yet bitter betrayal, void of much true nationality, as the colonized elite took advantage of all the colonial items left behind. Through the joint effort of the native intellectuals, peasants and lumpen-proletariat, there is a potential to revive the pre-colonial African cultures in its most fascinating particularities. Algeria is a model for other areas of decolonization. Fanon owns the statehood that the colonizers gave Algeria in its independence, but his bold ambition to revitalize pre-colonial African culture particular to distinct peoples would go unfulfilled today.

Primo Levi lived the life of the tragic survivor, the witness of disgrace and mastered the art of testimony. His suicide marked the end of a harrowing existence, one afforded humanity and then dehumanized – first slowly, through the racial tendencies, complacency, bliss, and then quickly with the rise of Fascism and ultimately in the chambers of the SS Lagers. Frantz Fanon never lived to see the failure of the modern world to appreciate his arguments for the historically oppressed. Still, their messages live on shadowing our every move, casting judgement on our morality, and always waiting to be satisfied.

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