1. Read the highlighted sections of Fanon, ‘Trials and Tribulations of National Consciousness’. This article, another chapter from his book *The Wretched of the Earth*, is a counterpart to Fanon’s chapter ‘On Violence’. In ‘Trials and Tribulations’, Fanon now addresses the aftermath of decolonization movements. He identifies some of the social, economic, and political hazards of post-independent African nations, in which a state of neo-colonialism, rather than socio-political transformation, arises. Fanon’s account goes on to identify progressive paths to post-independence, that he sees developing in Algeria and to which he is a programmatic contributor. It’s important to acknowledge that while Fanon’s critique of neo-colonialism is extensive, it is by no means fatalistic, but allows for the possibility of real decolonial transformation of humanity.

This distinguishes his approach from those that take a fatalistic perspective which considers African countries and societies ‘doomed’ to political-economic failure/tyranny/tribalism/primordial savagery/etc. Such approaches circulate widely in 20th and 21st-century US media, demonizing African politicians such as Robert Mugabe, Idi Amin, seeing in them—and in independent states more broadly-- the confirmation of an ‘essential’, metaphysical, negativity. (Ie, such approaches conform to and confirm the racist, colonial Manicheanism that Fanon identifies in ‘On Violence’). As the remainder of our class mostly focuses on critical literary representations of neo-colonialism in various post-independent states, I have highlighted Fanon’s critique passages more than his positive, programmatic passages in this chapter.

For further understanding, see the short piece defining ‘Neo-colonialism’ in the ‘Course Files’ folder for a summary of the phenomenon (optional not required reading). See also Nkrumah’s speech/article, ‘Neo-colonialism’, for an analysis which complements Fanon’s. Nkrumah focuses on the international factors in neo-colonialism, in particular, the role of the United States in attempting direct and indirect control across the African continent (also optional, not required, reading).

As you read the Fanon chapter, pay particular attention to these topics:

–the economics of neo-colonialism, in which the decolonized state continues to be part of the structure of global capitalism.

--the emergence of a class of African bourgeoisie, which Fanon casts as mediators not creators of capital.

--the growth of a militarized and centralized state, that treats its own population as a social and political threat. At times the state is organized through ethnic groups and loyalties (a left over from colonialism).

--the use and abuse of nationalist rhetoric, by the ruling class, that deploys liberationist discourse, celebrating nation-building, national unity, nationalism, etc, and exploits these as buzzwords. For Fanon, the use of these terms as empty abstractions reflects a failure of national consciousness to transform itself into social and political consciousness. The concept of the nation and of nationalism was, for him, supposed to be a means to a progressive humanistic and socialist end, rather than being an end in itself.

--the operations of symbols, pageantry, spectacles of national independence, and the place of anti-colonial heroic history, precolonial national culture and heritage, in these operations.

--the attitudes and behaviour of ‘the people’, under this new/old dispensation, whose frustration and alienation can take form in the growth of inter-ethnic hostilities and competition, and the growth of xenophobia (directed against migrant labor from other African countries)

--the cognitive dissonance of living in neo-colonial conditions, which can scramble perceptions, challenge understanding and upset emotions; social fragmentation of the body politic and its impact on the psyche, the material body, etc.

--Fanon’s advocacy of decentralization of government and the growth of local co-operative industries [links to Mda’s novel *The Heart of Redness*]

1. Watch/listen to these celebrations of national independence, to get some cultural and ideological context for the theoretical and literary readings:

--E. T. Mensah (Ghana), ‘Ghana Freedom’ track:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUMbrs4aEsA (Links to an external site.)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUMbrs4aEsA (Links%20to%20an%20external%20site.))[](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUMbrs4aEsA)

--Dorothy Masuka (Zimbabwe/South Africa), an early Pan-African song celebrating African independence in Ghana, Kenya, Congo/Zaire:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDeaKNBj6Mc (Links to an external site.)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDeaKNBj6Mc (Links%20to%20an%20external%20site.))[](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDeaKNBj6Mc)

Then read Yvonne Vera’s short story, “Independence Day”. What kind of commentary on decolonization does this story provide? How does it connect with Fanon’s critique?

1. Watch this musical commentary:

Fela Kuti, ‘Zombie’ track (useful info in the video). A celebrated critique of neo-colonial Nigeria. This song is also the epigraph to Nnedi Okorafor’s short story, ‘Spider the Artist’, that we are studying in class, week 8:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qj5x6pbJMyU (Links to an external site.)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qj5x6pbJMyU)[](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qj5x6pbJMyU)

Read these poems (in the course files for this week and in the course-pack):

Lesego Rampolokeng, “Welcome to the New Consciousness”

Frank Chipasula, “A Love Poem for my Country” and “Going Back Patiently”

Molara Ogundipe-Leslie, “song at the african middle class”

Odia Ofeimun, “Let Them Choose Paths”

Samuel Chimsoro, “The Change”

Catherine Obianuju Acholonu, “Nigeria in the year 1999” [1999 saw Nigeria hold a general election that transitioned from military rule to democracy]

Funso Aiyejina, “When the Monuments…”

Kofi Anyidoho, “Elegy for the Revolution”

As you read the poems, put them in conversation with Fanon.

How do the poems present the transition from colonial to neo-colonial society? Eg, the conclusion of Chimsoro’s ‘The Change’ that ‘//black hands dip/Lumps of their constitution/In the same soup bowl’ (ie, the same soup bowl that functioned to feed and serve colonialism). Or, Aiyejina’s poem’s contention that ‘pebbles lodged in muddy ponds/must grow muddy with time’…What is conveyed by the use of natural or folkloric imagery here, and how does that compare with the use of similar techniques in the earlier poetry that you read for the class?

How do the poems present the alliance of national and European/US powers—eg Chipasula’s observation of ‘watching our leaders embrace our enemies’, in ‘Going Back Patiently’? What do you make of the way that Catherine Acholonu incorporates the image and lyrics of Bob Marley –icon of black diaspora and pan-African culture--into her critique, in “Nigeria in the year 1999” ?

Think about the ways in which the poems explore the meaning of ‘revolution’ in the aftermath of post-independence.

Think back to Fanon’s ‘On Violence’, and its outline of Manichean absolutism. Do these poems complicate or confirm that Manicheanism, by drawing attention to internal African socio-economic class divisions?

How do the poems approach the topics of sensory, perceptual, cognitive disorder, violence, or confusion? Eg, poems by Rampolokeng, Aiyejina, and Anyidoho?

Think about the references to dreams here, as conduits of political imagination—these references pervade the poetry, and at times are juxtaposed with the reality of the present, or the experience of history. Anyidoho, for instance, refers to ‘a revolution gone astray into/arms of dream merchants’. How might these references link to Fanon’s references to the empty shells of consciousness?

Think about the imagery here of roads, paths, and forests—figurative and literal. How do these compare with earlier readings, such as ‘Afrika Road’?

Think about the references to precolonial and/or anti-colonial history and culture, such as Ofeimun’s ‘the garbage of folklore’; Chipasula’s reference to John Chilembwe (who led an uprising in Malawi, in 1915); Ogundipe-Leslie’s reference to Egungun (you can look that one up!); Anyidoho’s references to the thunder god Xebieso.What relationships between precolonial life, anti-colonial life, and neo-colonial life, are suggested here? The dedications of two poems here are to famous anti-colonial activists and artists, too—Agostinho Neto; Walter Rodney; Ngugi wa Thiong’o. Are the poems both dystopian and utopian here? Affirming the possibility of a life and society beyond neo-colonial horror?

What constructions of ‘the people’, ‘the country’ (the object of Chipasula’s ‘Love Song’) are presented here?