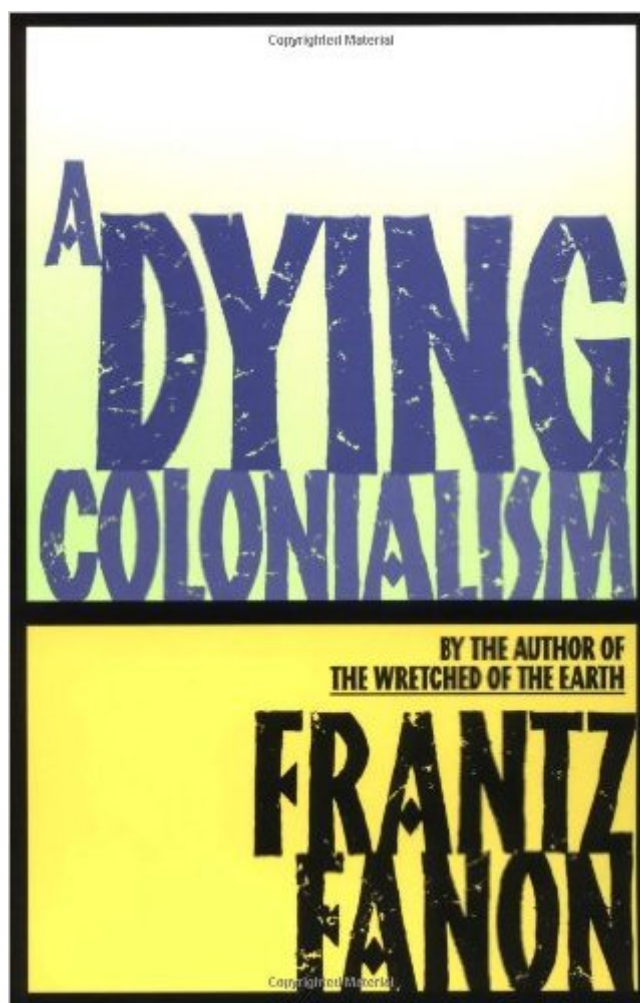


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A Dying Colonialism



Synopsis

An incisive and illuminating account of how, during the Algerian Revolution, the people of Algeria changed centuries-old cultural patterns and embraced certain ancient cultural practices long derided by their colonialist oppressors as primitive, in order to destroy those same oppressors. Fanon uses the fifth year of the Algerian Revolution as a point of departure for an explication of the inevitable dynamics of colonial oppression.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

To Frantz Fanon, scientist, revolutionary, hero, belongs the most eloquent voice of the era of decolonization. What is striking about the writing of Fanon is its beauty even in translation. Its compassionate humanism shines through even when he calls for armed struggle against the torturers and executioners of French imperialism. This book was originally published, I believe, as "Year Five of the Algerian Revolution." This revolution, which began on Nov. 1, 1954 and ended in 1962, became the archetype of anti-colonial revolt purely as a result of Fanon's record of it. Unfortunately, the Algerian, who had suffered under French domination for 130 years, was outmatched --- but not hopelessly outmatched --- by the French occupying forces. Over 1 million Algerians died in the struggle to give birth to a free Algeria, but only 15000 French soldiers. Fanon writes about the cultural transformations that occurred --- that HAD to occur --- to give fighting Algeria a fighting chance. Westerners often criticize the Arab world for its allegedly sexist treatment of women. Critics often use the veil as a metaphor for this "oppression." French colonizers, whose goal was the complete destruction of Algerian culture, often used the veil to create a rift in Algerian

society. They did so by trying to Europeanize Algerian women --- getting them to cast away the veil and wear make-up and immodest dress --- and by forcing Algerian men bring their wives with them to social functions, taboo in Algerian society. Fanon shows how the revolution not only healed the rift between the traditional Algerian patriarch and the "modern" woman, but created a new culture with new, non-sexist, values.

"A Dying Colonialism" is one of the lesser known books by Franz Fanon, the other better known works being "Black Skin, White Masks" - "Peau noir, masques blancs" (1952) and "The Wretched of the Earth" - "les damnés de la terre (1961)". Fanon was born on the French colony of Martinique, a descendant of African slaves, who had been brought to the Caribbean to work on the island's sugar plantations. In this book, Fanon espouses his beliefs and ideas that it is only through violent revolution that colonial repression and cultural trauma in the Third World can be ended. He argued that violence is a cleansing force which frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction, making him fearless and restoring his self-respect. In his teenage years, Fanon was politically active and participated in the guerrilla struggle against the supporters of the pro-Nazi French Vichy government. He served in the Free French forces. After the war he studied medicine and psychiatry in Paris and Lyons. Fanon argued that white colonialism imposed an existentially false and degrading existence upon its black victims to the extent that it demanded their conformity to its distorted values. The colonized is not seen by the colonizer a human being; this is also the picture the colonized is forced to accept. In 1954 the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) started its open warfare against French rule. In 1957 Fanon joined the Algerian liberation movement that sought to throw off French rule. Fanon traveled guerrilla camps, hid terrorists at his home and trained nurses to dress wounds. In 1959 he was severely wounded on the border of Algeria and Morocco.

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