SIX

Antifascist Neorealisms

North-South and the Permanent Battle for Algiers

Confronted with the disasters of the twentieth century (and now those of the twenty-first), antifascism has had two tasks. First, to depict the reality of fascist violence as violence, and not as an artwork. Next it must offer a different possibility of real existence to confront the fascist claim that only the leader could resolve the problems of modern society. It meant claiming a place from which there is a right to look, not just behold the leader. For both W. E. B. Du Bois and Antonio Gramsci, writing in the 1930s, that place was what they called the "South," understood as the complex and difficult place from which resistance had to begin and also as the emergent future. The mistake of the antifascist Left, in this view, was to ignore the "South" as an atavistic relic of servile relations, failing to realize that such relations were as much part of modernity as heavy industry. Fascism itself can be situated as a South-North flow of colonial politics, sometimes literally, as in the case of Franco's use of Moroccan armies in Spain, more often metaphorically in the installation of a police state, above all in Germany. Antifascism did not fully succeed in creating a form of realism from the "South" until after the Second World War—which was by no means the end of fascism, as Frantz Fanon made clear in his writing on Algeria. Indeed, in thinking through how fascist visuality came to be the intensified modality of the imperial complex, I kept coming up against the place of Algeria and the battle for Algiers during and after the revolutionary war (1954–62). The

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Algerian War was a crucial turning point for European and Third World intellectuals alike, a scission point that has reemerged in the present crisis of neo-imperialism and the revolutions of 2011. Independent Algeria was further the site of a second disastrous civil war, in the 1990s, between the army as the defender of the revolution of 1962 and what has been called "global Islam," which is ongoing. Both the country and the city were and are, then, key locations on the border between North and South, as a place of oscillation between the deterritorialized global city and the reterritorialized postcolony. "Algeria" is thus a metonym for the difficulties of creating a neorealism that can resist fascism from the point of view of the "South."

As an extensive literature has shown, fascist visuality was designed to maintain conflict. Like the colonialism of which it was an intensified form, fascism is a "necropolitics," a politics that determines who may allocate, divide, and distribute death.[1] Within colonial-fascist necropolitics, there was always the possibility of genocide that represented the intensification of the imperial complex. In 1936, Walter Benjamin made his now famous analysis that these strategies were "the aestheticizing of politics, as practiced by fascism. Communism replies by politicizing art."[2] While the first part of this proposition is widely understood as the cult of fascist leadership, its response as the politicizing of art is still debated and indeed current. Although Benjamin's essay sought to formulate "revolutionary demands in the politics of art," he did not return to his earlier endorsement of the general strike in his "Critique of Violence" (1921). Acknowledging Sorel and the German revolution of 1919, led by Luxemburg's Spartacists, Benjamin had countered the state of exception with an exception on the side of the multitude in the form of the (then) "right to strike [which] constitutes in the view of labor, which is opposed to that of the state, the right to use force in attaining certain ends."[3] By 1936, such rights had disappeared due to the triumphs of fascism over organized labor, requiring a new modality of countervisuality. To take a decolonial perspective, antifascism first refused the idea of the heroic leader, by describing him as a form of police function, then named the "South" as a place to look, refusing the subjection of fascism. From that viewpoint, it became possible to define a new realism that both described fascism as it was and predicated a different possible means of imagining the real. Just as Benjamin had come to his proposition regarding fascism from a reading of the impact of film, so I will consider how anticolonial cinema in Algeria explored the possibilities of realism from the literally guerilla documentary to the Italian neorealist-style *The Battle of Algiers*

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(dir. Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966) and Algerian post-independence feature films. While this book was in production, the region was swept by revolutions, whose outcome is at the time of writing unclear, but whose lines of force were set down by the process described here.

THE SOUTH AND ANTIFASCISM

Both Du Bois and Gramsci proposed new realisms as a counter to fascism. Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction* and Gramsci's prison writings undertook a detailed and archival description of their historical moment. Du Bois's reconfiguration of Reconstruction ran against a revisionist Confederate history that had portrayed the enslaved as loyal to their owners and Reconstruction as at best a disaster and at worst a crime.[4] Du Bois was therefore concerned to convey as many of the words of the historical actors as he could and then contrast them with the then "scholarly" accounts that still make shocking reading today.[5] Gramsci was equally concerned to restore what he called the "history of the subaltern classes" that the "modern dictatorship" tried so hard to eliminate from what he called the culture of the period. It was nonetheless present in the phenomena that he called "folklore," ranging from popular culture to newspapers, gossip, and myth. From these strata, at once present and invisible, the subaltern classes could act with an unpredictable "spontaneity" that cut against the grain of fascism's rage for order. For Gramsci, this "spirit of cleavage—that is the progressive acquisition of the consciousness of one's historical identity"—was the means by which antifascism could be actively engaged.[6] Fascist Caesarism by contrast held that the subaltern had no historical identity that could be distinguished from the leader.

In 1918, soon after the Bolshevik Revolution, Gramsci had seen historiography forming a dialectical pattern between Carlyle's conservative evocation of the hero and the bourgeois sense of history as the measure of progress, which he connected to Herbert Spencer. He contrasted the "mystical synthesis" in Carlyle and the "inanimate abstraction" of Spencer with Marx's sense of how "an idea becomes real."[7] Within a few years, fascism had shown that the question of heroic leadership could not be so easily set aside. Gramsci stressed that there was no "essence" of fascism. Rather it should be understood as "a particular system of relations of force" that has "succeeded in creating a mass organization of the petty bourgeoisie."[8] Given the Romanizing aspect of Italian fascism, he called this organization

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"Caesarism," which "can be said to express a situation in which the forces in conflict balance each other in a catastrophic manner."[9] In moments of social crisis there was a possibility of mutual destruction that Caesarism held in check rather than resolving. While Caesarism had traditionally been the domain of "a great 'heroic' personality," such as Napoleon, it had become a bureaucratic system, expressed as much by Ramsey MacDonald's coalition governments in Britain as by dictatorship. Crucially, Gramsci understood that "modern Caesarism is more a police than a military system."[10] Fascism is when the boundary created by the police between what they can see and what we can see extends to the totality of the social. It was not Caesar (the Führer, the Duce) that created the police, but the police that created and sustained Caesar. Similarly, W. E. B. Du Bois set aside theories of the Talented Tenth in favor of his defense of "the Negro race" as a whole in the work of Reconstruction. He showed that the falsified history of the past produced "the current [1935] theory of democracy . . . that dictatorship is a stopgap pending the work of universal education, equitable income and strong character. But always the temptation is to use the stopgap for narrower ends because intelligence, thrift and goodness seem so impossibly distant for most men. We rule by junta; we turn Fascist because we do not believe in men."[11] In the limited racialized democracy of America in the 1930s, "fascism" was the potential outcome of a series of stopgap policing measures that became permanent as a means of controlling space.

Gramsci felt it was essential to establish and fix this new reality from a new perspective, which he named that of the "subaltern classes," a new application of military terminology to everyday life.[12] Subalterns were the junior officers introduced into European armies in the nineteenth century as a means of communicating the leadership's commands to the rank-and-file. One might say that they were the embodiment of visuality, enacting the general's superior visualization of the battlefield. In Gramsci's view, the First World War had shown that armies now depended on these links, which he compared to the interface between the mind (the generals) and the body (the soldiers), making the subaltern a medium of transmission for what Descartes had called the mind-body hybrid.[13] In the general social context, visuality was that medium. If Gramsci retained the military name, he reversed its intent so that the subaltern became an alternative way to mediate the "war" of the social itself. Gramsci understood the subaltern classes as all those excluded from power, centered on industrial workers, but including peasants, women, and other marginalized groups. He consid-

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ered that the Risorgimento (1814–61), which created the Italian state had, by contrast, retreated to a pre-Napoleonic consideration of the people as dispensable units of foot soldiers, rather than as "thinking men" who could play an active part in the contest.[14] The "class struggle" had to be understood in advanced societies as having changed from a "war of maneuver," that is to say a pitched battle in the sense of Clausewitz, to a "war of position," a more cautious, long-term engagement measured in cultural form. The war of maneuver that inspired Carlyle's concept of visuality was the war of movement waged by Prussian generals since the late eighteenth century, which led both to the destruction of Louis Napoleon in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 and to the Nazi-era concept of blitzkrieg. Gramsci was recognizing, as many radicals had already done, that modern mechanized warfare in the imperial bureaucratic states could not be defeated by traditional methods of insurrection. By contrast, the war of position required a catharsis, as in classical tragedy. For Gramsci this entailed "a struggle for a new culture, that is, for a new moral life that cannot but be intimately connected to a new intuition of life, until it becomes a new way of feeling and seeing reality."[15] Du Bois expanded this countervisuality into "a clear vision of a world without inordinate individual wealth, of capital without profit, and income based on work alone, [which] is the path out not only for America but for all men. Across this path stands the South with flaming swords."[16] Here he reiterated the long-standing effort to imagine a biopolitics designed for sustainability, rather than for maximizing the exploitation of labor.

To deploy the medium of the subaltern against the police bureaucracy of Caesarism, a place of articulation or transmission had to be defined. For both Du Bois and Gramsci that complexly overdetermined space was the South, within and without the imperial nation-state. The South is not a geographic location, but what Enrique Dussel has called a "metaphor for human suffering under global capitalism."[17] The concept of the South emerged from the postslavery Atlantic world as a means of thinking through the legacies of plantation slavery and of imagining an alternative future. In Pétion's Republic of Haiti, his education adviser, named Colombel, had reported on the success of examinations at the new Lycée Pétion in soaring terms: "Haitians, you are the hope of two-thirds of the known world."[18] A group of intellectuals who graduated from the Lycée founded the journal *Le Républicain* (later *L'Union*), in 1837, to examine the specificity of Haiti.[19] For one of these writers, the historian and politician Beauvais Lespinasse (1811–63), Haitian leadership could be accomplished by empha-

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sizing the African past common to all and imagining a future as part of the global South. Relying on a social theory of evolution, Lespinasse mused,

> Africa and South America, these great lands which have almost exactly the same shape, and which regard each other as twin sisters, . . . await their destiny. These two Southern continents, the Caribbean and the innumerable islands of the Pacific will continue the work of the civilization of the North . . . The time of the races of the South is not yet come; but it is firmly to be believed that they will send to the current civilized world intellectual works along with their merchandise and the immense current of hot air, which each year softens the climate of Europe.[20]

Such ideas were most likely known to Du Bois. Since the occupation of Haiti by U.S. forces, in 1915, the affairs of the island had become a critical point of engagement for African American politics. Du Bois met the former Haitian education minister and writer Dantès Bellegarde at a Pan-African Conference in 1925 and later published his work in the review *Phylon*. Du Bois himself summarized for *Phylon* a speech given by Bellegarde on the development of "autonomous" Haitian literature, including references to Lespinasse.[21]

Both Du Bois and Gramsci developed such nineteenth-century aspirations, that the South might be the agent of global liberation, by examining how it was at the same time the key location for reaction. While there were very significant differences between the North-South pattern of domination in Italy and the United States, it may be more productive to think about the similarities. If the United States was, of course, not ruled by a fascist party, its South had a clear pattern of racialization and separation, which became known as segregation. As Du Bois convincingly argued, this violent mode of domination constrained democracy both locally and globally. Although there was no single autocratic leader in the American South, the ideologists of segregation spoke fondly and at length of its principles of anti-industrial aristocracy, which they derived from British conservatives like Carlyle.[22] At the end of *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935), Du Bois outlined the discursive formation of the post-Reconstruction South around the intersecting axes of whiteness, the penitentiary, and sharecropping. These disciplinary institutions so effectively divided and separated the working classes of the South that the distinction came to appear "natural." Gramsci summarized the Northern Italian view of the South in very similar terms: "Southerners are biologically inferior beings, either semi-barbarians

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or out and out barbarians by natural destiny; if the South is underdeveloped it is not the fault of the capitalist system, or any other historical cause, but of the nature that has made Southerners lazy, incapable, criminal and barbaric."[23] Looking back on the Fascist takeover of Italy, which had seemed inconceivable even when Mussolini's party first dominated parliament, Gramsci came to see this divide between the North and South as the key to the emancipation of the nation as a whole because the South had become an internal colony: "The Northern bourgeoisie has subjugated the South of Italy and the Islands, and reduced them to exploitable colonies."[24] The "South" was then reduced to a condition in which the only resistance it could imagine was a "great 'undoing' (revolt)."[25] Nonetheless, it was precisely the spontaneity of this spirit of resistance that offered the possibility of a transformation of political culture into a form that could not sustain the racialized segregations of Caesarism.

In calling these approaches "neorealist," I am evoking the Italian postwar cinema and photography of that name without wanting to suggest a simple resumption of that tactic. While Neorealism was antifascist, the director Pier Paolo Pasolini recalled, "I also criticized it for remaining subjective and lyricizing, which was another feature of the cultural epoch before the Resistance. So, neo-realism is a product of the Resistance as regards content and message but stylistically it is still tied to pre-Resistance culture."[26] If Italian neorealism was a product of the resistance to fascism, such stylistic failures suggest that the project should not be still defined by it. Even the "content" of that neorealism is no longer controversial, in that the European dictatorships, and indeed the Jim Crow South, are now, quite rightly, among the most reviled political regimes. Indeed, the place of such regimes in cultural work today is more often to express a sense of progress and the impossibility of recurrence. Against that comforting consensus, antifascist neorealism understands the contradictory nature of a conflicted reality held in place by the operations of the police. It wants to make the continuing realities of segregation—the combination of spatial and racial politics—visible and to overcome that segregation by imagining a new reality.

BATTLING FOR ALGIERS

I decided against posing such questions to the fascism of the 1930s, which is both so extensively documented and so reviled that it has almost ceased to have substantial contemporary meaning, as evidenced by the accusation

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that the U.S. healthcare proposals of 2009–10 were fascist or Nazi. Instead, I want to use the still controversial continuing struggle in and about the decolonization of Algeria as a test case. From Delacroix's *Women of Algiers* to Frantz Fanon and Assia Djebar, Algiers was and is a key node in the network that has attempted to decolonize the real, to challenge segregation, and to imagine new realities. It is not exactly the same as the historical Alger, or Al-Djazaïr, but its visualization on the border between North and South, recalling Giorgio Agamben's definition of the fascist state of emergency as a "zone of indifference, where inside and outside do not exclude each other but rather blur with each other."[27] The Algerian decolonization movement led by the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) and the revolutionary war of 1954–62, in particular the contest for control of the capital city, Algiers, in 1957, radicalized a generation of European intellectuals and was noted for the participation of the Caribbean theorist Frantz Fanon.[28] It was Fanon, having escaped from Vichy-controlled Martinique to enlist in the Free French Army, who later posed the question in his decolonial classic *The Wretched of the Earth*: "What is fascism but colonialism at the heart of traditionally colonialist countries?"[29] This rewriting prefigures the recent turn to understanding coloniality as the very being of power. By considering Algeria as a locale of antifascist neorealism, I continue the decolonial genealogy that has motivated my entire project. The Algerian War became a test case for the war in Iraq that began in 2003 and the subsequent U.S. strategy of global counterinsurgency, so it is still worth concentrating on the battles for Algiers in psychiatry, film, video, and literature that have raged since the end of the Second World War to the present. Finally, many of the unresolved issues in the decolonization of North Africa dramatically returned to global attention when autocratic regimes in Tunisia and then Egypt were overthrown by popular revolutions in 2011. At stake throughout has been the imaginary of decolonization and the postcolonial imperial power. Was decolonization a victory or a gift? Were the rebels terrorists or nationalists? As for France, in the case of decolonizing Algeria, was it the moral victor of the Second World War, the inventor of human rights, or just another tired European power trying to maintain its dominion?

Algeria had been colonized by France, in 1832, and following the particular pattern of French colonization, it was not considered separate or distinct, but as a "department" of France. At one level the revolutionary war concerned a simple incompatibility between the French view that Algeria was in all senses part of France and the indigenous claim for independence.

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Then and now it was clear that there was no solution to this counterpoint: one side would have to dominate. However, the country was entirely dominated by the French settler population, backed up by the military. By 1950, 1 out of 9 Muslim Algerians were out of work, 25 percent of the land was owned by 2 percent of the (white) population, and only enough food was being produced for 2–3 million people, despite a Muslim population of 9 million.[30] The battle for Algiers refers to the events of 1957, in which the FLN, which had begun the active guerilla war of liberation, in 1954, called for a general strike in Algiers. The FLN included the French definition of human rights as an "equality of rights and duties, without distinction of race or of religion," in their charter (1954) and pursued them alongside the armed struggle. They hoped for United Nations intervention on their behalf and claimed that their action was justified by the right to strike under the French constitution. Led by the infamous General Jacques Massu, French paratroopers repressed the strike and the FLN by the widespread use of torture to extract information. Nonetheless, the battle of Algiers came to seem a turning point in the liberation struggle, which was finally successful in 1962. Looking back on the events at a distance of forty years, the communist activist and journalist Henri Alleg, who was "disappeared" and tortured by French troops, reconfigured what had happened: "In reality, there never was a battle; only a gigantic police operation carried out with an exceptional savagery and in violation of all the laws."[31] Just as Gramsci understood the fascist Caesar to be the product of the police state, so, too, was the imperial president sustained and produced by colonial policing under martial law. One felt the forceful echoes of this history in the 2011 Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions, when the armies of both countries stood by as the revolutionary populace contested the authority of the police. In this sense, the popular takeover of the Egyptian secret police building and its archives in March 2011 marked the "undoing" of former President Hosni Mubarak's autocratic police state.

The consistent and persistent return of the battle for Algiers in art, films, television, literature, and critical writing in the period and subsequently as a figure for war, nationalism, the migrant, torture, colonialism, and its legacies suggests that what was in the period known as the "Algerian question" remains unanswered. Where is this Algiers? In Africa, Europe, or the Maghreb? And we shall ask: where is where? Whose Algiers are we describing? How is Algiers separated in time and space, now and then, and why does this battle continue? At the time of writing, the revolutionary wave that

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began with demonstrations in Algeria against the rise in the price of food in January 2011 has produced an end to the nineteen-year-old state of emergency, but has not transformed the regime. It is precisely such questions that the cultural work on Algiers has raised from France to Finland, Italy, the United States, and, of course, Algeria itself. At stake is the possibility of a movement toward the right to look, the counter to visuality, against the police and their assertion that there is nothing to see here. Less clear has been the question of what would come afterward. In Gillo Pontecorvo's film *The Battle of Algiers* (1966), the resistance leader Ben H'midi says to Ali La Pointe that the hardest moment for a revolution comes after its victory. If colonization means, as Albert Memmi put it, that the colonized is "outside history, outside the city," what does it look like when that viewpoint is restored?[32] How can a right to look, framed in the language of Western colonial jurisprudence, be sustained as the place of the decolonized inside history and inside the city, whether that city is Algiers, Paris, Cairo, New York, or the *civis* of civilization itself? As the case of Algeria itself suggests, such questions have yet to generate sustainable answers, here or there. For the Algerian insistence on a nationalist solution that would, in Fanon's famous phrase, create a "new man" set aside questions of Islam as belonging to the past. If that "new man" was the image of decolonization, the investment in a new imagined community, the independent post-colonial republic, was such that it was felt to be capable of solving the questions of a postcolonial imaginary.[33] The antifascist investment in the "spontaneity" of the people was a double-edged weapon. On the one hand, it was capable of evading and overcoming even the most dedicated repression as the French discovered to their cost. At the same time, spontaneity was not invested in building institutions, allowing the FLN's Army of the Frontiers to preside over what the writer Ferhat Abbas has famously called "confiscated independence" almost as soon as the French had departed, in 1962.[34] Still worse, as the world knows, the Islamic Salvation Front won the elections of 1991, which were invalidated by the ruling FLN and the army, unleashing a civil war that cost an estimated 160,000 lives, including some 7,000 "disappeared" by the government. The practice of "disappearing" antigovernment activists—meaning having them killed and disposed of in secret—was begun by the French during the revolution and later exported by them to Latin America, most notably in Argentina and Chile.[35] Such practices, far from forming a decolonized visuality, epitomize the secrecy of the police in separating what can be seen from what must be declared invisible.

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Fanon had accurately defined this condition in colonial Algeria. As a counter to what he saw as colonial fascism, he imagined the decolonization of colonial visuality as a process that "transforms the spectator crushed to a nonessential state into a privileged actor, captured in a virtually grandiose fashion by the spotlight of History."[36] The reply to the view of history as the plaything of the Hero was to transform the spectator from the passive onlooker demanded by fascism into an active participant in visualizing. The changes required were physical and mental. Fanon understood the colonial as "a world divided in two. The dividing line, the border, is represented by the barracks and the police stations."[37] These were, of course, the institutions that created Caesarism, and the border was the line where there was nothing to see. Above and beyond the physical separation of "native" sectors from "European," these divides had come to produce "aesthetic forms of respect for the status quo."[38] This aesthetic engendered a sense of what is proper, normal, and to be experienced without question. In reading this passage, Achille Mbembe has stressed that the emphasis on the police and the army means that behind this division of space lies a "spirit of violence."[39] The segregation of colonial space was thus experienced as violence by the "native," but also as the proper way of living that was visibly right by the "European." This legacy of separation has survived formal decolonization and the end of legal segregation in the United States, for, as Mbembe shows, segregation created a "large reservoir of cultural imaginaries. These imaginaries gave meaning to the enactment of differential rights to differing categories of people for different purposes within the same space; in brief, the exercise of sovereignty. Space was therefore the raw material of sovereignty and the violence it carried with it."[40] It is this aestheticized segregation that antifascist neorealism has set out to describe, define and deconstruct.

Fanon emphasized in *The Wretched of the Earth* that this aesthetics was a "language of pure violence," generating a sense that the "native" sector was "superfluous" with the result that "the gaze that the colonized subject casts at the colonist's sector is a look of lust, a look of envy" (5). Sexualized desire was displaced onto a desire for space, because that space represented possession in every sense of the term. Separation by violence produced a mirroring desire for violence: "To blow the colonial world to smithereens is henceforth a clear image within the grasp and imagination of every colonial subject" (6). While most discussion has centered on the question of violence, I want to stay with Fanon's concept of the imagination, for this was an imaginary destruction. He was intentionally using the language of

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Lacan's gaze here, as he had already done in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1951), a text that he presented as a "mirror with a progressive infrastructure, in which the Negro could retrieve himself on the road to disalienation."[41] Just as Sartre insisted that the antisemite made the Jew and Beauvoir claimed that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," Fanon did not understand identity as being shaped only by private or family dynamics. Rather, all three socially engaged critics shared Beauvoir's assumption that "only the intervention of someone else can establish the individual as an *Other*."[42] Fanon has often been faulted on his use of psychoanalysis here, with critics urging him to have read other essays by Lacan or pay more emphasis to the theory of castration.[43] Yet under the impact of the revolutions of 1968, none other than Lacan himself allowed that for the colonized "the unconscious . . . had been sold to them, along with the laws of colonization, this exotic regressive form of the master's discourse, in the face of the capitalism called imperialism."[44] That is to say, there was a colonial Oedipus complex and related phenomena, such as the gaze, but they had been instilled by colonial domination.[45] In a surprising reversal, little noticed among all the mathematical symbols of his often disrupted seminar at Vincennes, Lacan had come to endorse the cultural construction arguments of Fanon and Beauvoir, whose goal was to understand the constitution of inequality, rather than that of an eternally unchanging unconscious.[46]

The projected imago of the mirror stage theorized by Lacan was simply not available to the colonized subject, according to Fanon, given that the ideal body in colonial culture was of necessity "white" and that subaltern peoples were by definition not white. Indeed, in many fictional and autobiographical accounts, subaltern people of "mixed" background are repeatedly represented as staring into mirrors, trying to discern if that mixture is visible. In the racialized context, this looking meant discerning whether or not African, Indian, or Jewish ancestry was "visible," according to the stereotypes of the time. This mirror anxiety was not limited to subaltern groups. Given the widespread miscegenation of the Atlantic world, few "white" people were exempt. The mirror was in this sense a scene of colonial dispersal, rather than identification. Further, Fanon insisted that slavery and colonialism disrupted, and perhaps made impossible, Oedipal belonging, understood as a technique of colonization. For, as Deleuze and Guattari later put it: "To the degree that there is oedipalization, it is due to colonization."[47] That is to say, the divided self, or constitution by lack, is not a transcendental human condition, but a historically generated division of

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the sensible. What Fanon and others have looked for was a means of transition away from that division to another possible mode of engagement with the self and with others. The goal is not some impossible constitution of a whole, but the possibility of equality. Fanon's concept of looking was therefore transitional, rather than foundational, a means of working through violence that could not but acknowledge that the desire for equality between subaltern classes was the desire for the same, a desire that the regime of Oedipus reduced to deviance. As Greg Thomas has emphasized, this desire would lead Fanon away from the frame of the national to his support for pan-African revolt, as if, even during the course of the nationalist revolution, he had come to realize its limitations.[48] As events have shown, the violence that was supposed to be instrumental in disposing of colonial rule has become institutionalized through the place of the army in governing independent Algeria. Here arises the interfaced question of what one might call, following Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, decolonizing the imagination.[49] While Ngũgĩ's concentration on using indigenous language remains a controversial issue in Algeria, split between French, Arabic, Berber, and other indigenous languages, the politics of the image have received less attention, but were no less significant.

COLONIAL MYTHOLOGIES, GUERILLA DOCUMENTARIES

One of the first steps in the French declaration of a state of emergency in Algeria, in April 1955, was the assertion of powers to "take all measures to ensure control of the press and of publications of all kinds, as well as radio transmissions, showings of films and theatrical performances."[50] This law was revived during the riots and demonstrations in the French *banlieux* (suburbs) in 2005, indicating that there is still a battle for a certain Algiers in Europe. This active censorship introduced an element of ambiguity into French cultural work of the period. For instance, the critic Roland Barthes began his now classic essay "Myth Today," published in 1957, with an attempt to disrupt the "naturalness," as he called it, of media imagery. Waiting in a barbershop, he happens on a copy of *Paris-Match*, published in June 1955, just after the law was passed (see plate 9). "On the cover, a young Negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolor. All this is in the *meaning* of the picture. But, whether naïvely or not, I see very well what it signifies to me: that France is a great Empire that all her sons, without any color discrimination, faithfully serve

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under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors."[51] It took a certain daring for Barthes to use this emblem of the French empire to present his theory of signification, that is to say, the combination of the effect of what is seen, what it literally depicts, and what it implies. *Paris-Match*, a relatively new magazine (founded in 1949), relied on scandalous and eye-catching photographs to attract its audience. In this case, the saluting young soldier appears to be very young indeed, younger than military recruitment age, as the caption "the night of the army" suggests. Further, if he was a soldier, he was probably one of the notorious Zouaves, African troops who were used to carry out much of the most violent work in Algeria and other French colonies.

Ignoring these connotations, Barthes developed his analysis to show that what he called "myth" froze the historical meaning of the message and rendered it neutral as what he called "depoliticized speech." He suggested that myth was naturally at home on the Right, whose great cause Algeria had become, and that an anticolonial interpretation would end the mythic status of the image. As complex as that signification was, there was also an anticolonial signification at work in his use of the image. In a footnote, he proposed, "Today it is the colonized peoples who assume to the full the ethical and political condition described by Marx as being that of the proletariat."[52] If the French Communist Party (PCF), and other leftist groups would not necessarily have agreed, the Right would have found the proposal close to treasonous. Further, the picture had an unmentionable resonance. When the FLN killed sub-Saharan African soldiers, they would sometimes fix them upright in a pose of saluting.[53] The FLN knew that the French government were using these African troops symbolically (or as Barthes would put it, mythologically) and countered with their own symbolism. While Barthes's anti-imperial semiotics has been cited in countless academic texts, the counterperformance of the same "message" by the FLN has been forgotten. A recurrent theme in Western discourse against political violence waged by nongovernmental agencies is that violence is senseless, meaningless, and pointless. To the contrary, as Allen Feldman has pointed out in the different context of Northern Ireland, "violent acts on the body constituted a material vehicle for constructing memory and embedding the self in social and institutional memory."[54] The place of violence in decolonizing visuality is a place of difficulty, certainly, but not a discourse devoid of meaning.

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Colonial mythologies of the type discussed by Barthes were actively disseminated by cinema. In Algeria, twenty-four feature films were produced from 1911–1954, whose functions were later defined by Hala Salmane: "1. To distort the image of colonized people in order to justify to Western public opinion the policy of colonization; the natives therefore had to be portrayed as sub-human. 2. To convince the 'natives' that their colonial 'mother' protected them from their own savagery."[55] As Fanon had described in *Black Skin, White Masks*, such cinematic fictions as *Tarzan*, cartoons set in "Africa," and well-meaning documentaries on poverty or disease also contributed to this colonial cinema, whose aim was keep those in the colonies and in the colonizing nations invested in the aesthetics of separation. Salmane argued for restoring African identity from the distortions of colonial imagery. As a first step in this direction, the FLN established a film unit, in 1957, led at first by René Vautier, a French documentary filmmaker and former Resistance fighter, and the Algerian Chérif Zenati.[56] Vautier's first films in French colonial Africa had led to his prosecution and sentencing under still current Vichy laws, but he remained dedicated to the issue of ending and documenting colonialism. Working undercover as a filmmaker during the Algerian War, using the pseudonym "Farid," Vautier trained a group of Algerian filmmakers, including Chérif Zennati and Abd el Hamid Mokdad.[57] Nine of these filmmakers died in the conflict. His own 16 mm short documentaries were widely shown in the Arab world and in the Eastern bloc, beginning with *Algérie en flames* (1957), which showed footage taken during actual combat, making it among the first decolonial combat documentaries. Fanon met Vautier at this time, but opposed even allowing him to work in North Africa because he was French and a communist to boot.[58] Indeed, the filmmaker was later imprisoned by the Algerian resistance on suspicion of being a spy. He nonetheless continued to work with them after his release, participating in creating an unfilmed screenplay of *The Wretched of the Earth*.[59]

These projects generated the innovative short film *J'ai huit ans* (I Am Eight Years Old), officially attributed to the Maurice Audin Committee, including the filmmakers Olga Poliakoff and Yann Le Mason, commemorating a young French mathematician who had been tortured to death by the French occupation forces. The film was attributed as being "prepared by Frantz Fanon and R. Vautier," despite their earlier disagreement.[60] It was the product of a new therapeutic strategy of visualization that Fanon was experimenting with in his clinical work with Algerian refugees in Tunis.

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Perhaps the best known of these patients was the writer Boukhatem Farès, who became an artist and created a series of works, called "Screams in the Night," in the Tunis hospital.[61] Farès later recalled that Fanon had told him to "visualize" what was troubling him and gave him a book on Van Gogh to help advance his artistic ideas. By 1961, when the film was made, there were 175,000 Algerian refugees in Tunisia and another 120,000 in Morocco, many of them very young. At the children's house in Tunis, Fanon asked the refugees to work through their experiences, in writing, speech, or drawing. Paper and crayons were distributed to the child refugees, who created an extensive archive of the war in the rural areas. Later published and translated into Italian by Giovanni Pirelli, a sympathetic wealthy Italian, the children's accounts range from those of aerial bombardments to those of ground warfare and torture (see figs. 48a–e).[62] For example, a line drawing by Mili Mohammed shows a French soldier whipping a man who is shackled by the arms. Ahmed Achiri produced a detailed drawing showing soldiers attacking a village, torturing men with fire and rounding up women and children. While not all the works are attributed, at least two drawings were by girls, identified as Fatima and Milouda Bouchiti, showing veiled women with children. Anonymous cutouts depict a man being shot and another man being whipped. A drawing shows the corpse of a man being carried through a village by cavalry horses. So if the torture and violence of the war were in some sense a "secret" in France, although one preserved more by denial than by actual secrecy, it was well-known to the young people of Algeria. Perhaps unsurprisingly, they were all politically radicalized as a result. One sixteen year old stated that France wanted Algeria for its oil, while an eleven year old dated the outbreak of the revolution to the massacre in Sétif in 1945—six years before he was born. Another eleven year old, an orphan, said that his ambition was to return to an independent Algeria.[63] Collectively, these documents form the archive against which the famous case study in *The Wretched of the Earth*, describing the killing of a French child by two Algerians, should be judged, as we shall see.

In the period, it seems that Fanon or others realized the dramatic potential of these accounts, leading to both the book publication and the film. According to the titles of one version, René Vautier was responsible for collecting the images for the film. *J'ai huit ans* was made when the FLN's war of liberation was eight years old, thus memorializing the war itself, as well as the children seen in the film. It began with a minute-long sequence of filmed head-and-shoulder portraits of apparently eight-year-old children

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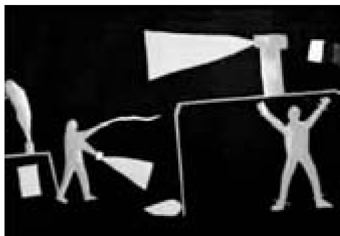

FIGURE 48A–E. STILLS FROM *J'AI HUIT ANS* (1961, DIR. RENÉ VAUTIER, 1961).

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looking straight into the camera to the percussive sound of gunfire.[64] The cut to black-and-white paintings of violent scenes comes as a surprise, even a shock, enhanced by the speeded-up gunfire. A narrative in voiceover by children speaking Algerian French in seemingly deliberate monotones describes attacks on the villages by French troops and the subsequent rescue of some of the children by FLN forces, illustrated with a series of the drawings, often seen in close-up. Tanks and machine guns are accurately depicted. One French soldier appears with a tail. One drawing is signed by "Hadim," another by "Madjid." As the film progresses, a variety of voices and stories are heard, which all contribute to the theme of conflict and loss. A child says that a plane "looked at me," and then it proceeded to fire, while she hid under a large stone. Music is added. FLN guerillas lead them to the border, cut the fence, and they find refuge—one child even finds his parents. Suitably happy images follow to the sound of a chant for an independent Algeria. These visualizations of the hidden realities of the war became a form of accusation, in the classic format of Zola's "J'accuse."

Short as it is, the film contains a range of potential looks to counter colonial visuality that were not allowed expression in the colonial context. From the opening shot of the children facing the camera, the central focus is the look of the child, usually ignored in such contexts. Now we are so inured to repeated displays of impoverished children in underdeveloped countries that these images have attained a new invisibility. In the period, they were both striking and a riposte to the idea that this was a war for civilization. The children's story also made visible the French soldiers, who would rather not have been seen at all, and the torture chambers, whose existence were officially denied until a former general admitted to them, in 2002. In the period, those taken in for interrogation were known as the "disappeared," attesting to the importance of invisibility for, and as a means of, torture. These looks became visible by means of the children's drawings, which were both a means for the children to work through their own traumatic experience and, by the very fact of their authorship, an unimpeachable source for the violence being carried out by the French. Finally, and counterintuitively, the war itself uses the film, as it were, to claim an age and the right to be seen. By emphasizing the duration of the conflict, the film reminded metropolitan viewers, who might have been trying to forget, that the war persisted; to the Algerians and their allies, it showed that the full might of colonial power had not succeeded in repressing the

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resistance. Realizing that this apparently humanitarian content was also a history of the war, French police seized the film at least seventeen times over many years. The French government replied by arranging some 7,500 showings of its own propaganda films in venues such as rotary clubs and other such institutions in the six months following the United Nations debate on Algeria during September 1957 alone.[65] *J'ai huit ans* was banned in France until 1973, whereupon it won a prize for best short film of the year.

This little-remarked collaboration between Fanon and Vautier marked a critical intersection between radical psychiatry and activist cinema. Fanon had created a practice in which staff worked with patients to address their conflicts, eating and socializing with them, rather than maintaining the classic clinical distance. Drawing on the teachings of Fanon's professor, the Spanish antifascist François Tosquelles, this now familiar strategy was then new, certainly in the colonial context, where colonial psychology had claimed that all Algerians were in an infantile state.[66] As late as 1952, the Algerian School of Medicine declared in its handbook for physicians: "These primitive people cannot and should not benefit from the advances of European civilization."[67] The spatialized and separated hierarchy of culture created in the late nineteenth century continued to inform such purportedly clinical judgments. Such pronouncements make it easier to understand the involvement of certain psychiatrists in torturing Algerians. Indeed, during the revolution, Antoine Porot, founder of the Algerian school, and one of his followers attributed the uprising to a pathological form of "xenophobia" among Algerians "against subjects belonging to an occupying race."[68] Hence revolutionary action was a form of madness, as Pinel had suggested in immediate aftermath of the French Revolution of 1789. Fanon's innovative ethnopsychiatry refused such stereotypes and worked to create culturally appropriate treatments, including creating a café, a mosque, and a newspaper for patients. Fanon endeavored to treat his patients on a day-clinic basis, meaning that they returned home at night and some even stayed in work. This approach required those in treatment to deal with their symptoms in everyday life as well as in the clinic.

In a lecture series he gave at the University of Tunis in 1959 and 1960, Fanon developed a theoretical framework for his decolonial psychiatry. He recharacterized the insane person as "a 'stranger' to society." Anticipating Foucault, Fanon saw that the internment of this "anarchistic element" in society was a disciplinary measure that rendered the psychiatrist into "the auxiliary of the police, the protector of society."[69] The segregation between

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the European and the native that had led Fanon to revolutionary politics was both replicated and produced in and by colonial psychiatry. Rather than segregate the patient, Fanon sought to achieve his or her "resocialization," following his emphasis on the dehumanizing effects of colonialism.[70] Yet, Fanon asked, into what group was the patient to be resocialized, and "what are the criteria of normality?" His answer was to create a "society in the hospital itself: this is *sociotherapy*."[71] Fanon went on to discuss neurological and psychoanalytic approaches, including Lacan's mirror stage, before turning to the psychological effects of time discipline and surveillance. He considered the psychic impact of the time clock on factory workers, of closed-circuit television on shop assistants in large American establishments, and of auditory monitoring on telephone operators.[72] He completed the circuit by casting the presumed "laziness" of the colonized as a form of resistance to the idea that they could not be unemployed because their function was to work as and when required. The colonial system thus visualized its colonized subjects as the perfect Platonic workers, whose function was to do what was required of them and nothing else. In this context, Fanon's engagement with children as social actors and as the index of the Algerian revolution marked his commitment to the cultivation of a "new man," unconstrained by discipline or colonization. Read optimistically, had he lived longer, Fanon might have moved away from his emphasis on masculinity to imagine new modes of postrevolutionary gender identity, as part of this analysis of the racialized disciplinary society, a connection made by many radical black feminists in the United States from Angela Davis to Toni Cade Bambara and bell hooks.[73]

In this connection, it is noticeable that a number of early post-independence Algerian films, such as *Une si jeune paix* (dir. Jacques Charby, 1964)—explicitly inspired by Fanon's work—and the multi-authored *L'enfer à dix ans* (dir. Ghaouti Bendeddouche et al., 1968), featured the children of the revolution as subjects, nonprofessional actors, and screenwriters. Film was a vital medium in Algeria, where 86 percent of men and 95 percent of women were estimated to be illiterate at the time of independence. Some 330 cinemas for 35 mm films were left behind by the colonial forces that now showed both the new films produced by the independent government and Hollywood productions. Vautier took a different approach, working with Ahmed Rachedi to create the Centre Audio-visuel (CAV), in 1962. The center developed what were called "ciné-pops" (popular cinema), building on the cinema club tradition that Fanon had participated in while working

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at Blida.[74] The "ciné-pops," recalled Vautier in a later interview, were designed to "initiate the people to progressive cinema with the goal of supporting them in their march towards socialism, by semantically illustrating the aspects of discourse proper to this form of socio-economic organization. Thus we always insisted on the militant and political aspects of film rather than its human value."[75] This agitprop form, recalling early Soviet cinema, organized 1,200 screenings in 220 locations in their first six months, using two projection vans taken from the old Psychological Service of the French Army. These films included Chinese works like *The Red Detachment of Women* (dir. Xie Jin, 1961), shown to a large women-only crowd just outside the Casbah; Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*, screened for dockers in Alger, who identified directly with the famous staircase scene because of a similar structure in their own city; and locally made shorts, including *J'ai huit ans*. The postwar Algerian films were silent montages accompanied by a live verbal commentary that became the basis for *Peuple en marche* (dir. René Vautier, 1963), a documentary about the new Algeria shown at the first FLN post-independence conference in Algiers.[76] Despite gaining some 60,000 members, the ciné-pops movement collapsed as the government moved away from revolutionary politics, and the center was closed, in 1964. The missed encounter to develop radical cinema and psychiatry as part of decolonial governance continues to haunt attempts to visualize a postdisciplinary society.

By contrast, the FLN cadre and former businessman Yacef Saadi created Casbah Films, in 1962, and later collaborated with Pontecorvo in filming *The Battle of Algiers*.[77] As Pontecorvo had himself been the leader of the youth section of the Italian resistance, in which the screenwriter Franco Solinas had also been involved, the film was a collaboration between anticolonial and antifascist resistance fighters. The Algerians financed 45 percent of the costs of the film, and Saadi helped Pontecorvo identify the exact locations in the Casbah where the events on which those depicted were based had taken place. For example, the house where the FLN resistance leader Amar Ali, known as Ali La Pointe, died was entirely rebuilt so that it could be blown up for the film. In keeping with this desire for authenticity, all the actors bar one, who played the paratrooper Colonel Mathieu, were amateurs, recruited in Algiers. Saadi played himself, under the name Djafar, while Ali La Pointe was played by a street hustler named Brahim Hadjadj, who went on to act in many Algerian films. Saadi was concerned to produce "an objective, equilibrated film that is not a trial of a people or of a

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nation, but a heartful accusation against colonialism, violence, and war."[78] In fact, Pontecorvo rejected his original treatment as being too much like propaganda and instead worked with Solinas to generate a neorealist film under a regime that he called the "dictatorship of truth." Pontecorvo shot the film on low-cost stock to enhance the grainy newsreel feel, while exposing for very strong black-and-white contrasts in the Italian neorealist style.

As a result, *The Battle of Algiers* allows for different points of interpretation. It is clearly anticolonial, but also antiwar, while arguing for the inevitability of armed conflict given the intransigence of French colonial policy. The film depicts the story of the struggle for control of Algiers in 1957. It begins just after torture has broken an FLN operative, who has revealed the hiding place of the FLN leader Ali La Pointe. From these opening moments in a French torture chamber, the viewer is plunged into the conflict. By its nature, torture is a practice that wants to be offstage, literally ob-scene. To be confronted with the tortured body, even in the current era of official avowal of so-called harsh techniques, is a visual shock. In using this shock in the opening, rather than as a central moment, as in more recent films like *Rendition* (dir. Gavin Hood, 2007), Pontecorvo visualized the normalization of torture. Henri Alleg, a French communist newspaper editor in Algiers, who was tortured by paratroopers, described this as the "school of perversion" for the young French conscripts and volunteers.[79] The actor used to play the torture victim in *The Battle of Algiers* was serving a sentence for theft in the notorious Barberousse prison, from where he was released to play the part, no doubt accounting for his confused air. By the same token, the dramatic scene that follows the titles, depicting the radicalization of Ali La Pointe in the same prison, showed the execution of an FLN activist, a key intensification of the conflict in 1956. The actor was a man who, like Saadi himself, had been sentenced to death by the French, but was not in fact executed. Pontecorvo further implicates the implied viewpoint of the spectator with the FLN. When Colonel Mathieu (Jean Martin), the fictional representation of General Marel-Marice Bigeard, sets out his information strategy to his colleagues, he shows them films taken at French checkpoints to point out that although surveillance was in effect, Algerian activists were succeeding in evading the checkpoints.[80] At that moment, a woman that we already know to have to planted a bomb passes by, creating what Soviet director Sergei Eisenstein called a montage effect in which the viewer creates knowledge that is not directly presented by the film.

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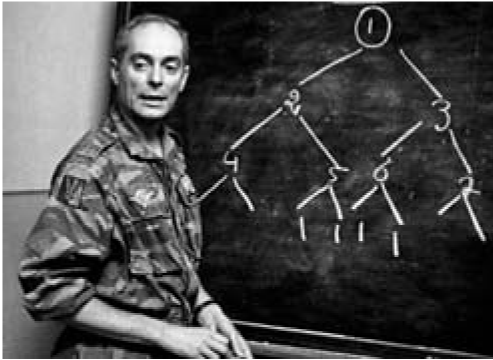

FIGURE 49. INFORMATION PYRAMID FROM *BATTLE OF ALGIERS* (1966)

Mathieu presents to his staff a means of overcoming their inability to see by transforming people into information. He demonstrates what Saadi called the "pyramid" scheme, in which each person in the organization knows only two others. In order for the French to reach the top-level commanders, information must be obtained that allows them to particularize the pyramid with names (see fig. 49). This "method" is Mathieu's euphemism for torture, under the excuse that there was a twenty-four-hour period to act before the organization modified its structure. This rhetoric is what is now known as the "ticking bomb" justification for torture. Unlike present-day politicians, Mathieu does not shy away from the realities of the question at stake. If, he demands, you want Algeria to remain part of France, then this is the way to do it—and he reminds the journalists that even *L'Humanité*, the French communist newspaper, adhered to the notion of *Algérie française*. For Republican rhetoric insisted that the country was "one and undividable," unlike a federal nation like the United States, where one state or another always seems to be contemplating secession. In interviews, Saadi argued that Mathieu had to be played by a professional actor in order for this explanation of the pyramid system to be convincing. Indeed, some have argued that it was precisely this professionalization of bureaucracy that limited the radicality of the FLN to that of a nationalist revolt, rather than a socialist or self-directed revolution. The French tactic rendered the body of the tortured into data, disguising the erotics of violence that generated it, as part of an information flow that would have been understood as "cybernetic" in the period. As N. Katherine Hayles has sum-

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marized it, Norbert Weiner decontextualized information "as a function of probabilities representing a choice of one message from a range of possible messages."[81] Thus the paratroopers find the leader of the organization (FLN) by means of tracking "messages" around their information system. This rendering of information into binary code was the reality that colonial authority now sought to find in its subject peoples, abstracting their individual identities but ensuring the free flow of information. Its obscene counterpart was that such information was for the most part obtained by the flow of electricity, the predominant method of torture used in Algeria.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there was a gulf between the European and the Algerian experience of realism in this and other filmed representations of the war. In later interviews, Jean Martin, the French actor who played Mathieu, described the powerful affect of working with Algerians who had experienced the revolution. Martin had come to prominence playing Lucky, one of the tramps in the Paris premiere of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1953). Ironically, he had been blacklisted for supporting the FLN by signing the famous Petition of the 121 against the war, and *The Battle of Algiers* itself would be banned in France until 1971. For Martin, the drama of the film came from the sight of "people reliving events," such that they were caught up in real emotions as they passed a "French" checkpoint in the film because they had so often done so in reality. For Saadi, however, making the film was a "game" compared to the reality. Pontecorvo seemed to understand that the lack of real threat diminished the experience for his nonprofessional cast, and so he shot repeated takes of even very short sequences, rendering the actors tired and frustrated. This real experience of irritation with the filming process ended up creating a "real" effect of fear, exhaustion, or anger when seen in the finished production. For many years, the film carried an opening disclaimer noting that no documentary or newsreel footage had been used, even though it wanted to generate precisely that sensibility. This decolonial dialectic of neorealism can be found across the range of cinema dealing with the Algerian War. For instance, Jean-Luc Godard's *Le Petit Soldat* (1960) dealt with the violence of the war under the rubric "Photography is truth, cinema is truth twenty-four times a second!"[82] But for the Algerian novelist Rachid Boudjedra, writing the first history of Algerian cinema, in 1971, Godard's film was nothing more than a "film of neo-fascist tendency" because of its sequences showing the FLN engaging in torture while quoting revolutionary texts.[83]

The women characters in *The Battle of Algiers* have an important role in

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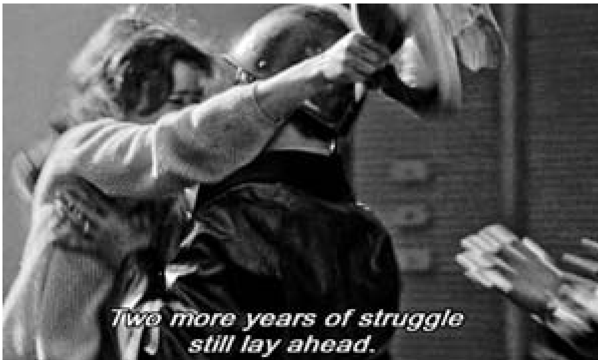

FIGURE 50. DANCING WOMAN FROM *BATTLE OF ALGIERS* (1966)

terms of the action, but have relatively little to say. In the dramatic scene in which women who are about to plant bombs in the French quarter are disguised as "modern," French-oriented women by means of hairstyle, clothing, and make-up, the original dialogue was replaced by up-tempo drumming, much to the initial shock of the scriptwriter, Franco Solinas.[84] According to an interview with Pontecorvo, Solinas later agreed that his dialogue had been weak, and he approved of the final version. Pontecorvo further emphasized that even while he was making the film, the situation of Algerian women was noticeably worsening, leading him to emphasize their place in the liberation struggle. The final scene of the film, in which independence is achieved, is marked by the ululation of women in celebration, a sound that might seem alien to many Westerners, in the way that the Islamic call to prayer has recently been stereotyped in some quarters. It was taken as the key to Ennio Morricone's powerful soundtrack for the film, or what Pontecorvo calls "music-images." The final shot of the film is a close-up of a dancing woman, in traditional dress but not veiled, which Pontecorvo intended as a symbol of the revolution, in the fashion of Eisenstein (see fig. 50). Unfortunately, the process of segregating genders has continued, rendering what the Algerian writer Assia Djebar has called the "severed sound" of Algerian women when "the heavy silence returns that puts an end to the momentary restoration of sound."[85] This silencing was an accompaniment to what she calls the "forbidden gaze" of women, hidden behind the walls of the home and the reimposed veil. Sight and sound were and are inextricably linked in decolonizing visuality, just as they had been in forming the concept.

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REAL SPECTERS

Soon after the achievement of independence, a silence fell over the subject of Algeria in Europe. Kristin Ross has emphasized, for example, how such erasures have distorted the understanding of "May '68," which she shows needs to be understood as beginning with the "mobilization against the Algerian war."[86] For despite a seemingly endless series of books, essays, and films, the real subject of the Algerian revolution was permanently displaced, namely the fundamental wrong of colonization. Indeed, many former French settlers in Algeria have recently sought to create memorials and museums to the "culture" of French Algeria, which they seek to separate from "politics," meaning decolonization. The politics that mattered were of course those of imperialism. It has returned in the past decade as a correlative of the neo-imperialism with which we are all familiar, calling for a renewed neorealism. *The Battle of Algiers* was notoriously screened at the Pentagon, in 2003, advertised as a chance to see "how to win the war on terrorism and lose the battle of ideas." While it is unclear what lessons were in fact learned, the screening shows that neovisuality has come to trace its own genealogy of counterinsurgency to Algeria. The interrogation and torture methods used by the French in Algeria were disseminated by the notorious School of the Americas to Latin American dictatorships in the 1970s and 1980s, and have been revived for use, since 2001, by the United States. In recent years, the "Algerian" has come to be the figure of the non-Western immigrant to Europe, at first needed and now reviled, which has led to a resurgence of fascist parties across Europe, matched by anti-immigrant and anti-refugee sentiment in Australia, Britain, and the United States. So do the necessities of an antifascist neorealism reimpose themselves in the light of both the electoral success of the far Right in Europe, from France (2002) to Italy (2007) and Austria (2008), and the appropriation of powers by the Bush-Cheney administration (2000–2008) in the United States under the cover of counterinsurgency. These questions continue to converge within the frame of global cinema, from France to Spain, Finland, the United States, Mexico, and Algeria itself, indicating the centrality of "Algeria" and its location as the border of North and South to the neovisuality of the present. A recent group of films have returned to Fanon, the psychology of civil war and fascism, and the viewpoint of the child.

Perhaps the best-known of these films in the West has been *Caché* (2005), made by the Austrian director Michael Haneke, which deals with the con-

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troversial legacy of the Algerian War in France. The film centers on Georges Laurent (Daniel Auteuil) and his wife, Anne (Juliette Binoche), two self-described Parisian "Bobos" (Bourgeois-Bohemians), working in television and publishing. Their comfortable lives with their son, Pierrot (Lester Makedonsky), are interrupted by the arrival of a series of anonymous video-tapes showing their apartment under surveillance, accompanied by violent drawings of a child vomiting blood or a chicken being slaughtered. As the mysterious tapes continue, it gradually emerges that the drawings represent scenes from Georges's rural childhood, when his parents employed as workers two Algerians, who lived at the farm along with their son, Majid. The two workers disappeared after attending the now infamous demonstrations in Paris on 17 October 1961. Called by the FLN to show the support of Algerians in France for independence, the demonstration was met with the most extreme police repression led by the former Vichy police chief Maurice Papon. Hundreds were killed and deposited in the river Seine, a moment that seems to be recurringly forgotten and remembered in France. Majid comes to live with Georges's family, causing the six-year-old Georges to stage some clumsy attempts to have Majid sent away, which culminate in success after he tricks Majid into slaughtering a rooster. These scenes are depicted in the drawings that accompany the videos, which have now moved on to show Georges's family home. Enraged, Georges tracks down Majid (Maurice Bénichou), who denies all involvement with the tapes as does his son, Hashem (Walid Afkir). Nonetheless the tapes continue to arrive, and Majid, who has continued to deny being their author, commits suicide by cutting his throat in Georges's presence, an incident again videotaped and distributed.

For all its excellent intentions, *Caché* exemplifies what Walter Mignolo has called the "Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism."[87] Indeed, much of the discussion of the film has centered on the ever-elusive "universal" values it supposedly embodies. What matters for *Caché* is the impact of Algeria on French lives and minds. Majid and Hashem are undeveloped as characters to the point of being ciphers for immigrant victimhood and angry second-generation Frenchness respectively. Majid's suicide is unintelligible except as a device to shock watching (Western) viewers. All the videos in the film, from the opening shot of Georges's and Anne's apartment to the closing sequence of Pierrot's school, use the same angle of vision. The camera is placed at a medium distance from the events being watched, slightly to the right of center. Within the film, this place is identi-

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fied as that from which the child Georges watched Majid being taken away to the orphanage. It is the viewpoint, then, of (colonial) guilt, betrayal, and later repression. One needs to qualify this "knowledge," because it comes, like all our visual understanding of the childhood drama between Georges and Majid, from Georges's dreams. While allowing for the obvious fact that these dream sequences are constructed, that construction was enacted by filmmakers very much aware of the mechanisms of condensation and displacement that shape dream imagery. Michael Haneke suggested that the entire film was designed to explore the "collective unconscious" of the West and that it had changed Godard's formula from *Le Petit Soldat* into "film is a lie, twenty-four frames a second."[88] That is to say, what *Caché* tries to do is undermine the cinematic consensus in which what is seen is true, without any recourse to what Georges, in cutting an edition of his show about Rimbaud, disparagingly calls "theory." There may be a "hidden" reference here to Rimbaud's lapidary phrase *Je est un autre*: for Georges there is no other, the I is all there is. Some have seen the drawings in the film as reminiscent of *J'ai huit ans* but here the purpose and meaning of the drawings are obscure, and they are also the agent of violence, rather than simply its record.[89]

Fanon had taken a strongly critical approach to this framing of Algeria. For example, in 1957, Georges Mattéï published in *Les Temps Modernes* an essay arguing that the drafting of French youth into Algerian service was teaching them to be reflexively racist and violent: "What is going in Algeria today is a large-scale attempt to dehumanize French youth." Fanon retorted: "It is worth thinking about this attitude. Such exclusion of Algerians, such ignorance about the men being tortured or of the families being massacred constitutes an entirely new phenomenon. It is related to the egocentric, sociocentric form of thought that has become characteristic of the French."[90] Even more characteristically, *Caché* centers on the exploration of the male ego. Conveniently, neither Hashem's mother nor Georges's father appear in the film, allowing the drama to circle around male egos in conflict, culminating in the dream/surveillance of the meeting of the two sons. Anne features as a plot device to exemplify Georges's inability to trust and to set up Pierrot's oedipal rebellion when he suspects her of having an affair. *Caché* invites the viewer to judge whether Majid or Hashem made the tapes, whether Georges was objectively guilty of betraying Majid, whether Anne was having an affair, and whether the sons were in league with each other. Like Freud and, all sophistication to the contrary notwithstanding, like Fanon, *Caché* cannot ask what the women in its drama might have done

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or wanted in their own right. Although it visualizes a France damaged by the police actions of 1961, it cannot engage with a right to look, but offers instead a different form of (ego) policing.[91]

I want to develop these themes by counterpointing two recent treatments of one of the most difficult sections in Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, in which he transcribed an interview with two teenage Algerian boys who had killed their French friend. The action was revenge for a preemptive massacre of Algerians by French militia at Rivet, in 1956, in which two of one of the Algerian boy's relatives had died.[92] All three boys had gone out to play as usual, but the two young Algerians killed their friend with a knife. Neither expressed remorse, "because they want to kill us" and because, although Algerians were being killed on a daily basis, no French were in prison. Fanon offers no commentary on the transcripts, in which he tried to emphasize that their friend had done nothing wrong, with which they agreed, and that he did not deserve to die, which they denied. In short, the boys acted on a theory of collective responsibility for which youth was no protection, just as children were involved in French attacks like those seen in *J'ai huit ans*. As Fanon suggested, "It is the war, this colonial war that very often takes on the aspect of a genuine genocide, this war which radically disrupts and shatters the world, which is in fact the triggering situation."[93] While the specific violence is acknowledged to be unjustified, the general political context made it seem that this was the only action the boys could take, because, as they said, they could not overpower an adult and they were too young to join the resistance. In response to the disaster of the post-1991 Algerian civil war, UNICEF has sponsored children's "activities such as drawing alongside group play, theatre and sport."[94] While worthy enough, such diversions cannot by their nature offer the children what Fanon's patients were claiming in a displaced and perhaps even psychotic fashion: the right to be seen as political subjects. Instead, their actions only attracted the gaze of the police and their auxiliaries, the psychiatrists, a dehumanized form of their desire to be recognized.

In 2007, the Finnish video artist Eije Liisa Ahtila created a six-screen installation entitled *Where Is Where?*, which dramatized Fanon's text as a fifty-three-minute film. Four screens showed the dramatization, while two others, placed out of the room, showed newsreel footage of a French massacre like that at Rivet. It was therefore impossible to see the entire "film," or perhaps *Where Is Where?* can be seen as a challenge to the concept of "film" in the digital-video era. In her account of this project, Ahtila de-

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FIGURE 51. "ONE DAY WE DECIDED TO KILL HIM," FROM EIJE-LIISA AHTILA, *WHERE IS WHERE?* (2007), MARION GOODMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.

scribed how she began by writing a script that incorporated Fanon's words into a poetic drama, revolving around what she calls "words, death, space and time."[95] Language implies death that negates space and time, restored by the specificity of words to time and place. In the four-screen main space of the piece, a Finnish woman, known as the Poet, has a series of meetings with Death, dressed in the conventional black cowl and holding a scythe. She then finds Algeria literally coming through the walls of her comfortable Helsinki apartment as an allegorical space of death. The rather kitsch magic realism of these scenes and those of a mythic "Algeria" shadowed by death contrast with the cinematic realism of the later scenes from Fanon's case study (see fig. 51). In a sense, the Helsinki scenes prepare the viewer for what is to come, which dominates the experience. The overlap of space and time culminates with the manifestation of the two Algerian boys in the Poet's deserted swimming pool, sitting in a small rowing boat. Looking lost and alone, the boys have become Algerian migrants, representative of the migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers whose presence is challenging the homogeneity of white Europe. The space was darkened for the screenings, but you were in no sense immobile like the spectator in a theater. As you turned from screen to screen to see the action, you became a vigilant soldier, aware that what there is to see exceeds your capacity to monitor it. The implied viewer is by implication, therefore, European or in the place of the European. Consequently, the visitor experiences no sense of a right to look, let alone the traditional dominance of the cinematic spectator. If

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there is such a place, it can only be that of the artist. Yet given its length, *Where Is Where?* is more than just a video installation, being intentionally closer to the immersive experience of classic cinema. If narrative cinema replicated the experience of dreaming, Ahtila's piece was closer to that of the nightmare or hallucination.

This imagined clash of realisms can be interestingly counterpointed with the recent novel *Fanon* (2008) by the African American novelist John Edgar Wideman, which used the same scene involving the two Algerian boys as a central moment. It was inspired by a chance meeting between Wideman's mother and Fanon, while she was a nurse in a hospital in Bethesda, Maryland, where he was being treated for his ultimately fatal leukemia. Wideman's novel is a complicated piece of writing, deliberately hard to follow, featuring both a character called John Edgar Wideman and his brother, who has been imprisoned for murder, as the writer's own sibling has been. Further, like the actual Wideman, the fictional Wideman has lost his nephew, the son of his imprisoned brother, to murder at the age of fifteen. Another layer in the novel contains a character Thomas, who is writing a book about Fanon in a book written by Wideman. These complicated changes of authorial voice place the engagement with Fanon behind a "mask," explicitly in imitation of *Black Skin, White Masks*,[96] as if he cannot be directly approached precisely because the hegemonic narrative codes of realism forbid such "unlikely" encounters. However, the characters in *Fanon* are African Americans making use of character masks, whether "white" or otherwise. Indeed, Wideman has a country house in France, emphasizing the country's dominant place in the modern imagination, but also a practice that reads "white," even if a residence in Paris might be read as "black," given the long-term African diaspora presence in the city. As Wideman's musing continues, "it becomes clear that Fanon is not about stepping back, standing apart, analyzing and instructing others but about identifying with others."[97]

In a striking change of voice, Thomas then shifts his proposed novel into a would-be screenplay for a film to be set in the African American neighborhoods of Pittsburgh, which he pitches at great length to none other than Jean-Luc Godard in a distinctively "black" voice. In the novel Godard is imagined to retort: "Images are slaves, prisoners. Images kidnapped, copyrighted, archived, cloned. Property" (80). Nonetheless, Wideman proposes a re-creation of the same scene from *The Wretched of the Earth* as that visualized by Ahtila: the killing of the French child. Only in this case it is to be set in counterpoint with Homewood, Pittsburgh, an underprivileged Afri-

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can American neighborhood. The imagined film opens with a bird's-eye view of the corner of Frankstown and Homewood, placed above a "crawl" of Fanon's text, which quickly dissolves into a re-creation of the scene (113–14). Dissolve back to Homewood, where a teenager, the same age as his murdered nephew, Omar, stares at Mason's bar, watched in turn by Wideman's elderly mother from her assisted-living apartment as a "sign" on the "grid" of streets below. The teenager waits and watches for a parent who seems unlikely to emerge, placed in the streets not because of a revolution, but because a social order has collapsed. The only person left to care for this child—and teenagers, reviled as they are, are children—is a disabled senior citizen, who can offer only her benevolence. The disjunctured chain of looking performed here neither protects nor prevents. In this context, Wideman wonders, "Where do you go if someone thinks of you as dead" (116), rhyming with Ahtila's questions "When you die where are you? And where is where?" There is a section break, indicated by an asterisk, and it emerges that the teenager has been shot and killed (120). A long reminiscence from Wideman's mother about the decline of the area culminates in her account of the murder, which she had heard but not seen, and her witnessing of the police and family approaching the scene. Death negates the difference between Helsinki and Pittsburgh, but the colonial difference of "Algeria" restores time and place. Both the video piece and the novel present the Algerian experience as a direct intervention into their very different present experiences, one in the comfort of Helsinki and the other in the impoverished suburbs of post-industrial Pittsburgh. Where Ahtila finds the history of Algeria floating in her pool in uniformly white Helsinki, Wideman sees a parallel between colonial Algeria and what is happening today in segregated Homewood with its 96 percent African American population. Both see that there is an "Algeria" that marks the border between European space and that of the immigrant; and white U.S. space from African American space. Ahtila claims that death takes away time, leaving only space. What is left behind is the ghost or the specter. For Jacques Derrida, himself Algerian, the ghost is that which sees us but which we do not see: "It is still evening, it is always nightfall along the 'ramparts,' on the battlements of an old Europe at war. With the other and with itself."[98] The ramparts are those of Elsinore, in Denmark, a place now associated with its reductive cartooning of Muhammad as an assertion of the rights of old Europe. Algeria is one name for that space that the old Cold War alliance cannot escape on either side of the Atlantic, a space that returns.

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FIGURE 52. RACHIDA (DJOUADI IBTISSEM), IN *RACHIDA* (2002)

In Algeria itself, civil war returned as an uncanny double of the FLN's war against the French, as represented in Yamina Bachir's film *Rachida* (2002). Bachir studied at the National Algerian Film School, first established by Vautier. *Rachida* was Bachir's first film, made in the face of what she calls the "dismemberment of the film industry" in Algeria, after the elections of 1991. It evokes the collapse of Algerian civil society by means of the story of a young woman teacher named Rachida (Djouadi Ibtissem) (see fig. 52). Bachir developed her idea from an incident in which antigovernment militants tried to compel a teacher to carry a bomb into her own school. When she refused, she was shot, as is Rachida in the film. The film then imagines what might have happened next, as Rachida goes into hiding in the countryside, having survived being shot, for fear that her assailants would return to kill her. At first understandably depressed, Rachida returns to teaching and is attending a wedding when the local version of the terrorists (the term used in the film) attack and devastate the community. Bachir created what she calls "a 'perfect' victim" as the center of her protest, and the film suffers somewhat from this idealization. At the same time, the film was made against the background of censorship; thus, for example, when a young woman is raped in the village and soldiers come to investigate, her distress at the fact that her attackers also wore military uniforms is the only hint the film can offer to suggest the army, as well as the "terrorists," is committing outrages. The film gains in texture when seen against its predecessor, *The Battle of Algiers*. Early in *Rachida*, the television news declares that "terrorists attacked a man in the Casbah," evoking the French propaganda

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of the 1950s, just as a bomb-making scene recalls the similar FLN activity in *The Battle of Algiers*. However, in *Rachida* a woman has to be coerced into carrying a bomb, whereas in *The Battle of Algiers* there were many volunteers. In another scene, Rachida watches a television news report of the murder of several monks, an incident recently made into a popular French film, *Des hommes et des dieux* [Of gods and men] (2010, dir. Xavier Beauvois). By contrast, *Hors la loi* [Outside the law] (2010, dir. Rachid Bouchareb) caused widespread controversy for its story of three brothers who witnessed the Sétif massacre in 1945 and were drawn into the revolutionary struggle in different ways. As an indication of French revisionism on the Algerian war, in part caused by the palpable difficulties of the postcolonial state, there was even questioning as to whether Sétif had really been a massacre.

While there is a postcolonial state of denial in France concerning Algeria, Bachir was trying to evoke what is repeatedly called in her film a mutual "culture of hate" operating between all sides in the country itself. Rachida needs to hide not from a colonial army but from her own neighbors, creating such great anxiety that she thinks she is going mad. A local woman doctor in the village diagnoses "post-traumatic psychosis," but adds that the "whole country suffers from it." Rachida later dreams that she will be assassinated by terrorists in the village in a very realistic scene that emerges as a dream only in its aftermath. The level of persistent psychic damage in Algeria depicted in *Rachida* reinforces the importance and necessity of the return of Fanon's case studies in *The Wretched of the Earth* in Wideman's and Ahtila's projects. Indeed, the inaugural conference of the Société Franco-Algérien de Psychiatrie, in 2003, heard case studies that Robert Keller, who attended, described as "near replications" of Fanon's from fifty years earlier.[99] Fanon's clinic in Blida is now within a center of the Groupe Islamique Armée, and the facilities are described as ruins, with the wards reduced to a "warehouse of bodies." During the revolutions of 2011, it was noticeable that people in Tunisia and Egypt repeatedly referred to losing their sense of fear. Once that fear had been set aside, it became possible to imagine a very different future. One of the most damaging legacies of the civil war in Algeria has been that people still seem unable or unwilling to set aside that fear. To be fair, if one considers the impact of under three thousand casualties on 9/11 in the United States, and then bear in mind how much smaller Algeria is, it is perhaps not surprising that after so much death, people are not yet ready for another experiment.

The village life evoked by Bachir has more texture than the simple peas-

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ant scenario sketched by Ahtila. The one public telephone in the village, for instance, is constantly used by Khaled, a young man who is in love with Hadjar, whose father, Hassen, will not sanction the match because Khaled is too poor. Hadjar's arranged marriage ends the film, a counterpoint to the love match seen in *The Battle of Algiers*. In Pontecorvo's film, the FLN official apologizes for the simple ceremony, but evokes the possibility of a transformed future that *Rachida* suggests is still yet to come. The violent scenes are shot with a hand-held camera, giving the "realistic" jerky feel pioneered by Pontecorvo, but there are also long interludes in the separate spaces of the women, from the courtyard to the baths. Here the lyricism of Ahtila's Algeria is matched by reveries such as one evoked by the scent of figs. But Bachir brings us back to earth when in a subsequent scene a local man harasses Rachida, gesturing with a carrot and saying he can smell the scent of a woman. There are only two moments in the film that step outside the realism sustained by terror. As Rachida is teaching in the village, she sees a bubble floating near her head. She turns and all the children in her class are blowing bubbles at her (see plate 10). This moment is recalled at the very end of the film when, in what Bachir calls a Brechtian moment, Rachida dresses in her clothes from Algiers, sets her hair loose, and heads through the devastated village toward the school in order to teach. Several children emerge from nowhere, and they sit down in a class held in a vandalized room. Strikingly (for a Western viewer), Rachida begins the class by telling the students to take out their slates, a tool that evokes a remote past for those in wealthier locations. Although she writes "today's lesson" on the board in Arabic, she does not specify a topic. Since the Atlantic revolutions of the eighteenth century, the education of the working and subaltern classes has been central to the consolidation of the right to look. Although it proposes no solution, the ending to *Rachida* imagines another reality, in which today's lesson is always open to question, always about to be begun, and not yet foreclosed.

While that would be a satisfying place to conclude, it would overlook many more complex realities. Algerian schools have been the subject of intense national controversy, first stressing Islam and Arabic, and then returning to a curriculum that includes French and science. However, journalistic estimates in 2008 suggested that, although there is 70 percent literacy (cited without definition), only 20 percent of eligible children attended high school, with the majority dropping out for economic, political, or religious reasons. After forty years of independence that figure seems very low.

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During the revolutionary period, Fanon suggested that the FLN was not paying sufficient attention to the peasantry or what he called the "lumpen-proletariat," meaning the dispossessed urban population, "the pimps, the hooligans, the unemployed and all the petty criminals [who], when approached, give the liberation struggle all they have got."[100] Some of the characters in *The Battle of Algiers*, for example, certainly fit this description. Like Gramsci, Fanon saw that the revolution depended on the "spontaneity" of this group, but that the leading party was not thinking about how to use that energy once independence was achieved. To put it briefly, the FLN stressed elements of the "North" within Algeria, such as the small urban proletariat, and did not develop a theory or practice to integrate the "South," the peasants and the dispossessed. Fanon's own belief in the "new man" that would be created by the revolution owed more to the regeneration theory of the French Revolution than to modern politics and failed to think through the practicalities of transformation, hoping instead that nationalism (or later pan-Africanism) would simply deliver them. Algeria's first difficult and then disastrous post-independence history can be seen as a working out of this failure, the internal contradiction between the FLN leadership and those in whose name the revolution was carried out.

By the same token, in 2002, the year that *Rachida* was released, French electoral politics came to a dead end when the first round of the presidential election saw the avowed racist Jean-Marie Le Pen, who had been a torturer during the Algerian War, win through to the second round, defeating the socialist Lionel Jospin. The choice was now between the "right extreme" and the "extreme right," as the queer novelist Virginie Despentes put it.[101] Diagnosing a "French psychosis" that one could put alongside the Algerian "post traumatic psychosis" discussed above, Mehdi Belhaj Kacem went further still. He called the situation "fascist democracy," because no criticism of the democractic system itself was permitted. Suggesting that any proper commitment to democracy would have led to a refusal to participate in the second round, ending the Fifth Republic just as the Fourth Republic had collapsed over Algeria, Kacem concluded that, in present circumstances, the "extreme right is the real."[102] In his view, the riots of December 2005 were perpetrated by disaffected minority youth in the French suburbs (*banlieux*), who had come to understand that their lives were being carried out in what he calls the "place of the ban" (a pun on *ban*, meaning "ban," and *lieu*, meaning "place").[103] Consistent with this analysis, Nicolas Sarkozy, who came to prominence by describing the rioters as "*racaille*" [a mob], was elected

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president of France, in 2007. Soon afterward, he was declaring in Dakar that Africa had "not yet fully entered history."[104] This parody of Hegel has at least had the benefit of opening and extending academic debate of decolonization and postcolonial theory to wider discussion. More accurately, it might be said that a history that can account for Africa within modernity has yet to become accepted in the West. One key element of the crisis that is currently afflicting visuality is, then, this refusal to acknowledge the persistence of imperial visuality in both its "normal" and intensified (fascist) form. Time, that which visuality visualizes as History, is out of joint. The effort to restore visuality has become global, leaving the nation behind as one element among many in the pattern of global counterinsurgency.

POSTSCRIPT: 18 MARCH 2011

At the time of writing, the autocratic regimes in Egypt and Tunisia have fallen. There is open war against the people by the autocrats in Libya and Bahrain, while Yemen seems set to be the next "hot spot" of the extraordinary events of 2011. As I am working, the United Nations Security Council has passed a resolution authorizing intervention in Libya. Safe to say, then, that this is not over.[105] By the time you read this, you will know what will have happened, whether the dramatic events of January and February have been forgotten as globalized capital restores business as usual, or new forms of governance and activism have continued to emerge. Nonetheless, whatever the outcome, and however "success" is defined and by whom, it is clear that the entanglements of half a century of decolonization, globalization, neo-colonialism, and counterinsurgency described in this chapter have produced a striking challenge to the autocracies of the region. Often "invisible" to Western audiences, in the sense that they rarely feature in news and media reporting, the oil-producing and -protecting autocrats have nonetheless been indispensable to neoliberal geopolitics. These regimes operated a classic form of imperial visuality. Their classification was simple: for or against the regime, whether divided by family ties, religion, ethnicity, or political allegiance. Separation was effected by the traditional means identified by Fanon, the barracks and the police station. In Tunisia, there was one police officer for every forty citizens at the time of Ben Ali's fall. The Egyptian Army has over 450,000 men. Nonetheless, their regimes fell. The "aesthetics of respect for the status quo" described by Fanon disappeared as young populations—it is often said that 70 percent of the region

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are under 30—networking via globalized media and interfacing with destitute rural and urban underclasses, decided that nothing was worse than the continuance of the regime.

Across the region the slogan has been, "the people demand the fall of the regime." There is no classification within the people, only one between the people and the regime. The performance of "the people" has constituted a new political subject that refuses to see or hear the regime, except when it resigns or falls. The mobilization of the army against the police in Tunisia, the popular resistance in Egypt against the police, and the contest in Bahrain for Pearl Square, culminated in the war of the state against the people in Libya in order to sustain the authority of the autocrat. Even in Libya, no one believes in the status quo. It is no longer right; it no longer commands assent. The status quo can be enforced but it will be a long time before it is once again invisibly "normal." The security states watched the subject populace and guarded the autocrat. Now the revolution is watching. That is to say, the revolution is watching us and we are watching the revolution. It is also to say that there has been a certain revolution in watching, although the casual use of "revolution" in such contexts is less convincing now. Nonetheless, despite all injunctions to the contrary, to watch is a form of action. The 2011 revolutions are reconfiguring the places of the political and the everyday. It is a watching that demands to see and be seen. It has formed a new distribution of the sensible to allow for the emergence of a new political subject, a *mobility* whose characteristics are constantly updating. There has been a radical reconfiguration of the attributes often associated with the private to the public—peace, security, a sense of belonging, and the absence of fear.

The location of this new sharing of the sensible has been the "square," epitomized above all by Cairo's Tahrir Square. The square was transformed from one of the banal "public" spaces of the thirty- year state of emergency into a site of emergence, whose form became that of the revolution. The "square" is not, in fact, square. It consists of a polyhedron, shaped something like a hatchet, with a central circle and a large gathering space. The entrance used by the revolutionaries was via a checkpoint on the Kasr al-Nil bridge, won in combat with the police on 29 January 2011.The January 25 movement called the square "Free Egypt," sending up chants of "these are the Egyptian people." Food, medical care, and civility were all provided. The poor, destitute, middle ranks of business, academics, lawyers, and filmmakers were all able to recognize each other. The guards, who

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greeted each new member of this emergent Cairo commune, as if following the Commune of 1871, wore improvised helmets made from kitchen bowls labeled "the government of the revolution." Tahrir Square became an alternative city within the city, a rival source of affiliation to the nation-state. People lived there and treated it as a place of belonging. In popular discourse, the interim government is held to account with the slogan "We know the way to Tahrir Square," a line of force that was sufficient to drive out the Mubarak holdover prime minister Ahmed Shafiq on 3 March 2011. In the "square," real and virtual, people are enacting wakeful watching: an active form, wide-awake, concentrating and alert with intent. No longer subject to the police, the people move around, circulate, and are very aware that there is something to see here. People read newspapers, talk, rest, but above all they are present: alive, in the present, attesting to their presence, refusing to depart. It is simply the sense that something has snapped into focus for the first time in ages. This watching is live and alive—it is of the present but an expanded present in which certain moments are again alive, not as specters or echoes, but as actors in the new network. We shall always know the way to Tahrir Square, even if we have not quite got there yet.

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