

radical dialectics in benjamin and fanon: on recognition and rupture

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Elsewhere I have cited at length a few incidents culled from the history of colonial expeditions ... it seems that I was pulling old skeletons out of the closet.

—Aimé Césaire, Discourse on Colonialism, 1950

INTRODUCTION

As a contribution to broader inquiries into epistemic decolonization and anti-colonial politics, this article examines radical dialectics in both Frantz Fanon and Walter Benjamin, two theorists whose work can be read as revolving around the notion of rupture. The argument proceeds in three parts. The first part focuses on Fanon and Benjamin's respective treatments of recognition, and their turns away from narratives that reinforce recognition on the terms of those in power. Second, the article turns toward two different kinds of recognition: recognition in good faith and recognition in bad faith. I argue that recognition in good faith must rely on a notion of rupture, and that for both Fanon and Benjamin, rupture offers a way to break away from structures of power. Both theorists also share

similar views regarding the nature of dialectics at a “standstill,” in which rupture is suspended, hindering dialectical historical movement. Third, the article shows that the convergence between Fanon and Benjamin’s respective notions of recognition and rupture can strengthen each other’s theoretical investigations, and that this convergence may have implications for contemporary anti-colonial politics. I refer to Glen Coulthard’s thesis of decolonization to contextualize this argument, and to illustrate the potential relevance of Benjamin in an anti-colonial project. Coulthard’s thesis can be read as putting into contemporary practice both Fanon’s demand for the rupture of a Manichaeic colonial reality, as well as Benjamin’s notion of messianic time. Finally, I offer some concluding remarks on the nature of dialectical reason, taking into consideration Fanon and Benjamin’s contributions to its revision, and its relevance for anti-colonial politics today.

It is important to note two issues at the onset of this discussion. The first is that, by placing Benjamin and Fanon in dialogue, there is a risk of simply using a European philosopher to “legitimate” Fanon’s political thought. I make this clear in the last section of this article, where I clarify the opposite sentiment: Benjamin’s political project can only continue to be relevant if we are able to put him in relation to an anti-colonial politics.

Second, I refer to the “anti-colonial” throughout this article. There currently exists a vast breadth of decolonial, postcolonial and anti-colonial methods that belong to different epistemological and political projects. In this context, I have characterized this particular dialectical method as “anti-colonial” in the spirit of a politics that acknowledges the convergences and differences between decolonial and postcolonial thought (both influenced, at least in part, by Frantz Fanon formative scholarship), but remains committed to the abolition of colonial projects and colonial thinking as a key task of critical inquiry.

I. ON RECOGNITION

The underlying notion of recognition is central to the dialectical method. For both Fanon and Benjamin, it is recognition—or more specifically, the absence of recognition—that forms the foundation for a radical dialectics. George Ciccariello-Maher points to Fanon regularly being pigeonholed into recognition studies, and suggests that a more accurate ascription would be “nonrecognition studies.”¹ Explicit in Fanon is a reconsideration of the Hegelian dialectic of recognition that is reworked to suit the colonial landscape, in which nonrecognition is a critical

component. In Benjamin, the absence of recognition is explored in relation to its historical erasure, and the emancipatory potential of an authentic recognition manifests for Benjamin through the concept of redemption. Through investigation of this theme of nonrecognition, we can better understand the specificity of rupture in each author's work.

The observation by Ciccariello-Maher contests the move made by contemporary scholarship to collapse Fanon's narrative of decolonization into a framework of recognition. This elision of Fanon's work into a familiar Hegelian paradigm distorts his key reformulation of dialectical thought and dilutes his radicalism. To read Fanon through a framework of recognition can suggest (quite misleadingly) that the struggle for indigenous self-determination in a context of settler colonialism requires vying for legitimacy through the political order created by colonialism itself. For example, Charles Taylor, a prominent theorist of the politics of recognition, describes recognition as a "vital human need," and argues that misrecognition (say, for marginalised groups and indigenous peoples) can lead to debilitating self-hatred.² However, to put the focus on recognition can take away from the asymmetrical relationship of power the oppressed share with the system of colonial power. Rather than advocating for mutual recognition, Fanon could be described as a theorist of *rupture*. One site of rupture exists for Fanon at the ontological level. In other words, the site of being becomes a site of contradiction and struggle for the colonized subject, as they lack "ontological resistance" in relationships under conditions of racism and/or colonialism.³

Fanon's idea of ontological resistance and the corollary notion of rupture comes directly from his reconsideration of the Hegelian master/slave dialectic. In G.W.F. Hegel's formulation of the dialectic, there is an "absolute reciprocity" inherent to the relationship between the so-called master and slave, which entails their codependency.⁴ Fanon understands recognition in the Hegelian formulation as follows:

It is in the degree to which I go beyond my own immediate being that I apprehend the existence of the other as a natural and more than natural reality. If I close the circuit, if I prevent the accomplishment of movement in two directions, I keep the other within himself. Ultimately, I deprive him even of this being-for-itself.⁵

Reciprocity (as being-for-others) is inherent to a smooth, functioning Hegelian dialectic of recognition. The status of the colonized subject, however, makes absolute reciprocity and codependency unattainable. This is a direct result from the material violence and dispossession that colonialism relies on, as well as the invasive psycho-affective implications of racist ideologies. In a passage that has become a key touchstone for his relationship to dialectic thought, Fanon writes that

for Hegel, there is reciprocity; here the master laughs at the consciousness of the slave. What he wants from the slave is not recognition but work ... The Negro wants to be like the master. Therefore he is less independent than the Hegelian slave. In Hegel the slave turns away from the master and turns toward the object. Here the slave turns toward the master and abandons the object.⁶

The ontological subjugation, as an effect of the individual and institutional power of colonialism, reduces the colonized subject to a status of “less-than-being”. The master does not see an independent self-consciousness in the colonial subject, but a source of exploitable labour.⁷ As a result, the affirmation of selfhood derived from mutual recognition is unattainable within racist settler colonial societies, unless this relational structure of exploitation is dissolved or overcome.

However, the racist dimensions of settler colonialism are not limited simply to an exploitative division of labour. Fanon articulates the psycho-affective transformation of the individual under colonialism with the following logic:

There is a fact: White men consider themselves superior to black men.
There is another fact: Black men want to prove to White men, at all costs, the richness of their thoughts, the equal value of their intellect.⁸

The psycho-affective transformation undergone here is such that the colonized subject internalizes the white-black dynamic, in places where “white” and “black” have become the categories through which the coloniser and colonised have come to understand themselves. The desire of the colonised to be recognized grows from within this internalization, and relies on a demand not to overthrow the system that enforces this dynamic, but rather on a desire to become the Master themselves. For Fanon, this kind of Hegelian recognition forecloses the possibility of rupture, and without rupture, there cannot be a breaking of the colonial relationship that creates the need for recognition itself. From this viewpoint, the

dialectics of recognition are Eurocentric, insofar as they are unable to accommodate the moment of rupture and contradiction, which results from a misunderstanding of, or refusal to engage with, the relationship between settler and colonized in a colonial landscape.

Ciccariello-Maher has already described of Fanon's dialectics as staying truer to the spirit rather than to the word of Hegel, in reworking the dialectics of recognition to suit a colonial context.⁹ Wendy Brown has also drawn a parallel regarding Benjamin and Karl Marx, gesturing to Benjamin as a theorist who offers a "reenactment" of Marx, rather than departing from him.¹⁰ This dual ascription is on the basis of their commitment to a dialectical conception of history, but emphasises the fluidity with which they use dialectical analysis as a malleable tool, rather than a rigid methodology. Both critique Hegel and Marx whether implicitly or explicitly, while remaining true to the central concern of a dialectical political praxis. The relevance of Ciccariello-Maher and Brown's comments points to Fanon and Benjamin's shared concern with dialectical thought. Where Fanon's concern is initially with the individual's ontological negation, Benjamin's concern is with the contradictions inherent to the myth of progress, to which I now turn.

Benjamin pinpoints the same weaknesses of a Eurocentric dialectical methodology as Fanon, but instead targets the teleology and determinism embedded within the dialectic of Marxist historical materialism. This offers not only a radicalisation of the dialectic methodology, but achieves this following the same formula as Fanon's critique of the dialectics of recognition. In this regard, I argue that Benjamin, alongside Fanon, can be read as a theorist of rupture.

Benjamin's use of Marxism arises particularly from a focus on class and historical consciousness. It is important to note here the influence of György Lukács, whose writings on historical materialism stand as a point of reference for his critique. Benjamin aligns himself with Lukács, with both holding that the inner contradictions of capitalism will necessarily implode, but that the question remains whether this will be as a historical inevitability, or at the will of the working class. If the social relations of production within capitalism are to be overturned, Benjamin argues this must be at the hands of the working class, which is contingent on the attainment of class consciousness.

Benjamin's approach to historical transformation puts an emphasis on human agency, and contains within it a critique of scientific Marxism. Lukács summa-

rizes scientific Marxism as follow:

The essence of scientific Marxism consists... in the realization that the real motor forces of history are independent of man's [*sic*] (psychological) consciousness of them... history is precisely *the history of these institutions*, of the changes they undergo *as* institutions which bring men together in societies. Such institutions start by controlling economic relations between men and go on to permeate all human relations.¹¹

The scientific Marxist characterization of history is an inadequate explanation for Benjamin, because it relies on a linear and teleological conception of time as constituted through epochs. In *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin writes that “one of the methodological objectives of this work [is] to demonstrate a historical materialism which has annihilated within itself the idea of progress.”¹² Benjamin retains a commitment to a dialectical conception of history, but sees the weaknesses of the narrative of progress to which it remains parasitic as needing reconceptualization. This leads to his secularization of the concept of messianic time, which is used to contest linear historical narrativisation. Messianity is a conception of time that understands the entire past and present as now-time (*jetztzeit*): “History is the subject of a construction whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled full by now-time [*jetztzeit*]... [a] leap in the open air of history is the dialectical leap Marx understood as revolution”.¹³

We can link Benjamin's interest in history and his critique of linear historicism to the problems of recognition and rupture discussed above. Bound up in Benjamin's notion of messianicity is the idea of redemption, which he describes as a “secret index” encoded in the past.¹⁴ The political implication is that revolutions, as authentic forms of political transformation, redeem past struggles and conflict. Benjamin's concern for the victims of history—those not lost to the past but waiting like ghosts for redemption—plays out in a desire for collective emancipation, which cannot happen on the terms of historicism. This is because the narrative of progress here undermines the capacity for emancipation by shutting off the past, effectively sealing it away as chapters in history. Consider Benjamin's sixth thesis in “On the Concept of History,” in which he states that “articulating the past historically does not mean recognizing it “the way it really was. It means appropriating a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger.”¹⁵ For Benjamin, the passive nature of historical contemplation is insufficient for a radical politics. By focusing on nonrecognition, and turning to rupture instead, we can see how Ben-

jamin looks to radically rework historicism instead of substituting the direction of its gaze. It is not through acknowledgement of historical injustice within the framework of linear progress towards Europe that can ever truly redeem the past. Recognition must be on the basis of a radically reformulated conception of time, that is not history *per se*, but now-time, with the emphasis placed on messianic power as a radically active force.

Benjamin expands on the theoretical move described above throughout *On the Concept of History*. He configures his critique around social democracy: for Benjamin, social democracy wants to be recognised by the mechanisms of power, so conforms to, and assimilates into, the doctrine of progress. This has three dangerous consequences which lead to social democracy being understood as a threat. Firstly, the social democrats faith in technological development was mistaken as “constituting a political achievement.”¹⁶ Modernisation is therefore taken to mean progress at the expense of its effect on workers, ignoring how technological development and its commodities could actually be of benefit to the working class. Secondly, in “recognizing only the progress in mastering nature, not the retrogression of society,” the social democrats subscribed to the domination and exploitation of nature, and by extension, labour.¹⁷ Progress is measured without consideration of nature and labour, as its narrative is used teleologically and in blind faith. Finally, social democracy “already displays the technocratic features that later emerge in fascism.”¹⁸ Benjamin here acknowledges that the culmination of the subscription to the narrative of progress in a totalising move to power by way of the exploitation of natural resources and human labour. To the extent that the social democrats desire recognition as a means to an end, they subscribe to the ideological narratives dictated by power—in this case, the myth of progress.

There can be no resistance within the desire for recognition by the frameworks handed down by structures of power. A total break with the system is needed. In Benjamin’s words, a “state of emergency” must be declared.¹⁹ Historical consciousness, as an emancipatory objective for a radical politics, must take on a radically new meaning that locates it entirely outside of the given framework of progress. An entirely new comprehension of time and history must be found, and here Benjamin—like Fanon—turns to the notion of rupture.

II. ON RUPTURE

This article has referred thus far to recognition and nonrecognition without prop-

erly clarifying what authentic recognition might look like. To do this, I will here define recognition as being either in “bad faith” or in “good faith”. Popularised in the work of French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, “bad faith” is considered as a form of active deception, as lying to oneself.²⁰ In this sense, it is an escape from what Sartre considers to be the ‘choice’ of freedom. Recognition in bad faith suppresses the point of rupture as a means of reconciling combative struggle. It depends on being recognized on the terms of the oppressor, and thus recognition in “bad faith” is a “choice” against a break with the systems of power. Drawing on both Sartre and Fanon, Lewis Gordon argues that

from the existential phenomenological standpoint, freedom and humanity are regarded as one. Since freedom and human being are regarded as one, we can translate bad faith into more prosaic language as the effort to hide from human beings. The effort to hide from human beings takes at least two forms: rejection of the humanity in others and rejection of the humanity in oneself.²¹

Gordon’s definition helps to establish a politics of recognition in bad faith as a “rejection of humanity” in oneself and others. In contrast, the concept of recognition in good faith relies on nonrecognition and therefore rupture. Good faith requires a complete break with the systems that have birthed oppression, and allows for the reinstatement of humanity to both colonized peoples and the victims of history—the subjects of Fanon and Benjamin’s concerns, respectively. Rupture, as they key to recognition “good faith,” characterizes moments of combative struggle within dialectical analysis. Fanon and Benjamin both identify in such rupture the quality of being ‘suspended’ in history and locked in time; that is to say, each envisions dialectics at a standstill. Rupture acts here as a marker of weakness within the linear thread of material history, providing the vantage point from which transformation may be pushed forth. Good faith therefore has a temporal dimension—it arrests historical narrative, while bad faith succumbs to it.

In this context, let’s re-examine Fanon’s treatment of rupture. For Fanon, recognition in good faith is a politicized phenomenon, given that a material situation governs one’s capacity to realise one’s freedom. Rupture exists as an active, combative tension at the centre of a contradiction of forces, but can be trapped at the points where its realization is suppressed. But Fanon’s understanding is such that colonialism induces a dialectical stasis that renders rupture immobile. To this extent, there is a temporal dimension latent within Fanon’s treatment of rupture.

Recognition in bad faith follows a logic of substitution. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, this theme is developed in Fanon's warnings against neocolonialism. The period post-independence in an anti-colonial struggle, he cautions, carries with it the risk of the "native" bourgeoisie substituting itself in the gap left by the former settler colonial bourgeoisie: "there is no native who does not dream at least once a day of setting himself up in the settler's place."²² The logic of substitution helps to determine the way in which the colonial world is "a motionless, Manichaeic world,"²³ and for this reason, Fanon warns that "independence ... is not a word which can be used as an exorcism."²⁴ In this way, Fanon reaches the following conclusion:

The immobility to which the native is condemned can only be called into question if the native decides to put an end to the history of colonization—the history of pillage—and to bring into existence the history of the nation—the history of decolonization.²⁵

Decolonization for Fanon is synonymous with a dialectical movement of history and must follow the "dialectical requirement" of rupture if recognition in good faith is to be achieved.²⁶ Without rupture, dialectics are at a stand-still: "Today, we are at present at the stasis of Europe. Comrades, let us free from this motionless movement where gradually dialectic is changing to the logic of equilibrium."²⁷ Focusing on the content of rupture, Fanon turns to revolutionary violence. Fanon's opening discussion of *The Wretched of the Earth* emphasises that "violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect."²⁸ He means, of course, violence *to* the structure of colonialism. This conception of violence frees colonized subjects from the dialectical stasis to which racism has confined them, acting as a medium through which rupture functions. Fanon's notion of violence serves the same purpose of reinvigorating dialectical movement through the formation of collective bonds: "the practice of violence binds [colonized subjects] together as a whole, since each individual forms a violent link in the great chain, a part of the great organism of violence which has surged upwards in reaction to the settler's violence in the beginning."²⁹ Collective violence acts here with a rehabilitative dimension, building solidarity and a sense of national consciousness in opposing the colonial enemy as a nation. Violence that gives way to a national movement derives its strength by totalising the "weaker" efforts toward liberation that came before it, and asserts itself as combative struggle in the face of its passive counterpart of recognition in bad faith. In this context, Fanon's

discussion on violence highlights the importance in privileging rupture, and the movement of history *through* rupture, within dialectical analysis.

Furthermore, Fanon argues that a radical multiplicity of ruptures might emerge from the same historical dialectic, which distinguishes his thought clearly from progressive discourses (especially those inspired by Marxist-Leninism) that suppose a linearity of “revolutionary” struggle. This is made possible through the method by which Fanon reconsiders Hegel’s master/slave dialectic, and by his demand to move away from the epistemologies and institutions established by an imperial Europe. This new history must be on the terms of what, at the time of Fanon’s writing, was described as “the Third World”: “if we want humanity to advance a step farther, if we want to bring it up to a different level than that which Europe has shown it, then we must invent and we must make discoveries.”³⁰ This is written as a warning to not follow in the wake of Europe, which leaves behind it “an avalanche of murders.”³¹

We can now consider similarities and differences between Fanon’s and Benjamin’s accounts of rupture and recognition in good faith. If rupture is a moment of tension built from the contradictions that inform it, then for Benjamin, the essence of rupture within history is understood in the following way: “where we see the appearance of a chain of events, he [the Angel of History] sees one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before his feet.”³² Returning to the idea of dialectics at a standstill, dialectical movement for Benjamin is frozen on the grounds that the rupture is only seen by the Angel of History, as rupture is suppressed by means of the myth of progress. Regarding the notion of revolutionary agency in Fanon, Benjamin offers an equally powerful emphasis on pushing the point of rupture to its absolute breaking point:

Marx said that revolutions are the locomotive of world history. But perhaps things are very different. It may be that revolutions are the act by which the human race travelling in the train applies the emergency brake.³³

To extend the metaphor, the train does not move dialectically, but is trapped in a movement that renders its movement neither forwards nor backwards. The emergency break to which Benjamin refers is the moment at which the rupture suppressed can no longer maintain its hold. At this point, rupture gives way to messianic time, and historical chapters seemingly sealed away in the past return with full force into the immediacy of the present: “what characterises revolution-

ary classes at their moment of action is the awareness that they are about to make the continuum of history explode.”³⁴ The explosion is what Benjamin calls a “dialectical leap,” a term used in his analyses of the French Revolution and its self-perception as Rome incarnate. According to Benjamin, this is a “tiger’s leap into the past. Such a leap, however, takes place in an arena where the ruling class gives the commands. The same leap in the open air of history is the dialectical leap Marx understood as revolution”.³⁵

Benjamin’s convergence with Fanon can be established on the basis of the shared temporal specificity of their treatment of rupture. Benjamin understands without rupture, nothing is able to change. Despite appearing to move forward, the ‘progressive’ train in Benjamin’s metaphor is actually at a stand-still. Bad faith uses the myth of progress to look backwards down the narrow, linear path of the tracks that produced oppression and exploitation in the first instance. By contrast, the explosive nature of rupture immediately collapses the myth of progress. Messianic time demands recognition in good faith, in order for the recognition of history and historical injustice to be truly redemptive.

In a similar vein to Fanon, Benjamin also looks to violence as a political phenomenon that emphasises the explosive nature of rupture. This is specifically manifest in the idea of divine violence, which enacts justice in its intervening role in institutionalized or structural violence.³⁶ It exists outside of any legally endorsed violence, and in its spontaneous bursts, it makes visible the injustice of existing legal frameworks. Although divine violence for Benjamin cannot be a means to an end, it still has historical significance in signifying a collective will to political change. To this end, divine violence exists in parallel to Fanon’s conceptions of revolutionary agency, which manifests spontaneously outside of a well-articulated political project of resistance. It is for this reason that Fanon looks to the rural peasantry as the revolutionary class. Because of their physical isolation from the cities, Fanon points out that the constitution of the native peasantry “obeys its own logic, and neither the brimming activity of the missionaries nor the decrees of the central government can check its growth”.³⁷ In Benjamin, divine violence reveals a momentary flash in the underlying sentiments of an oppressed population, pure in its opposition to all laws.³⁸ Both Fanon and Benjamin converge in terms of the momentary, explosive nature of rupture, particularly in terms of its reliance on spontaneity.

The critique of the Eurocentric myth of progress must be central to any Fanonian analysis. Through the pervasive discourse of delivering colonised peoples from “savagery” towards “civilization,” colonising logics of progress have paved the way for imperial subjugation. The metaphor of Benjamin’s “emergency brake of history” represents one way to think through new sites of non-teleological rupture, and may be a valuable touchstone for extending Fanon’s project of developing a distinctly anti-colonial dialectics. To look then to Fanon’s demand for a Manichaean inversion of coloniality requires dislocating ourselves from a narrative of progress. In this context, we can place in conversation Benjamin’s theory of history as messianic time with Fanon’s notion of a rupture suspended. The following section links this conversation to contemporary scholarship on decolonial thinking and politics, focusing on the work of Lewis Gordon and Glenn Coulthard, who each rework Fanonian themes in important ways.

III. CONVERGENCE IN THOUGHT

In *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man*, Lewis Gordon makes clear an intention to not draw a causal relationship between the philosophies of Fanon and Sartre, stating that “it is not our intent to continue the long tradition of treating the thoughts of black philosophers as derivatives of white ones.”³⁹ The same problem of subordinated theoretical identity applies to this discussion on the convergence in thought between Fanon and Benjamin. To avoid an attempt at trying to further legitimize Fanon using yet another philosopher, we need to recognize that Fanon does not necessarily need Benjamin to strengthen this thesis on decolonization, as he has already incorporated into this a dialectical theory of history. It may therefore be more fruitful to consider what Fanon can do for Benjamin. While Benjamin has exposed the contradiction of the myth of progress, using Fanon to pull him into postcolonial analysis further strengthens the politicized, secularized nature of messianity. To subject Benjamin to the scrutiny of anti-colonial thought shows the strength of the active potential of messianity within an anti-colonial project. For Benjamin to remain relevant, we must be able to put him in relation to Indigenous contexts and perspectives on coloniality. To do so, I put Fanon, Benjamin and Glen Coulthard in conversation, because their ideas converge to challenge a singular, teleological and determinist dialectic. Furthermore, each of these theorists can be read as offering a foundation for reclaiming a dialectic methodology for anti-colonial and decolonial praxis that considers the complexity, multiplicity and open-ended potential of dialectic ruptures. I want to argue here that an authentic and informed conception of “decolonization” may challenge a linear

and teleological narrative of historical time. Benjamin's redemption may take on two varying meanings in respect to this process, in regards to the redemption of a nation or land to its Indigenous population(s), and in regards to the epistemological and historical redemption that comes with decolonial projects post-independence. Importantly, it sketches a grounds on which Benjamin's notion of redemption, conceived as recognition in good faith, can be put in relation to the fundamental question of land.

First Nations philosopher Glen Coulthard provides an opportunity through which to more clearly illustrate the relevance of Benjamin's messianic thinking and Fanon's good faith to these issues. Coulthard's *Red Skin, White Masks* offers a critical, explicit response to the politics of recognition, but also stands as a thesis of decolonization in its own right. Coulthard argues against a liberal politics of recognition, a framework within which he identifies that Indigenous struggles are largely fought today. For Coulthard, the violence of colonialism in so-called liberal societies exists in more insidious forms than its prior methods of overt domination, which had included (at their worst) genocidal policies to erase the lives, histories and worlds of First Nations peoples. It is this same violence which emerges, in Coulthard's analysis, in the form of the politics of recognition, which serves the interests of colonial power instead of the liberation of colonised peoples. Indigenous struggles continue to be fought within the governmental and legal infrastructures imposed by the settler state in order to claim back land, instigate economic development initiatives, and secure self-government agreements.⁴⁰ Drawing on Fanon's reconsideration of the master/slave dialectic, Coulthard warns that a politics dedicated solely to mutual recognition promises "to reproduce the very configurations of colonialist, racist, patriarchal state power that Indigenous peoples' demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend."⁴¹ Coulthard does not therefore advocate the recognition of Indigenous peoples as a primary goal, but rather for radical political and economic transformations that are actively redemptive at their core. Not only does the struggle for recognition in bad faith reproduce the configurations of colonial state power, but it also reproduces colonial logics, such as the myth of progress. Recognition in good faith, by contrast, requires the rupture from colonial logics, from the myth of progress, and from the implicit metaphysics of linear time on which it relies. Coulthard advocates for recasting the radical imagination towards not only toward the future, but also for a present praxis informed by the struggles and knowledges of the past. This demand involves the unsealing of the "chapters" locked into colonial history, as suggested by Benjamin's phrasing above. As a re-

sult, Coulthard offers an entry point for Benjamin's messianity to find its way into contemporary anti-colonial praxis.

It is important to note here that Coulthard's own political theory relies on First Nations metaphysics and knowledges, and he does not need Benjamin to compensate for any lack in his critical frameworks. However, Coulthard's articulation of a rupture from colonial logics helps to think through possibilities for re-reading and reworking "redemption" and "messianic time" in new political and intellectual climes. We also need to acknowledge that messianity harbors remnants of the Eurocentric notions that Benjamin was trying to overcome, by abstracting the concept of time itself from the question of land.⁴² Such a theoretical problem is beyond the scope of this article, but could certainly warrant further investigation.

CONCLUSION

I want to finish by returning to the work of Lewis Gordon by way of his discussion of Audre Lorde. It is a well-known adage that for Lorde, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house."⁴³ This is commonly understood as a rejection for recognition (in bad faith), and that theoretical tools borrowed from the powerful cannot or should not be re-tooled as resources for resistance. Gordon has a twofold analysis of this approach. While praising Lorde's rejection of philosophical Eurocentrism, Gordon also points out the limit of this metaphor. While it focuses on the destruction of the house, it leaves room to focus on the production of a new house, by which he means the overall goal of building freedom:

Why ... would people who are linked to production regard themselves in solely destructive terms? Yes, they want to end slavery. But they also want to build freedom. To do that, what they may wish to do with the master's tools is to use them, along with the tools they had brought with them and which facilitated their survival, to build their own homes.⁴⁴

Gordon appears to suggest the provisional use of the master's tools, as well as the tools colonized and enslaved subjects may already have developed and "which facilitated their survival."⁴⁵ Gordon's approach seems to make room for Benjamin, as a theorist of rupture who may be one voice (among many others) for the creation of new tools that can link together both European epistemologies and those of colonised, enslaved and subjugated peoples.

Fanon's own concluding remarks in *The Wretched of the Earth* supports Gordon's turn to the creation of freedom, by emphasising the invention of new concepts and tools for collective emancipation, rather than those set by European standards: "humanity is waiting for something other from us than such an imitation, which would be almost an obscene caricature."⁴⁶ Read alongside Fanon and Coulthard, Benjamin's voice can acquire new valence for dialectic analysis and anti-colonial thinking. Even if we are to take up the task Fanon has issued in leaving behind the constructs of colonial European thinking, we might still look to dialectical reason to envision emancipatory change.

In line with the reading of Fanon and Benjamin presented in this article, the relevance of dialectical methodology to anticolonial politics and thought is contingent on its privileging of rupture in the practice of recognition in good faith. If the aim is to reinvigorate the dialectic stagnancy that characterizes a global political crisis and colonial oppressions, then it is important to focus on the anti-colonial and decolonial stasis first. This is a particularly urgent demand given that, as Coulthard has shown, it is the colonial state continues to promote capitalist exploitation and the assimilation of Indigenous peoples into liberal social democracy at the cost of self-determination. It is through the rejection of recognition in bad faith that redemption for such struggles can become a historical possibility.

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NOTES

1. George Ciccariello-Maher, *Decolonizing Dialectics*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2017, 57.
2. Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, A. Gutmann (ed.), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992, 27.
3. Full quote for clarification: "For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man. Some critics will take it on themselves to remind us that this proposition has a converse. I say that this is false. The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man." See: Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. London: Pluto Press, 2008, 83.
4. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. London: Pluto Press, 2008, 169.
5. Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*. London: Penguin Classics, 2011, 169.
6. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. London: Pluto Press, 2008, 172 (footnote 8).
7. The connection between coloniality and labour is discussed throughout Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race*. London: Verso, 2016.
8. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. London: Penguin Classics, 2004, 12.
9. Ciccariello-Maher, *Decolonizing Dialectics*, 68.
10. Wendy Brown, *Politics out of History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001, 165.
11. György Lukács, *History and Class-Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1971, 47, emphasis in original.
12. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1999, 460.
13. Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History" in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Vol. 4 1938-1940*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Others, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press, 2006, 395.
14. Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," 390.
15. Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," 391.
16. Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," 393.
17. Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," 393.
18. Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," 393.
19. Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," 392.
20. See: Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*. New York: Washington Square Press, 1966.
21. Lewis Gordon, "Racism as a Form of Bad Faith," in *The American Philosophical Association* 99, no. 2 (spring 2000).
22. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 41.
23. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 40.
24. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 250.
25. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 30.
26. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 250.
27. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 253.
28. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 74.
29. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 73.
30. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 254.
31. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 252.
32. Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," 392.
33. Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," appendix.
34. Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," 395.

35. For original quote, see Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," 395.
36. For a full discussion of Benjamin's notion of divine violence and its relationship to imposed law and justice, see Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott. New York: Schocken Books, 1986.
37. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 103.
38. For a more detailed discussion, see Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," 277-300. See also: Richard Wolin, *Walter Benjamin, An Aesthetic of Redemption*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994; Rolf Tiedemann, "Dialectics at a Standstill," in *The Arcades Projects* by Walter Benjamin, ed. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Massachusetts: The Belknap Press, 1999.
39. Lewis Gordon, *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man: An Essay on Philosophy and the Human Sciences*. New York: Routledge, 1995, 14.
40. Coulthard, *Red Skin White Masks*, 3.
41. Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 3.
42. The differences between 'temporal' and 'spatial' thinking across Indigenous and non-Indigenous modes of thought are discussed in Vine Deloria Jr., *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion*. Golden, Colo.: Fulcrum Publishing, 1992, 63.
43. See Lorde discussed in Lewis Gordon, "Problematic People and Epistemic Decolonisation" in *Postcolonialism and Political Theory*, ed. Nalini Persram. Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2007, 135-136.
44. See: Lewis Gordon, "Problematic People and Epistemic Decolonisation" in *Postcolonialism and Political Theory*, ed. Nalini Persram. Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2007, 136.
45. See: Lewis Gordon, "Problematic People and Epistemic Decolonisation" in *Postcolonialism and Political Theory*, ed. Nalini Persram. Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2007, 136.
46. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 154.