

Across the Lines. Drawing Frantz Fanon, Anne Beaumanoir, and Si Mustapha-Müller into Relation

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ABSTRACT: *This essay describes the social context, main intentions, and theoretical considerations that informed the production of the map Across the Lines.*

KEYWORDS: *anticolonial movements, coloniality of power, experimental cartography, multi-directional imagination, philosophy of relation*

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My research maps translate reading notes from academic and literary texts into lines, images, symbols, and quotations. I begin by selecting a set of texts that I would like to turn into a map and then apply the notes that I have taken from these texts onto a larger piece of paper. This practice thus involves combining scholarly research with elements from the verbal and visual arts in order to produce what I hope is a more inclusive mode of sharing knowledge. This method of experimental cartography developed out of my collaboration with the editorial team of the *Chimurenga Chronic* – a Pan-African literary magazine based in Cape Town, South Africa – and my long-term engagement with Édouard Glissant's philosophy of relation. As many of my generation, to whom postcolonial thinkers opened a door out of the confines of Eurocentric social theory, I am appalled by the glaring confusions and misrepresentations that have, in recent years, pitted a generalized ›postcolonialism‹ against the remembrance of National Socialism and the Shoah in German public discourse. Similar to the motivations behind Charlotte Wiedemann's (2022) book, *Den Schmerz der Anderen begreifen*, and the emphatic tone in which she writes (see also Wiedemann, this volume), my hope is that experimental cartography contributes to narrowing the gap between academic discourse and public media by rendering the multidirectional imagination at the basis of decolonial scholarship visible in a non-confrontational manner.

Since experimental cartography is essentially dedicated to drawing relations that tend to fall outside the realm of disciplinary knowledge production, it may be seen as a visual realization of the kind of multidirectional thinking that Michael Rothberg (2009, 18) has described as »irreducibly transversal; it cuts across genres, national contexts, periods, and cultural traditions«. In the sense that it is seen as »subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative« (Rothberg 2009, 3), it also resembles Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's view of the rhizomatic character of the map:

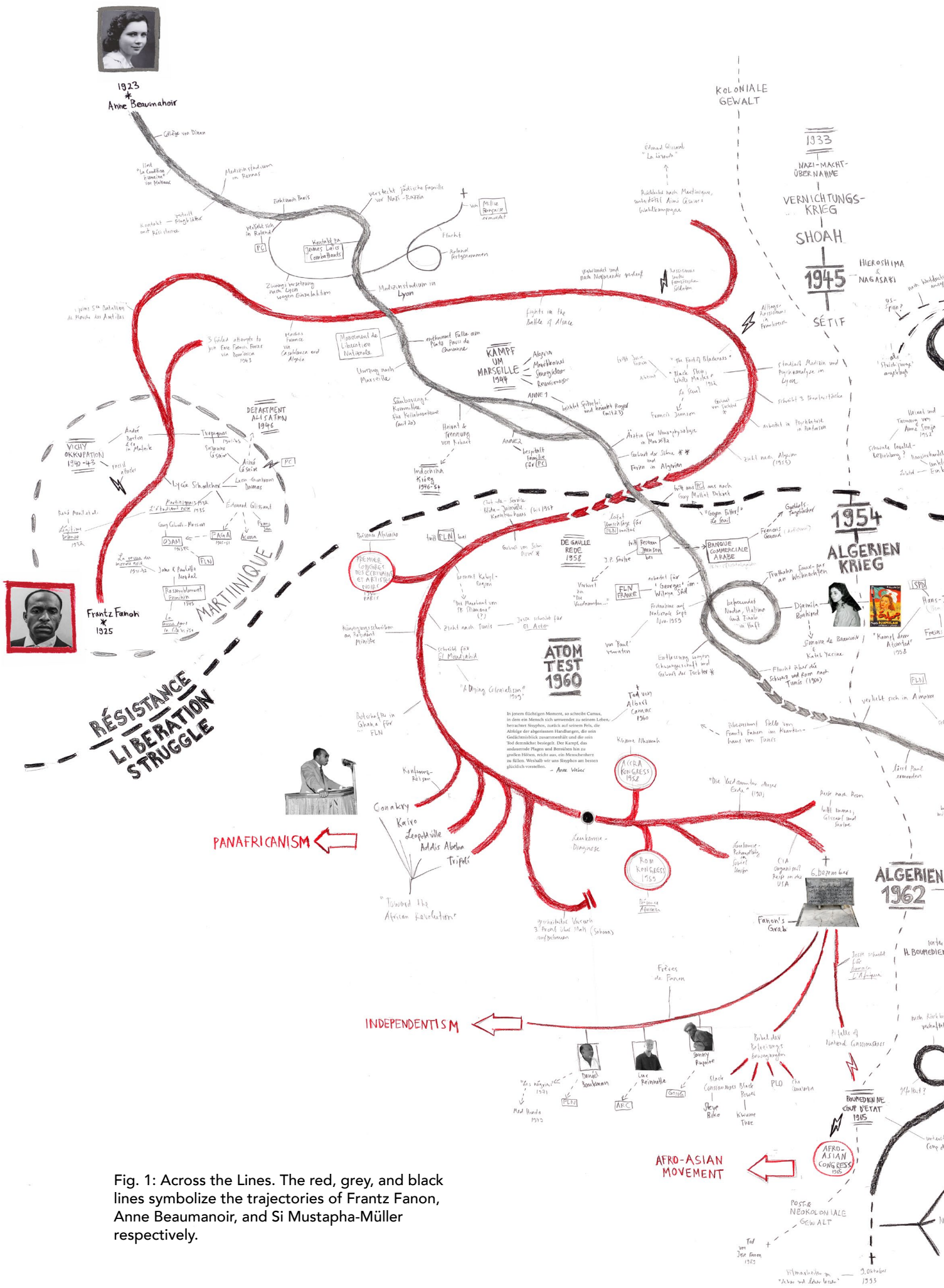


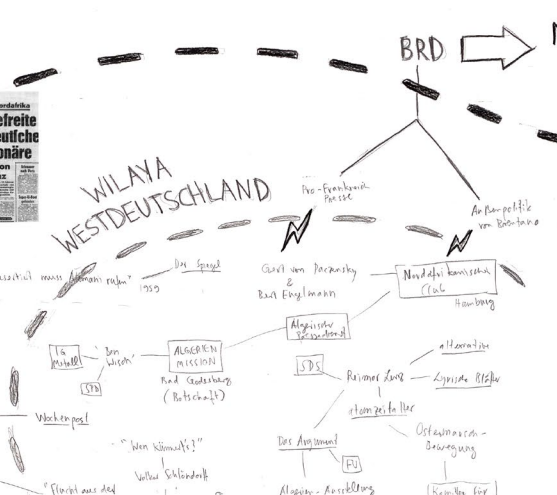
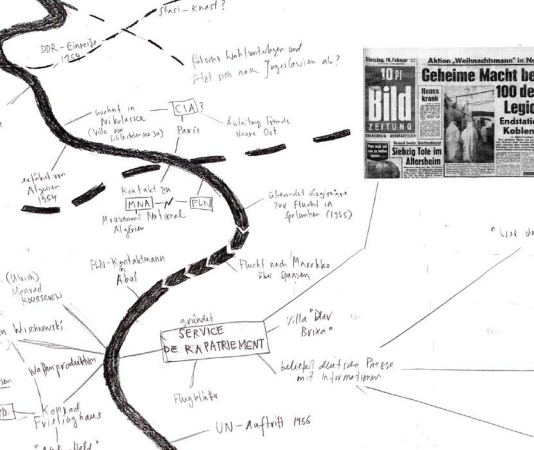
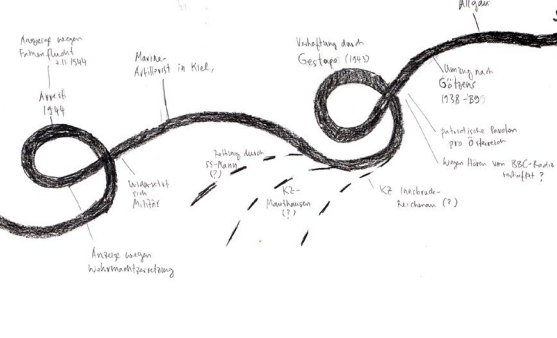
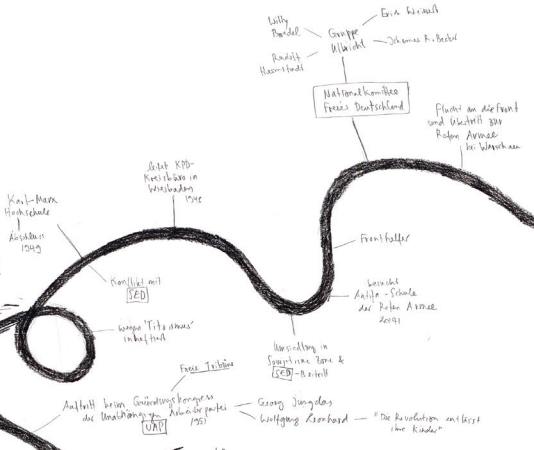
Fig. 1: Across the Lines. The red, grey, and black lines symbolize the trajectories of Frantz Fanon, Anne Beuinahoir, and Si Mustapha-Müller respectively.



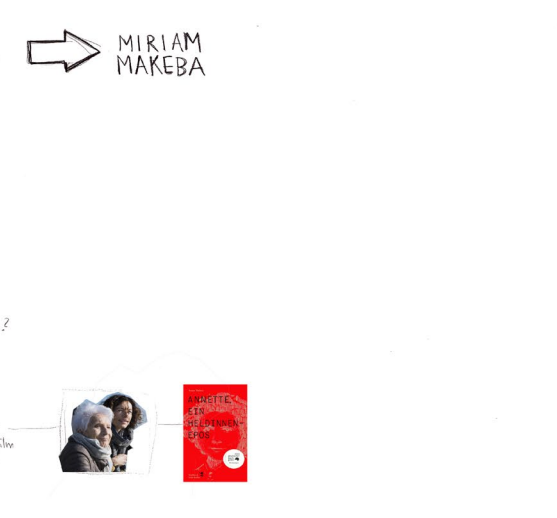
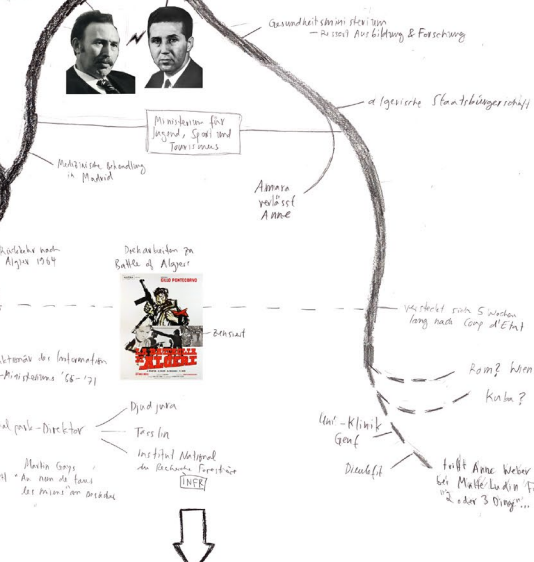
1926
St. Moustapha-Müller (Kwafred Mallor)



EIN LEHRER AM ANFANG DER WEHRSCHEMELICHKEIT



Contemplating the prospect of an artistic future from the...
with Ahmed Ben Bella, whose National Liberation Front guerrilla movement had ended French colonial rule after a long and bloody war. The interviewer asked the successful revolutionary to talk about his fondest dreams, what he would love to do if he did not have the responsibility of managing a new state. Ben Bella said his dream was to find a quiet place where he could do the things the revolution had left him no time for. He would want to listen to music, to read, perhaps to write.
The man had spent his adult years doing the kind of work I was hoping to do, and for which I had turned my back on writing. And here he was describing his dream life: some music, a library of books to read, perhaps to write...
- Art. Karin Appenzel



BLACK ECOLOGY

»The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation.« (Deleuze/Guattari 1987, 12)

Turning to cartography in response to the confusion around the implications of decolonial scholarship in the contemporary German context might seem counterintuitive. Maps are notorious for being used as tools of surveillance, exploitation, and the creation of divisions (Hardy 2015). My cartographic work tries to use the medium for the opposite purpose: to create relations, to experiment with conceptions of time, space, and subjectivity outside the confines of modern Western thought, and to identify structures of oppression and exploitation tied to the *coloniality of power* (Quijano 2000). In response to the intricate entanglement of modern academic disciplines and the West's historical quest to conquer and dominate the world – not least by subjugating the diversity of the world's cultures to a singular epistemology – my maps try to work against this exclusionary conception of knowledge by combining intuitive and systematic, disciplined and undisciplined modes of analysis, while being inspired by non-Western or animist epistemologies (Garuba 2002; Blaser 2013; Craib 2017).

The map *Across the Lines* (Fig. 1, see also the cover), which I am contributing to this issue of *Berliner Blätter*, is a continuation of the series of maps that were shown at the 12th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art in 2022 and published in *Karten zur Kreolisierung der Welt and the Marvelous Arithmetics of Proximity and Distance oder Decolonial Reading Notes (Out of Berlin)* (2022). *Across the Lines* suggests that following the trajectories of Frantz Fanon, Anne Beaumanoir, and Si Mustapha-Müller – symbolized by red, grey, and black lines respectively – may exemplify the multidirectional nature of movements that were committed to the fight against fascism, colonialism, and authoritarianism in the mid 20th century. Fanon (1925 – 1961) was born in Martinique and fought for France in the Second World War. He worked as a psychiatrist in Tunis before joining the Algerian *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN) and becoming a key advocate for radical Pan-Africanism. Beaumanoir (1923 – 2022) was active in the French Resistance and a member of the French Communist Party before she joined the FLN. As a trained neuropsychiatrist, Beaumanoir became Fanon's successor at the Blida-Joinville hospital in Tunis and went on to work for the government of Ahmed Ben Bella. After Ben Bella's overthrow in 1965, she worked as a doctor in Switzerland. Mustapha-Müller (1926 – 1993) deserted from the German army in 1944 and, after the war ended, worked for different communist organizations in East and West Germany, before he joined the FLN in 1956. Until 1962, he coordinated a repatriation campaign that encouraged German mercenaries to desert from the French Foreign Legion. Following the independence of Algeria, Mustapha-Müller worked for several Algerian ministries and became the founder and director of the Djurdjura National Park in 1978.

Coming from three different geographies of Martinique, France, and Germany, these three historical figures and their biographies are marked by the transition from a resistance against Nazi Germany to an active support of the Algerian anticolonial struggle. Particularly in the case of Si Mustapha-Müller, this move also involved a close collaboration with socialist actors and institutions from the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic (GDR), which adds a postsocialist dimension to the post-National Socialist and postcolonial narrative that this map seeks to portray.

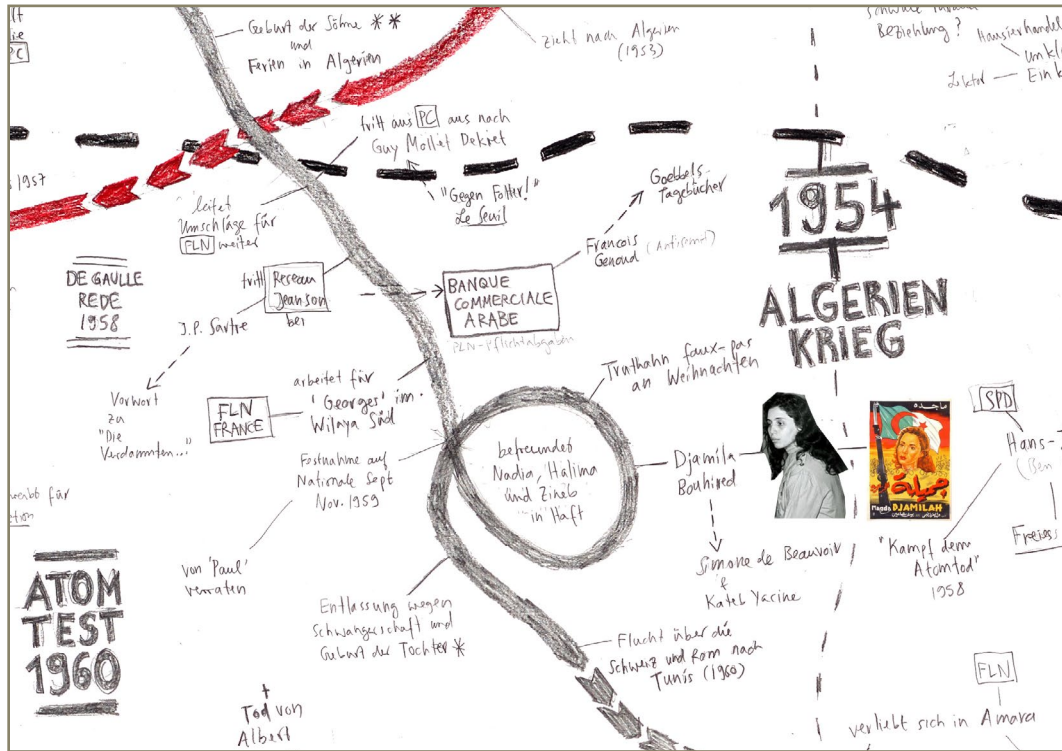


Fig. 2: Across the Lines (Section 1).

The material on which the map draws to visualize these figures' life-stories combines reading notes from a variety of sources in which the borders between fact and fiction, myth-reading and myth-making are blurry. For Anne Beaumanoir's line, the map draws on *Annette, ein Heldinnenepos*, a book of poetic prose written by Anne Weber and published in 2020. Mustapha-Müller's line is mainly based on Fritz Keller's biographic account in *Ein Leben am Rande der Wahrscheinlichkeit. Si Mustapha alias Winfried Müller: Vom Wehrmachedeserteur zum Helden des algerischen Befreiungskampfes*, published in 2017. In the case of Fanon, I drew on the main dates of his trajectory from Martinique via France to Algeria as listed in his Wikipedia article. Treating these texts as equally valid sources, despite their vastly different characteristics, and seeing what happens when they are placed in relation to one another on a single page is part of the allure of the kind of experimental cartography in which I am engaged.

Annette, ein Heldinnenepos follows the trajectory of Annette from her earliest acts of resistance, which included hiding a Jewish family from a Nazi raid (top left), until the overthrow of Ben Bella's government and her escape to Geneva (bottom right). The narrator's tendency to identify with the protagonist's point of view complicates any attempt to distinguish between the narrator, Anne Weber the author, the book's protagonist Annette, and the real-life person Anne Beaumanoir. As its subtitle points out, the book is less an attempt at an accurate biography than a proposition of an epic tale circling around a philosophical reflection on what it means to resist: »Denn wie das meiste ist auch das Widerstehen anders, als man es sich denkt, nämlich kein einmaliger Entschluss, kein klarer, sondern ein unmerklich langsames Hineingeraten in etwas, wovon man keine Ahnung hat. Das Erste, dems zu widerstehen gilt, das ist man selbst«¹ (Weber 2020, 24). In the sense that it is based on Beaumanoir's memoir, *Le feu de la mémoire: La résistance, le communisme et l'Algérie*,

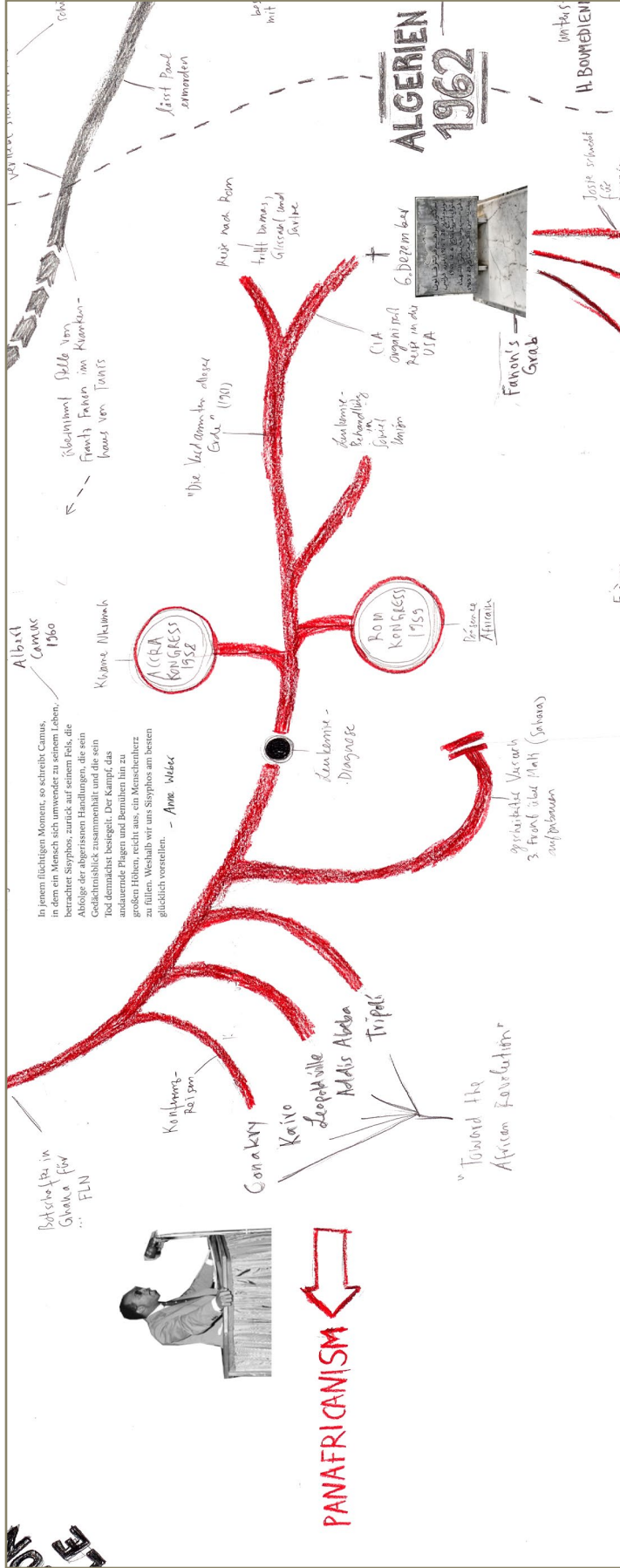


Fig. 3: Across the Lines (Section 2).

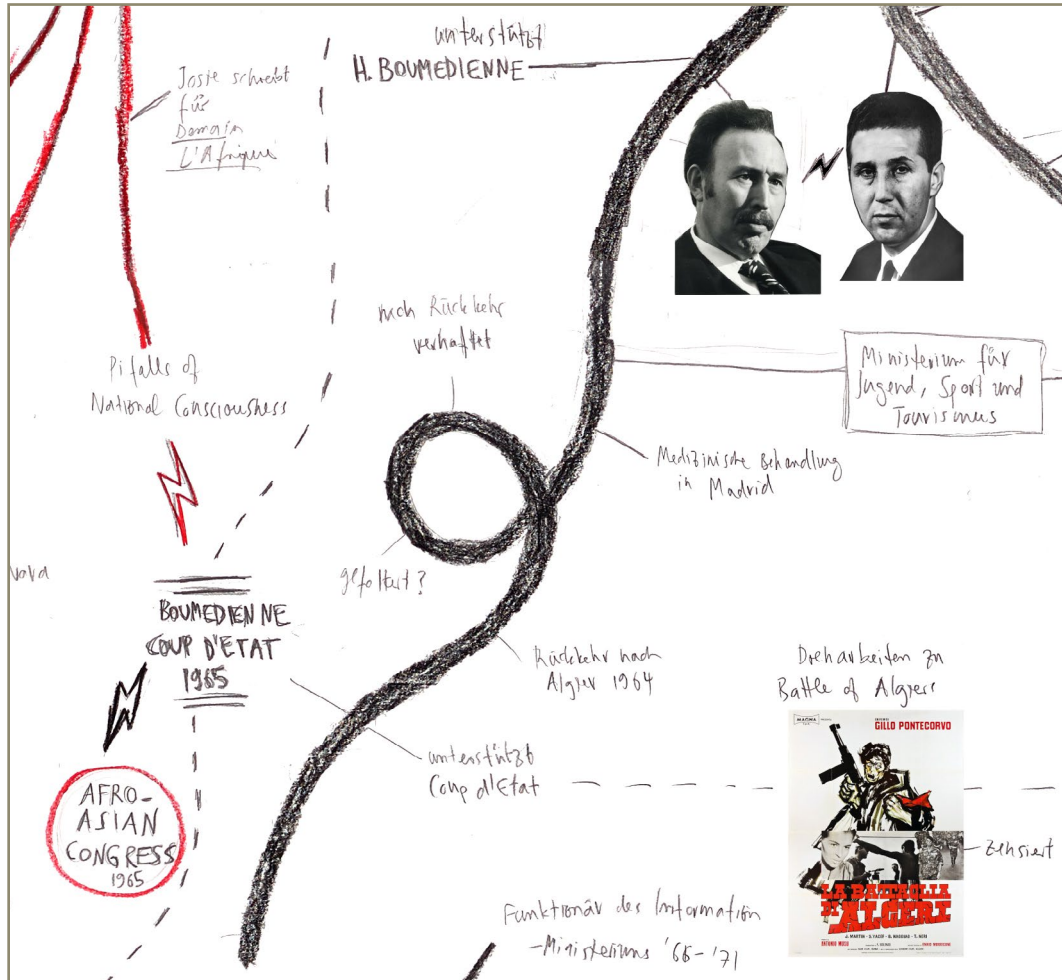


Fig. 4: Across the Lines (Section 3).

1940–1965, Weber's work formally appears to be a work of translation. This is less so in a literal sense, from French into German, however, but it is so in being translated from prose into poetic verse, and from one national discourse on memory into another.

Fritz Keller's (2017) book, *Ein Leben am Rande der Wahrscheinlichkeit. Si Mustapha alias Winfried Müller: Vom Wehrmachtsdeserteur zum Helden des algerischen Befreiungskampfes*, seeks to explain the factors that led to Winfried Müller's transformation into Si Mustapha-Müller, from a German soldier into an Algerian freedom fighter. The book begins by acknowledging the difficulty of finding out *the truth* about Mustapha-Müller due to his deliberate practice of sowing confusion by telling contrasting versions of his life. Keller's work is thus mainly devoted to patching together incoherent fragments, leading to what he calls an »asymptotic approximation« of the truth (Keller 2017, 8). The gaps and contradictions in Mustapha-Müller's biography make Keller's book particularly interesting to map. The dashed lines diverting from the main black line in the upper right half of the map point out moments in his life around which different versions circulate.

In the case of Frantz Fanon, the scenario is different again. The main markers of his trajectory from Martinique via France to Algeria have achieved such a legendary status in post- and decolonial scholarship and activism that his physical trajectory has itself become a symbol for the Black liberation struggle. Anecdotes told by his contemporaries attest to the possibility that Fanon was aware of the symbolic power of his physical movements

across the *frontline* separating France from Algeria. In an account written by Ari Gounongbé, Liliyan Kesteloot shares the following anecdote about her last encounter with Fanon that took place 40 years prior:

»Ses dernières paroles prononcées quelques instants avant de prendre le train étaient: ›je ne sais pas si on se reverra, mais quoi qu'il m'arrive, parle de moi. Elle ne s'attendaient pas à une telle requête, ›parle de moi; il avait donc quelque part le besoin d'être reconnue, de survivre au moins dans la mémoire, il ne savait pas qu'il allait mourir très prochainement.«² (Gounongbé/Kesteloot 2007, 135)

This kind of story inside a story, where the narrator quotes a witness quoting a freedom fighter, illustrates that Fanon's »grand and intoxicating diversion« (Glissant 1999, 25) unfolds its political potential by being told and retold, as in an intergenerational relay race where each runner hands over the baton to the next. Aware of these dynamics, the map actively participates in this kind of relational practice.

To provide more context to intersections between the three strands woven by the lifelines of Fanon, Beaumanoir, and Mustapha-Müller, the map also draws on Claus Leggewie's (1984) book *Kofferträger: Das Algerien-Projekt der Linken im Adenauer-Deutschland*, in which Leggewie provides an overview of the main actors involved in the Algeria solidarity movement in West Germany during the late 1950s and early 1960s. These actors and their networks are grouped in the permeable circle on the right under the heading *Wilaya Westdeutschland*. The permeable circle on the left, with the heading *Martinique*, indicates cultural institutions and political movements that fought for the autonomy of the French Antilles from France and draws on previous research contained in a map I co-created titled *Chant l'endependans*, which we published in an issue of the *Chimurenga Chronic* entitled *imagi-nation nwar* (2021).

What first drew me to the stories of these individuals is how seamlessly they weave together histories of the Second World War, the Cold War, and the anticolonial struggle. Instead of countering the *zero-sum game* logic (Rothberg 2009, viii) in popular German media discourse with abstract arguments, the embodied examples of these antifascist and anticolonial activists demonstrate the complementary and continuous nature of these struggles and their memorialization.

The rhythmic flow of Anne Weber's account of Anne Beaumanoir's life makes the transition from one struggle to the next seem self-evident:

»[Jacques] Rispal war wie Annette früher in der Résistance, beide halfen sie verfolgten Juden; jetzt helfen sie Muslimen. In ihren Augen geht da einfach etwas weiter. Natürlich gibt es Unterschiede, sie aber sehen die Gemeinsamkeiten und ihre Hilfe für den FLN als ihre Schuldigkeit und Pflicht. Was ist schon der Transport von ein paar Scheinen.«³ (Weber 2020, 112)

Weber refers here to Beaumanoir's work among the so-called *suitcase carriers* (*porteurs de valises*) – French intellectuals who supported the FLN by clandestinely transporting money or weapons for its cause in suitcases. In a recent issue of the *Funambulist* magazine entitled *Questioning Our Solidarities*, Léopold Lambert (2023, 21) cites the example of the *porteurs de valises* as an »instructive embodiment of operational solidarity« that remains relevant today by depicting the transition from the bystander and ally to active participation in the anticolonial liberation struggle. Lambert's (2023, 21) assessment, that »[e]xamples of

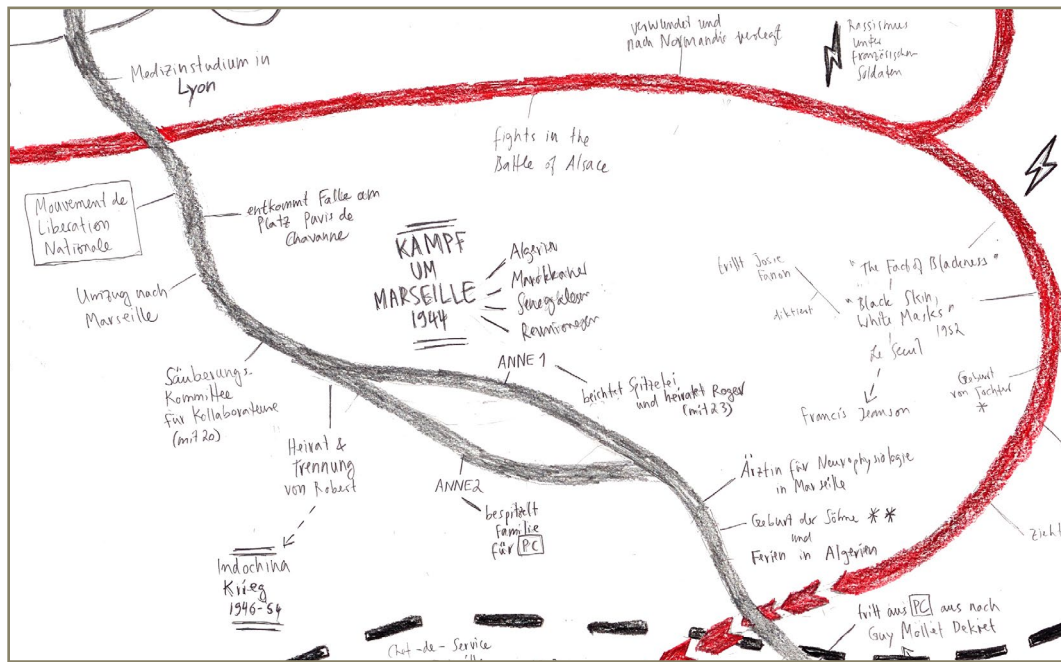


Fig. 5: Across the Lines (Section 4).

such practices should not be overly romanticized but rather appreciated for the humble yet effective contribution they make to the fight», also applies to the movements on this map.

What drew me to the trajectories of Fanon, Beaumanoir, and Mustapha-Müller, in addition to their shared commitment to work towards the creation of a utopian socialist Algerian society – »Das (Zitat Annette) wird ein moderner, demokratischer, revolutionärer Staat!«⁴ (Weber 2020, 118) – was their continuous movement *out of Europe* and their complicated position as foreigners. In all three cases, the awareness of the violence perpetuated in the name of the nation-states of which they are citizens leads to the process of *becoming other*: not as a form of cultural appropriation, but as a result of choosing one's home outside the confines of a nationalist framework, or what Édouard Glissant (1997, 11) refers to as an exclusionary identity based on single roots. In contrast to the movement of an »arrowlike nomadism« with the intention of conquest and settlement (Glissant 1997, 12), their search takes on the form of an open-ended errantry, or what Glissant calls a »detour.« For Glissant, Fanon's radical break with French civilization exemplifies the kind of errantry that is not to be confused with the negative connotations of the psychoanalytical concept of redirection activity (*Ersatzhandlung*). Instead, for Glissant (1997, 11), it performs a »Poetics of Relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other.« The life-threatening risks associated with the decisions of the map's three protagonists to cross the line and fight against the injustices perpetuated by their home countries are illustrated by the loops in their trajectories that symbolize instances in which they have been imprisoned for their political convictions.

These loops are just one way in which the map alludes to a sense of temporality outside the linear teleologic view of modern history. Instead of operating as a central break between a before and an after, the year 1945 appears as one important time-stamp among others. Instead of ascending steadily towards a more humanitarian future, as insinuated by a modernist temporality, the three lines move downwards, as if to find the ground, the root of the destructive force they are resisting.

By allocating a central position to Algeria, and by loosely conflating antifascist and anticolonial movements of resistance across France, Algeria, and the GDR, the map also troubles the borders of the political map of the world. As a result, crossing over is not a matter of moving from one nation-state to another, but a political decision to resist the coloniality of power and to fight against injustice *wherever it may occur*. This decision is indicated by the division of the map into the zones of *Résistance* (top) and *Liberation Struggle* (bottom), shown by the horizontal dashed black line. By shifting the center of gravity south, across the Mediterranean, and thereby calling for an appreciation of African history as part of *world history*, the centrality of the Algerian war for liberation to several transnational political movements across the Global South becomes apparent. Among them are the movements for African unity and Afro-Asian solidarity, which are both connected to the overthrow of Ben Bella's government in 1965. The big red arrows pointing in these directions indicate instances where the map is connected to other maps. This is to show that the map warrants to be read in conjunction with other maps as part of an alternative *geography of knowledge* (Zhijie 2020).

The peripheral positions of West Germany on the right side of the map are of interest to me in so far as the West German state had actively supported the French colonial regime until it became untenable to do so. West Germany's support of colonial regimes like France, Britain, and Portugal, as well as neocolonial regimes such as Apartheid South Africa, is in stark contrast to the GDR's support of national liberation movements across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. West Germany's presence on the map thus calls into question the narrow focus on official German colonialism, which ended in 1919, and calls for a recognition of its role in neocolonial alliances throughout the latter half of the 20th century. Apart from being the location of departure for Fanon's red line, the presence of Martinique, on the far left of the map, is of importance here because the Antillean movement for independence in the late 1950s and early 1960s was closely aligned with the Algerian cause. Moreover,

Notes

- 1 »As with most things, resistance is not what we think it is, it is not a once-off, clear-cut decision, but a slow drifting towards something one has no clue about. The first thing one ought to resist is the self« (my translation).
- 2 »Just before he boarded the train, his last words to her were ›I don't know if we'll see each other again, but whatever happens to me, speak about me‹. She didn't expect this kind of request ›speak about me‹; so, he did have a desire to be recognized, to at least survive in the memory of others, he didn't know that he would die soon« (my translation).
- 3 »Just like Annette, [Jacques] Rispal used to be active in the Résistance, both used to help persecuted Jews, now they are helping Muslims. In their eyes it just continues. Of course, there are differences, but they see the commonalities and consider their help for the FLN to be their duty and responsibility. What's the transport of a few bank notes, after all« (my translation).
- 4 »This (Annette Quote) will be a modern, democratic, revolutionary state!« (my translation).

Martinique's status quo as a French Overseas Department, which critics like Glissant have perceived as a *de facto* colony, attests to the unfinished nature of this history.

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Fig. 1–5 Moses März, 2023.

