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A recepção de Frantz Fanon no Brasil

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**Electronic version**

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/lusotopie/158>

DOI: 10.1163/17683084-01602010

ISSN: 1768-3084

Publisher

Idemec - UMR 7307

Printed version

Date of publication: June 1, 2009

Number of pages: 157-172

ISSN: 1257-0273

Electronic reference

Antonio Sérgio Alfredo Guimarães, "Frantz Fanon's reception in Brazil", *Lusotopie* [Online], XVI(2) | 2009, Online since 30 September 2015, connection on 06 December 2023. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/lusotopie/158> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/17683084-01602010>

FRANTZ FANON'S RECEPTION IN BRAZIL*

How was Fanon received among intellectuals and what was his influence on the formation of black identities in Brazil? His work took time being noticed, because of the particularities of the Latin-American left of the 1960s, because of a racial and national system totally opposed to racial conflicts and because of the limited number of black researchers addressing the subject of the formation of the black identity or the assertion of the rights of the racially oppressed. It was Sartre's preface to his book "The Wretched of the Earth" that circulated widely among non-blacks, rather than the books themselves. Fanon remained a black revolutionary wearing the white masks imposed on him by European universalist culture.

There have been three decisive moments in Fanon's reception in Brazil. The first was in the 1960s amid the riots of the Black Panthers. The second was his reception by Abdias do Nascimento and young black students and professionals in the 1970s. The third is going on today through postcolonial and subaltern studies.

La réception de Frantz Fanon au Brésil

Comment Fanon a-t-il été reçu par le milieu intellectuel et quelle influence a-t-il exercé sur la formation d'identités noires au Brésil? Son ouvrage a connu une réception tardive à cause des particularités de la gauche latino-américaine des années 1960, d'une constitution raciale et nationale totalement opposée aux conflits raciaux, et du nombre réduit de chercheurs noirs à aborder le sujet de la formation de l'identité noire ou l'affirmation des sujets de l'oppression raciale. C'est la préface de Sartre au livre *Les Damnés de la Terre* qui a largement circulé parmi les non-Noirs, et non pas ses livres. Fanon demeura un révolutionnaire noir portant les masques blancs imposés par la culture universaliste européenne.

La réception de Fanon au Brésil s'est déroulée en trois étapes-clé. La première a eu lieu dans les années 1960, au moment des émeutes des Panthères noires. La deuxième a été sa réception par Abdias do Nascimento et les jeunes étudiants et professionnels noirs des années 1970. La troisième réception est celle qui a lieu de nos jours, à partir des études postcoloniales et subalternes.

* This article was originally presented as a paper at the conference "Penser aujourd'hui à partir de Frantz Fanon", organized by the Centre de Sociologie des Pratiques et des Représentations politiques (CSPRP) of the University of Paris Diderot-Paris 7 at Unesco in collaboration with universities Paris 1, Paris 8 and the Frantz Fanon Foundation, in Paris, on 30 November and 1 December 2007. A former version of this text was first electronically published by CSPRP (<www.csprp.univ-paris-diderot.fr/actes_fanon.html>). *Lusotopie* would like to thank CSPRP for authorization. For the Portuguese version of the text ("A recepção de Fanon no Brasil e a identidade negra"), see *Novos Estudos* (CEBRAP, São Paulo) 81, July 2008: 99-114 (on line at: <www.flch.usp.br/sociologia/asag/>). For the French version ("La réception de Frantz Fanon au Brésil"), see "Vers une pensée politique postcoloniale. À partir de Frantz Fanon", *Tumultes* (Paris, Éditions Kimé), 31 October 2008: 81-102.

A recepção de Frantz Fanon no Brasil

Como foi a recepção de Fanon pelo meio intelectual e qual foi a sua influência sobre a formação de identidades negras no Brasil? A sua obra teve uma recepção tardia, devido à especificidade da esquerda latino-americana nos anos 1960, a uma constituição racial e nacional totalmente oposta a conflitos raciais, e ao número reduzido de pesquisadores negros que abordem a formação da identidade negra ou a afirmação de sujeitos racialmente oprimidos. Mas foi o prefácio de Sartre a *Os Condenados da Terra* que circulou amplamente entre os não-negros, não os seus livros. Fanon continuou sendo um revolucionário negro, com as máscaras brancas que a cultura universalista europeia lhe pôs.

A recepção de Fanon no Brasil teve pelo menos três momentos decisivos. A primeira deu-se nos anos 1960, em meio aos motins pelos Panteras Negras. A segunda recepção foi feita por Abdias do Nascimento e pelos jovens estudantes e profissionais negros dos anos 1970. Uma terceira recepção de Fanon é a que ocorre hoje em dia, a partir dos estudos pós-coloniais e subalternos.

Frantz Fanon is a central figure in cultural, post-colonial and African-American studies, whether in the United States, Africa or Europe. We often speak about Fanonian studies, such is the volume of research that has been based on his work**. My black Brazilian colleagues and students have the same admiration, respect and devotion for him as their black North American and African brothers. However, when I looked for material to write this article, I was met with a conspicuous silence, both in cultural and academic journals, which lasted all the way to the mid 1960s.

Although he had previously had a limited readership in Brazil, Fanon became known within cultural circles, as in other parts of the world, when revolutionary violence was the order of the day, championed by thinking revolutionary fighters such as Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, Camilo Torres; or by black leaders such as Stockley Carmichael, Malcom X and Eldridge Cleaver; or by Amílcar Cabral, Agostinho Neto, Kwame N’Krumah. However, after this phase, contrary to what occurred in other places, his thinking did not become the object of elucidating and critical reflection on the part of Brazilian universities and academics who were established in study centres, as was the case with other revolutionary thinkers.

In this article, I will defend two theses. The first is that his lukewarm reception was due to a national and racial makeup totally opposed to racial conflicts, highly instilled within an intellectual middle class which was white and mixed race, yet racially colourless. That is, the Brazil of racial democracy. The second thesis explains the limited dissemination of Fanonian studies by the small number of black professors and researchers at Brazilian universities who focus on the formation of black identity or the affirmation of racially oppressed subjects as their area of study.

Fanon’s thinking came to Brazil much like all new ideas – in European books – and at a time when Marxism and existentialism competed for the limelight on the Brazilian cultural and political scene.

** It deals with the issue of *Tumultes* (see previous note) where the French version of the article has been published: “Vers une pensée politique postcoloniale. À partir de Frantz Fanon”.

The 1960s and the Sartre epidemic

A careful reading of the main Brazilian cultural journals of the 1950s did not shed any light on Fanon's reception in Brazil. It is as if the publication of *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Fanon 1952b, 1983) had passed unnoticed. *Anhembi*, from São Paulo, published between 1953 and 1955 all the studies of race relations between whites and blacks in São Paulo, the outcome of a project co-ordinated by Roger Bastide and Florestan Fernandes. It also published some reactions to these studies. Bastide himself, after having returned from Paris in 1954, regularly wrote critiques and commentaries on books which were released in Europe, mainly in France; but he does not mention Fanon in his reviewing activities. Clovis Moura, Florestan Fernandes and Octávio Ianni wrote for this journal on black issues (the Malé revolt, racial relations, poetry), but without mentioning the Martinican author. In 1958, Sergio Milliet wrote a far-reaching review of black poetry, and of course, cites the *négritude* poets and Sartre. That is all.

Brazil became more familiar with Fanon's ideas shortly before his death, more precisely during Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir's stay in the country, between August and September 1960. Sartre and Beauvoir arrived in Rio de Janeiro from Havana, in order to promote international solidarity in support of the Cuban revolution and the war of liberation in Algeria (Beauvoir 1963). Certainly the Brazilian intelligentsia, in close contact with what was happening in Paris, accompanied, through *Les Temps Modernes*, the anti-colonialist positions held by Sartre. His journeys into China, Cuba and Brazil clearly had a militant character. "Colonialism is a system that infects us with its racism", wrote Sartre in 1956, and while he was in Brazil, he faced criminal charges in Paris, together with another 121 intellectuals who openly proclaimed co-operation with the Algerian National Liberation Front¹.

In the previous decade, the black newspaper *Quilombo* also published passages of his *Black Orpheus*, to show that the "anti-racist racism" of black francophones contained a new dialectic of liberation. But now, in 1960, Sartre was in Brazil, defending the very same anti-imperialist positions held by communists and the catholic left in relation to Cuba and Latin America, Asia and Africa; and thus the anti-racist and anti-colonial struggle of Africans and Afro-Americans came into closer proximity to Brazil.

I do not have any information as to whether Sartre mentioned Fanon in his conferences, but the ideas of his young Martinican disciple and how they impressed Sartre at the time are apparent in Beauvoir's diaries. When reminiscing about a visit to a *barracão*² in Ilhéus, for example, she notes "men with dark hair and dark skin were looking at us, hatchets in their hands and hatred in their eyes". The revolution in the third world, as perceived by Fanon, should be the work of peasants and not the dock workers who they also met in Ilhéus, "muscly, healthy, they knew how to laugh and sing". "Compared with the peasants, the proletariat in Brazil is an aristocracy", wrote Beauvoir (1963: 549). Sartre also drew attention

¹ Sartre signed the "Manifeste des 121" published in September 5, 1960 justifying the actions of those who refused to serve the French Army in Algeria.

² *Barracão* is a building housing cacao workers.

to the social inequality which Brazilian black people suffered from, as he became aware that all his contacts were white from the middle and upper classes:

“We have never seen in the *salons*, in the universities, or even in the auditoriums chocolate or milky coffee-coloured faces. Sartre made this observation aloud during a conference in São Paulo and then corrected himself: there was a black man in the room – a television technician.” (Beauvoir 1963: 561)

Evidently, Sartre and Beauvoir did not find in Brazil anybody who thought that Brazilian black people were victims of racism; on the contrary, they met with a unanimous discourse in which the segregation of black people was seen to be of an economic nature, and therefore the struggle for liberation should be one of classes. They did not seem entirely convinced since, according to Beauvoir, “the fact is that all the descendents of slaves continued to be proletarian; and in the shanty towns poor white people feel superior to black”. That may be so. But Sartre’s success in Brazil was a result of his conferences about colonialism and the historic necessity of the fight for independence by the peoples of the Third World.

In Brazil, Sartre’s anti-racism and anti-colonialism had to co-exist alongside the republicanism of his audience – a literary middle-class made up of students, writers and intellectuals. For Sartre, Brazil was not simply a European transplant like the United States; after all, “all [Brazilians] that I have met, have been influenced to some extent by the *nago* cults” (Beauvoir 1963: 561). Here, assimilation and integration did not seem like some ingenious discourse of domination; on the contrary, they seem to have *amulatado*³ the country, as Freyre wanted and as Jorge Amado, their host, believed. In fact, Sartre and Beauvoir were already familiar with both their ideas. We must remember that extracts from *Cacau* had been published in *Les Temps Modernes* (Amado 1954), which also published a favourable review of the French edition of *Masters and Slaves* (Pouillon 1953), and that *The Two Deaths of Quincas Wateryell* would be published by the same journal after his return to Paris (Amado 1968).

To understand Sartre’s position, it is important to remember that the post-war world quickly became polarized in two axes. In the first, there was a contraposition between the north and the south with regard to the issues of de-colonisation and racism. Sartre had actively participated in the construction of the position held by the south. He wrote the preface to *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de la langue française* (Sartre 1948, 1949), in which he embraced *negritude* – the movement of identity affirmation and cultural, ethnic and racial reconstruction of Africans and Afro-Caribbeans – despite the fact that he made use of the old conception of racism as doctrine. *Negritude*, according to him, was anti-racist racism. Since the 1950s, however, he started to open up the pages of his journal to a new theory of racism in the post-war period: the type of racism which, despite being conceptually denied, actually occurred and was experienced in the social and political practices of the colonizers and colonized. In relation to the second axis, polarization was between the intellectuals who defended the bourgeois and liberal order, on the one hand, and those who spoke up for the interests of

³ *Mulato* is a person of mixed race. Hence, *amulatado* is the result of cultural and biological miscegenation.

workers and peasants, from a Marxist or other ideological point of view. The first axis is marked by races and by de-colonization; the second by the struggle of the classes and by anti-imperialism. Thus, Sartre and Fanon represented a fusion of anti-imperialism, anti-racism, de-colonization and the struggle of the classes.

In Brazil during the 1950s and 1960s, however, these two axes did not meet: liberals and Marxists, whites and blacks, both had the same anti-racist project of building a mixed race nation, Brazilian and post-European, which overcame the polarity between whites, on the one hand, and black and indigenous peoples on the other. The only thing that divided them was the defence of the bourgeois order or a commitment towards class struggle. Races therefore, disappeared, with the conceptual and political overexposure given to the idea of social classes. The same happened in all of Latin America, including in socialist Cuba, which Fanon wanted to become acquainted with (Gordon, Sharpley-Whiting and White 1996: 4) and which Sartre came to know in 1960.

If Fanon's thinking had not been the result of the convergence of these two axes, Guerreiro Ramos, the black activist and sociologist, could have introduced him to Brazil in 1960, since he had some affinity with his ideas. Not only him, but all the other members of ISEB⁴, as observed Renato Ortiz (1998: 51):

“What is noticeable about Fanon's and ISEB's writings, is that they are both based on the same fundamental concepts: alienation and the colonial situation. The original sources are also, in both cases, identical: Hegel, the young Marx, Sartre and Balandier.”

If Guerreiro did not take up Fanon's ideas, it was because the type of de-alienation and de-colonization he was looking for did not involve class struggle. He probably knew Fanon, since he read *Présence africaine* (Fanon 1956a, 1959a), *Esprit* (Fanon 1951, 1952, 1955) and *Les Temps Modernes* (Fanon 1959b, 1961), as well as French academic journals. The fact is that to formulate his indictment against the cultural colonization of “light” and “dark” Brazilians, Guerreiro used some of the same sources as Fanon, but not all of them. They had the same inclination for Hegel and for existentialism; however when considering their different national situations and personal projects, Guerreiro was led to hold nationalist and populist positions (Paiva 1980), separating him from the revolutionary doctrines which preached violence as a means of social transformation or which argued for the maintenance of different cultures between colonized and colonizers⁵.

Furthermore, the São Paulo black press during the 1960s, which was made up of men and women who came from a more precarious class situation than Guerreiro himself, seemed to overlook Fanon and his solidarity campaign for the African Liberation Movements, but continued to be in tune with Senghor and Sartre's discourse of 1948 on *négritude*, which they directly cite⁶.

⁴ The *Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros* (ISEB) was a think tank for nationalist and developmentist intellectuals in the 1950's and 1960's.

⁵ In *A redução sociológica*, 1958, Ramos Guerreiro explicitly cites Césaire (1955), Diop (1954) and Sartre (1956) in French, but does not refer to Fanon (1952, 1955). In the second edition, in 1965, Guerreiro adds references to Balandier (1955) but still does not mention Fanon.

⁶ See the *Niger* Collection, newspaper edited by José Assis Barbosa and José Correia Leite, in São Paulo, 1960, Coleção Mirian Ferrara, IEB-USP.

Fanon and the revolutionary left

The Brazilian Left certainly knew Fanon through the excerpts of *The Wretched of the Earth* on violence published in *Les Temps Modernes* and the famous introduction by Sartre to the book (Fanon 1961). The French-Brazilian intellectual and activist Michel Löwy, for example, remembers reading and discussing Fanon's ideas with his comrades in 1961 in Sao Paulo⁷. Two remarks are necessary at this point. First, the debate over revolutionary violence was so important at this time that the Brazilian Left was discussing guerrilla tactics, urban uprisings, and reading Third World strategists in a very pragmatic mood. Second, and consequently, the Left read Sartre's preface but not the whole *The Wretched of the Earth* and totally ignored *Black Skin, White Masks*.

The silence of the Brazilian left in relation to Fanon, both among blacks and whites⁸, certainly needs to be understood as profound political disagreement, because of the countless indirect signs of his presence from the 1960s onwards. Some facts need to be mentioned so that we can understand how this difficult relationship between Fanon and the Brazilian left was established.

In 1964, the journal *Tempo Brasileiro* published an article by Gérard Chaliand, in which the author inserts a footnote to comment: "Based on some of the most contestable of Fanon's analyses – those about African peasants. In relation to this subject see the best and, in fact, the only Marxist analysis of Fanon's thought: 'Fanon et les problèmes de l'indépendance', *La Pensée*, n° 107". He was referring to Nghe (1963), one of Fanon's great adversaries in the African world.

Brazilian Marxists, therefore, followed Marxist – and also liberal (Arendt 1970) – criticism in relation to Fanon's political conceptions. In Brazil, the left revered Fanon, but read him in French, and did not cite him; imposing on itself a respectful silence. The *Monthly Review* (MR) Marxists, whose articles were regularly translated and published by Brazilian journals, did not behave in the same way. The reason for this reverence and silence with regard to Fanon can be found, perhaps, in his centrality to the struggles that were emerging in the United States at that time, where Afro-American rebels also considered themselves to be colonial subjects, an attitude that was summed up well by the words of MR's editors:

"If you don't already know it, mark well the name of Frantz Fanon who has become perhaps the most revered spokesman for the colonial oppressed. His justly famous book *Les Damnés de la Terre* has just been issued by Grove Press under the title of *The Wretched of the Earth*, and we recommend it highly."⁹

⁷ Personal information passed on to me by Michel Löwy in 2007. Löwy left Brazil in August 1961 and returned briefly in December of the same year.

⁸ *Em entrevista a Verena Alberti e Amílcar Pereira (19.12.2006), José Maria Nunes Pereira, que dirigiu o Centro de Estudos Asiáticos da Cândido Mendes, entre 1973 e 1986, comenta: "Fanon era nome cortado na esquerda."* In an interview with Verena Alberti and Amílcar Pereira (19 dec. 2006), José Maria Nunes Pereira, who directed *Asian Studies* at Cândido Mendes University between 1973 and 1986 comments: "Fanon was a crossed out name in the left".

⁹ *Monthly Review*, XVII (1), 1965.

In November 1966, Goldman (1966) writes a five-page review of *Studies in a Dying Colonialism*, and creates a fitting phrase about what Fanon meant to the black rebellion at that time:

“Fanon is popular because he is talking, above all, about the struggle itself and he is talking from inside the Revolution, as a participant. The young black radicals who read him, who internalize his vision and respond with such great fervor to his ideas are, after all, people who are struggling intensely against a system they are not at all sure they can bring down. To Fanon the important thing is the transformation, the inner mutation that occurs during the struggle, the way the ‘wretched of the earth’ are freed during the inevitable confrontation between oppressor and oppressed. And there is one further idea that Fanon, a Negro doctor from Martinique who wrote about the Algerian Revolution, suggests to these young radicals: that the system they are fighting and the one he was fighting are one and the same, and that both he and they oppose a common oppressor in the name of a common vision.” (Goldman 1966: 58)

Did Fanon have the same significance among Brazilian blacks? What is certain is that finally in 1968 a Brazilian edition of *The Wretched of the Earth* was released but was quickly taken out of circulation by the organs of political repression, but not before it fell into the hands of dozens of militants. It was explosive food for thought for both the class struggle and for the racial democracy project. Buchanan (1968: 19-20), in the *Revista da Civilização Brasileira* (Journal of Brazilian Civilization), writes: “We must remember that Malcom X – who, together with Frantz Fanon, was Carmichael’s main inspiration – was the only black American leader who applauded Kennedy’s assassination.”

In the same journal, the communist literary critic Werneck Sodré (1968:198), in a annual review of the year’s releases, writes: “Colonialism, in its brutality, is reflected in Frantz Fanon’s work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, which studies the effects of torture”. In this sentence we hear the echo of the tortures which started to become routine during the military regime, and also a display of some sympathy for interpretations similar to those of Goldman (1966: 55):

“One of Fanon’s most important contributions to social thought [. . .] is his brilliant analysis of the relationship between mental disorder and colonialism, between sexual maladjustment and political repression.” (Goldman 1966: 55)

For some, brilliant psychoanalyst and bad politician, for others, radical ideologue, Fanon would have to wait for a new left to receive a sympathetic reading. Even the black leader Abdias do Nascimento (1968), in his articles at the time, set out the influences of the black movement, analysed the international situation, focused on *négritude* and black culture, talked about the rape that is the origin of the Brazilian miscegenation, mentioned the African liberation struggles, the “North American black uprising”, but said nothing of Fanon:

“Paraphrasing Toynbee, and due to specific historical conditions, there is a new decisive role to be played by black people in the United States towards a new – political and cultural – direction for coloured peoples of all the world. It is, so to speak, the bringing together of the legacy left by the current generation of great black people – Leopold Sédar Senghor, Kwame N’Krumah, Langston Hughes, Jomo Keniata, Aimé Césaire, Sekou Touré, Nicolás Guillén, Peter Abraham, Alioune Diop, Lumumba, James Baldwin, Mário de Andrade” (Nascimento 1968: 206)

Abdias was very close to ISEB and to Guerreiro Ramos and both had great respect for Toynbee, something that was common among “isebianos” (ISEB members) as Vanilda Paiva¹⁰ explains. Frantz Fanon became an important reference for Abdias only after 1968, when the Brazilian black leader became aware of Fanon’s work, widely translated, discussed and commented on in the United States, where he was then exiled. The *Genocídio do Negro Brasileiro* [The Genocide of the Brazilian Black people] (Nascimento 1978) marks the moment where Fanon’s ideas come to influence Abdias’ writings.

The same occurs with Octávio Ianni and many other exiled Brazilian intellectuals. In his *Imperialismo y cultura de la violência em América Latina* [Imperialism and the Culture of Violence in Latin America] (Ianni 1970) he had already taken on board Fanon’s discourse and that of the *Monthly Review* Marxists. The same is true of Clóvis Moura (1994). When Ianni returned to Brazil in the 1980s and was re-integrated into the university environment, he made the reading of Fanon compulsory for his classes and recommended it to black students who came to him¹¹.

If, according to José Maria Pereira, “Fanon was a name crossed out by the left” in the mid 1960s, this was certainly not the case for the whole of the left, in particular those that were outside party politics. Catholics, for example, who increasingly gained influence as the communist parties were decimated by political repression, did not totally condemn the revolutionary violence of the colonised and anti-racism, to which the name of Fanon was intricately linked. The journal *Paz e Terra* (Peace and Earth), an entity very closely linked to the catholic left, published in its 7th edition a translation of an article by Raymond Domergue, which used the very same *The Wretched of the Earth* as a parameter to draft a blueprint for Catholic political action in face of the emergence of revolutionary struggles in the Third World.

“This long sequence of citations [Fanon’s] seemed to us necessary to show how violence, when it becomes the norm, can suddenly irrupt in the form of armed violence. Revolutionary violence is nothing but the transposition of a previous violence which has its roots in a type of economical exploitation.” (Domergue 1968: 51)

The revolutionary pedagogue Paulo Freire, much influenced by Catholic existentialist thinking and by ISEB’s anti-colonialist nationalism, was most absorbed by Fanon’s readings in his exile in Chile. In his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970) was perhaps the first Brazilian to embrace Fanon’s ideas.

According to Freire himself, he became aware of the Martinican revolutionary between 1965 and 1968. This is what he insinuates in two passages of *Pedagogy of Hope*:

¹⁰ “In fact, it was common among ‘isebianos’ (ISEB Members), who were influenced by Toynbee, to refer to underdeveloped countries as ‘external proletariat’ of the western world.” (PAIVA 1980:159, note 33)

¹¹ *Informação pessoal que me foi passada por Valter Silvério, professor da UFSCar e ex-aluno de Ianni.* Personal information was passed on to me by Valter Silvério, a professor at Federal University of São Carlos and Ianni’s ex-student.

"[...] later on, much later on, I read in Sartre (the Preface of *The Wretched of the Earth*, by Franz Fanon) as being one of the expressions of the connivance of the oppressed with the oppressors." (Freire 1992: 19)

"They [the Spanish peasants] were encouraged by all this, as I was encouraged by reading Fanon and Memmi, when re-reading the originals of *Pedagogia*. Possibly, when establishing their co-existence with *Pedagogia do oprimido*, and referring to the educational practice to which they were accustomed, they must have felt the same emotion that took hold of me when I started getting into *Condenados da Terra* and the *The Colonizer and The Colonized*. That pleasant sensation which takes hold of us when we reaffirm the reason for our sense of security." (*Ibid*: 141)

The last passage suggests that he read *Condenados* when he had already finished the manuscript of *Pedagogia*, since Freire talks about the "re-reading of the originals". As the manuscript is dated to 1968 and the first edition to 1970, this is a plausible interpretation. But, at the same time, Freire indicated that he read Fanon in the Mexican edition of 1965. The fact is, therefore, that he became aware of Fanon between 1965 and 1970, a period of radical changes in his thinking:

"Absorbed by practical work since the creation of his method, he was obliged to stop when the Goulart government fell. Up until that point Freire had little time for theoretical work, and he was now able to return to his starting point of 1959. 'His theoretical work had been effectively left behind'. Until then, Freire had been unable to digest new influences and theoretically incorporate new positions; for this reason, his ideas could not keep pace with his practice and he lacked, at that moment, the theoretical and methodological tools which would allow him to re-interpret reality and profoundly revise his pedagogical discourse. A more consequential effort in this direction would come later and 'Pedagogia do oprimido' is its outcome." (Paiva 1980: 141)

Either way, the Brazilian intellectuals who were open to Fanon's radical and revolutionary influence were free from party political loyalties and detached from well-established philosophical tendencies.

Another notable figure who was open to Fanon's influence was Glauber Rocha. Some writers such as Xavier even managed to discern Fanon's direct influence on the young Rocha's writings.

"In Glauber, the feeling that geo-politics is an axis of confrontation (where cinema is one of its vectors) in which the oppressed become visible (and are likely subjects in the process) is expressed through violence. Basing himself on Frantz Fanon, he makes this feeling explicit in 'An aesthetic of hunger', stressing the demarcation of places and the structural conflicts which come from the economic-social, cultural and psychological barriers separating the world of hunger from the developed world." (Xavier 2004: 21)

Xavier makes a connection between Fanon and Glauber in the following sentence:

"From the 'cinema novo': above all, an aesthetic of violence is revolutionary rather than primitive; this is the starting point for the coloniser to perceive the existence of the colonised; only by becoming aware of his only possibility, that is violence, the coloniser can understand, through its horror, the force of the culture he is exploiting. Whilst he does not take up arms the colonised is a slave: it was necessary for the first policeman to die for the Frenchman to notice the Algerian." (Rocha 1965: 169)

But Glauber Rocha, himself, did not remember having read Fanon at this time. It is far more likely that he had read Sartre, since he says in another text:

“It was during JK’s [Jucelino Kubitschek] time, while I was still in Bahia when I heard about anti/‘Ufanistic’ nationalism. While still young, when Arnaldo Carrilho went to Itamaraty, he took Cinema Novo’s ‘Paixão’ [Passion] to the international festivals. This is what ‘Brazil’ needed to culturally de-colonise itself in the world. Dialectically, one of the priorities was the development of internal markets (economy/culture) but before Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* reached me, recommended by the playwright Antônio Pedro, and before modernism, we could already feel Jorje Amado’s murmur, ready to break the chains of ideological submission, the complex core of colonial inferiority, our cancer, the main weapon used by the invaders” (Rocha 2004: 455)

It seems that Glauber Rocha is only aware of Fanon in 1968, through the Brazilian edition of *The Wretched of the Earth*. But Xavier is right: in Glauber Rocha, Fanon seemed to be fully alive, not half-heartedly, he becomes a way of thinking and not just a name. Xavier’s thesis is corroborated by Mendonça (1995).

It is also revealing that both intellectuals who were initially receptive to Fanon’s ideas were white – though they had not even come across *Black Skin, White Masks* – and they were iconoclasts in search of a new language, a new way, a third-world way of making cinema or educating. Both left Brazil after 1968.

When *Black Skin, White Masks* was finally published in Brazil, after having circulated among young militants in photocopies as black consciousness training manuals, it was already 1983. It was published by *Fator*, which specialised in psychoanalytical works. Furthermore, despite the fact that it was published in Rio de Janeiro, *Fator* was based in Salvador, where the *Movimento Negro Unificado* (MNU, Unified Black Movement) edited its newspaper which had a national circulation. Undoubtedly there was a convergence of editorial interests in a work that is very much influenced by psychoanalysis, and the commercial interest in feeding a new market created by a middle class with race consciousness, since Fanon had become training literature. Florentina Souza says:

“... the *Negro* magazine, the MNU-Bahia bulletin, in its first issue published reading suggestions from Amílcar Cabral’s *Obras escolhidas, África – literatura, arte e cultura* (Selected Works, Africa – literature, art and culture), organized by Manoel Ferreira and, in its third issue, Fanon’s book *Black Skin, White Masks*...” (Souza 2005: 163)

Young black students during the 1970s and 1980s

Sartre, and his way of reading Fanon, had an enduring influence among blacks and whites. In 1978, the chief-editor of the newspaper *Versus* – from *Convergência Socialista*¹², whose black militants were very active in the foundation of *Movimento Unificado Contra a Discriminação Racial* (Unified Movement against Racial Discrimination), which preceded MNU – found images in Sartre’s preface to the *Wretched*

¹² *Convergência Socialista* (Socialist Convergence) was a Trotskyist party in clandestine activity during the 1970’s and 1980’s.

of the *Earth* to express what took place on the staircases of São Paulo's Municipal Theatre¹³:

"On one occasion Sartre wrote about black issues. He said something unforgettable, and I will cite it from memory . . . 'What did you expect to hear when these black mouths found themselves freed from their muzzles? That they would shout out nice, friendly words?' Are the muzzles being torn off in Brazil? Indeed they are. So, this is what we saw in São Paulo, on a historical night. Black mouths shouting against injustice and oppression. Fists raised, in the twilight of that moment when, in a big city, tired men go home. Gentle words were not heard – and it's good that this was so. The humiliation of centuries, only the resilience of the people could have put up with this." (Faerman 1978: 1)

In the same way, the *Versus* section *Afro-latino-America* was launched in 1978 with the headline "Nem almas brancas, nem máscaras negras" (Neither white souls, nor black masks), a pun on Fanon's title, whilst also alluding to other simple cognitive references such as "black man with a white soul"; or traditional ones, such as Nelson Rodrigues' observations – "a painted white man is the national theatre's black man. Just like that!" – sometimes remembered by Abdias do Nascimento (1996).

Furthermore, *Afro-Latino-América* was unaware of *The Wretched of this Earth*, published in 1968 in Brazil, or *Black Skin, White Masks* – which had been circulating among some black militants since the mid 1970s in a photocopied Portuguese edition by Paisagem publishing house from Porto – but in 1978, it re-published in issue 18 extracts of Sartre's *Black Orpheus*, preceded by the following warning:

"In the current political context, where the Socialist Party shows itself to be the more serious alternative for the participation of the marginalised sectors of Brazilian society, Jean-Paul Sartre considers the role of the black socialist. He debates the importance of not losing sight of the objective conditions of being a black person and a worker."

However, it was the young black students of the 1970s and 1980s who, in Brazil, read and lived Fanon with their body and soul, making him an instrument of race consciousness and resistance to oppression, the ideologue behind a complete revolution within Brazilian racial democracy. References to this fact are plentiful in the literature. I will only pursue some of these.

In a research project co-ordinated by Alberti and Pereira (2006) about the contemporary black Brazilian movement, eight militants spontaneously cite Fanon when talking about their training: Amauri Mendes Pereira, Gilberto Roque Nunes Leal, Hédio Silva Júnior, José Maria Nunes Pereira, Luiz Silva (Cutí), Milton Barbosa, Regina Lucia dos Santos and Yedo Ferreira. In a similar research, conducted by Márcia Contins (2005), six militants also mention Fanon.

¹³ On 7 July 1978, a dozen Black organizations promoted a rally at the staircases of the Municipal Theatre in Sao Paulo to protest the death of a Black activist under torture by the military political police, as well as racial discrimination against young Black athletes in a Sao Paulo club. This protest received widespread solidarity from the Left and from the Brazilian democratic front fighting the military dictatorship, and was the political debut of the new Black Movement in Brazil.

From interviews with these militants, Michael Hanchard (1994: 116) also registers:

“Thus members of Black Soul in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo – whose activities included passing around copies of Stokely Carmichael’s *Black Power* and Frantz Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth* for group discussion, among other items – were (mis)identified as part of the conspiracy theory held and propagated by civilian and military elites. There is no documentation available on the surveillance and perceptions of Black Soul and the black movement in general during this period, due to the nature of the regimes during the dictatorship. However, a high-ranking official of the National Information Service, the resourceful intelligence arm of the state, confirmed during a personal interview that several black activists were closely monitored in the 1970s because of the state’s belief that they were mere cogs in the ever-turning wheel of communist conspiracy.” (Hanchard 1994: 116)

Thirteen years after the publication of Hanchard’s book, when the archives of the political police (*Departamento Estadual de Ordem Política e Social de São Paulo*, DEOPS-SP) had already been opened to researchers, Karin Kosling was able to document the repression suffered by MNU:

“In a report by the DEOPS Information Division about a public act organised by MNU, on 7 July 1980, Milton Barbosa, an important MNU militant, cited Fanon to criticise imperialism.” (Kosling 2007: 161)

Analysing police documentation¹⁴, Kosling did not have any doubts about listing the main intellectual influences on young black rebels: “Writers like Fernandes, together with Eldridge Cleaver and Frantz Fanon, among others, introduced the issue of class struggle into the MNU debates.” (*Ibid.*)

Florentina de Souza, looking at other sources – two important black newspapers – agrees about Fanon:

“The influence that black writers in Brazil received from African literature written in the Portuguese language, which arrived in Brazil in newspapers, magazines and books, was notable; as was the influence of the translation of Fanon’s works and Garvey and DuBois’ texts which had been circulating within the Brazilian black movement since the 1930s.” (Souza 2005: 162)

Reading some statements from black militants from the 1970s, I have the impression that Fanon’s reception in Brazil was no different to his reception in the United States as reported by Goldman. Amauri de Souza, an important figure in the Rio de Janeiro MNU says:

“When I started to read *Soul in Exile*, which was the experience of Cleaver, one of the main leaders of the Black Panthers, and soon afterwards I got into Fanon, I read both at the same time . . . It was crazy! That was amazing! Fanon was so important, violence as the midwife of History. It advocated the violence of the colonised, the hatred . . . Fanon meant more to me than Che Guevara, because Che was a revolutionary that was dead, therefore he had lost, and it was here in America and he was not black. Fanon was black. I felt a greater affinity towards him. It was terrible . . . Fanon didn’t die in the struggle, they had won, they made the revolution . . . And I

¹⁴ FÉLIX, 2000:40-41.

fell in love with all that, in my head.” (Interview with Verena Alberti and Amílcar Pereira, 19 December 1006)

But the first (and perhaps the only) systematic reflection about Fanon's thinking was only made in 1981 by black intellectuals in a Brazilian academic journal and signed by a collective, *Grupo de Estudos sobre o Pensamento Político Africano* (GEPPF) [Study Group on African Political Thinking], which signifies a midway point between academic and political reflection. The group was made up of activists, students and teachers from the *Centro de Estudos Afro-asiáticos* (Centre for Afro-Asian Studies, Cândido Mendes University), directed by José Maria Nunes Pereira:

“It is clear [by reading Fanon] that while racism is the consequence of a situation of socio-economic domination, it has its own mechanisms of a psychological order which give it a certain autonomy. However, this situation continues to feed – and feeds itself upon – racism. It is applicable not only to the colonial situation, but also to neo-colonial and capitalist societies with a large contingency of labour from the old colonies. In the first case, as we have seen, the fundamental function of racism is the legitimization of direct occupation and exploitation. In the neo-colonial situation, race discrimination is used with the same objectives, with the necessary adaptations to a new reality. It supports the mechanism of neo-colonial subordination.” (GEPPF 1981: 22)

But by reading the article, it can be seen that there are still clear limits to the acceptance of Fanon as a political strategist, especially with regard to his belief in the potential of peasant revolution:

“He [Fanon] does not make a real class analysis of the colonial society. There are references to classes or layers of society. The proletariat, the lumpenproletariat and the peasantry deserve some attention [since] they lack characterization. There are references to the bourgeoisie and to the local elites, possibly consisting of members of the bourgeoisie. His analysis favours the urban-rural polarization.” (*Ibid.*: 15)

If the group criticizes the excessively classist and economicist position held by the traditional left, for whom the black movement still represented a serious danger of dividing the exploited classes, it also distances itself from those within the black movement who separate themselves from the Marxist matrix:

“We believe that the position of those who try to minimize the race issue by simply and purely diluting it in the ‘social’, and the position of those who argue for the absolute independence of anti-racist organisations (and their involvement in party politics) relative to the rest of society, hinder – albeit involuntarily – the death of the ‘racial democracy’ ideology.” (*Ibid.*: 25)

The academic reception

Gordon, Sharpley-Whiting and White (1996) divide the development of studies about Fanon into four phases. The first phase was marked by the revolutionary literature of the 1960s, which in Brazil, as we have seen, was embraced by Glauber Rocha's ideas about the *Cinema Novo* and Paulo Freire's conception of the pedagogy of the oppressed. The second phase, which they denominated biographic, did not have representatives in Brazil, and was practically ignored. Not only is there no biography of Fanon written by a Brazilian author, there is not yet a single biography

of Fanon edited in Brazil. There are only some biographical notes (Ortiz 1995; Cabaço and Chaves 2004). The third phase, marked by Fanon's interest in political theory, would also have been totally ignored if it wasn't for the fact that Renate Zahar (1974) was reference reading for *Grupo de Estudos do Pensamento Político Africano* (1981). It is worth pointing out Ianni's book on imperialism already mentioned above. But also in relation to this phase, Fanon is only a reference, and these studies did not generate thinking in Brazil about his political ideas on a wider scale, or of a more original nature. The fourth and last phase, that of post-colonial studies, is still practically new in Brazil, and reaches us only through the commentaries of Bahba, Gilroy, Gates Jr. or through Brazilian critics of post-colonialists, such as Sérgio Costa (2006) or Olivia Cunha (2002).

In Brazil, unlike in the United States, black mobilisation during the 1970s did not lead to the entry of black people in large numbers into universities, and the creation of centres for Afro-Brazilian studies is relatively recent in the country. The Brazilian Association of Black Researchers only dates from 2000.

Fanonian studies in Brazil did not really become a subject of research with a certain degree of autonomy, and references to Fanon, as well as being sparse, seem to pursue different lines. A quick search through university thesis and dissertation databases shows that Fanon is read in Brazilian universities, particularly on post-graduate courses about literature, media and arts, social psychology and the social sciences. When debates which raged through the 1960s and 1970s are revisited, his work attracts interest.

However, only three Brazilian authors have dedicated articles or part of chapters in books to discussing Fanon. Renato Ortiz (1995, 1998) undoubtedly discusses Fanon more profoundly and in a more refined manner. Specialising in the French intellectual world of the post-war period, Ortiz (1995) prepared a volume on Fanon for a collection of scientific dissemination entitled *Great Social Scientists*, published by Editora Abril. This volume was never published, but years later Ortiz returned to the original of his "presentation" in an article in the journal *Idéias*, published by the Sociology Department of the University of Campinas (Unicamp). Ortiz retraces the formation of Fanon's thinking to three central movements of the intellectual world of post-war France – the re-reading of Hegel, the debate between Marxists and existentialists, and, finally *négritude*. However, he is silent about Fanon's psychoanalytic formation. Ortiz's main concern is related to the Fanonian conception of racism and of the nation. Sometime later, Ortiz (1998) revisits Fanon, this time in relation to his study about the thinking within ISEB, and discovers similar roots to the cultural anti-colonialism of the "isebian" thinkers – Hegel, Sartre and Balandier. He does not mention, however, the important influence of phenomenology of Catholic origin on the main members of ISEB.

Cabaço and Chaves (2004), in the wake of 9/11, re-read Fanon to again take up the key points of his anti-colonialism and his justification of revolutionary violence. Recalling the debates of the 1960s, they write:

"[Fanon] shook the 'good conscience' of Western metropolises when he asserted that 'a colonial country is a racist country', and frightened colonialist circles by denouncing the violence of the system and explaining that 'the colonised man frees himself in and through violence'; he shocked a part of the intellectual left taking issue with the theoretical tools of Marxist orthodoxy; he provoked the indignation of western labour parties by asserting that 'the history of the wars of liberation is the history

of the non-verification of the thesis' about the commonality of interests between the Metropolis' working classes and colonized peoples; coherent in his conviction, he accused non-violence and neutralism of passive complicity with the exploitation of the colonized and the 'disorientation' of the elites of the subjugated peoples." (Cabaço Chaves 2004: 69)

In recent years, Franz Fanon's thought has been reintroduced into Brazilian universities through new programs and literature on cultural studies, subaltern studies and feminism. A new and well-documented Brazilian translation of *Black Skin, White Masks* has appeared by the Bahia Federal University Press in 2008. In summary, in Brazil, as elsewhere, Fanon definitely entered the roll of classic authors. Authors who are compulsory references to the study of some of the modern world's phenomena, among which, and in particular, are racism and political violence. He positively became part of the Pantheon of black heroes as an author whose reading educates the racial consciousness of activists or of Brazilian black citizens. However, this took place without the actual development of Fanonian studies in the country. The reason for this underdevelopment can partially be found in the small number of blacks in Brazilian universities and, as a consequence, in the lack of a deeper reflection about racism and racial identities. If this is really the case, the current entry of large numbers of black people through quotas could perhaps lead to a wider range of possibilities.

December 2007, October 2008

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