BOOK REVIEWS

Pedro TABENSKY, (2023). *Camus and Fanon on the Algerian Question. An Ethics of Rebellion*. Londres: Routledge, 168 p.

Pedro Tabensky is the founding director of the Allan Gray Centre for Leadership Ethics (AGLE), part of the Department of Philosophy at Rhodes University. The book is within this institute's great lines.

This book compares two pivotal figures during the horrific Algerian War of Independence, Albert Camus and Frantz Fanon while hindering ethical leadership. The author presents a passionate opposition between these two intellectual figures who have not lived long but impacted so much their times. We read two visions in one book, where Tabensky contextualizes intricate and different philosophical themes, but clearly favours Camus' vision over Fanon's. He asserts: “I am also critical of Camus, particularly given his Eurocentric distortions, but I argue that his philosophy of rebellion is in the end better able to help us navigate the impasse between acquiescence to oppressor violence and unrestrained murder aimed at liberation” (11).

Tabensky blames Fanon for the long-term effects of violence as this latter saw violence as a unique salvation for independence. He declares: “The options, it seems, were either the corruption of capitulation or the corruption of the revolutionary path. Neither option offers us the way towards Fanon's New Man Elysium” (32-33).

Tabensky does not see any arrival of a New Man after a cruel revolution, on the contrary, he sees that the dictatorship of the proletariat generates oppressive totalitarian rule. He prefers, however, Camus' vision for his non-idealization of heroes and his warning against allowing the rebellion to transmute into revolution as it is more disgusting. He explains this idea with Camus' character, Sisyphus, who is not concerned with admiration but rather with a practical reconciliation with the human condition.

Tabensky asserts: “We shall see that his ethics is one of approximation rather than perfection” (107). He continues explaining how Sisyphus is so different from Fanon's New Man: “Sisyphus, unlike the New Man, informs his actions not by a picture of what is to come but by a lucid understanding of what follows from the original act of protesting against injustice” (107).

Tabensky expounds on Camus' philosophy of moderation so brightly, like the negation of moralist certainty and inflexible beliefs of the yogi. All is in diversion with Fanon, who, according to the author, is "blind to the long-term effects of the violence" (23), where the planned perfect society turns into a nightmarish one.

Reading Camus' imagined answer to Fanon's *A Dying Colonialism* is also original. (108) It is a meaningful section as the author imagines Camus responding to Fanon from his grave and giving his father's example in WW1 when he exclaimed in the views of horror that "A man doesn't do that" (Camus, 2013a [1994], p. 51-52) in French, it sounds even more powerful than that: "Non, un homme ça s'empêche" (Camus, 1994, p. 77).

This "No" of outrage that is expressed in *The First Man* is explained magnificently by Tabensky. He affirms: "Fidelity to our values, to what we stand for, to what caused the no of outrage is what differentiates the Rebel from the Revolutionary" (116). The "no" affirms that "things had gone on long enough and there was a limit that could not be crossed". (140) Sisyphus is someone who, within the absurd, learns to develop the sense of observation that annihilates any thought of revolution.

According to Fanon, Camus is no more than an apologist for the status quo. (Tabensky, 2023, p. 110) Fanon reflects on Camus, a protector of colonialism in Algeria, as it is hard to avoid his compromised pied-noir perspective. He considers Camus ideal type, Sisyphus, the victim of thoughtless and unproductive efforts. Tabensky argues here on the central philosophical disagreements between the two philosophers. He states:

> "Sisyphus is, for Camus, a representation of his ideal moral type -the absurd man- someone who, despite being condemned to roll a stone up a hill, watch it roll down from the top, only to recommence the endless cycle anew, refuses to capitulate, that is refuses to let his futile condition define him as someone defeated by nihilism" (106).

Fanon believed that the only way to achieve freedom was through the use of violence. This was because he felt that the enemy could not be trusted.

For him, Sisyphus should turn into a revolutionary because the "yes" hidden behind the "no" of rebellion (108) will maintain the status quo. Accordingly, the author links revolution to Frantz Fanon and rebellion to Albert Camus.

The words “justice” and “injustice” are recurrent in *The First Man*. Justice is even the last word in this book, but surprisingly, the famous quote by Camus, “I believe in justice, but I will defend my mother before justice”, is missing, though it encapsulates the idiosyncratic humanity of this author and also consists as an analogous idea with Fanon. Tabensky is so much blaming him for letting truth dwindling into insignificance when working for *El Moudjahid* newspaper and lying on the killing circumstances of some Algerian heroes (41) during the process of liberation.

In this investigation of intricate ethical issues and all the expenses loyalty may demand, Tabensky declares: “Being a loyal cadre, it seems, involves a commitment to expedient dishonesty, even when it meant helping to cover up the murder of a friend.” (38). We have no clear evidence for this event as there are many hypotheses concerning this event, and none of them have been verified. Even if we suppose this is true, Camus' quote above also clearly levels up personal relationships over the notion of justice. The support of one's mother consists of compromising with great values such as justice.

This book deserves to be read because we have these two types of Man in every liberation history. It is giving an alternative to violence when confronting the absurd. It explores the ethical, political, and psychological realms of Camus' and Fanon's philosophies during the Algerian War of Independence. This war served as a crucible to test people and lead to a considerable transformation. The book shows an apparent disagreement in what concerns conflict resolution. Fanon advocates radical means for emancipation and liberation; in contrast, Camus advocates a moderate position to distance unrestricted violence. Both positions are pertinent in current wars for justice and liberation.

Tabensky is convinced that neither Fanon nor Camus seems to propose a way out of the deadlock (141). In the book's last paragraph, he invites us to avoid the temptation of choosing one horn (151). In this dilemma, I think that though he felt the sharpness of the two horns, he is already bleeding with one horn, with the Camus' horn. Anyone who reads this book will undoubtedly identify with either Fanon or Camus. This is one of the strengths of the book. I am also bleeding with one after reading this book. Some people are incapable of violence even in the worst situations, while others are easily driven depending on many factors and circumstances. But the author incites us to return to the originating act of rebellion because many things are discovered there.

In conclusion, Pedro Tabensky's *Camus and Fanon on the Algerian Question: An Ethics of Rebellion* is a fascinating and intellectually

inspiring work that allows readers to reflect on ethical dimensions, especially during our tumultuous time. The book is meticulously crafted, with a focus on historical narratives. Tabensky offers insights into the challenges of the Algerian War, which contribute to a nuanced understanding of the socio-political context that shaped Camus and Fanon's perspectives.

Tabensky's research is put eloquently to expose his discerning analysis. He brings a thought-provoking exploration of the ethical and moral complexities of rebellion, leaving readers with a profound appreciation for the enduring relevance of Camus and Fanon's ideas in our contemporary world.

Neema GHENIM

Muriam Haleh DAVIS, (2022). *Markets of civilization. Islam and Racial Capitalism in Algeria*. Duke University Press: Durham and London, 288 p.

During the colonial period, a conflict emerged between two conceptual archetypes: homo economicus and homo islamicus. Homo economicus symbolized the ideal of the self-interested economic individual, embodying the liberal subject of European modernity. Conversely, homo islamicus represented indigenous social customs and was linked with Islam. This conflict arose as colonial administrators and policymakers in Algeria endeavored to institute economic reforms and integrate Muslims into a productive market economy. The tension between these two archetypes influenced discussions on colonial policy and shaped the establishment of colonial governance. The racialization of Islam and the association of Muslims with economic underdevelopment played a significant role in the creation of a racialized religious system in Algeria. This conflict between homo economicus and homo islamicus mirrored the broader colonial mindset that perceived Muslims as fundamentally different from Western individuals and influenced perceptions of economic advancement and the potential contributions of Muslims to material progress.

The primary focus of the book is to analyze the intersection of race, religion, and capitalism within the context of French colonialism in Algeria. It investigates how racial classifications were formulated and managed by the colonial government, with a specific emphasis on the influence of religion on economic policies and social hierarchies. The

book also delves into the discussions surrounding the correlation between race, capitalism, and postcolonial theory.

Muriam Haleh Davis argues in this book that religion and race were utilized as instruments to classify and regulate populations in colonial Algeria. She explores how colonial officials and planners identified the economic capabilities of Muslims as a pivotal factor in implementing economic reforms. She also scrutinizes the construction of racial and religious disparities in discussions on political economy and how these concepts influenced the allocation of resources and the development of capitalism, and she argues that comprehending the intersection of religion, race, and economics is essential for understanding the dynamics of colonialism and postcolonialism.

In order to comprehensively address this issue, Davis presents various events that characterized the conflict between homo economicus and homo islamicus. Notably, Karl Marx's visit to Algiers in 1882 is examined, during which he focused on several key issues. Marx believed that French colonialism in Algeria would foster closer ties between the European and native populations by introducing shared material interests, leading to prosperity and peaceful labor. However, he also acknowledged that the prosperity of the settler colony relied on the exploitation of Algerian society. Marx's visit occurred amidst ongoing revolts against the colonial order and urban transformations, with French observers interpreting these uprisings as evidence of Islamic extremism. Overall, Marx's primary focus during his visit was on the impact of French colonialism, the role of Islam in Algerian society, and the economic and social dynamics. Additionally, the author discusses a 1948 promotional film released by the French government that highlighted Algeria's role in exporting high-quality agricultural products to Europe. The film depicted the meticulous transportation of fruits and vegetables from Algerian ports to various European destinations, emphasizing the careful handling and preservation of the products to meet consumer expectations. The primary objective of the film was to promote Algeria as a dependable source of superior agricultural goods for European markets.

Furthermore, the author addresses various challenges related to the economic situation in postcolonial Algeria, including the dilemma between pursuing a modern, outward-looking industrial future associated with the Common Market or maintaining traditional agricultural practices. The author also delved into the impact of French colonization on agricultural practices, unequal access to market-exchange crops, and the shift towards wage labor. Additionally, the mismanagement of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP^{s}), questionable accounting

practices, and favoritism towards wealthy settlers over Algerian farmers were discussed. The author also explores how Algerian nationalists sought to redefine the religious landscape by emphasizing Islam as a means of resistance against colonial depersonalization. Economic progress, national identity, and Islam were identified as key themes in Algerian political life during and following Ben Bella's presidency. Davis also highlights the influence of figures such as the famous sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, the anarchist Daniel Guérin, and Salah Bouakouir, the secretary general of economic affairs, in shaping the racial regime, as well as the algerian thinker Malek Bennabi, who advocated for an economic system that would avoid extreme individualism and dehumanizing materialism, and rejected the notion that the economic and religious realms were inherently opposed.

This book offers significant value by providing a comprehensive examination of racial capitalism and the underlying conflicts. It challenges the notion that France brought civilization to uncivilized Algerians through economic systems, asserting that Islam formed the basis of a racial regime long before French colonization. The author emphasizes the use of Arabic sources, offering a fresh perspective that counters the potential bias of relying solely on French accounts. Additionally, the book is accessible to non-specialized readers, featuring explanations and definitions of terminology. The inclusion of original French denominations for institutions and services allows for further exploration. Overall, the book offers an engaging and informative exploration of the establishment of racial regimes in colonial and post-colonial Algeria. It serves as a valuable resource for students, scholars, and researchers across various disciplines, including history, politics, and sociology.

Kheira SEHABA

Ahmed BEDJAOUI, (2020). *Cinema and the Algerian War of Independence. Culture, Politics, and Society.* Palgrave MacMillan, 267 p.

The author, Ahmed Bedjaoui, has accomplished a great representation of Cinema and the Algerian War of Independence unveiling three aspects:political, social and cultural. The liberation war and its origins have left an indelible imprint on modern Algerian history and a lasting impact on the former colonial power. In his work, composed of nine chapters, Bedjaoui explains that even fifty years later, this pivotal chapter

remains a contentious subject in terms of its portrayal, not only in the relationship between the former occupiers and Algerians but also within the Algerian community itself.

The work presents a prevalent depiction of the liberation war as predominantly rural obscured the early and critical involvement of the urban elite in the national movement. Nevertheless, urban centers played a crucial role in securing significant political victories. This was evident, firstly, through major public demonstrations in Algerian towns in December 1960 and within the emigrant population in 1961. Additionally, urban political leaders, by effectively internationalizing the conflict, contributed to the triumph of the political struggle against the colonial power. Interestingly, among the younger generation of filmmakers, there is a noticeable return to urban settings, even in their depictions of the liberation war.

The use of the title “Battle of Algiers” exemplifies how the Algerian officers, still reeling from the Indochinese defeat, primarily fixated on their yearning for military retribution, inadvertently sidelining the significance of political engagement. In this regard, the of Bedjaoui work infers the Algerians and their leaders decisively prevailed. According to his research, the period following the independence, most of scripts depicting revolutionary episodes drew inspiration from individual recollections. However, he explains, it does not diminish the importance of incorporating historical expertise.

He explicate that after six decades, the Algerian liberation war continues to evoke diverse and personal interpretations. Despite such a relatively long period of time, the historical events that shaped Algeria's relationship with France remain vivid. Most Algerians today were born after gaining independence, while the senior officers of the French army from that era have largely passed away. One must confess the French colons’ use of horrific and brutal repression methods drew attention to the resurgence of memories. This war of liberation has spurred a surge in audiovisual productions in both nations.

Now, two generations later, 60 years after the independence of Algeria, there is a keen sense of the importance of preserving and acknowledging these memories. During Algeria's fiftieth anniversary of independence celebrations, there was a strong call for a critical reexamination of history. Algerian cinema played an important role during and after the liberation war, while French cinema remained hesitant due to censorship and self-censorship. This increased interest was not without underlying motives and was marked by a subtle semantic conflict that underscored the differing approaches taken.

The contrast in terminology provides a striking insight into the clash of visual concepts and creative realms between the two opposing parties. It serves as a reminder that the history of colonization and subsequent decolonization was marked by a conflict conducted through the medium of imagery. During the colonial invasion, the colonial power utilized artistic depictions to support its military campaign against Algeria and its institutions. The battle of images, in fact, commenced in 1830 when "the art of the conquest loudly proclaimed annexation," as Dominique Legrand eloquently described it. For the Algerians, the national movement coincided with the emergence of a robust national culture distinct from that of the occupiers. The emergence of Algerian great writers and artists captured hearts and minds with images of the struggle.

With the introduction of cinematography, Algeria gained recognition as a prime location for early filmmakers. However, these productions predominantly focused on capturing the region's unique lighting, notably lacking representation of Algerians. The General Government promptly harnessed cinema as a propaganda tool for psychological operations, aiming to influence isolated native populations. Despite this, the colonial system's efforts to establish a widespread network of cinemas primarily benefited Algerians concurrently, as they developed a strong cinema culture through regular attendance. It wasn't until shortly before the commencement of the armed struggle that the first films created by Algerians appeared.

As a matter of fact, the leaders of the National Liberation Front recognized the importance of visual imagery in the media war conducted parallel to the military conflict. The National Liberation Army and later the Provisory Government of the Algerian Republic established cinema services led by figures like Djamel Chanderli, alongside Algerians and foreign filmmakers sympathetic to the Algerian cause.

Lastly, this work does not aim to be a historical treatise but rather a narrative and viewpoint on the myriad filmed depictions inspired by the liberation war, in Algeria and elsewhere. He mostly emphasises the importance of learning from history not to repeat the same mistakes by working on bringing back the past through images and confronting the memories. The author also ponders if one has adequately addressed the events in Algeria, even after fifty years. If not, it is the Algerian's duty to take action regarding the cinema on the liberation war.

Ahlem FIDOUH