

## Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the Politics of Recognition in Colonial Contexts<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

Over the last thirty years the self-determination efforts and objectives of Indigenous peoples<sup>2</sup> in Canada have increasingly been cast in the language of “recognition.” Consider, for example, the formative declaration issued by my community, the Dene Nation, in 1975:

We the Dene of the NWT insist on the right to be regarded by ourselves and the world as a nation.

Our struggle is for the recognition of the Dene Nation by the Government and people of Canada and the peoples and governments of the world. ...

And while there are realities we are forced to submit to, such as the existence of a country called Canada, we insist on the right to self-determination and the recognition of the Dene Nation...(Dene Nation, 1977: 3-4)

Now, fast-forward to the latest policy position on self-determination published by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) in the spring of 2005. According to the AFN document, “a consensus has emerged [...] around a vision of the relationship between First Nations and Canada which would lead to strengthening recognition and implementation of First Nations’ governments” (2005: 18). This “vision”, the AFN goes on to state, expands on the core principles outlined in the 1996 *Report of Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*: that is, recognition of the nation-to-nation relationship between First Nations and the Crown; recognition of the equal right of First Nations to self-determination; recognition of the Crown’s fiduciary obligation to protect Aboriginal treaty rights; recognition of First Nation’s inherent right to self-government; and recognition of the right of First Nations to economically benefit from the use of their lands and resources (ibid: 18-19). When considered from the vantage point of these perspectives, it would appear that recognition has emerged as the hegemonic expression within the Indigenous self-determination movement in Canada.

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Taiaiake Alfred, Duncan Ivison, John Munro, Robert Lee Nichols and Jim Tully for helping me clarify the ideas expressed in this paper.

<sup>2</sup> When applied to the Canadian context I use the terms “Indigenous,” “Aboriginal” and “Native” interchangeably to refer to the descendants of those who traditionally occupied the territory now known as Canada prior to the arrival by European powers. I will also occasionally use these terms in an international context to refer to those peoples that have suffered under the weight of European colonialism in the United States, Africa, South America, the Caribbean, and elsewhere. I use the term “Indian” and phrase “First Nation” to refer to those legally recognized as Indians under the Canadian federal government’s *Indian Act* of 1876. Periodically, I also refer to Native people and communities by referring to their individual national identifications, such as Metis, Dene, Mi’kmaq, Sto:lo, and so on.

It should also be noted that these more or less on-the-ground demands for recognition have not gone unnoticed. Beginning roughly with Charles Taylor's catalytic 1992 essay "The Politics of Recognition" (1994), the last 15 years have witnessed a veritable explosion of intellectual production aimed at mapping the complex and contested terrain of these struggles. To date this literature has tended to focus on the relationship between the recognition of cultural difference and the freedom and well-being of minority groups in both multicultural and multinational contexts. In Canada it has been argued that this synthesis of theory and practice has forced the state to re-conceptualize the tenets of its relationship with Aboriginal peoples (Cairns, 2000, 2005); whereas prior to 1969 federal policy was unapologetically assimilationist, now it is couched in the vernacular of "mutual recognition" (DIAND, 1997, 2005; RCAP, 1996).

This essay will challenge the idea that the colonial relationship<sup>3</sup> between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state can be adequately transformed via a politics of recognition. Following Richard J.F. Day (2000, 2001), I take "politics of recognition" to refer to the now expansive range of recognition-based models of liberal pluralism that seek to reconcile Indigenous nationhood with Crown sovereignty via the accommodation of Indigenous identities in some form of renewed relationship with the institutions of the Canadian state. Although these models may vary in both theory and practice, most tend to involve the delegation of land, capital and political power from the state to Indigenous communities through land claims and self-government processes. Against this position, I will argue that, instead of ushering in an era of peaceful coexistence grounded on the Hegelian ideal of *reciprocity*, the politics of recognition in its contemporary form promises to reproduce the very configurations of colonial power that Indigenous peoples' demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend. More specifically, through a sustained engagement with the work of anti-colonial theorist Frantz Fanon I hope to demonstrate that the reproduction of a colonial system of governance like Canada's rests on its ability to entice Indigenous peoples to come to *identify*, either implicitly or explicitly, with the profoundly *asymmetrical* and *non-reciprocal* forms of recognition either imposed on or granted to them by the colonial-state and society. As we shall see, Fanon first developed this insight in his 1952, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), where he persuasively challenged the applicability of Hegel's dialectic of recognition (1977) to colonial and racialized settings. Against Hegel's abstraction, Fanon argued that, in *actual* contexts of domination (such as colonialism) not only are the terms of recognition usually determined by and in the interests of the master (the colonizer), but also over time slave populations (the colonized) tend to develop what he called "psycho-affective" (2005: 148) attachments to these master-sanctioned forms of recognition, and that this attachment is essential in maintaining the economic and political structure of master/slave (colonizer/colonized) relations themselves. By the end of this essay it should be clear that the contemporary politics of recognition is ill-equipped to deal with the interrelated structural and psycho-affective aspects of imperial power that Fanon implicated in the preservation of colonial hierarchies.

This essay is organized into three parts. In part one I outline some of the underlying assumptions that inform the politics of recognition from Hegel's master-slave to the work of

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<sup>3</sup> Throughout the following pages I use the terms "colonial" and "imperial" interchangeably to avoid repetitiveness. I do so, however, acknowledging the distinction that Robert Young (2001), James Tully (2004), Sankar Muthu (2003) and others have drawn between these two interrelated concepts. In their work a colonial relationship is conceptualized as a more *direct* form or practice of maintaining an imperial system of dominance. Imperialism is thus a broader concept, which may include colonialism, but could also be carried out indirectly through non-colonial means. Following this logic, a significant amount of the world's population can now be said to live in post-*colonial* condition despite the persistent operation of *imperialism* as a form of "political and economic influence that effectively amounts to a [similar] form of domination" (Young, 2001: 27).

Charles Taylor. In part two I apply the insights of Fanon's critique of Hegel's dialectic of recognition to highlight a number of problems that appear to plague Taylor's politics of recognition when applied to colonial contexts. Although I tend to focus most of my attention on the troubling nature of Taylor's work in this respect, it should be clear that the conclusions reached throughout this paper are by no means limited to his work alone. In part three, I hope to show that the processes of colonial subjection identified in the previous sections, although formidable, are not total. Indeed, as Robert Young has recently argued, Fanon himself spent much of his career as a psychiatrist investigating "the inner effects of colonialism" in order to establish "a means through which they could be resisted, turning the inculcation of inferiority into self-empowerment" (Young, 2001: 275; emphasis added). Thus, with the hope of closing on a more uplifting note, part three will briefly explore how the self-affirmative logic underlying Fanon's writings on anti-colonial empowerment prefigure a means of evading the politics of recognition's tendency to produce Indigenous subjects of empire.

### **I. Mutual Recognition from Hegel's Master-Slave to Charles Taylor's "Politics of Recognition"**

It is now commonly acknowledged that one of Hegel's most enduring contributions to contemporary social thought has been his concept of "recognition." Indeed, not many concepts have enjoyed the influence that Hegel's "recognition" has, particularly in terms of its ability to shape the normative horizons of such a diverse array of disciplines, including philosophy, political science, sociology, law, and more recently, women's studies, cultural studies, and postcolonial theory. As Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth have recently pointed out, within all of these fields the impact of Hegel's legacy is indisputable: "Whether the issue is indigenous land claims or women's carework, homosexual marriage or Muslim headscarves [...] the term 'recognition' [is increasingly used] to unpack the normative bases of [today's] political claims. [...] 'Recognition' has become a key word of our time" (2003: 1)

For my purposes here it will suffice to limit my discussion of Hegel to his chapter on "Lordship and Bondage" in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1977). This narrower approach can be justified on two grounds. First, although others have correctly emphasized the importance of both Hegel's earlier and later writings on recognition, Fanon was primarily concerned, following Alexander Kojève (1969) and Jean-Paul Sartre (1956, 1976), with recognition as it appeared in the master/slave dialectic of the *Phenomenology*. In this respect, it has been argued that Fanon's work constitutes an important, yet largely ignored, contribution to the so-called Hegel "renaissance" that occurred in postwar France (Gibson, 2002: 31). My second justification is that this essay is not about Hegel *per se*. Rather, it concerns the contemporary *appropriation* (whether implicit or explicit) of his concept of recognition by activists, political theorists and policy makers working on issues pertaining to Indigenous self-determination in Canada. Only once I have outlined the logic of recognition at play in Hegel's master/slave narrative, can I begin to unpack and problematize this appropriation.

Hegel's master/slave narrative can be understood from at least two interrelated perspectives, both of which inform much contemporary recognition-based theories of liberal pluralism, including Charles Taylor's. On the first reading, Hegel's account outlines a theory of identity-formation that cuts against the classical liberal view of the subject insofar as it situates social relations at the fore of human subjectivity. On this account, relations of recognition are deemed "constitutive of subjectivity: one becomes an individual subject only in virtue of recognizing, and being recognized by another subject" (Fraser and Honneth, 2003: 11). Our senses of self are thus dependent on and shaped through our complex relations with others. This insight into the intersubjective nature of identity-formation underlies Hegel's often quoted assertion that, "Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged" (1977: 178).

On the second reading, the master/slave narrative tells a slightly more complicated story. Here the dialectic is not simply hashing out an ontological theory about the relational nature of human subjectivity; rather it outlines what Hegel sees as the intersubjective conditions required for the *realization of human freedom*. From this perspective, then, the master/slave narrative can be read as a normative story in that it suggests that the realization of oneself as an essential, self-determining agent requires that one not only be recognized as self-determining, but that one be recognized by another self-consciousness that is also recognized as self-determining. It is through these reciprocal processes and exchanges of recognition that the “condition of possibility” for freedom emerges (Pippin, 2000: 156). Hence Hegel’s repeated insistence that relations of recognition be *mutual*. This point is driven home in the latter half of the Hegel’s section on “Lordship and Bondage,” when he discusses the ironic fate of the master in a context of asymmetrical recognition. After the “life-and-death struggle” between the two self-consciousnesses temporarily cashes out in the hierarchical master-slave relationship, Hegel goes on to depict a surprising turn of events in which the *master’s* desire for recognition as an essential “being-for-itself” is thwarted by the fact that he or she is only recognized by the unessential and dependent consciousness of the slave (1977; 191-192) – and, of course, recognition by a slave hardly constitutes recognition at all (Kojève, 1980: 19). In this “onesided and unequal” (Hegel, 1977: 191) relationship the master effectively fails to gain certainty of “being-for-self as the truth of himself [or herself]. On the contrary, his [or her] truth is in reality the unessential consciousness and its unessential action” (ibid: 192).<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, as the master continues to wallow in a lethargic state of increased dependency, the slave, through his or her transformative labor, “becomes conscious of what he [or she] truly is” and “*qua* worker” comes “to realize “his [or her] own independence” (ibid: 195). Thus, in the end, the truth of independent consciousness and one’s status as a self-determining agent is realized more through the praxis of the slave – through his or her transformative work in and on the world. However, here it is important to note that for Hegel, “the revolution of the slave is not simply to replace the master while maintaining the unequal hierarchal recognition” (Williams, 2001: 167). This, of course, would only temporarily invert the relation, and the slave would eventually meet the same fate as the master. Rather, as Robert Williams reminds us, Hegel’s point is to move “*beyond* the patterns of domination [and] inequality” (ibid: 167) that constitute asymmetrical relations of recognition as such. It is also on this point that many contemporary theorists of recognition remain committed.

Patchen Markell (2003) has recently suggested that one of the most significant differences between recognition in Hegel’s master/slave and the “politics of recognition” today is that state institutions tend to play a fundamental role in mediating relations of recognition in the latter, but not the former (25-32).<sup>5</sup> For example, with respect to policies aimed at preserving cultural diversity, Markell writes: “far from being simple face-to-face encounters between subjects, *à la* Hegel’s stylized story in the *Phenomenology*”, multiculturalism tends to “involve large-scale exchanges of recognition in which states typically play a crucial role” (25). Charles Taylor’s “The Politics of Recognition” (1994) provides a case in point. There, Taylor drew on the insights of Hegel, among others, to mount a sustained critique of what he claimed to be the increasingly “impracticable” (ibid: 61) nature of “difference-blind” (ibid: 40) liberalism when applied to culturally diverse polities such as the United States and Canada. Working within the context of a rise in Aboriginal and

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<sup>4</sup> In this paper I have chosen to avoid the use of exclusively masculine pronouns when quoting from the writings of Fanon and Hegel. In my concluding section I hope to flag some of the potential problems that flow from the gendered and, at times, overly masculinist nature of Fanon’s theorizing.

<sup>5</sup> One could argue that this is not necessarily the case with respect to Hegel’s later works, particularly *The Philosophy of Right* (1952), where the state is understood to play a key role in mediating relations of recognition (Williams, 2001; Markell, 2003).

Quebec nationalism, Taylor argued that culturally diverse states like Canada should grant institutional recognition and protection for subaltern ethno-national groups because it is within and against the horizon of one's cultural community that humans come to develop their identities, and by extension their capacity for evaluation, their sense of dignity, and their ability to formulate choices among the options that life provides (ibid: 32-33). In short, our identities provide the "background against which our tastes and desires and opinions and aspirations make sense" (ibid: 33-34).<sup>6</sup> Without this orienting framework humans would be unable to derive meaning from their lives – we would not know "who we are" or "where [we are] coming from" (ibid: 33). We would be "at sea", as Taylor put it elsewhere (1989: 27).

Thus, much like Hegel before him, Taylor argued that human actors do not develop their identities in "isolation," rather they are "formed" through "dialogue with others, in agreement or struggle with their recognition of us" (1991: 45-46). However, given that our identities are formed through these complex relations, it follows that they can also be significantly *deformed* through similar processes. This is what Taylor means when he asserts that identities are shaped not only by recognition, but also its *absence*:

often by the *misrecognition* of others. A person or a group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning one in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being. (1994: 25)

This idea that asymmetrical relations of recognition can impede human freedom and flourishing by "imprisoning" someone in a distorted relation-to-self is, again, a fundamentally Hegelian point, and one that is made throughout Taylor's essay. For instance, we are repeatedly told how disparaging forms of recognition can inflict "wounds" on their "victims", "saddling [them] with a crippling self-hatred" (ibid: 26); or that withholding recognition can "inflict damage" on "those who are denied it" (ibid: 36). And given that misrecognition has the capacity to "harm" others in this manner, it follows, according to Taylor, that it be considered "a form of oppression" (ibid: 36) on par with "injustices" such as "inequality" and "exploitation" (ibid: 64). Recognition is thus elevated to the status of a "vital human need" (ibid: 26).

Since its publication in 1992, Taylor's essay has generated both praise and criticism with respect to how it conceptualizes justice for Indigenous peoples. Simply stated, Taylor argued that Indigenous peoples, as a previously non-recognized ethno-national minority, ought to be considered eligible for state recognition. To this end, he advocated the delegation of political and cultural "autonomy" to Aboriginal groups through the institutions of "self-government" (ibid: 40). Accommodating the aspirations of Indigenous peoples in this way would ideally allow Native communities to "preserve their cultural integrity" (ibid: 40) and thus help stave off the psychological disorientation and resultant unfreedom associated with exposure to structured patterns of misrecognition. The institutionalization of "a regime of reciprocal recognition" (ibid: 50) would thus help Indigenous peoples' realize their status as distinct and self-determining agents.

While it is undoubtedly true that Taylor's proposal represents a marked improvement over Canada's "past tactics of exclusion, genocide, and assimilation" (Day and Sadik, 2002:

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<sup>6</sup> In a similar vein, Will Kymlicka defends state recognition for what he calls "societal cultures": that is, "a culture that provides its members with meaningful ways of life across the full range of human activities, including social educational, religious, recreational and economic life, encompassing both public and private spheres" (1995: 76).

6), in the following section I will argue that the logic at play in his argument – where “recognition” is conceived of as a “gift” bestowed from a “privileged” group or entity (the liberal settler-state) to a dependent and “subordinate” group or entity (Indigenous peoples) (Day, 2001: 195) – ultimately prefigures its failure to significantly alter, let alone transcend, the breadth of power at work in colonial relations of domination. I also hope to show how Fanon anticipated this failure over fifty years ago. What makes this insight from Fanon even more interesting, however, is the fact that Taylor himself relied on Fanon’s work in order to delineate the complex relationship between misrecognition and the forms of unfreedom and subjection discussed above.

## II. Frantz Fanon and the Problem of Recognition in Colonial Contexts

In the second half of “The Politics of Recognition” Taylor identifies Fanon’s classic 1961 treatise on decolonization, *The Wretched of the Earth* (2005), as one of the first texts to elicit the role of misrecognition in propping up relations of colonial domination (Taylor, 1994: 65-66). By extension Fanon’s analysis in *The Wretched* is also employed to support Taylor’s theoretical argument for granting cultural recognition to sub-state groups that have suffered under the weight of European imperialism. Although Taylor acknowledged that Fanon advocated “violent” struggle as the primary means of overcoming the “psycho-existential” complexes (Fanon, 1967: 12) spawned by misrecognition, he nonetheless insisted that Fanon’s argument was applicable to contemporary debates surrounding the “politics of difference” more generally (Taylor, 1994: 65-66; 1985: 235). Below I want to challenge Taylor’s use of Fanon in this context. In doing so, however, I do not intend to dispute his assertion that Fanon’s work constitutes an important theorization of the ways in which the subjectivity of the oppressed can be deformed by mis or nonrecognition, and thus contribute to their unfreedom. As I hope to demonstrate, Taylor is essentially correct in this claim. Where I do disagree, however, is with his suggestion that by institutionalizing a liberal regime of reciprocal recognition we can somehow transcend the configurations of power at play in colonial forms of dominance. Interestingly, Fanon posed a remarkably similar challenge in his earlier work, *Black Skin, White Masks* (BSWM).

Fanon’s concern with the relationship between human freedom and achieving reciprocity in relations of recognition in colonial contexts represents a central and reoccurring theme in *BSWM*.<sup>7</sup> As mentioned at the outset of this essay, it was there that Fanon argued that the long term stability of a imperial system of dominance relies as much on the “internalization” of the forms of racist recognition imposed or bestowed on the Indigenous population by the colonial state and society as it does on brute force. In essence, Fanon showed how the longevity of a colonial social formation depends on its capacity to effectively transform the colonized population into *subjects* (or objects) of imperial rule. Here I suggest that Fanon notably anticipates the work of Louis Althusser (1994), who would later argue that the reproduction of capitalist relations of production rests on the ability of the state’s ideological apparatus to “interpellate” individuals as subjects of class rule.<sup>8</sup> For Fanon colonialism can thus be said to operate on two levels: it includes “not only the interrelations of *objective* historical conditions but also human *attitudes* to these conditions” (1967: 84: emphasis added). Fanon argued that it was this dialectical interplay between the structural/objective and recognitive/subjective realms of colonialism that ensured its hegemony over time.

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<sup>7</sup> A number of studies have mapped the similarities and differences between the dialectic of recognition as conceived by Fanon and Hegel. See, for example: Gendzier, 1974; Bulhan, 1985; Turner, 1996; Kruks, 2001; Oliver, 2001; Gibson, 2002, 2003; Chari, 2004; and Schaap, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, Althusser called the reproduction of capitalist relations of production the “recognition function” of ideology (1994: 128-136).

With respect to the subjective dimension, *BSWM* painstakingly outlines the myriad ways in which those “attitudes” conducive to colonial rule are cultivated amongst the colonized through the unequal exchange of institutionalized and interpersonal patterns of recognition (whether manifest in communicative, sex, or race relations) between the colonial society and the Indigenous population. In effect, Fanon was able to reveal how, over time, colonized populations tended to internalize the derogatory images imposed on them by their colonial “masters”, and how as a result of this process, these images, along with the structural relations with which they were entwined, came to be recognized (or at least endured) as more or less natural. This last point is made agonizingly clear in arguably the most famous passage from *BSWM*, where Fanon shares an alienating encounter on the streets of Paris with a little white girl. “Look, a Negro!”, Fanon recalled the girl saying, “Mommy, look at the Negro! I’m afraid! Afraid!” (2001: 185). At that moment the imposition of the child’s racist gaze locked Fanon into a “crushing objecthood” (ibid: 184), fixing him “like a dye used to fix a chemical solution” (ibid: 184). He found himself temporarily *accepting* that he was indeed the subject of the girl’s call: “It was true, I was amused”, thought Fanon (ibid: 185). But then “I ran an objective gaze over myself, discovering my blackness, my ethnic characteristics and I was deafened by cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, [and] racial defects (ibid: 185-186). Far from assuring Fanon’s humanity, the other’s recognition effectively imprisoned him in an externally determined and devalued conception of self (ibid: 186). Instead of being acknowledged as a “man among men”, he was reduced to “an object among other objects” (ibid: 184).

Left as is, Fanon’s insights into the ultimately subjectifying and freedom-inhibiting nature of colonial recognition appear to square nicely with Taylor’s work. For example, although Fanon never uses the term himself, he does seem to be mapping the debilitating effects associated with *misrecognition* in the sense that Taylor uses the term. In fact, *BSWM* is littered with passages that illustrate the innumerable ways in which the imposition of the settler’s gaze can inflict damage on the Indigenous society at both the individual and collective levels. Even with this being the case, however, I believe that a close reading of *BSWM* renders problematic Taylor’s approach in several interrelated and crucial respects. The **first** problem has to do with its failure to adequately confront the dual structure of colonialism itself. Fanon insisted, for example, that in order to transform a colonial configuration of power one had to attack it at both levels of operation: the objective and the subjective (1967: 11-12; also see Young, 274-275). This point is made at the outset of *BSWM* and reverberates throughout all of Fanon’s work. As stated in his introduction, although a significant amount of *BSWM* was committed to diagnosing the “psychological” dimension of colonialism – that is, how subjects tended to experience, endure, internalize, and “live” colonial domination – Fanon nonetheless insisted that, strategically, any “effective disalienation” of the colonized subject could only happen if one also addressed the “social and economic realities” of imperial rule (1967: 11). Hence the term “sociodiagnostic” for Fanon’s project: “if there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process [...] primarily economic; [and] subsequently the internalization – or better, the epidermalization – of his [or her] inferiority” (ibid: 11). Fanon correctly situated, among other things, colonial-capitalist exploitation alongside misrecognition and alienation as one of the foundational sources of colonial violence and unfreedom. “The Negro problem”, wrote Fanon, “does not resolve itself into the problem of Negroes *living* among white men but rather of Negroes being *exploited, enslaved, despised* by a colonialist, capitalist society that is only accidentally white” (ibid: 202; emphasis added). Fanon was enough of a Marxist to understand that capitalist economic relations played a foundational role in exasperating asymmetrical relations of recognition. However, he was also much more perceptive than many Marxists insofar as he insisted that the subjective realm of colonialism had to be the target of strategic transformation along with the socio-economic structure. The colonized person

“must wage war on both levels”, insisted Fanon. “Since historically they influence each other, any unilateral liberation is incomplete, and the gravest mistake would be to believe in their automatic interdependence” (ibid: 11). Attacking colonial power on one front, in other words, did not guarantee the subversion of its effects on the other. “This is why a Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched when it comes to addressing the colonial issue”, Fanon would later write in *The Wretched*, (2005: 5). The levels on which colonial power operates may be interrelated, but they are also semi-autonomous.

Lately a number of scholars have taken aim at the contribution of recognition theorists like Taylor on precisely these grounds: that their work offers little insight regarding how to address the more overtly structural and/or economic dimensions of social oppression (Bannerji, 2001; Rorty, 1998, 2001; Day, 2001; 2002; Barry, 2002; Fraser and Honneth, 2003). We have also been told that this lack of insight has contributed to a shift in the terrain of contemporary political thought and practice more generally – from “redistribution to recognition”, to use Nancy Fraser’s formulation (Fraser and Honneth, 2003). According to Fraser, whereas traditional proponents of redistribution tend to focus on the structural aspects of economic injustice, advocates of the newer “politics of recognition” tend to conceptualize injustice in largely cultural and psychological terms (ibid: 13). Moreover, in accordance with their conceptually distinct views on the nature and sources of injustice, proponents from these two camps often view its remedies in different terms as well. Advocates of redistribution, for example, are inclined to attack injustice on the socio-economic level: examples range between “affirmative” strategies such as social welfare, which aim toward a more equitable distribution of goods and resources, to more “transformative” methods, such as the transformation of the capitalist mode of production itself. In contrast, advocates fighting against injustices associated with misrecognition often focus their efforts on “cultural and symbolic change” (ibid: 12-13). Again, this could involve “affirmative” approaches such as the recognition and reaffirmation of previously disparaged identities (à la Taylor’s project in “The Politics of Recognition”), or these strategies could adopt a more “transformative” form, such as the “deconstruction” of dominant “patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication in ways that would change everyone’s social identities” (ibid: 12-13). Here it is important to highlight Fraser’s distinction between “affirmative” and “transformative” strategies. Simply put, affirmative approaches seek to alter the economic and cultural end-state of an unjust social relation without altering the generative structures that produce such relations. Transformative approaches, by contrast, seek to alter the underlying mechanisms responsible for distributive and recognitive injustices in the first place (ibid: 96, 72-78). Fraser aligns her project with the more “radical” position indicative of transformative strategies.

I think that Fanon, who anticipates the so-called “redistribution or recognition” debate by a half century, would argue that both Taylor and Fraser have it wrong.<sup>9</sup> Taylor’s mistaken insofar as his work tends to, at best, address the political economy of colonialism in a strictly “affirmative” manner: through reformist state redistribution schemes like granting certain “cultural rights” and concessions to Aboriginal communities via self-government and land claims processes. Although this approach may alter the intensity of some of the *effects* of colonial-capitalist exploitation and domination, it does little to address their generative structures, in this case the racist capitalist economy and the hetero-patriarchal colonial

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<sup>9</sup> Fanon also emphasized the importance of redistributive politics in *The Wretched*: “As we have seen, [in the colonial context] a government needs a program if it really wants to liberate the people politically and socially. Not only an economic program but also a policy on the distribution of wealth and social relations” (2005: 143). And: “What matters today, the issue which blocks the horizon, is the need for a redistribution of wealth. Humanity will have to address this question, no matter how devastating the consequences will be” (ibid: 55). For the only discussion that I know of regarding Fanon’s anticipatory intervention into the redistribution/recognition debate see, Bhabha, 2005.



state. When his work is at its weakest, however, Taylor tends to focus on the recognition end of the spectrum too much, and as a result leaves uninterrogated the deeply-rooted economic structures of oppression.<sup>10</sup> Richard Day has succinctly framed the problem this way: “although Taylor’s recognition model allows for diversity of culture within a particular state by admitting the possibility of multiple national identifications”, it is less “permissive with regard to polity and economy [...] in assuming that any subaltern group that is granted [recognition] will thereby acquire a *subordinate* articulation with a *capitalist state*” (2001: 189). Seen from this angle, Taylor’s theory appears to leave untouched one of the two operative levels of colonial power identified by Fanon.

This line of criticism is, of course, well worn and can be traced back to at least the work of early Marx. As such I doubt that many would be surprised that Taylor’s liberalism as *liberalism* fails to confront the structural/economic aspects of colonialism at its generative roots. To my mind, however, the inadequacy of Taylor’s approach in this respect is particularly surprising given the fact that many Indigenous communities and individuals in Canada continue to articulate their demands for *recognition* in ways that explicitly call into question the inherently dominating nature of capitalist social relations and the state-form. This was as true for my community (the Dene Nation) in the 1970s in our struggle against state-sanctioned capitalist resource development in the Northwest Territories (Watkins, 1977; Berger, 1977), as it is now for scholars and activists such as the recently deceased Metis leader and historian Howard Adams (1975, 1999), Mohawk political scientist Taiiaki Alfred (1999, 2005), Sto:lo writer Lee Maracle (1996), and Mi’kmaq scholar Bonita Lawrence (2004). Alfred, for one, has repeatedly argued that the goal of any traditionally rooted self-determination struggle should be to protect that which constitutes the “heart and sole of indigenous nations: a set of values that challenge the homogenizing force of Western liberalism and free-market capitalism; that honor the autonomy of individual conscience, non-coercive authority, and the deep interconnection between human beings and other elements of creation” (1999: 60). For Alfred, this vision is not only embodied in the practical philosophies and ethical systems of many of North America’s Indigenous peoples, but it also flows from an astute “realization that capitalist economics and liberal delusions of progress” have historically served as the “engines of colonial aggression and injustice” itself (2005: 133).

However, if Taylor’s account pays insufficient attention to the clearly structural and economic realm of domination, then Fraser’s does so from the opposite angle. In order to avoid what she sees as the pitfalls associated with the politics of recognition’s latent essentialism and displacement of questions of distributive justice, Fraser proposes a means of reconceptualizing recognition so that it can be integrated with struggles for redistribution, without subordinating one to the other. To this end, Fraser suggests that instead of understanding recognition to be the revaluation of cultural or group-specific identity and misrecognition as the disparagement of such identity and its consequent effects on the subjectivity of minorities, recognition and misrecognition should be conceived of in terms of the “institutionalized patterns of value” that affect one’s ability to participate as a *peer* in social life (2003:29). “To view recognition” in this manner, writes Fraser, “is to treat it as an issue of *social status*” (ibid: 29).

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<sup>10</sup> A number of scholars have explicitly challenged Taylor’s use of Fanon in these terms as well. Consider, for example, Anthony Alessandrini’s claim that it has become “all too easy to reduce Fanon’s legacy to the question of ‘recognition,’ in its most limited sense. This is apparent, for example, in Charles Taylor’s ‘The Politics of Recognition’, which tries to make a case for Fanon as a prophet of the sort of multiculturalism which maintains that ‘recognition forges identity,’ and thus that the solution to questions of social oppression relies in the reform of curricula [and similar liberal concessions]” (1999: 11). Also see Bannerji, 2001.

Although Fraser's status model allows her to avoid some of the problems she identifies with the recognition paradigm, it unfortunately raises a host of new ones in their place. First, when applied to Forth World anti-colonial struggles, the status model rests on the problematic background assumption that the state constitutes an appropriate and legitimate framework within which one could be more justly included, or unjustly excluded (Day, 2001: 176). In this sense, Fraser, like Taylor, leaves intact one of the formative structures of colonial exploitation and domination: the nation-state.<sup>11</sup> Second, although the name remains the same, in many ways I fail to see how Fraser's status model deals with the issue of *recognition* at all, especially with respect to her deconstructive approach which seeks to undo identifications as soon as they crystallize into anything remotely concrete. The problem here is that whether we like it or not many of today's most volatile social and political conflicts include identity-related and psychological dimensions to them in the way that both Taylor and Fanon describe. In pragmatic terms, then, in her explicit attempt to eschew this messy feature of contemporary political discord, Fraser's status model may leave an important aspect of the source of these conflicts untouched, and as such do little to address the debilitating effects that they have on the subjectivities of the oppressed. This should be problematic for Fraser even on her own terms, given that these injuries can themselves undermine the development of the "degree of autonomy and sense of self-worth that is required to participate equally in the public and private life of [one's] community" (Tully, 2000a: 470).<sup>12</sup> And finally (and this is leaving aside the first problem, which is a decisive one), if Fanon's insight into the semi-autonomous nature of the two realms of colonial power is correct, then dumping all of our efforts into alleviating the institutional impediments to participatory parity may not do anything to undercut the forms of unfreedom related to misrecognition in the traditional sense. This is precisely why Fanon insisted that any unilateral liberation would be incomplete unless both realms of domination, the objective and subjective, were addressed in full and in accordance with their own specific logics.

This last point brings us to the **second** key problem with Taylor's proposed remedy for colonial domination. I have already suggested that Taylor's hybrid liberal-communitarian position is incapable of curbing the damages wrought within and against Indigenous and other subaltern communities by the structures of state and capital, but what about his theory

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<sup>11</sup> To be fair, at one point in her text (actually, in a long footnote) Fraser hints at her theory's weakness in this respect. Speaking of the work of Will Kymlicka, Fraser suggests that her status model may not be as appropriate in situations where claims for recognition involve a challenge to a current distribution of state sovereignty. Whereas Kymlicka's approach is tailored toward demands for recognition in multinational states like Canada, Fraser's project seeks to address such demands in "polyethnic" polities like the United States. The problem with this caveat, however, is that it is premised on a misrecognition of its own: namely, that as a polity founded on the territories of previously self-determining Indigenous nations, the United States is itself a multinational state in much the same way that Canada is (2003: 100).

<sup>12</sup> One of the reasons Fraser provides to support her status model is that she claims it locates what is wrong with misrecognition in "social relations" and not in "individual or interpersonal psychology" (Fraser, and Honneth, 2003: 31). This is preferable, according to Fraser, because when misrecognition "is identified with internal distortions in the structure of the consciousness of the oppressed, it is but a short step to blaming the victim" (ibid.). On this point I have to disagree with Fraser. I do not think that acknowledging the harm that misrecognition can have on the psychic structure of individuals necessarily implies that one is blaming those subject to oppression for their own misfortune. Fanon, for example, was unambiguous with respect to his locating the cause of the "inferiority complex" of colonized subjects in the underlying colonial social structure (1967: 11). The problem, however, is that the psychological problems that flow from this structure often take on a life of their own, and as such, need to be dealt with independently. As mentioned previously, Fanon was insistent that a change in the social structure would not guarantee a change in the subjectivities of the oppressed.

of recognition? Does it suffer the same fate vis-à-vis the forms of power that it seeks to transform or undercut? As noted in the previous section, underlying Taylor's approach is the assumption that the flourishing of Indigenous peoples as distinct and self-determining collectivities is dependent on their being *granted* cultural recognition and institutional accommodation by and within the colonial state apparatus. What makes this approach both so intriguing and so problematic, however, is that Fanon argued against a similar presumption, albeit in a slightly different context, in the penultimate chapter of *BSWM*. Moreover, like Taylor, he did so with reference to Hegel's master/slave parable. There Fanon argued that the dialectical progression to reciprocity in relations of recognition is frequently undermined in the colonial setting by the fact that, unlike the subjugated slave in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, many colonized societies no longer have to *struggle* for their freedom and independence. It is often negotiated, achieved through constitutional amendment, or simply "declared" by the settler-state and bestowed upon the Indigenous population in the form of political rights. Whatever the method, in these circumstances the colonized, "steeped in the inessentiality of servitude" are "set free by [the] master" (Fanon, 1967: 219; emphasis added). "One day the White Master, *without conflict*, recognize[s] the Negro slave" (ibid: 217). As such they do not have to lay down their life to *prove* their "certainty of being" in the way that Hegel insisted (1977: 113-114). The "upheaval" of formal freedom and independence thus reaches the colonized "from without."

The black man [sic] [is] acted upon. Values that [are] not created by his actions, values that [are] not born in a systolic tide of his blood, [dance] in a hued whirl around him. The upheaval [does] not make a difference in the Negro. He [goes] from one way of life to another, but not from one life to another. (ibid: 220)

There are a number of important issues underlying Fanon's concern here. The first involves the relationship that he draws between struggle and the disalienation of the colonized subject. Simply stated, for Fanon it is through struggle and conflict (and for the later Fanon, *violent* struggle and conflict) that imperial subjects come to rid of the "arsenal of complexes" driven into the core of their being through the colonial process (ibid: 18). I will have more to say about this aspect of Fanon's thought below, but for now I simply want to flag the fact that struggle – or, as I will argue later, *transformative praxis* – serves as the mediating force through which the colonized come to shed their colonial identities, thus restoring them to their "proper place" (ibid: 12). In contexts where recognition is conferred without struggle or conflict, however, this fundamental self-transformation – or as Lou Turner puts it, this "inner differentiation" at the level of the colonized's being (1996: 146) – cannot occur, and as such authentic freedom is denied. Hence Fanon's claim that the colonized simply go from "one way of life to another, but not from one life to another" (1967: 220); the structure of domination changes, but the subjectivity of the Native remains the same – they become "emancipated slaves" (Turner, 1996: 146).

The second important point to note is that when Fanon speaks of a lack of struggle in the decolonization movements of his day (particularly in his own country of Martinique) he does not mean to suggest that the colonized in these contexts simply remained passive recipients of colonial practices. He readily admits, for example, that "from time to time" the colonized may indeed fight "for Liberty and Justice" (1967: 221). However, when this fight is carried out in a manner that does not pose a foundational challenge to colonial power as such – which, for Fanon, will always involve struggle and conflict – then the best the colonized can hope for is "white liberty and white justice; that is, values secreted by [their] masters" (ibid: 221). Without conflict and struggle the terms of recognition remain "the

property” of those in power to bestow on their “inferiors” in ways that they deem appropriate (Oliver, 2001: 24). Note the double level of subjection here: without transformative conflict constituting an integral aspect of the decolonization process the Indigenous population will not only remain subjects of imperial rule insofar as they have not gone through a process of purging their colonial mentalities, of strategic *desubjectification*, but they will also remain so insofar as the Indigenous society will tend to come to see the forms of limited and constrained recognition conferred to them by their colonial “masters” as *there own*. In effect they will come to *identify* with “white liberty and white justice” (ibid: 221). As Fanon would later phrase it in *The Wretched*, these values eventually “seep” into the colonized subject and subtly structure and limit the realm of possibility of their freedom (Fanon, 1963: 9). Either way, for Fanon, the colonized will have failed to reestablish themselves as truly self-determining: that is, as creators of the terms of their own recognition and in accordance with their own values (1967: 220-222). Again, I will return to these issues later, particularly with respect to the implications they have in terms of anti-colonial strategies of resistance and resurgence.

This leads nicely to my **third** and final problem with Taylor’s politics of recognition. This time the concern revolves around a misguided sociological assumption that undergirds Taylor’s appropriation of Hegel’s notion of mutual recognition. As noted in the previous section, at the heart of Hegel’s master/slave dialectic is the idea that both parties engaged in the struggle for recognition are dependent on the other’s acknowledgment for their freedom and self-worth. Fanon picks this up when he writes: “At the foundation of [the] Hegelian dialectic there is an absolute reciprocity which must be emphasized” (ibid: 217). Moreover, Hegel asserts that this dependency is even more crucial for the master in the relationship, for unlike the slave he or she is unable to achieve independence and objective self-certainty through the object of his or her own labor. Mutual dependency thus appears to be the background condition that ensures that the dialectic progresses towards reciprocity. This is why Taylor claims, with reference to Hegel, that “the struggle for recognition can only find *one satisfactory solution, and that is a regime of reciprocal recognition among equals*” (1994: 50; emphasis added). However, as Fanon reminds us, the problem with this formulation is that when applied to the real world context of struggles for recognition between hegemonic and subaltern communities the mutual character of dependency often does not exist. This observation is made in a lengthily footnote on page 220 of *BSWM* where Fanon claims to have shown how the colonial master “basically differs” from the master depicted in Hegel’s *Phenomenology*. “For Hegel there is reciprocity”, but in the colonies “the master laughs at the consciousness of the slave. What he wants from the slave is “*not recognition but work*” (1967: 220). To my mind this is one of the most crucial passages in *BSWM* for it outlines in precise terms what is wrong with the recognition paradigm when abstracted from the face-to-face encounter in Hegel’s dialectic and applied to the colonial environment. Although the issue here is an obvious one, it has nonetheless been critically overlooked in the contemporary recognition literature: in relations of domination that exist between nation-states and the sub-state national or cultural groups that they “incorporate” (Kymlicka, 1995, 1998, 2001) into their territorial and jurisdictional boundaries there is no mutual dependency in terms of recognition. In these contexts, the “master” – that is, the colonial state and state society – does not need recognition from the previously self-determining communities upon which its territorial, economic, and social infrastructure is constituted. What it needs is land, labor and resources. Thus, rather than leading to a condition of reciprocity the dialectic either breaks down with the explicit *non*-recognition of the equal status of the colonized population, or with the strategic “domestication” or limiting of the terms of recognition in such a way that the foundation of the colonial relationship remains relatively undisturbed (Schulte-Tenckhoff, 1998).

Anyone remotely familiar with the power dynamics that structure the Aboriginal rights movement in Canada should immediately see the applicability of Fanon's insights here. Indeed, one need not expend much effort to elicit the countless ways in which the liberal discourse of recognition is limited and constrained by the state, politicians, policy makers, and the courts in ways that pose no fundamental challenge to the colonial relationship. With respect to the law, Michael Asch's work (1999), for example, has clearly demonstrated how the Supreme Court of Canada has consistently refused to recognize Aboriginal peoples' equal and self-determining status based on its adherence to legal precedent founded on the white supremacist myth that Indigenous societies were too primitive to bear "abstract political rights" when they first encountered European powers. Thus, even though the Court has secured an unprecedented degree of protection for certain "cultural" practices within the state (mostly in form of subsistence rights) it has nonetheless consistently refused to challenge the racist origin of Canada's assumed sovereign authority over Indigenous peoples and territories (also see Macklem, 2001).

The political and economic ramifications of this legal strategy are clear-cut. In *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*, for example, it was declared that any residual Aboriginal rights that may have survived the unilateral assertion of Crown sovereignty could be infringed upon by the federal and provincial governments so long as this action could be shown to further "a compelling and substantial legislative objective" and that it is "consistent with the special fiduciary relationship between the Crown and the aboriginal peoples" (quoted in Tully, 2000b: 413). What "substantial objectives" might justify infringement? According to the Court, virtually any profitable economic venture, including "the development of agriculture, forestry, mining, and hydroelectric power, the general economic development of the interior of British Columbia, protection of the environment or endangered species and the building of infrastructure and the settlement of foreign populations to support those aims" (ibid). So today it appears, much as it did in Fanon's day, that colonial powers will only recognize the collective rights and identities of Indigenous peoples insofar as this recognition does not jeopardize the structural underpinnings of the colonial relationship itself (Povinelli, 2002).

However, the above examples confirm only one aspect of Fanon's insight into the problem of recognition when applied to the colonial setting: namely, the limitations that it runs up against when pitted against these overtly structural expressions of colonial power. But what about the subjective or "psycho-affective" realm that Fanon speaks of, is his critique equally pertinent to this contemporary aspect of the politics of recognition? Does recognition still produce subjects of empire in the way that Fanon suggested so many years ago?

With respect to the forms of racist recognition imposed on Indigenous peoples through the institutions of the state, church, schools, media, and by intolerant individuals within the dominant society, the answer is clearly yes. Countless studies, novels, and autobiographical narratives have outlined, in painful detail, how these expressions of recognition can saddle individuals with low self-esteem, cause depression, encourage alcohol and drug abuse, and incite violent behavior against oneself and toward others (Duran and Duran, 1995). Similarly convincing arguments, however, have been made regarding the types of recognition offered to Indigenous communities through the law, self-government packages, land claims, and economic development programs. The recent work of Taiaiake Alfred (2005), Paul Nadasdy (2005) and Isabel Altamirano-Jimenez (2004), for example, have all shown in markedly different ways and contexts how the state institutional and discursive fields within and against which Indigenous demands for recognition are made can subtly shape the subjectivities and worldviews of the Indigenous claimants involved. Alfred contends that the trouble with the bulk of these strategies is that they simply fail to acknowledge the ways in which the means of decolonization affect its intended ends. (2005: 22-23). "How you fight determines who you become when the battle is over", writes Alfred

(ibid: 23). Consider the legalist approach as an example: in order for the courts to even comprehend an Indigenous recognition claim, one of two things has to happen. (1) Indigenous communities have to either go to great lengths to make their claim legible to the courts. This often involves casting claims in the Eurocentric discourse of rights, sovereignty, property, nationhood, or what have you, concepts which often have a fundamentally different meaning from the vantage point of Indigenous cultures and communities. Or (2) the court itself has to attempt to render Indigenous recognition claims legible under colonial law, which often distorts or constrains the meaning and spirit of what is being claimed to begin with: land as “property”, jurisdiction as “sovereignty,” treaties as a matter of domestic rather than international law, *sui generis* rights as not only “unique” but also subordinate, and so on. The problem here, of course, is that the discursive and institutional settings within which these claims are articulated and assessed are by no means neutral: they are profoundly hierarchical and incredibly power laden to the detriment of Indigenous claimants. As such they have the ability to mold how Indigenous subjects think and act not only in relation to the topic at hand (the recognition claim) but also to themselves and with others. This is what Alfred means when he suggests that, over time, the legalist approach tends to produce Aboriginal “citizens” whose rights and identities become defined by the colonial state; economic development approaches produce Aboriginal capitalists whose thirst for profit comes to outweigh their ancestral obligations to the land and to others (2005: 23); and land claims processes produce Aboriginal property owners whose territories, and thus identities, become subject to expropriation and alienation. Whatever the method, all signify the erosion of the most traditionally egalitarian aspects of Indigenous ethical systems, ways of life, and forms of social organization.

### III. Self-Recognition and the Politics of Anti-Colonial Empowerment

The argument that I have sketched-out to this point is a bleak one. Indeed, left as is, it would appear that recognition inevitably equates subjection, and as such much of what Indigenous peoples’ have sought over the last thirty years as a means of securing their freedom has in practice cunningly assured its opposite. In this sense, my line of argument appears to adhere to an outdated understanding of power and subjection, one in which postcolonial critics, often reacting against Fanon, Memmi, Althusser, and others, have worked so diligently to refute. The implication of this view is that Indigenous subjects are *always* being interpellated by recognition, being constructed by colonial discourse, or being assimilated by imperial power structures (Ashcroft, 2001: 35). As a result, resistance to this totalizing power is often conceived of in entirely reactionary and oppositional terms, which for the colonized usually “means the rejection of the dominant culture [and] the utter refusal to countenance any engagement with its forms and discourses” (ibid: 47). To the degree that Fanon can be said to have been implicated in espousing such a totalizing view of power and resistance, it has been suggested that he was unable to escape the Manichean logic so essential in propping up relations of colonial domination to begin with (Ashcroft, 2001: 13; Scott, 2004).

In providing a counter to this classical view of colonial power relations, Bill Ashcroft has recently suggested that the most effective forms of subaltern resistance have often occurred through more subtle means, and as such have tended to fall under the radar of much anti-colonial thought and strategy (2001). According to Ashcroft, these micro-political, non-binary strategies of resistance tend to involve the tactical “interpolation” of the colonized into a “dominant discourse without asserting a unified anti-imperial intention, or a separate oppositional purity” (ibid: 47). Here Ashcroft purposely employs the term “interpolation” as a play on Althusser’s distinctly negative concept of “interpellation” in order to ascribe the colonial subject a level of “agency” that is denied in Althusserian accounts of subjection (ibid;

14). To this end he claims to have recast “the trajectory of power” traditionally thought to operate in colonialism:

Rather than being swallowed up by the hegemony of empire, the apparently dominated culture, and the “interpellated” subjects within it, are quite able to interpolate the various modes of imperial discourse to use it for different purposes, to counter its effects by transforming them. (ibid.)

As a scholar of post-colonial literature, Ashcroft is most interested in the ways in which language and writing have been used to subvert the hegemony of imperial representations and the maintenance of colonial hierarchies. However, he also suggests that interpolation could cover a “wide range of resistance practices” which might include the colonized society’s strategic interjection into the market economy, the dominant society’s academic institutions and fields of intellectual production, the discursive and institutional apparatus of the colonial state and the law, or any other number of sites of imperial power.

At this point I want to rescue Fanon, a least partially, from the charge that he advocated such a devastating view of power, and as a result saw the most effective means of resistance in terms of locating a place either outside or in direct opposition to it (what Ashcroft refers to as “separate oppositional purity” above). Although I appreciate Ashcroft’s emphasis on the importance of the micro-political realm of subversive action that coincided with the anti-colonial macro-political projects that swept the post-war period, I nonetheless think that, in attempting to counter the classical anti-colonialist view of power as a totalizing, smooth, and unified force, with the post-colonial view of it as being uneven, rife with internal contradictions, and thus littered with innumerable points of access at which subalterns can effectively interject and change the field from within, goes too far. But it is not that he goes too far in suggesting that the strategic intervention into these sites of power is possible as such, which I am sure it is, but rather that it is *uniformly* so across a diverse array of discursive and institutional contexts. In other words, Ashcroft, unlike Fanon, fails to identify the radical asymmetries that exist in terms of the *interpolatability* of different discursive and institutional formations. What he does not acknowledge is that interpolation may serve as an extremely empowering form of Indigenous resistance in one realm – for example, literary production – but not so much in another – for example, in seeking recognition as a means of reconciling the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the colonial state.

In order to assess the degree to which Fanon anticipates and accounts for this criticism, however, we have to unpack his theory of anti-colonial resistance and empowerment. In keeping with the theme of this paper I will do this in relation to the concept of recognition. As argued throughout the preceding pages, Fanon did not see much emancipatory potential in Hegel’s politics of recognition when applied to the colonial environment. However, this is not to say that he rejected the recognition paradigm entirely. As we have seen, like Hegel and Taylor, Fanon ascribed to the notion that relations of recognition are constitutive of subjectivity and that, when unequal, they can foreclose the realizability of human freedom. On the latter point, however, he was deeply skeptical as to whether the mutuality that Hegel envisioned was achievable in the conditions indicative of contemporary racist colonialism. But if Fanon did not see freedom as naturally emanating from the slave being granted recognition from his or her master, where, if at all, did it originate?

In effect, Fanon claimed that the road to self-determination instead lay in a quasi-Nietzschean form of personal and collective self-affirmation (1967: 222). Rather than remaining dependent on their oppressors for their freedom and self-worth, Fanon argued that the colonized must begin to critically reclaim and reevaluate the worth of *their own*

histories, traditions, cultures, and identities against the subjectifying gaze and assimilative pull of colonial recognition. According to Fanon this self-initiated process is what “triggers a change in the fundamental importance in the colonized’s psycho-affective equilibrium” (2005: 148). For Fanon the colonized must come to recognize *themselves* as being dignified and distinct agents of self-determination. Interestingly, Fanon equated this self-affirmative process with the praxis of the slave in Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, which he saw as illustrating the necessity on the part of the oppressed to “turn away” from the master and struggle for freedom on their own terms and in accordance with their own values (1967: 221). This is also why Fanon, although critical of the latent essentialism undergirding the work of the negritude poets, nonetheless saw their project as necessary (Kruks, 2001: 101). As a practicing psychiatrist Fanon witnessed first hand how the individual and collective reevaluation of black identity at the heart of the negritude movement served as a source of pride and empowerment, jolting the colonized society into an “actional” as opposed to “reactional” existence (1967: 222). Note, however, that Fanon insisted that self-affirmation was just the beginning: for true decolonization to take hold the colonized would still have to “act in the direction of a change in the social structure” (ibid: 100; Kruks, 2001: 104).

I would argue that Fanon’s call in *BSWM* for a simultaneous turn inward and away from the master, far from espousing a binaristic view of power relations, reflects a profound understanding of the complexity involved in contests over recognition in colonial and racialized settings. Unlike Hegel’s life-and-death struggle between two oppositional forces, Fanon added a multidimensional racial/cultural aspect to the dialectic, thereby underscoring the multifarious web of recognition relations that are at work in constructing identities and establishing (or undermining) the condition of possibility for human freedom and flourishing. Fanon showed that the power dynamics in which identities are formed and deformed were nothing like the simplistic hegemon-subaltern binary depicted by Hegel. Interestingly, in an anticipatory way Fanon’s insight can also be said to challenge the overly negative and all-subjectifying view of interpellation that would plague Althusser’s recognitive theory of ideology more than a decade later. For Althusser, the process of interpellation always took the form of “a fundamental misrecognition” (Larrain, 1996: 48) which served to reproduce relations of class dominance (Hall, 1996: 30). Fanon’s innovation was that he showed how similar recognitive processes worked to “call forth” individuals into communities of resistance (Larrain, 1996: 49).

This is not to say, of course, that Fanon was able to entirely escape from the “Manichean delirium” that he himself was so astute at diagnosing. Those familiar with the legacy of Fanon’s later work, for example, know that the “actional” existence that he saw self-recognition initiating in *BSWM* would in *The Wretched* take the form of an untenable yet necessary violent engagement with the colonial society and its institutional structure. “At the very moment [the colonized come to] discover their humanity”, wrote Fanon, they must “begin to sharpen their weapons to secure its victory” (2005: 8; emphasis added). In effect, Fanon would eventually come to see violent struggle as a necessary feature of the decolonization process for he believed that only it offered a means of both transforming the colonized subject at the level of their being as well as toppling the social structure that produced colonized subjects to begin with. Violence provided “the means and the end” of decolonization (2005: 44).

### **Conclusions: Anti-Colonialism and the Politics of Recognition after Fanon**

In the end, Fanon turned out to be wrong with respect to the “cleansing” (2005: 51) value that he attributed to anti-colonial violence. Indeed, one could argue that Algeria never recovered from the eight years of carnage and brutality that constituted its war of independence with France. Nor was the Front de Libération Nationale’s (FLN) seizure of the Algerian state apparatus enough the stave off what Fanon would call “the curse of [national]



independence" (ibid: 54): namely, the subjection of the newly "liberated" people and territories to the tyranny of the market and a post-independence class of corrupt bourgeois national elites. But if Fanon was ultimately wrong regarding violent struggle being the "perfect mediation" (ibid: 44) through which the colonized come to liberate themselves from both the structural and psycho-affective dimensions of colonial domination that he identified so masterfully, then what is the relevance of his work here and now? To quote Homi Bhabha, is Fanon's contribution to anti-colonial thought and action "lost in a time warp?" (2005: ix).

Throughout this paper I have argued that Fanon's insights into the subjectifying nature of colonial recognition are as applicable today to the liberal "politics of recognition" as they were fifty years ago when he first formulated his critique of Hegel's master-slave relation. I also hope to have shown that Fanon's dual-structured conception of colonial power still captures the subtle (and not so subtle) ways in which a system of imperial domination that does not sustain itself exclusively by force is reproduced over time. As Taiaiake Alfred has recently argued, under these "post-modern" imperial conditions "[o]pression has become increasingly invisible; [it is] no longer constituted in conventional terms of military occupation, onerous taxation burdens, blatant land thefts, etc." (2005: 58), but rather through a "fluid confluence of politics, economics, psychology and culture" (ibid: 30). But if the dispersal and effects of colonial and state power are now much more diffuse, how do we go about transforming or resisting them? Here I believe that Fanon's earlier work remains key. In that all important footnote in *BSWM* where Fanon claimed to have shown how the condition of the slave in the *Phenomenology* "basically differs" from those in the colonies he suggested that Hegel provided a partial answer: that those struggling against colonialism must "turn away" from the colonial state and society and find in their *transformative praxis* the source of their own liberation (1967: 221). I think that today this process will (and must) continue to involve some form of critical individual and collective self-recognition on the part of Indigenous peoples, not only in an instrumental sense like Fanon seemed to have envisioned it, but with the understanding that Indigenous societies have truths to teach the Western world regarding the establishment and preservation of relationships within and between peoples and the natural world that are profoundly non-imperialist. Also the empowerment that is derived from this critically self-affirmative process must be consciously directed away from the assimilative lure of the statist politics of recognition and instead be fashioned toward our own on-the-ground strategies of freedom (Tully, 2001: 54). As the feminist, anti-racist theorist bell hooks explains, such a project would minimally require that we stop being so preoccupied with looking "to that Other for recognition"; instead we should be "recognizing ourselves and [then seeking to] make contact with all who would engage us in a constructive manner (1990: 22; also see Anderson, 2000). For Alfred this would involve reconceptualizing struggle as a sustained commitment to a largely non-violent *practice* of ongoing "self-transformation and self-defense against the insidious forms of control that state and capitalism use to shape our lives according to their needs - to fear, to obey, to consume" (ibid: 29).

Finally, I also think that the explicitly non-state orientation of this radicalized politics of Indigenous empowerment would go a long way toward curbing the problematically gendered nature of the liberal reformist and revolutionary paradigms that have dominated the self-determination literature to date. With respect to the former, the work of Indigenous and non-Indigenous feminists like Patricia Monture-Angus (1995) and Wendy Brown (1995) have done an excellent job at problematizing mainstream feminism's uncritical turn toward the state in its efforts to address women's oppression. Brown's work, for example, has exposed the paradoxical nature of the politics of recognition's (although she never uses this phrase) attempt to seek emancipation for women by employing the state as a guardian and/or protector of their rights and interests on the grounds that this strategy risks further entrenching the patriarchal "mechanisms and configurations of power" that feminism has

traditionally sought to oppose (1995: 3). This strategy of reliance upon government has deeply contradictory implications, especially given that “domination, dependence, discipline, and protection, the terms marking the itinerary of women’s subordination in vastly different cultures and epochs, are also characteristic effects of state power” (ibid: 173). Thus when women turn to the state in their liberatory efforts, they risk the possibility of “reiterating rather than reworking the condition and construction of women [and women’s oppression]” (ibid). And of course the same can be said with respect to the militaristic and masculinist nature of the revolutionary paradigm that occupied Fanon’s thought late in life. This is why Alfred, for one, insists that the struggles of Indigenous peoples today “cannot hold onto a concept of the warrior that is gendered in the way it once was and that is located in an obsolete view of men’s and women’s roles” (2005: 84). Instead Indigenous struggles must “be rethought and recast from the solely masculine view of the old traditional ways to a new concept of the warrior that is freed from colonial gender constructions” (ibid). I think that Fanon’s early politics of anti-colonial empowerment, which has served as an inspiration for radical feminists of color such as bell hooks, Himani Bannerji, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, provides a potential example of an alternative to both the reformist politics of recognition and the revolutionary models of social change that have guided much anti-colonial thinking to date.

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