'The hollow shell of nationality': Competing nationalisms and the emergence of

dictatorship in David Caute's *At Fever Pitch*

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In its depiction of the hijacking of the African nationalist movement by a self-serving African middle-class, David Caute's *At Fever Pitch* (1959) disrupts unilinear conceptions of British literature of decolonisation and complicates contemporary postcolonial debates around nationalist ideology and practice.   Synchronic and diachronic accounts of British literature and the end of Empire have tended to focus on a shared preoccupation with imperial retrenchment (Taylor 1993, Sinfield 1997: 2004, Esty 2004), while the re-emergence of regionalism and state control in developing countries since decolonisation has led many postcolonial critics to view nationalism, as Laura Chrisman holds, as 'inherently dominatory, absolutist, essentialist and destructive' (2004: 183).   In *At Fever Pitch*, however, Caute foregrounds the complex transition to independence in Africa and depicts the emergence of a totalitarian form of nationalism as a legacy of British colonial rule.[1]

Based upon his experience of National Service in the Gold Coast (Ghana), and written whilst still a History undergraduate at Oxford, Caute's debut novel has garnered a reputation as one of the 'more well known novels of waning colonialism' (Seigneurie 106 n.2).   This reputation is due mainly to the novel's characterisation of its protagonist Michael Glyn as a marginalised and disillusioned colonial officer. Yet, the novel also portrays the replacement of British colonial power by an African bourgeoisie which voices anti-colonial rhetoric whilst at the same time recreating the racial hierarchies and elitist political positions of the colonial era.   It is a preoccupation with the political struggle surrounding African independence that is also evident in Caute's critical analysis of Frantz Fanon's life and thought, entitled *Fanon* (1970), as well as a number of literary and historical works produced throughout his career.[2]   While *At Fever Pitch* is characterised as a novel predominantly about imperial decline, an examination of its portrayal of the setbacks

to African nationalism reveals Caute's preoccupation during the era of decolonisation with Europe's imperial legacy throughout Africa; be it political, economic or cultural.

As well as complicating conceptions of British 'end of Empire' literature as primarily concerned with what Jed Esty calls an 'historical sense of pervasive national decline' (9), *At Fever Pitch* offers an early intervention into postcolonial debates which question nationalism's ability to empower the powerless. Literary and postcolonial analyses of decolonisation often assign the issue of nationalism to colonised writers, theorists and activists, such as Fanon, in a manner which flattens the diverse number of positions in circulation during the period. Caute's depiction of a rampant totalitarian nationalism replacing an equally inimical colonialism can be read alongside Fanon's critique of African nationalism in his 1961 essay 'The Pitfalls of National Consciousness', published in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1965), as a means of broadening understanding of responses to the uncertainties surrounding decolonisation. Although Fanon's thought is founded in experience of French colonialism in Algeria, rather than British colonialism in Ghana, both Caute and Fanon display a significant preoccupation with the durability of imperial oppression throughout Africa when the ideals of nationalism are seized by an African bourgeoisie interested not in land or wealth redistribution but in consolidating power.

According to Fanon, the biggest threat to the nationalist project during decolonisation is the acquisition of centralised political and economic power structures by the "national bourgeoisie" which, due to its 'incapacity to think in terms of all the problems of the nation as seen from the point of view of the whole of that nation [...] will have nothing better to do than to take on the role of manager for Western enterprise' (1965: 123). In *At Fever Pitch*, Caute imagines a colonial situation in which nationalism is thwarted by an African middle-class that has

benefitted from Britain's economic intervention and which views the country's interior as "savage" and its people worthy only of slavery. The prominence of a neo-colonial middle-class in *At Fever Pitch* reveals Caute's critique of a form of nationalism concerned only with what Fanon refers to as 'the transfer into native hands of those unfair advantages which are a legacy of the colonial period' (1965: 122). In placing *At Fever Pitch* in dialogue with Fanon's essay, it is possible to situate both texts as responses to the political and societal conflicts at a time when formerly colonised nations were facing the dilemma of establishing a unified "national consciousness".

A comparative reading of *At Fever Pitch* alongside Fanon, moreover, re-historicises Fanon's thought and allows for a contextualised engagement with contemporary denunciations of nationalist ideology (Anderson 1983: 2006; Lowe and Lloyd 1997; Spivak 1999). The widespread censure of nationalism within postcolonial debates has been brought into question by Neil Lazarus. With the aim of interrogating contemporary critiques of nationalism, Lazarus calls for a renewed understanding of Fanon's commitment 'to proclaim a "new" humanism, predicated upon a formal repudiation of the degraded European form, and borne embryonically in the national liberation movement' (1999: 190). Such a project, however, requires 'a more strenuously contextualised and politically discriminating engagement with Fanon and his work', which moves away from the construction of Fanon as a 'poststructuralist *avant la lettre*' and towards an historicised appreciation of Fanon's belief in the socialist and internationalist possibilities of nationalism (Lazarus 2011: 162). While Fanon has become associated with the deconstruction of Western notions of race, then, a reading of Fanon's response to the power struggles within the anti-colonial movement highlights his commitment to an alternative nationalist vision and

allows for a more developed understanding of the competing nationalisms surrounding African independence.

As well as recognising that the derailment of the African nationalist movement was supported by established colonial power structures, *At Fever Pitch* also reveals a preoccupation with the performative nature of power which *allows* a totalitarian form of nationalism to impose oppressive ideologies upon the powerless masses. Caute articulates his concern with ideology through the Marxist notion of "false consciousness" and offers an interpretation of the power of ideology in a manner which can be compared with Louis Althusser's conception of 'ideological state apparatuses'. An analysis of Caute's portrayal of the performance of power marks the significant divergence between *At Fever Pitch* and Fanon's anti-colonial thought; where Fanon is committed to actively intervening in the nationalist project in order to prevent the ruinous influence of a 'rapacious bourgeoisie' (1965: 135), Caute depicts the manipulation of the prejudices, aspirations and fears of the bourgeoisie by the nationalist leader Kofi Bandaya. It is through this concern with the power of ideology and its manipulation by a political elite that Caute dramatises the private and public power struggles surrounding the end of Empire and the re-emergence of state control under an African-led government.

Nationalism and the 'end of Empire' novel

Caute's preoccupation with a form of neo-colonial totalitarianism derailing the ideals of nationalism has been neglected from previous references to and criticism of *At Fever Pitch*, which concentrate on the characterisation of Michael Glyn. Yet, the descent and eventual deportation of the novel's British protagonist is paralleled by the rise to power of Bandaya as the leader of the nationalist People's Progressive

Party (P.P.P.).　Nicholas Tredall's survey, *Caute's Confrontations: A Study of the Novels of David Caute* (1994), examines the thematic relevance of this exchange of power in the novel, but offers only a brief comparative discussion alongside Caute's later fiction.[3] What little further criticism there is focuses on the depiction of Glyn as a means of discussing the theme of imperial decline (Sinfield 157; Seigneurie 106 n.2) or the prominence of homosexuality (Busia 92-3; Hyam 18-19; Killingray and Omissi 246 n.64).　Given the prominence of Bandaya's consolidation of power alongside Glyn's decline, however, an understanding of Caute's response to the end of Empire cannot be divorced from the novel's depiction of an emerging neo-colonialism following independence.

The portrayal of African totalitarianism as a legacy of Empire also sets the novel apart from contemporaneous literary accounts of decolonisation.　In *The African* (1960), for example, the Sierra Leonean novelist William Conton depicts Africa's struggle for independence in a manner which justifies nationalism's equivocations, as Lazarus comments: '[Conton] presents Kamara [the nationalist leader of the Party for Unity and Liberation] quite openly as a manipulator, evidently believing that under the circumstances, manipulation is not only defensible but also necessary' (1990: 7).　Other prominent 'end of Empire' novels by white British writers depict the tumultuous move towards independence in the colonies as the backdrop either for a critique of post-war American foreign policy (Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* [1955]), a critique of the insulated and supercilious British officer-class (Anthony Burgess's *The Malayan Trilogy* [1956-9]), or an articulation of support for the rise of Communism in the East (Alan Sillitoe's *Key to the Door* [1961]).　For Caute, however, the continued subjugation of African nations by

ostensibly anti-colonial leaders is central to the decolonising process as its seeds are sown by the colonial encounter.

In discussing the manifestations of power in the novel, Caute explains that Glyn's homosexuality is 'a metaphor for power, for authority, for submission' as it is Glyn's desire for his black servant Sulley which makes him 'both predator and victim' (Tredall 1994b: 112). The prominence of homoeroticism within the setting of African decolonisation invites close comparison with Simon Raven's novel *The Feathers of Death* (published in the same year).[4]   Yet, Raven marginalises the issue of a burgeoning totalitarian nationalism in favour of dramatising the 'ever present though ever unacknowledged' (175) existence of homosexual relationships within the colonial forces. Caute, on the other hand, does not attempt to offer an insightful account of the dilemma of homosexual colonial officers. Instead, he admittedly adheres to long established tropes of colonial masculinity to signify Glyn's private struggle to uphold the more traditional, masculine role of the coloniser during Britain's imperial decline.[5]

Despite recirculating plots that linked gender, sexuality and colonialism, *At Fever Pitch* foregrounds the complexities surrounding the nationalist struggle. Instead of using the move towards independence as a backdrop to contextualise the British characters' story, Caute depicts its manipulation by a Western-educated middle-class that is supported by the political and economic modernisation of specific regions of Africa during colonialism. Furthermore, the nationalist project is not portrayed as inherently pernicious or doomed to failure, as the novel offers a response to decolonisation which shares Fanon's concern with the disenfranchisement of the African people. For Caute, it is the modernisation of African colonies, coupled with the centralisation of government and the adoption of racial hierarchies by the African

middle-class, which supports the regionalism and competing nationalisms at the heart of the re-emergence of state control.

The pitfalls of self-determination

In Fanon's critique of the nationalist project in Africa, he systematically attacks the hijacking of the ideals of the liberation movement by the "national bourgeoisie", which he argues will derail the process of emancipation in favour of regional and tribal allegiances upheld by the economic and political structures previously imposed by European colonialism. In order to prevent irrevocable damage to the ideals of nationalism, Fanon promotes the decentralisation of government away from the imperial centre and endorses a Leninist position which calls for 'the combined effort of the masses led by a party and of intellectuals who are highly conscious and armed with revolutionary principles' as a means of barring 'the way to this useless and harmful middle class' (1965: 140).

In his critical reading of Fanon's work, Caute describes Fanon as 'a revolutionary; an anti-racist who believed in the efficacy and humanist value of violent counter-assertion' and whose writings 'added to [the European revolutionary] tradition and enriched it' (97).[6] More recently, Lazarus has argued that, having been inspired by European revolutionary thought, Fanon is guilty of "messianism". According to Lazarus, Fanon exhibits 'a utopian conceptualisation of the national liberation struggle' whereby 'decolonisation was interpreted as a *revolutionary* process and the independence ceremony was taken to signal that the revolution had been won, rather than merely begun' (1990: 12). It is a fault attributed to Fanon which is described by Terry Eagleton as an endemic pitfall of nationalism whereby 'premature utopianism grabs instantly for a future, projecting itself by an act of will

or imagination beyond the compromised political structures of the present' (1990: 25).

In contrast to Caute, Lazarus holds that, despite his prescience with regards the detrimental influence of the middle-classes, Fanon was in fact prone to a similar view of decolonisation as the middle-class elite he criticised. Where Fanon contends that 'the national bourgeoisie conjures away its phase of construction in order to throw itself into the enjoyment of its wealth' (1965: 138), Fanon jumps the revolutionary phase and imagines that the struggle for independence will mobilise the masses into a unified revolutionary movement. Yet, Lazarus also warns against dehistoricising Fanon's writing in a manner which negates the fundamental "nationalitarian" and internationalist nature of his thought. Indeed, despite Homi K. Bhabha's assertion that Fanon's view of African liberation does 'not allow any national or cultural "unisonance" in the imagined community of the future' (1991: 102), Lazarus rightly points out that 'Fanon's critique of bourgeois nationalist ideology is itself delivered from an *alternative nationalist standpoint*' (1999: 162), a standpoint which aligns itself with the kind of anti-colonial nationalism promoted not by a self-serving elite but by the popular political mobilisation of the people.[7]

Although it was Caute's experience as a colonial officer during the period of decolonisation which directly influenced the writing of *At Fever Pitch*, he criticises the ideologies which disenfranchise the masses in favour of a reckless colonialism and a fervent, totalitarian nationalism. During the novel's denouement, for example, Glyn acknowledges that the 'black-faced refugees' forced to huddle together amid the chaos of political riots between opposing nationalist parties were 'being undermined' and 'were surely ruined' (173), yet it is a view which precedes Glyn's hand in the oppression. Faced with a mob of protesters following the instatement of Bandaya as

Prime Minister, Glyn panics and kills twenty-five people in a fit of 'terrified fury', setting in motion a melee of indiscriminate shooting from his fellow officers on duty 'unaware of the destruction already inflicted' (177-8). This juxtaposition of the detrimental manifestations of both nationalism and colonialism in the concluding scenes places an emphasis on the novel's depiction of the suffering caused by the dangerous transfer of power from one self-interested group to another. The political refugees and protesters who have been deprived of their agency by the dominant authoritarian powers are the true victims of the tale.

Pointedly, it is the Western-educated middle-class (Fanon's "national bourgeoisie") which is most influential in Caute's dramatisation of the emergence of dictatorship following independence. At the beginning of the novel the British colonial forces hand over *de facto* power to Bandaya and the P.P.P. prior to the formal election of an African-led government. The 'backbone' of the P.P.P. are the 'more prosperous' Africans from the South; they are the 'clerks and shopkeepers trimly starched in European clothes and half-assimilated European ideas' who 'ride to work on bicycles from which the wrapping paper has never been removed, for a new bicycle is a great thing and a bicycle clothed in brown paper can seem new forever' (8-9). As such, Caute characterises Bandaya's ardent supporters as the country's civil servants and traders (those with political and economic power), knowledgeable in 'European ideas' (presumably due to a privileged Western education) and who wish to advertise their superiority through the status symbol of the new bicycle. Their status, knowledge and power, however, derives from the centralised political and economic structures and urban modernisation which were vital to the establishment of British colonial rule.

The scene which depicts the inherent contradictions between the anti-imperialism voiced by Bandaya's supporters in the South and the developing regionalism which Fanon argues will be the legacy of a centralised, colonial economy is the bar scene in which Glyn's servant Sulley is attacked and ridiculed. Originally from the North, 'a land of clustered villages' where they 'knew little of the white men', Sulley recalls a time when he would sit in the trees 'watching the workers sweating at the new highway which stretched towards the distant South where it was said there were many towns and Africans of a different race who used the ways of the white man' (20). The characterisation of Sulley as removed from the modernising effects of colonialism points to his role as the novel's most prominent representation of the interior of African nations which did not benefit from the forced economic development of more prosperous areas under imperial rule.

With a romanticised view of the South, Sulley joins the army only to find himself the figure of racial abuse and labelled a 'bushman' (23). In a bar he is taunted by an African man who 'spoke to him sarcastically in a tongue of the South which he could not understand' and whose 'light-skinned' complexion and proud claim, 'I have been to England!' (23), implies European parentage and an English University education; he is one of what Lazarus refers to as the "been-to's": members of the bourgeoisie 'who had travelled abroad – usually to the West – for education or professional training' (1990: 11). Sulley is soon surrounded by similar men shouting insults such as 'How do you like cars, bush baby' and 'Where's your loin-cloth, muscle man?' before the light-skinned man goes on to blame 'the bushmen and savages of the North who have no education, no towns, no cars, no cinemas' for the extended period of imperial oppression which they believe Bandaya will free them

from: 'The Chorus: "Freedom, Bandaya, freedom!"' (23). 'Soon' he concludes, 'we shall be free and these dogs will do as we say. They will dig the sewers for us!' (24).

It through is this encounter between the North and the South that Caute depicts an inherent irony in the regional prejudices developing during the period of decolonisation. In the same breath that Bandaya's supporters call for freedom from the yoke of imperialism they look forward to the day when the South can make slaves of the "savages" of the North, thus drawing on imperial discourses of racial hierarchies. Instead of promoting the redistribution of land and wealth or the dismantling of unfair colonial systems of governance, Caute's African middle-class is concerned only with acquiring the dominance it was previously denied: freedom from imperialism for Bandaya's supporters means the freedom to take over the role of oppressor.

It is this contradiction between the anti-imperialist rhetoric and neo-colonial attitudes of the middle-classes that Fanon holds will be the biggest risk to the ideals of nationalism. Behind Bandaya's pre-election calls for 'One nation, one government, one liberty!' (35) and his post-election rhetoric that 'the struggle against white imperialism has bound the peoples of Afro-Asia into close unity' (185), Caute's bar scene depicts a microcosm of post-independence Africa where regionalism (re-enforced by colonial modernisation) reigns over national unity, or as Fanon asserts, 'African unity takes off its mask, and crumbles into regionalism inside the hollow shell of nationality itself' (1965: 128).

Caute establishes Bandaya's complicity in the regionalism which threatens to engulf the nation through his first appearance in the novel, which depicts Bandaya as promoting anti-colonialism whilst simultaneously securing his own position. In his speech to the Legislative Assembly on the granting of formal independence he

addresses his 'countrymen' with the statement that 'for hundreds of years the peoples of this land have been deprived of their liberty, first by the tribal chiefs, and later by the imperialists' (35). Yet Bandaya shifts his attack on 'the menace of imperialism' to a politically motivated assault on the new 'traitors' of the people, the opposing Federal Rights Party (F.R.P.) of the West and North, who 'would divide our country into three, dissipating our resources, our economic strength, not to mention our unity and sense of purpose' (35). It is Bandaya's demonising of the F.R.P. which exposes his desire for the continuation of centralised governance and economic control and fuels the retrogressive attitudes of the P.P.P.'s supporters witnessed in the abuse of Africans from the North, such as Sulley.

The fractures within the liberation movement are compounded by the fact that Bandaya's party, which claims to 'represent the people' and in fact 'are the people', is itself split by internal power struggles (35). The ideological divides within the P.P.P. are represented by Bandaya's closest advisors, Mandu Bruce and Choku Atuhope, who respectively stand in for the 'old guard calling out for the best traditions of socialist democracy as the answer to imperialist taunts of incompetence' and the 'new party men, Southerners afraid of the West and the North, [...] ready to meet force with force' (38). The physiology of the European-educated Bruce, a 'light-skinned' man with 'the tight, wiry hair of the Negro', embodies one of the central dilemmas at the heart of the newly-independent nation, namely the issue of miscegenation and the impossibility of establishing a unified nation based on a notion of a "pure" African race (36). Atuhope, on the other hand, 'embodied all the strong, emotional contempt and hatred which the Southern tribes felt for those of the North and West' (37), thus representing the fervent regionalism and tribalism which lies beneath the surface of Bandaya's rhetoric of African unity. Between these two extremes Bandaya

successfully navigates a path to power, which is secured following his order for the assassination of Bruce, a move which represents Bandaya's total abandonment of the philosophical ideals, 'the traditions of socialist democracy', upon which his campaign is based.

While the regional and political conflicts dramatised in the novel reflect the regionalism and competing nationalisms which divide the ostensibly unified, anti-colonial nation and highlight the inherent precariousness of the nationalist aim of post-independence nation-building, Caute's characterisation of Bandaya also reveals an awareness of the performative aspect of power. It is through Bandaya's self-aware and manipulative performance of benevolence and libertarian values that Caute dramatises the dominant ideologies threatening nationalism and depicts the hijacking of the nationalist project as a form of "false consciousness".

"False consciousness" and the performance of power

At the heart of Caute's desire to expose both colonialism and nationalism 'for what they were' (Tredall 1994b: 112) lies a preoccupation with power and in particular Caute's interpretation of "false consciousness": the way in which people (and by extension institutions and political parties) interpret reality to service a desire for control. As Caute contends:

> [I]t's my impression that all my fiction is about false consciousness. Not merely in Marx's rather narrow, class-bound sense – much wider. As a historian, too, I've been mainly concerned with why people – groups, individuals – see things as they do, how they reorganise reality to suit their own chosen causes, to service their fears, to prop up their own positions (Tredall 1994b: 116-7).

While many would contest Caute's reading of Marx, it can be compared to Althusser's interpretation of Marxism in *Lenin and Philosophy* (1968), which holds that,

> [i]n order to advance the theory of the State it is indispensible to take into account not only the distinction between *State power* and *State apparatus*, but also another reality which is clearly on the side of the (repressive) State apparatus, but must not be confused with it. I shall call this reality by its concept: the *ideological State apparatus* (142).

According to Althusser, 'ideological state apparatuses' (such as political, religious, educational and familial institutions) by their very nature impact people's private lives primarily by *imposing ideology* upon the consciousness of the masses (as opposed to the public nature of what he terms the '(repressive) state apparatus', i.e. ruling governments, which function primarily through violence and only secondarily through ideology). Thus, where the '(repressive) state apparatus belongs entirely to the *public* domain, much the larger part of the ideological state apparatuses [...] are part, on the contrary, of the *private* domain' (Althusser 144). Caute explains that in writing *At Fever Pitch*, 'the primary impulse was to dramatise the interplay of private and public life' (Tredall 1994b: 112-3). As such, Caute's formulation of "false consciousness" in the novel reveals itself in the manner in which the characters' private desires and fears are upheld by the powerful ideologies of political or familial institutions. In this case, the neo-colonial prejudices and aspirations of the middle-classes are supported by Bandaya's political hijacking of an ostensibly libertarian nationalist ideology.

For Caute, false consciousness 'becomes more interesting when people – one's fictional characters – tend to be aware, alert, self-scrutinising, well-read, even tortured

by guilt' (Tredall 1994b: 117). The self-scrutiny of Caute's characters is presented through a narrative form which shifts between third and second-person narration and stream-of-consciousness, imitating (as Caute himself admits) the stylistic techniques of both James Joyce and the Australian writer Patrick White. It is an experimental form which Tredall asserts successfully 'suggest[s] the clashes of culture and the interaction of the "public" and the "private"' (1994a: 9), particularly in relation to Glyn's internal conflicts in which his internal persona chastises him for being 'inherently weak' (104). What Tredall neglects, however, is the manner in which the novel also depicts Bandaya's self-aware and manipulative personality. Indeed, through his private recognition that he must present a particular public persona Bandaya reveals his insidious ambition to become 'a legend, the first name a child learns' and to 'go down to posterity as the first and greatest of national heroes' (37). As the narrator states:

> Unmarried, Kofi Bandaya had devoted his life to his country and to his ego. Sometimes he would sink back into a chair surrounded by his vast library of cosmopolitan literature, entranced into hypnosis by his own powers, subconsciously striving after the ideal of limping in limbo, limb by limb. And then... his pale eyes would contract and the extrovert in the man would warn the introvert that his mood was merely a symptom of physiological fatigue. The public life, he realised, is a ceaseless struggle. There can be no letting up (38).

Bandaya's private desire for power reveals a depiction of nationalism which functions not as a means of dismantling the political 'ideological state apparatuses' established by colonialism, but with the aim of transferring control to an African elite. Throughout the political campaign, Bruce's reservations about Bandaya are articulated through his recollections of the two men performing *Julius Caesar* in their

school-days, recalling that 'the part of the dictator of Rome had fitted [Bandaya] like a glove...a Colossus in ebony' and, during a particularly fervent speech at a Party rally, Bruce 'thinks briefly: Demosthenes, Hitler, Bandaya. *L'etat, c'est moi*' (43). Tredall holds that the allusions to *Julius Caesar* provide a 'respectively "European" dimension' to the novel's power struggles' (1994a: 10). Yet, it is Bandaya's ability to perform the role of the dictator, coupled with his experience of Nazism and the success of the "cult of personality" whilst studying in Europe, which provides him with the necessary techniques to present an authoritative and impassioned public persona and hide his true intentions.

Caute's characterisation of Bandaya includes references to his Western education at the London School of Economics where he was schooled in the egalitarian political theory of 'Marx and Engels and J.S. Mill', but would spend his vacations in Germany, 'rapt in admiration for the technique of the Leader of National Socialism' (79). It is from this European education that Bandaya has learnt the discourse of liberalism and equality as well as realising the power of performance. As such, he is able to decorate his impassioned rally speeches with talk of colonial exploitation, unity and liberty alongside the cultivation of a public image of himself as the 'hero of race and people' (42). Thus, in the same way that Fanon warns of an institutional middle-class which 'jumps the parliamentary phase and chooses a dictatorship of the national-socialist type' (1965: 138), Caute depicts Bandaya's manipulation of egalitarian political theories and his adoption of Nazi-inspired techniques as a means of establishing a government which purports to speak for the entire nation but which will in fact be a form of dictatorship.

Following his first speech in the novel and the formal granting of independence by the Legislative Assembly, Caute further undermines Bandaya's

rhetoric of national unity and exposes his passion to be no more than a self-aware performance: 'Kofi Bandaya, his face set in a broad grin, forced his way past admiring supporters and eager press photographers into the small antechamber set aside for Government ministers.   Once inside, Bandaya's smile vanished automatically' (36).   Indeed, it is this mock-benevolent smile concealing Bandaya's true lust for power which is the final portentous image of the book when, as Glyn falls asleep on the plane back to England, '[h]is hand relaxed and a coin slipped to the floor, revealing the smiling face of Kofi Bandaya...' (188).   From the reader's introduction to Bandaya at his speech calling for independence through to the novel's final image, Caute critiques the performance of power which has gained prominence throughout postcolonial Africa and allowed ostensibly anti-colonial nationalist leaders, supported by a self-interested elite, to seize control of the machinery of colonialism and install a neo-colonial system of state oppression.

Conclusion

While there is certainly a significant shared preoccupation with regards the detrimental acquisition of power by the African middle-classes replacing European colonial oppression in both *At Fever Pitch* and Fanon's 'The Pitfalls of National Consciousness', it is important to note that Caute's and Fanon's texts differ in relation to both their intended audience and overall aims.   Fanon, on the one hand is articulating resistance to French colonial power structures by documenting the anguish caused by Europe's imperial projects and the pitfalls of establishing a post-independence form of indirect colonialism.   Alternatively, *At Fever Pitch* attempts to represent the nuances within such broad and homogeneous categories as 'the bourgeoisie' and 'the coloniser' and depict the continuation of unfair power relations

and the re-emergence of state control through a literary portrayal of the ideologies which lie behind the desire for power.

Although in *At Fever Pitch* no alternative to either a destructive colonialism or a corrupt African nationalism is offered, it is an examination of the African nationalist movement which is represented in the novel as missing from British debates and policy polarised between support for African self-determination and calls for upholding Britain's imperial responsibility. As the narrator states during the election process: 'The Left-Wing Pencil: "There is great hope that the elections will pass off in a peaceful manner...optimism is high here in official circles..." The Right-Wing Pencil: "Should we scuttle from our responsibilities?"' (148).[8]   Where Fanon is committed to the decentralisation of government and the mobilisation of the masses to defend against the abuse of power by the bourgeois African elite, Caute is concerned with dramatising for a Western audience the private and public power struggles surrounding the emergence of dictatorship and the end of Empire.

Caute's choice of the novel form, moreover, as opposed to writing as a historian, allows for a study of the motivations behind Bandaya's desire for power and the maleficent manifestations of "false consciousness" within a portrayal of the performative nature of Bandaya's nationalist campaign. Caute's experimental style, which he admits is 'intensely imitative' of writers such as Joyce and White (Tredall 1994b: 112), offers an insight into the provisional literary forms of 1950s British literature. The form of *At Fever Pitch* appropriates and adapts modernist and colonial literary aesthetics to address the rapidly changing conditions of the immediate post-Empire period, but during a period when the styles and forms of postcolonial and postmodernist writing were still to emerge.

     At Fever Pitch pre-figures contemporary novels dealing with postcolonial African dictatorships, such as Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) and Giles Foden's fictionalised account of Idi Amin's ruthless reign in Uganda in *The Last King of Scotland* (1998). Prefiguring postcolonial literature in a manner which anticipates contemporary postcolonial denunciations of nationalism, Caute seeks to understand and dramatise the failures of the emancipatory project of African nationalism in terms of the legacy of Empire and the prevalent political ideologies at work during the turbulent transition of decolonisation.

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[1] *At Fever Pitch* is set during the political turmoil surrounding an unnamed African country's independence from Britain in 1957 and depicts the dilemma of the junior officer, Michael Glyn, who feels powerless to fulfil the role of what he views as the stereotypical pioneering colonial hero having come to Africa too late. Glyn's only experience of "action" during his post comes in the novel's denouement when he is faced with a rioting mob of political protesters and, in a state of panic, kills twenty-five people, leading to his deportation back to England. Compounding his sense of inadequacy throughout the novel, Glyn is also struggling to come to terms with his sexuality. He engages in a homosexual relationship with his black servant Sulley before rejecting him and visiting a prostitute, where he experiences difficulty in getting an erection. Coinciding with Glyn's descent is the rise of the nationalist leader Kofi Bandaya, whose ruthless political campaign ostensibly promotes anti-colonialism whilst at the same time consolidating power behind the scenes.

[2] Caute returns to the theme of decolonisation in Africa in his novels *Decline of the West* (1966), *The K Factor* (1983) and *News from Nowhere* (1989) as well as his historical book *Under the Skin: The Death of White Rhodesia* (1983) which documents the last days of Rhodesia before it became the Mugabe-controlled nation of Zimbabwe.

[3] Tredall also notes that Caute 'has received little critical attention and has not entered into any of the provisional canons of contemporary British fiction which have been formed by criticism, publishing, the media and the academy' (1994a: 1). At the time of writing, Tredall's study is the only attempt at a comprehensive critical analysis of Caute's fiction. Prior to this, the most thorough appreciation of Caute's literary output is to be found in Bernard Bergonzi's *The Situation of the Novel* (1979), which allows only five pages to its analysis and neglects to mention *At Fever Pitch*.

[4] I must thank Howard J. Booth for drawing my attention to this comparison.

[5] For a detailed study of male homosexual desire in British colonial fiction see Christopher Lane's *The Ruling Passion: British Colonial Allegory and the Paradox of Homosexual Desire* (1995) which addresses 'the insufficiency and overabundance of drives to colonial sublimation, the relation between imperialism and the death drive, the service that colonialism

performed in the realm of sexual fantasy, and the influence that all of these factors brought to bear on the symbolisation of masculinity and homosexuality during Britain's volatile years of world power' (2).

[6] Caute's analysis of Fanon's life and writings also displays an understanding of the original French in which Fanon's work was published prior to being translated in the mid-1960s. It is therefore probable that when writing *At Fever Pitch* Caute was aware of Fanon's first book, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), not translated into English until 1967.

[7] In 'The Pitfalls of National Consciousness' Fanon discusses the successes of the Front de Liberation Nationale (FLN), the Algerian liberation movement for whom Fanon fought until his death in 1961. Moreover, as an FNL delegate, Fanon actively encouraged other African nations to revolt and begin armed struggle, working closely with Amilcar Cabral of the PAIGC, a guerrilla movement which fought for independence in both Portuguese Guinea and Cape Verde (Davidson 228).

[8] Harold Macmillan's 'Winds of Change' speech in 1960 (initially given in the Gold Coast and repeated more famously to the Parliament of South Africa) exemplifies the acceptance within British government that African self-determination was a necessary policy. Alternatively, in his recounting of the Suez Crisis in his 1960 autobiography, Anthony Eden calls for a sustained British presence in Africa on the grounds of preventing widespread totalitarianism. As he states: 'It is important to reduce the stature of the megalomaniacal dictator at an early stage. [...] Some say that Nasser [President of Egypt 1956-70] is no Hitler or Mussolini. Allowing for a difference in scale, I am not so sure. He has followed Hitler's pattern, even to concentration camps and the propagation of *Mein Kampf* among his officers. He has understood and used the Goebbels pattern of propaganda in all its lying ruthlessness. Egypt's strategic position increases the threat to others from any aggressive militant dictatorship there [i.e. in Africa]' (431).