**Notes for Lecture on Struggles for Self-Determination in the 21st Century**

**Introduction**

In this lecture, we will turn to focus on yet another momentous topic: namely, that of struggles for self-determination in the 21st century. We will again seek to gain traction on this vast intellectual terrain by structuring the discussion around two main questions, in relation to a set of core readings. The two questions around which the lecture will revolve are:

1. In what ways do the lessons and legacy of “anticolonial worldmaking” continue to influence and inform contemporary struggles for decolonization and/or self-determination?; and
2. Is the narrative of liberation associated with the radical projects of anti-imperialist self-determination by now hopelessly passé?

The core readings with whose arguments we shall closely engage include Adom Getachew’s compelling narrative about the contours and content of twentieth-century “anticolonial worldmaking” projects, with her focus on the black Anglophone world, and especially on the Anglophone Caribbean and African contexts, in her very recent and very important book, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination*. We will also treat in some depth the provocative argument advanced by Gary Wilder, specifically his attempt to recover the heterodox projects of anti-colonial self-determination, crucially conceived as self-determination without the need for state sovereignty, as articulated in the mid-twentieth century by two of the most emblematic figures of the Negritude movement, Aimé Césaire, from Martinique, some of whose ideas we treated last week, and Léopold Sédar Senghor, from Senegal, as depicted in Wilder’s widely-discussed but not always well-received 2015 book, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World*.

We will then hone in on three contemporary treatments of the legacy of Frantz Fanon, a canonical figure no doubt, whose elaboration and embodiment of the anti-colonial struggle for national liberation was indeed exemplary. We will try to consider the lessons we can learn from Fanon for struggles for self-determination in the twenty-first century. To this end, we will begin by contemplating David Scott’s challenging and sophisticated characterization of the narrative of emancipation to which Fanon ascribed as belonging to a historical era whose progressive aspirations, indeed, whose revolutionary and heroic vision of futurity, have by now been irredeemably defeated, forever subsumed or surpassed. We will then contrast Scott’s tragic tale with two attempts to resuscitate Fanon’s heroic hopes: the first, by George Ciccariello-Maher, in concrete relation to ongoing anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, and anti-racist struggles across the Americas, as elaborated in his 2017 theoretical tour de force, *Decolonizing Dialectics*; the second, by Glenn Coulthard, in concrete relation to the movement of Indigenous resurgence in Canada, in his much-acclaimed 2015 book, *Red Skins, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*.

**Anticolonial Worldmaking Remembered**

Let us begin by returning once more to contemplate what the twentieth-century project of anticolonial self-determination was all about. In her book *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination*, Adom Getachew powerfully depicts this project as one of “antisystemic worldmaking.” Getachew “draw[s] on the political thought” of a diverse array of thinkers and activists, including “Nnamdi Azikiwe, W.E.B. Du Bois, Michael Manley, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, George Padmore, and Eric Williams, [in order to] argue that decolonization was a project of reordering the world that sought to create a domination-free and egalitarian international order” (p.2). Getachew takes issue with what she calls “the standard view of decolonization as a moment of ***nation-building*** in which the anticolonial demand for self-determination culminated in the rejection of alien rule and the formation of nation-states” (p.2). Rather than this ***nation-building***dimension, a dimension which she does not deny, Getachew emphasizes instead that these anticolonial nationalist projects were simultaneously projects of ***worldmaking***. The protagonists of Getachew’s story, she persuasively contends, did not only seek to extend the doctrine of self-determination, to apply a fixed doctrine to their colonized nations; rather, they reinvented the doctrine altogether, so that it could “reach beyond its association with the nation.” Indeed, they would “insist that the achievement of this ideal required juridical, political, and economic institutions in the international realm that would secure non-domination” (p.2).

More specifically, Getachew points to three different moments – “the institutionalization of a right to self-determination at the United Nations, the formation of regional federations, and the demand for a New International Economic Order” – and she argues that, in each of these projects, “anticolonial nationalists sought to overcome the legal and material manifestations of unequal integration and inaugurate a postimperial world” (p.2). Getachew goes to great lengths to emphasize that, given the “global ambitions of anticolonial nationalism … the critique of nationalism as parochial and anti-universal” (p.3) in fact misses the mark. To the contrary, Getachew contends: “Rather than foreclosing internationalism, the effort to achieve national independence propelled a rethinking of state sovereignty, inspired a far-reaching reconstitution of the postwar international order, and grounded the twentieth century’s most ambitious vision of global redistribution” (p.3).

Getachew is careful to situate the worldmaking projects at the core of her narrative within a series of successive subversive and globally ambitious projects. The first of these – that is, the “first antisytemic worldmaking project” – she identifies as none other than the one that emerged in Europe in 1864, “with the founding of the International Workingmen’s Association,” with which Marx and Engels were of course associated. To render this lineage plausible, Getachew makes explicit reference to the famous passage from Chapter XXXI, on “The Genesis of the Industrial Capitalist,” in Volume One of Marx’s *magnum opus*, *Capital*, where (as we have seen last week) Marx eloquently insists: “The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signalised the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production.”

Getachew goes on to further paraphrase Marx, to the effect that, through such primitive accumulation, such “violent domination, the European bourgeoisie sought to create ‘a world after its own image’,” but that this movement in turn, dialectically, “produced the conditions of its own overcoming” (pp.3-4). The First International, Getachew surmises, “link[ed] together disparate political parties and trade unions against the growing consolidation of an international system of nation-states,” all the while advancing a bold vision, indeed, a secular prophecy, according to which the “global emancipation of labor … [was destined to] remake the world” (p.4).

Moreover, by the turn of the century, Getachew continues, “anti-imperialists of the colonized world radicalized [the] Marxist critique of empire’s political economy. They argued that Europe’s effort to produce ‘a world after its own image’ through imperial expansion was always a chimera that belied colonial dependencies and inequalities. Imperial integration did not create one world but instead entailed racialized differentiation” (p.4).

With the Bolshevik revolution, Getachew writes, the Third International came to be consummated, and for their part, “interwar anti-imperialists mobilized … to envision a reordering of the world that transcended imperial inequality and anticipated anti-imperial and often antistatist futures.” They “experimented with political forms [both] beyond and below the nation-state,” offering “visions of a world after empire that ranged from Marcus Garvey’s transnational black nation organized through the Universal Negro Improvement Association to [George] Padmore’s International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers, an arm of the Third International that fashioned black workers as the vanguard of the struggle against imperialism and capitalism” (p.4).

Though the worldmakers at the center of Getachew’s account were intimately familiar with, indeed, “traveled the circuits of interwar anti-imperial internationalisms,” by the time they matured and took the political stage the Third International had been dissolved, and “the mid-century collapse of empires coincided with the triumph of the nation-state. These conditions,” Getachew emphasizes, “set limits on the range of political possibilities for anticolonial worldmaking.” But at the same time, she also insists, “the emergence of the nation-state as the normative unit of the international order also provided occasion to rethink the conditions in which a system of states might overcome imperial hierarchy and domination. In this context,” she highlights, “nationalists argued that in the absence of legal, political, and economic institutions that realized an international principle of nondomination, the domestic politics of postcolonial states were constantly vulnerable to external encroachment and intervention.” As such, in her words: “**Worldmaking** was thus envisioned as the correlate to **nation-building**, and **self-determination** stood at their nexus” (p.4).

Moreover, this doctrine of self-determination had both a domestic and an international face. According to Getachew, “[i]n its domestic face, self-determination entailed a democratic politics of postcolonial citizenship through which the postcolonial state secured economic development and redistribution.” Furthermore, “[i]n its international face, self-determination created the external conditions for this domestic politics by transforming conditions of international hierarchy that facilitated dependence and domination” (pp.4-5).

In sum, Getachew paints a picture of anticolonial nationalism at odds with dominant depictions, as far from closed and provincial, but rather, profoundly ***internationalist*** in aspiration and orientation, demanding “a radical reconstitution of the international order” (p.5). To this end, she highlights how figures such as Azikiwe, Du Bois, Nkrumah, and Padmore “drew on a distinctive account of empire as enslavement,” and “a wholesale transformation of domestic and international politics understood as ***combined projects of nation-building and worldmaking***.” For them, “[t]he right to self-determination marked [but] the ***first step*** of this transformation” (pp.10-11).

Getachew explicitly contrasts her account of anticolonial self-determination to those of the likes of John Plamenatz and Rupert Emerson, who espoused a still-prevalent “diffusionist model,” according to which anticolonial self-determination was interpreted as in fact the culmination and consummation of “the global diffusion of Western ideals” (p.15). Indeed, as Emerson would contend: “through global conquest the dominant Western powers worked to reshape the world in their own image and thus roused against themselves the forces of nationalism which are both the bitterest enemies of imperialism and, perversely, its finest fruit” (quoted on p.16).

However, such “diffusionist” accounts would end up effectively denying the agency of those engaged in the anticolonial struggle, at the same time that they would portray the transition to colonial independence as somehow seamless, non-conflictual, even inevitable. Getachew, by contrast, contends that, “[r]ather than a seamless and inevitable transition from empire to nation, anticolonial nationalists refigured decolonization as a **radical rupture**—one that required a wholesale transformation of the colonized and a reconstitution of the international order” (p.17).

Seamless, even inevitable, transition versus contingent and radical rupture – these are the rival hermeneutic frameworks that Getachew frames for her readers, making the case throughout the course of the book that the latter interpretation is much more plausible. In making her case, Getachew draws inspiration from the early work of the prominent postcolonial scholar Partha Chatterjee, in particular, his 1986 book, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* At the outset of that important book, Chatterjee sets out to rebut the Eurocentric bias built into much of the scholarly literature on nationalism, which treats the emergence and nature of nationalist thought in the colonial world as if it were but mimicry, or mere imitation of a model that was, of course, created by European historical subjects, thereby robbing the colonized of agency, reducing their role to the repetition or playing out of scripts that were written elsewhere, by Europeans, for Europeans. An imitation, not surprisingly, that was doomed to fail once it had been transplanted to radically different circumstances.

For Chatterjee, as for Getachew, such Eurocentric scholarship on nationalism simply “fail[s] to reckon in any sustained way with the animating questions that shaped the trajectories of anticolonial nationalism.” The point is not to “identify an authenticity unsullied by Western ideals and practices,” but rather, “to capture the specificity of anticolonial nationalism.” Indeed, for Chatterjee, as for Getachew, that specificity consisted precisely in “its imposed relationship to Western modernity and the ways that anticolonial nationalists both challenged and accepted its terms.” Therefore, to understand anticolonial nationalism requires “highlight[ing] the ways that nationalists in the colonial world were responding to particular political, economic, and cultural conundrums.” In other words, it requires reconstructing their thought and their praxis “**on their own terms**” (p.27).

Rather than diffusion, imitation, or mimicry, in relation to the idea of the nation and the aspiration for national self-determination, Getachew persuasively contends, what was at work among anticolonial nationalists is more accurately portrayed as translation, reinvention, and re-appropriation. To this end, she also invokes the 1999 book of David Scott, *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Post-coloniality*, a very important work to which we shall return. Getachew takes from Scott the notion of a “problem space,” which he in turn adapts from R. G. Collingwood’s notion of the “logic of question and answer,” in combination with Quentin Skinner’s understanding of “reformulation.” Following Scott, Getachew contends that “the problem-space is a [useful] conceptual tool for conceiving of the way in which political thought and practice are responses to specific, historically situated questions” (p.77). A tool which allows us to “rethink the politics of appropriation as a creative intervention, responding to specific political questions and conditions” (p.77), in a manner more subtle and receptive to agency than such notions as diffusion or imitation would suggest.

In the book, Getachew provides a very illuminating, synoptic sketch of the trajectory of the doctrine of self-determination, whose irruption on the international scene she traces back, notably, to Vladimir Lenin and the Bolshevik Revolution. Getachew highlights how, after the Bolsheviks came to power in October of 1917, in a Russia that was thoroughly devastated by the so-called Great War, they began to call for, to demand, “‘a democratic peace between the nations, without annexations and indemnities and on the basis of the free self-determination of nations’.” This call on the part of Lenin’s revolutionary government, in turn, would have tremendous ramifications, with “observers among the Allied powers and elsewhere” fearing its impact upon the exploited and dispossessed around the world. In a word, “the Russian Revolution ‘seemed to have all the qualities of the opening act of a revolutionary drama shortly to be enacted all over Europe’. According to US secretary of state Robert Lansing, the revolution threatened the domestic stability of states and the prospects for a stable postwar world order” (pp.37-38).

The capitalist powers responded accordingly, with American President Woodrow Wilson, alongside the South African Jan Smuts, coming to embrace the doctrine of self-determination, only to recast it in the context of the emergent institutional order of the League of Nation, as a racially differentiated principle, in the service of Empire. This is what Getachew means by referring to the post-War “Wilsonian moment” as a “counterrevolutionary moment.” And she goes on to emphasize the more general methodological point that “***the principle of self-determination must be excavated through careful attention to the contexts in which it emerges and the uses for which it is mobilized***” (p.40).

Flash forward to the end of the Second World War, and we come to another moment of recasting, of reinvention, in which “anticolonial nationalists [would] appropriate the principle of self-determination [and] reinvent its meaning through a novel critique of imperialism that centered on the problems of slavery and racial hierarchy” (p.74). In terms of the logic of question and answer, as Getachew frames it, anticolonial nationalist “framed empire as enslavement and conceived of the right to self-determination as the response to this problem.” In other words, “[i]n this pairing of question and answer, the anticolonial account of self-determination was invented” (p.77).

Even so, Getachew is also careful to insist that her argument not be interpreted in too idealist a vein. To this end, she emphasizes that “the problem-space does not simply describe the ideational context in which question and answer are paired. It also includes the institutional and political backdrop that enables certain kinds of answers while disabling others. In other words, question and answer are linked, but those linkages are governed less by an inevitable logic and instead articulated on a historically contingent stage” (p.77).

More concretely, she proceeds to specify: “The right to self-determination emerged as the answer not because it was the only logical or available response. Instead, specific historical conditions helped to elevate this particular response. On the one hand, metropolitan intransigence vis-à-vis alternative demands for equal political and economic rights as well as institutional integration put forward largely by African labor movements laid the groundwork for nationalist calls for self-determination … On the other hand, the UN, the emerging language of human rights, and the Cold War created institutional and discursive openings for the pairing of empire as enslavement with the right to self-determination” (pp.77-78).

The institutional and discursive openings for the anticolonial reinvention of self-determination were not, of course, unlimited. Instead, the context was one of both “possibility and constraint,” Getachew claims, invoking the eminent historian Frederick Cooper’s “felicitous phrase” to this effect (p.79). And in terms of contextual constraints, most significantly, “the more radical demands around economic self-determination … would have to be set aside in the institutionalization of [the] right to self-determination” (p.79).

Yet again, this right to self-determination was conceived by anticolonial nationalists as but a first step. And Getachew spends a good deal of time in her book sketching the projects, the ultimately failed institutional experiments, of regional federation and international economic redistribution, intended as complements and counterparts necessary for approximating substantive sovereign equality and non-domination in the international order.

Getachew ends her book by claiming that “we live in the shadow of self-determination’s fall” (p.180), in a post-Cold War, neoliberal, and neo-Imperialist era, characterized by “a striking return to and defense of a hierarchical international order” (p.179). Yet, Getachew contends, all is not lost. In her words: “it would be a mistake to collapse the partiality and eventual decline of a set of languages and strategies for making a world after empire with the demise of the moral and political vision that looked forward to an egalitarian and domination-free world.” Indeed, Getachew insists, “the central lessons of anticolonial worldmaking— that hierarchy rather than sovereign equality structures the international order, that nondomination must be a central principle of a postimperial international order, and that a commitment to nondomination enhances rather than detracts from internationalism” — are more relevant than ever, and most certainly can still “inform our own projects of worldmaking” (pp.35-36).

To this end, she ends the book on an unabashedly hopeful, even optimistic note. “The fall of self-determination,” she writes, “marks not only a dead end but also a staging ground for reimaging that future. In the Black Atlantic world, from which the worldmakers of this book emerged, intimations of a new language are afoot in the Movement for Black Lives, the Caribbean demand for reparations for slavery and genocide, and South African calls for a social and economic decolonization. Like the worldmakers of decolonization, these political formations have returned to the task of rethinking our imperial past and present in the service of imagining an anti-imperial future” (p.181).

**Still Freedom Time?**

Let us now turn to consider Gary Wilder’s fascinating 2015 book, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World*, which also focuses on twentieth-century projects of anticolonial self-determination – though these were unrealized projects of self-determination, and crucially, they conceived of decolonization and self-determination differently, as not needing state sovereignty. More specifically, Wilder tells the story of decolonizing projects that might have been, of the “unrealized attempts by French African and Antillean legislators and intellectuals during the Fourth and Fifth Republics to invent” different forms of decolonization. At the center of his narrative are the figures of “Aimé Césaire from Martinique and Léopold Sédar Senghor from Senegal who, between 1945 and 1960, served as public intellectuals, party leaders, and deputies in the French National Assembly. Their projects proceeded from a belief that late imperialism had created conditions for new types of transcontinental political association.”

Wilder emphasizes that both Césaire and Senghor “hoped to overcome colonialism without falling into the trap of national autarchy.” Indeed, he insists: “Their constitutional initiatives were based on immanent critiques of colonialism and republicanism, identifying elements within each that pointed beyond their existing forms. They not only criticized colonialism from the standpoint of constitutional democracy and self- government; they also criticized unitary republicanism from the standpoint of decentralized, interdependent, plural, and transnational features of imperialism itself.” Wilder continues: “In different ways Césaire and Senghor hoped to fashion a legal and political framework that would recognize the history of interdependence between metropolitan and overseas peoples and protect the latter’s economic and political claims on a metropolitan society their resources and labor had helped to create” (pp.1-2).

In the book, Wilder thus tries to get us to question the automatic or necessary equation between decolonization and national self-determination, on the one hand, and nation-state sovereignty, on the other. He does so by “seek[ing] to historicize the postwar logic that reduced colonial emancipation to national liberation and self- determination to state sovereignty.”

Wilder notes that “[h]istorical accounts typically focus on stories of confrontations between national states losing overseas possessions and oppressed nations winning independence,” and that scholarly “[d]ebates often focus on decolonization’s causes, mechanisms, or outcomes as well as the so- called transfer of power. However important,” he contends, “these discussions tend to treat the **meaning** of decolonization as self- evident by reducing colonial emancipation to national liberation. Underlying such dyadic accounts,” he argues, “is the assumption that European states ***had***empires but were not ***themselves*** empires” (p.4).

What does Wilder mean by, and what is at stake in, such a claim? To get a sense of this, it is worth considering the critique of Dipesh Chakrabarty’s influential post-colonial manifesto, *Provincializing Europe*, that Wilder elaborates in his book’s first chapter, on “Unthinking France, Rethinking Decolonization.” Wilder begins this critique by acknowledging that “[u]nderstandable fears of totalizing explanation and Eurocentric evaluation have led a generation of scholars to insist on the singularity of black, African, and non- Western forms of thought.” Even so, he contends, **“**we now need to be less concerned with unmasking universalisms as covert European particularisms than with challenging the assumption that the universal is European property” (pp.9-10). And he goes on to insist: “My aim is not to provincialize Europe but to deprovincialize Africa and the Antilles” (p.10).

Wilder likewise recognizes the force of Chakrabarty’s “landmark” argument “that supposedly universal categories were in fact produced within culturally particular European societies” (p.10). Indeed, he even admits that “Césaire’s and Senghor’s multiplex reflections on Negritude resonate in many ways with Chakrabarty’s argument about the existence of incommensurable forms of being and thinking that are often ungraspable by the rationalist protocols of modern historiography” (p.10). And yet, he goes on to forcefully contend: “But their thinking also provides a perspective from which to question Chakrabarty’s critique of general, abstract, and universal thought from the standpoint of local, concrete, and particular lifeworlds. It reveals how the ‘provincializing Europe’ argument depends partly on a set of territorial assumptions about lifeworlds; how it tends to collapse people, place, and consciousness and to ethnicize forms of life; how it equates the abstract and universal with ‘Europe’ and the concrete and lived with India or Bengal” (p.10).

Moreover, Wilder admits that “Chakrabarty argues persuasively that there is an intrinsic connection between forms of life and forms of thought,” but he nevertheless chastises Chakrabarty for not proceeding to “inquire directly into the scales of life worlds in relation to which thinking is often forged.” Indeed, according to Wilder, Chakrabarty “seems reluctant to recognize that large social formations and political fields, such as empires, are also concrete places” (p.10).

Wilder further contends that his argument, which takes empire as the unit of analysis, “pushes against a recent tendency in comparative history and colonial studies to insist upon multiple, alternative, or countermodernities,” on the grounds that such a tendency would “grant to Europe possession of a modernity which was always already translocal” (p.11). Doing so, he contends, comes at both an analytical and a political cost. In his words: “What is the analytic and political cost of assigning to Europe such categories or experiences as self-determination, emancipation, equality, justice, and freedom, let alone abstraction, humanity, or universality? Why confirm the story that Europe has long told about itself? Modern, concrete universalizing processes (like capitalism) were not confined to Europe. Nor were concepts of universality (or concepts that became universal) simply imposed by Europeans or imitated by non- Europeans. They were elaborated relationally and assumed a range of meanings that crystallized concretely through use” (p.11).

Wilder continues by noting that “Chakrabarty recognizes that the intellectual heritage of Enlightenment thought is now global and that he writes from within this inheritance.” Wilder points to the “eloquent reminder” with which Chakrabarty concludes, “that ‘provincializing Europe cannot ever be a project of shunning European thought. For at the end of European imperialism, European thought is a gift to us all. We can talk of provincializing it only in an anticolonial spirit of gratitude’” (p.11). And so he acquits Chakrabarty of any false charge of being “a provincial or nativist thinker.” Even so, Wilder goes on to insist that Chakrabarty’s “conception of gratitude concedes too much at the outset— to Europe as wealthy benefactor and to a liberal conception of private property.” Wilder, by contrast, contends that modernity was, in fact, “a global process” to begin with, and that, as such, “its concepts are a common legacy that already belong to all humanity; they are not Europe’s to give.” Indeed, he concludes, “[t]hey are the product of what Susan Buck- Morss has recently called ‘universal history’, the ‘gift of the past’, and ‘communism of the idea’” (p.11).

In taking Césaire’s and Senghor’s unfulfilled projects of self-determination without state sovereignty seriously, Wilder’s account attempts a “deterritorializ[ation of] social thought,” a decoloniz[ation of] intellectual history” (p.11), even a “globaliz[ation of] critical theory” (p.258). His aim is not to get us to “valorize non-European forms of knowledge;” rather, it is to get us to “question the presumptive boundaries of ‘France’ or ‘Europe’ themselves” (p.11).

Humanism, cosmopolitanism, and universalism are categories in which Césaire and Senghor were certainly interested, Wilder insists. But more significantly still, these figures tried to “reclaim, rethink, and refunction [such] categories by overcoming the abstract registers in which they were conventionally formulated,” hoping “to realize them through intercontinental political formations” (p.11).

According to Wilder, Cesaire and Senghor sought to do more than just “secure a favorable place for their peoples within the existing international order; they sought to transcend it.” Theirs was not “simply a pursuit of sovereignty;” it was a vision of “unprecedented arrangements for dwelling and thinking through which humanity could realize itself more fully.” In Wilder’s evocative words: “From the evanescent opening of the postwar moment they anticipated a new era of world history in which human relations would be reorganized on the basis of complementarity, mutuality, and reciprocity. Through these novel political arrangements, humanity might overcome the alienating antinomies that had impoverished the quality of life in overseas colonies and European metropoles” (p.12).

Like Getachew, Wilder also claims to takes inspiration in the work of David Scott, whose important 2004 book, *Conscripts of Modernity*, Wilder describes as both “powerfully challeng[ing] the nationalist orthodoxies of anticolonial thinking” and centering “historical temporality as an analytic and political problem.” Wilder flags in particular Scott’s contention that “what ought to be at stake in historical inquiry is a critical appraisal of the present itself, not the mere reconstruction of the past.” In such a vein, Wilder understands his own work of historical recovery to be directly related to “the demands of our political present” (p.15).

To this end, Wilder employs and tweaks Scott’s “provocative notion of ‘***futures past***’,” which Scott himself “adapts from the historian Reinhart Kosellek.” While for Scott, in an argument to which we shall return, “revolutionary anticolonialism’s dream of national sovereignty became a historically superseded and politically obsolete future past after failing to secure political freedom for colonized peoples and can no longer meaningfully animate emancipatory projects in our radically transformed conditions,” for Wilder the point is somewhat different. He is “not primarily concerned with futures [past] whose promise faded after imperfect implementation nor with those that corresponded to a world, or to hopes, that no longer exist.” Instead, he is concerned to recover “futures [past] that were once imagined but never came to be, alternatives that might have been and whose unrealized emancipatory potential may now be recognized and reawakened as durable and vital legacies” (pp.15-16).

Wilder emphasizes the dual nature of decolonization: on the one side, it represented “an emancipatory awakening of peoples;” and simultaneously, on the other, “a heteronomous process of imperial restructuring.” Yet most actors and agencies, on both sides of the imperial divide tended to “share the assumption that self- determination meant state sovereignty.”

Césaire and Senghor, by contrast, refused to “reduce decolonization to national independence.” This refusal on their part, Wilder argues, “derived from their convictions about the difference between formal liberation and substantive freedom.” Moreover, there was both a pragmatic and an ethical dimension to this refusal. According to Wilder: “Pragmatically, they believed that autarchic national solutions could not adequately address the problem of colonial freedom in an epoch of global interdependence. Ethically, they believed that the history of imperial entanglement allowed them to claim the legacies, resources, and rights supposedly reserved for metropolitans” (pp.241-242).

In different ways, Césaire and Senghor both called for the radical reconfiguration of political relations within the French Empire, for its transformation into a multi-national, democratic federation. Wilder urges us to imagine what might have been had such a vision been realized. He contends: “African *sans papiers* in metropolitan France would not be foreigners demanding hospitality but citizens whose rights of mobility, family reunification, social security, and political participation were legally protected. Africans would not be outsiders appealing for economic aid from a foreign French state nor targets of dehumanizing humanitarianism. Violations of their human rights could be adjudicated in a federal justice system rather than depend on the weak ethical norms of international law or the good will of powerful nations. West African peoples would be integral members of an expanded European Union” (p.244).

Even more forcefully, Wilder sums up his argument by insisting that “the nationalist logic of decolonization has contributed to dispossession; state sovereignty has neither been a recipe for self- determination in postcolonial Africa nor a guarantor of basic rights for Africans in the metropolitan postcolony” (p.246). As such, a radical rethinking of what self-determination would require, indeed, a decoupling of the ideal from the paradigm of nation-state sovereignty, would seem in order. Césaire and Senghor stand out as untimely thinkers, whose dissent from what came to be the hegemonic program and parameters of anti-colonial nationalism in their own era, emerges again today, capable of speaking directly to the dilemmas of our era, in which the promises of nation-state sovereignty have come to ring increasingly hollow.

As Wilder eloquently insists: “The current situation … presents the same structural dilemma that Senghor and Césaire confronted in the postwar opening. Changing historical conditions have challenged the long- standing assumption that territorial sovereignty is the necessary framework for political freedom. These include the close of the Cold War, the dismantling of social welfare states, the failure of Bandung development states, and the transformation of slum dwellers, immigrants, and stateless refugees around the world into permanent surplus populations. For larger masses of people, decisions by distant, invisible, or unaccountable actors circumscribe their life chances without any mechanisms for redressing harms, let alone participating in defining desirable futures.” Meanwhile, “[r]esponsibilities for global governance are ceded to unelected international bodies, transnational organizations, technical experts, and private corporations. The world community seems unable to create frameworks for self-management adequate to the transnational scale through which decisions about global politics, human futures, and environmental sustainability must be made. Formal independence cannot guarantee substantive freedom in most postcolonial societies” (pp.251-252).

In sum, we seem to be at a conjuncture in which self-determination must take the form of some kind of transnational, if not postnational, democracy. Indeed, we can no longer afford to conflate self-determination with nation-state sovereignty. And in this respect, “[t]he proleptic writings of Césaire and Senghor” emerge again as most relevant today. As Wilder puts the point, their writings “seem to proceed according to Frederic Jameson’s suggestion that ‘utopias in fact come to us as barely audible messages from a future that may never come into being’. They also call to mind Benjamin’s inverse injunction to listen carefully for ‘a sort of theological whispered intelligence dealing with matters discredited and obsolete’. Césaire and Senghor did precisely this when they identified within an already superseded empire the elements of an unprecedented federal democracy … [their] own unrealized programs for self-determination without state sovereignty” can thus be regarded “as discredited and obsolete matters, [in Benjamin’s sense], waste products of a perishing present, [but] from which new futures might [just] be imagined” (pp.258-259).

**An End to the Narrative of Liberation?**

Both Getachew and Wilder find inspiration in the work of David Scott, drawing on his adaptation and employment of the notions of the “problem-space” and of “futures past,” respectively. Scott is one of the most eloquent advocates of a postcolonial line of argument, according to which the narrative of liberation that was articulated by anticolonial thinkers and activists can no longer command our allegiance. Indeed, in his 1999 book, *Refashioning Futures. Criticism after Postcoloniality*, Scott argues that the “problem-space” in which the anticolonial project made sense and operated has been rendered irredeemably obsolete.

That problem-space, Scott contends, “had, of course, been defined by the demand for political decolonization, the demand for the overthrow of colonial power.” Its principle goal, “the achievement of political sovereignty” (p.11). But formal sovereignty did not mean emancipation. To the contrary, according to Scott, “the colonial” managed to persist “in the heart of sovereignty,” a state of affairs which was originally “theorized as neocolonalism and cultural imperialism,” and which later “enabled post-coloniality to problematize colonialism as a discursive formation enduring into the present” (p.14).

Even more fundamentally, Scott argues, “[w]ith the collapse of the Bandung and socialist projects and with the … hegemony of a neoliberal globalization,” it became “no longer clear” how to even think of an alternative to Western power, “much less defend” such an alternative (p.14). In a word, as Scott would have it, “the epistemological assumptions that [had] held [the anticolonial project] together and guaranteed the salience of its emancipatory hopes—assumptions about history, about culture, politics, resistance, freedom, subjectivity— have been steadily eroded by the labor of anti-metaphysical and anti-teleological strategies of criticism” (p.199).

Scott holds up Frantz Fanon’s 1961 classic, *The Wretched of the Earth*, published just before his “untimely death,” as “[o]ne of the great texts through which [the anticolonial] narrative of liberation [was] articulated.” Indeed, Scott contends, “[m]ore than any other work on the cultural-politics of decolonization (on what Ngugi would summarize in his memorable phrase, ‘decolonising the mind’), this book captures the spirit of militant insurgency that characterized the refusal of colonial subordination and tutelage and the unequivocal demand for absolute political sovereignty that marked the Bandung years” (p.198).

Yet, Scott insists, “standing where we are, we no longer look into the same future that Fanon did ... We do not because we cannot. And we cannot,” he argues, “because the shift that [has] tak[en] place around us [has] alter[ed] the very enabling/disabling conditions of possibility of political criticism itself. We stand,” in Scott’s judgment, “in an historical predicament in which the old languages of Left politics—that is to say, the oppositional languages of emancipation—are no longer effective” (p.199). Or put otherwise, “standing where we do … after colonialism, we do not share … politico-epistemic space with Fanon.” To drive the point home more bluntly, Scott adds, quite caustically: “***It is, I believe, a romance, the self-indulgent nostalgia of late modernity, to read Fanon as though we were about to join him in the trenches of the anticolonial national liberation struggle***” (p.204).

What does Scott mean by the “narrative of liberation,” of which he interprets *The Wretched of the Earth* to be “perhaps the most profound instance or elaboration?” In Scott’s words: “By a ‘narrative of liberation’ I mean a more or less structured story that progressively links (through such generative tropes as Repression, Alienation, Consciousness, Awakening, Resistance, Struggle, and Realization) a past and a present of Domination to an anticipated future of Freedom. A narrative of liberation, on this view, works through the construction of a certain economy of discourse, the central elements of which are not hard to identify: it operates by constructing, for instance, a teleological rhythm in which the various moments and maneuvers that constitute the struggle are identified in their succession; by constructing a repressive power that denies the subjugated their essential humanity, and whose absolute overcoming constitutes the singular objective and destiny of the struggle; by constructing a subject who moves from alienated dehumanization to self-realization; and by constructing a ‘beyond’ in which there emerges a new and unencumbered humanity” (p.201).

Scott walks us through, step-by-step, how he sees this narrative to play itself out in Fanon’s canonical text, which traces “the nature and the path of decolonization.” Fanon’s story begins with a depiction of the colonized as “physically and psychologically dehumanized.” The response to this situation is at first “inchoate” – “tak[ing] the form of more or less disorganized violence and forms of ritual possession and magic.” A good deal “of this violence is initially” horizontal, “directed inward, at the colonized themselves.” Even so, “these outbursts are important for at least two reasons. First, because they allow the colonized a concrete outlet for their pent-up rage; and second, because they signal to the colonizer that there is too much disorder to continue ruling in the old way.” This in turn leads to the undertaking of a “‘familiar dialogue concerning values’ … between certain colonized intellectuals and the colonizer.” As Scott summarizes: “The natives are, however, not persuaded by this discourse about morality. Eventually the native learns that the settler is not the superhuman he makes himself out to be. His glance ceases to turn the native to stone. As the disorder grows, moreover, a section of the intelligentsia goes over to the side of the people. The aggressivity and violence of the natives are rechanneled away from themselves and given a political, and specifically anticolonial, focus. This is a turning point. It is, for the colonized, the moment of Consciousness; the moment of Awakening—the creation of what one might call an anticolonial Will. The criminal is turned into an activist; the lumpen becomes a militant. Moreover, through this canalization of the violence of the colonized there also begins a period of psychic healing, the reconstitution of the alienated self of the colonized. The ‘New Man’ of whom Fanon speaks begins to emerge” (p.202).

Scott urges not an outright dismissal, but nevertheless a fundamental “repositioning of Fanon’s criticisms and hopes,” one that rids them of “the ‘alienation model’ of the narrative of liberation in which they [were originally] formulated” (p.200). A repositioning that at the same time allows us to guard against the allegedly “unreflexive … idea of an essential native subject” embedded in “the Fanonian story” (p.205).

On the one hand, Scott insists that “several decades into the project of constructing the political forms of our national sovereignty (sovereignty for which people like Fanon paid dearly), our questions cannot continue to be those of realizing that threshold” (p.204). Indeed, according to Scott: “A Fanonian politics of national liberation is only intelligible when the currency of nation-state sovereignty has value as an unattained aspiration that counts in global politics.” But today, he continues: “not only do we inhabit the normative terrain of that threshold (in the sense that an anticolonial argument does not have much work to do to produce effectively its legitimacy), but simultaneously the currency value of that national sovereignty has vastly declined.” Therefore, he concludes, “[t]o gain any sort of critical purchase, our oppositional questions, the revised questions about our futures, have rather to be those of unsettling the settled settlements of this very postcolonial sovereignty itself” (pp.202-204).

On the other hand, Scott also contends that there is an assumption “[i]n the Fanonian story … that the colonized are alienated from a harmonious identity; that this alienation is fostered by colonial institutions that repress the colonized self and prevent the colonized people from achieving a higher and unifying consensus.” Indeed, Scott argues, for Fanon “[t]he redemptive project of overcoming colonialism is to return the natives to themselves. But,” Scott goes on to ask, “who exactly are these ‘natives’? What is their gender? What is their ethnicity? What is their class? What is their sexual orientation? What are their modes of self-fashioning?” After posing such questions, Scott proceeds to stress his “worry … that the Fanonian story underwrites too much—or gives too much space to—the normalized centrality of a specific identity, even though an identity argued to have suffered particular injuries under colonial domination” (p.204).

There’s a lot to digest in Scott’s sophisticated critique of the narrative of liberation, but the upshot of it all is that, for him, the dream of human emancipation “is over” (p.223). Or perhaps not quite. Scott ends up employing Foucault as a “strategic supplement,” if not corrective to, or “dialectical displacement of” Fanon. Scott argues that we should stay faithful to Fanon in certain respects – namely, to Fanon’s “unequivocal refusal of the ‘European game’ of colonial and neocolonial dependence and mimicry,” as well as to his “responsiveness to the subaltern demand for a future constructed in its own vernacular image,” and even to his “insistence that the last shall be first.” Nonetheless, he emphasises that such a Fanonian register of affirmation should be supplemented by a Foucaultian reminder about the exclusions inevitably entailed in the pursuit of affirmative political demands. In other words, he urges a Foucaultian caution against the “tendency toward normalization,” and a Foucaultian sensitivity to “the Otherness at the heart of order, [and] the difference that identity invariably denies” (p.219).

**Jumpstarting the Dialectic of Recognition**

But there are other theorists who are not quite so ready to put the narrative of liberation to rest. George Ciccariello-Maher, for one, in his 2017 book, *Decolonizing Dialectics*, who makes ample use of Fanonian lessons of precisely the kind that Scott would condemn to the past, in order to illuminate the contours and clarify the stakes of a variety of contemporary struggles for self-determination, ranging from the Movement for Black Lives in the United States to the battle for socialism in Venezuela. Ciccariello-Maher takes inspiration from the revolutionary life and work of Fanon, whom he considers a kindred spirit, while managing to acquit himself quite convincingly of Scott’s post-modern charge of indulging in a late-modern romance of nostalgia, even as he unequivocally urges a return to the barricades.

Ciccariello-Maher brings into focus the centrality and continuing relevance of the call to combative confrontration, the articulation of a decolonized dialectic of revolutionary struggle, by Fanon. By dialectics, Ciccariello-Maher means “the dynamic movement of conflictive oppositions” (p.2). In two successive chapters, dedicated to Fanon’s two most influential books, his 1952 *Black Skins, White Masks*, and his 1961 *Wretched of the Earth*, respectively, Ciccariello-Maher elaborates a quite persuasive case for the lessons to be learned from an unabashedly liberationist reading of Fanon as a decolonizing dialectician.

In a chapter titled, “Towards a New Dialectics of Race,” Ciccariello-Maher skilfully sketches a portrait of Fanon as a man “driven repeatedly backward, forced to seek a new outlet for his humanity in combative rupture.” As Ciccariello-Maher insightfully frames Fanon’s response to his predicament: “Knowing full well the irrationality of race, he was left with no alternative but to embrace Black identity and to embrace it fully—mythically and violently—in the hope that doing so would provide racialized subjects with the necessary ‘ontological resistance’ to jumpstart the Hegelian dialectic of recognition” (p.50).

Ciccariello-Maher depicts Fanon as determined to “forge ahead to reformulate and ultimately decolonize Hegel’s dialectic of lord and bondsman, master and slave,” all too aware of the need for “‘violent’ self-assertion” by those racialized as Black to stand the chance to escape from the “zone of non-being” to which they have been condemned by a racist order (pp.53-54). In Ciccariello-Maher’s felicitous turn of phrase: “For equality to be contemplated, for recognition to even appear on the horizon, racialized subjects must first storm the fortified heaven of Being itself” (p.58).

Ciccariello-Maher is at pains to emphasize, contra the charge of teleology levelled by the likes of Scott against the narrative of liberation as articulated by Fanon, that, in fact, Fanon’s version of decolonized dialectics is a “dialectics stripped of all certainty” (p.58). It is a dialectics that effectively “center[s] the radical assertion of Black identity in the present at the expense of all determinism, teleology, and preemptive reconciliation” (p.53).

The ontological violence entailed in processes of racialisation must be met with counterviolence. As Ciccariello-Maher eloquently puts the point: “For the racialized subject, self-consciousness as human requires counterviolence against ontological force. In a historical situation marked by the denial of reciprocity and condemnation to nonbeing, that reciprocity can only result from the combative self-assertion of identity. It is only through such conflict that Black subjects can transcend the barriers — internal and external — that exclude them from the fullness of Being, at the juncture of the in-itself and the for-itself. The task of this violence is therefore twofold: internally, to ‘disalienate’ the Black subject even prior to any physically ‘violent’ act, by turning away from the master; and externally, to **appear**, which will inevitably be perceived as violence to the prevailing system — a perception that is itself necessary for appearance to become violence to that system, and for the former master to eventually turn toward the former slave for recognition” (p.63).

But for Ciccariello-Maher, Fanon’s contribution is not limited to the “discover[y] – against Hegel—that a decolonized dialectic needs to be jumpstarted to overcome an absence of reciprocity from the outset.” Instead, Fanon would also come soon to “foresee several” further dangers “looming on the horizon that threatened to deactivate and short-circuit what had scarcely been set into motion.” Prominent among these – a problem, Ciccariello-Maher stresses, that “still very much plagu[es] us today – is the false universal posed by formal emancipation and formal equality” (p.63). Ciccariello-Maher contends that Fanon could see how “emancipation — and formal equality more broadly speaking — reinforced ontological hierarchy by masking it beneath a false universalism that became white supremacy’s best alibi.” But “from a dialectical perspective,” Ciccariello-Maher continues, “for this alibi to function on both the objective and subjective levels, for it to deactivate struggles and freeze dialectical movement at the level of the merely formal, something essential must have been lacking from the emancipation process itself. That something was struggle” (p.64). Indeed, to this end, “Fanon draws upon the centrality Hegel ascribes to struggle for subjective transformation as leverage to insist that freedom cannot be given, but must instead be fought for” (p.65).

Another crucial problem that Fanon foresees – which again speaks to the radically uncertain, non-teleological nature of Fanon’s liberationist narrative – “is the danger of a premature (and Eurocentric) closure of the dialectic” (pp.63-64). This he distils from his confrontation with the great existentialist philosopher, Sartre, who had penned what was on the surface an adulatory preface titled “Black Orpheus,” for an anthology of African and Caribbean poets, edited by Léopold Senghor. In the preface, Sartre had applauded the Negritude movement, and interpreted its appearance on the scene as a moment in a progressive movement towards human emancipation, in which its necessary particularism, its single-minded focus on race, was destined to be subsumed within the allegedly universal category of class and dynamic of class struggle.

“‘Negritude appears’, writes Sartre, ‘as a minor moment of a dialectical progression: the theoretical and practical affirmation of white supremacy is the thesis; the position of negritude as the antithetical value is the moment of negativity. But this negative moment is not sufficient in itself, and these blacks who use it know this perfectly well; they know that it aims at preparing the synthesis or realization of the human in a raceless society’. Sartre then goes on to conclude that ‘negritude is [thus] for destroying itself, it is a passage and not an outcome, a means and not an ultimate end’” (Coulthard, pp.138-139).

Fanon interprets this argument by his erstwhile comrade Sartre as more than mere condescension; he interprets it as outright betrayal. “[T]his born Hegelian,” retorts Fanon, in reference to Sartre, “had forgotten that consciousness needs to lose itself in the night of the absolute, the only condition for attaining self-consciousness” (Quoted on p.67). Ciccariello-Maher deciphers this somewhat enigmatic response by highlighting “the open-endedness of Fanon’s own approach” (p.54), indeed, the “radical unpredictability of Fanon’s dialectics” (p.69). He contends that Fanon is here accusing Sartre of, undialectically, having “forgotten that no dialectic can operate in a preordained manner without short-circuiting the very process itself” (p.68). For after all, in the case at hand, “why would someone embrace an identity already deemed transitory from the outset?” (p.68).

Fanon, Ciccariello-Maher concludes, was utterly devastated by “Sartre’s undialectical betrayal.” “‘Not yet white, no longer black, I was damned [damné]’,” Fanon would write, thereby stumbling upon “the [very] concept for which he would become most famous: that of the damné, the condemned, or the ‘wretched’ of his last book, for which a repentant Sartre would himself pen the preface” (p.69).

If Fanon, unlike Sartre, is therefore adamant in his insistence upon the open-ended, uncertain nature of the outcome of the struggle, he nevertheless converges with Sartre in his existentialist emphasis on the theme of liberation as self-creation. “In the world I am heading for,” Fanon would insist, “I am endlessly creating myself” (quoted on p.70).

But whereas in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon’s focus is on the process of individual disalienation and self-realization, by the time he came to write *The Wretched of the Earth*, in the last months of his life, Fanon had come to believe that “individual disalienation meant little in a profoundly sick world where ‘everyday reality is a tissue of lies, of cowardice, of contempt for man’” (p.77). Accordingly, in 1956, he had resigned from his post at the head of the Psychiatric Hospital of Blida-Joinville in colonial Algeria, a post he had taken up in 1953, and had embraced instead the full-throttled commitment to the life of a revolutionary, ensconced in Algeria’s anti-colonial struggle.

*The Wretched of the Earth*, though it is much more than that, is undoubtedly most famous for its first chapter, “Concerning Violence,” in which Fanon defends the armed struggle against the colonizer, justifying the generative power of anti-colonial counter-violence, as a cleansing force, capable of “harden[ing] decolonial-national identity and mak[ing] possible the leap from a frozen Manichaeism to a properly dialectical logic of dynamic oppositions, generating not merely the rupture of the existing, but also a process of open-ended transformation toward a new decolonized universal,” as Ciccariello-Maher depicts it (p.84).

In a word, Fanon sees such violence as “the essential precondition for national identity” in the colonial context, “stand[ing] at the very center of the dialectic of decolonization as its only source of motion” (p.86). Again, Fanon is quick to emphasise the centrality of struggle: “Through the struggle, ‘the people realize that life is an endless combat’, and that combat is no more and no less than the motor force of an equally endless dialectics” (p.95).

The uncertain, open-ended nature of Fanon’s dialectic, is again most apparent. For as “Fanon lay dying he” glimpsed a “new danger looming that threatened to halt [the] motion and close off the emergence of national consciousness … The danger was a dual one: threatening to trap the young nation within the simplistic nationalism that had been its initial motor, while harnessing it globally into the neo-colonial continuity of the capitalist world-system” (p.91). A dual danger which, in turn, leads him to project “his dialectic outward onto the global plane” (p.95).

Even so, as Ciccariello-Maher insists: “Fanon’s leap to the global is … not characterized by an immediate embrace of the universal. Far from it: he displaces analysis to the global level at the same time that he defers the universal even further into the future, deepening the oppositions at the heart of a global dialectics while insisting on the indeterminate open-endedness of that process” (p.99).

Moreover, Ciccariello-Maher continues: “Fanon concludes *Wretched* with a striking condemnation of ‘mimicry’ that has powerfully dialectical implications” (p.99). For Fanon, “with Europe as antithesis and humanity marking a distant universal horizon, the only path forward is ‘ourselves’, the revolutionary assertion of decolonial identity emerging from the zone of nonbeing to press the dialectic into motion. This,” Cicciarello Maher concludes, “is a decolonized global dialectic that walks the fine line between essentialism and the universal, recognizing both European accomplishments and European crimes” (p.101). Such a decolonized dialectic effectively “displaces the narrow European dialectic by way of a ‘decolonial turn’ in which the national unit of analysis is no longer sufficient—if it ever was— while the decolonial nation assumes an oppositional position within the broader unit of analysis that is the global-colonial totality of the world-system” (p.101). If “‘the European workers began the revolution,” it is “the colonized masses [who must] complete it’” (p.102).

**Back to the Future?**

Nor is Ciccariello-Maher alone in revindicating the continuing relevance of a revolutionary reading of Fanon for struggles for self-determination today. Indeed, the Indigenous activist and scholar Glenn Coulthard, from the Denes nation, similarly draws militant lessons from Fanon in relation to the struggle for Indigenous resurgence in Canada, as embodied in the *Idle No More* movement. He does so in his ground-breaking 2015 book, evocatively titled, *Red Skins, White Masks. Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, where he takes aim at liberal, multicultural forms of settler colonial accommodation and recognition for indigenous groups, as perhaps most famously framed in the work of the political philosopher Charles Taylor.

Like Ciccariello-Maher, Coulthard stresses the continuing importance for colonized and racialized groups of Fanon’s emphasis on the need for militant self-affirmation and determined struggle. To this end, Coulthard claims that “Fanon’s critique of Hegel’s theory of recognition convincingly unpacks the ways in which delegated exchanges of political recognition from the colonizer to the colonized usually ends up being structurally determined by and in the interests of the colonizer” (p.152).

Coulthard goes on to contend that Fanon remains crucial also insofar as “he identifies the subtle ways in which colonized populations often come to develop what he called ‘psycho-affective’ attachments to these circumscribed, master-sanctioned forms of delegated recognition. For Fanon,” Coulthard insists, “these psycho-affective or ideological attachments create an impression of ‘naturalness’ to the colonial condition, which he referred to as ‘internalization’ or ‘internalized’ colonialism” (pp.152-153). Nevertheless, Coulthard contends, “Fanon showed how colonized populations, despite the totalizing power of colonialism, are often able to turn these internalized forms of colonial recognition into expressions of Indigenous self-empowerment through the reclamation and revitalization of precolonial social relations and cultural traditions” (p.153).

Even so, unlike Ciccariello-Maher, Coulthard ultimately thinks that the Indigenous struggle needs to go beyond the dialectical framework provided by Fanon. Indeed, Coulthard accuses Fanon of remaining too close to Sartre, in viewing “practices of Indigenous cultural self-empowerment, or self-recognition, as insufficient for decolonization,” as “constitut[ing] a ‘means’ but not an ‘end’” (p.153).

In Coulthard’s words: “Fanon clearly shared Sartre’s view that negritude’s emphasis on cultural self-affirmation constituted an important ‘means’ but ‘not an ultimate end’ of anticolonial struggle, even though both authors arrived at this analogous conclusion via different paths” (p.133). In fact, as Coulthard suggests: “Although Fanon saw the critical revaluation of Indigenous cultural forms as an important means of temporarily breaking the colonized free from the incapacitating effects of being exposed to structured patterns of colonial misrecognition, he was decidedly less willing to explore the role that these forms and practices might play in the construction of alternatives to the oppressive social relations that produce colonized subjects in the first place” (p.132). For this reason, Coulthard concludes: “When Fanon reprimands Sartre for characterizing the self-affirmative reconstruction of black subjectivity as a phase in the unfolding dialectic of anticolonial class struggle, he is challenging Sartre’s deterministic understanding of the dialectic, not his claim that this process represents ‘a stage’ in a broader struggle for freedom and equality” (p.144). Or, to put the point even more forcefully: “Although Fanon eschews an evolutionary anthropological theory of historical development in which societies are viewed as developing along a linear path from primitive to civilized, he remains wedded to a dialectical conception of social transformation that privileges the ‘new’ over the ‘old’” (p.153).

In sum, according to Coulthard: “This view simply does not provide much insight into either what motivates Indigenous resistance to settler colonization or into the cultural foundations upon which Indigenous noncolonial alternatives might be constructed” (p.154). Coulthard thus, unlike Scott, would hold on to the militant, revolutionary nature of the emancipatory narrative articulated by Fanon, but unlike Ciccariello-Maher, he would at the same time radically question that narrative’s reliance on “a dialectical conception of social transformation that privileges the ‘new’ over the ‘old’” (p.153).

**Conclusion**

Let us, therefore, conclude. In this lecture, we have sought to explore the lessons and legacy of “anticolonial worldmaking,” as the implications and limits of such twentieth-century projects have been profoundly examined in the important recent books by Adom Getachew and Gary Wilder. We have, furthermore, contemplated the possibility that the narrative of liberation associated with the radical projects of anti-imperialist self-determination should be considered by now hopelessly passé. We did so by engaging with David Scott’s skilful depiction and critique of this narrative as articulated in the canonical work of Frantz Fanon, and by contrasting Scott’s approach to Fanon to the more militant readings provided by George Ciccariello-Maher and Glenn Coulthard, both of whose scholarship is unabashedly and organically linked to a variety of contemporary struggles for decolonization and self-determination, ranging from the Movements for Black Lives and for Indigenous resurgence in North America, to the ongoing struggle for socialism, inflected by the imperative for a decolonial turn, in Latin America.