AIME CESAIRE AND NEGRITUDE: THE GROWTH OF AN ANTI-COLONIALIST IDEOLOGY

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CHAPTER I

CULTURE AND COLONIALISM IN THE CARIBBEAN

> Qu'on le veuille ou non, on ne peut pas poser actuellement le problème de la culture noire, sans poser en même temps le problème du colonialisme, car toutes les cultures noires se développent à l'heure actuelle dans ce conditionnement particulier qu'est la situation coloniale ou semi-coloniale ou para-coloniale.
>
> --Aimé Césaire

Modern colonialism--Europe's ascendence over the rest of the world during the past four hundred years--is not a strictly economic or political phenomenon, but extends to the total domination of the life of a people. The imposition of colonial rule can disrupt the historical continuity of the indigenous society. The possibilities for the development of the native society may be destroyed: its science, philosophy, art and literature may become folklore.[1] When the elements which structure the cultural life of the colonized are shattered, the economy and society are demolished, the family disintegrates, and traditional ties are weakened. Indigenous culture then becomes marginal and loses the ability to renew itself.

In the West Indies the imposition of colonialism meant the total destruction of native culture. The original Indian population was destroyed by disease and forced labor soon after contact with the Eu-

ropeans. To meet the demand for cheap and abundant plantation labor the Europeans imported slaves from Africa. These slaves were torn from their environment, severed from their traditional societies and the sustenance which those societies might provide, and thrown into an alien situation. Thus there is no "traditional" society in the West Indies and what we now understand as West Indian life developed from its inception within the cadre of modern society. With no indigenous culture in the West Indies, it was the African slave adapting himself to the conditions of western civilization who created the peculiar features of West Indian society. Historian C. L. R. James has described the course of this development:

> The West Indies has never been a traditional colonial territory with clearly distinquished economic and social relations between two different cultures. Native culture there was none. The aboriginal Amerindian civilization had been destroyed. Every succeeding year, therefore, saw the laboring population, slave or free, incorporating into itself more and more of the language, customs aims and outlook of its masters.... When three centuries ago the slaves came to the West Indies, they entered directly into the large-scale agriculture of the sugar plantation, which was a modern system. It further required that the slaves live together in a social relation far closer than any proletariat of the time. The cane when reaped had to be rapidly transported to what was factory production. The product was shipped abroad for sale. Even the cloth the slaves wore and the food they ate was imported. The Negroes, therefore, from the very start lived a life that was in its essence a modern life.[2]

The sugar plantation and slavery have molded the course of West Indian history and produced a pattern of social relations that are uniquely West Indian. The peculiar history of the peoples of the Caribbean has required a special path to the creation of a collective identity--a path that has both imposed blocks to the development of anti-colonial-

ist movements and provided them with their unique insights, and perspectives.

The adaptibility of the slaves--the ability to learn new languages and modern techniques and social relations of production--made the perpetuation of modern life in the colonies possible. The West Indian slave adapted to modern life and in so doing shaped the conditions of existence to create the unique pattern of Caribbean life. The Blacks of the West Indies are a unique people who share no common core of traditional culture from the pre-colonial era. No native institutions survive: there is no native language. Only in the broadest sense do the West Indies possess a group identity that predates slavery. As a group they can no longer maintain a collective identity (as for example Yoruba or Ashanti). The Diaspora had made them all Africans, but Africans cut off from Africa. As West Indians they have nothing national to be aware of. For the people of the Caribbean to throw off the yoke of colonial rule and become the makers of their own history they must create their own national identity.[3] Their peculiar history thus explains the West Indian search for a national identity.

To establish their identity Black West Indians must look to Africa. Because of their varied backgrounds and origins the Blacks of the Diaspora must recover the source of their cultural development as a people, thus their path to self-determination leads them to Africa. The West Indian past is not rooted in the traditions of one traditional African culture, but in the civilization of Black Africa as a whole. Consequently, Black West Indians are compelled to see their future mirrored in the liberation of an entire continent. From this perspective we can

see négritude not as a philosophical concept of "Negro essence" or the "African personality" but rather as a cultural and political movement closely related to African nationalism as well as to the liberation struggles of Diasporic Blacks. In this respect, négritude shares much with Pan-Africanism. Both share a perception of the unity of the historical experiences of people of African descent, and both, in large measure, are products of the peculiar West Indian historical situation.

Although the remarkable adaptibility of the slaves and their descendents made western civilization possible in the West Indies, they are an African people, people of African descent. What Jamaican scholar Robert Hill refers to as "the idea of African nationality," the perception of the African experience and what is necessary for its survival,[4] is a necessary stage in the development of West Indian national consciousness. Their colonial masters have denied the initiatives of the people of the West Indies on the basis of their alleged inferiority. The myth of inferiority has been projected in many ways: genetic inferiority, cultural backwardness, the White Man's Burden, the long apprenticeship for self-rule. The implication of the myth in whatever form is that the "natives" cannot govern their own affairs until they become "civilized" (a logical and historical impossibility for the people as a whole given the colonial situation and the colonialist mentality). The danger always exists that the West Indian masses will degenerate into savagery as soon as the whites leave (witness Haiti). To oppose this colonialist ideology, the people of the West Indies have had to recover Africa, past, present and future. To justify and vindicate their own quest for independence the Caribbean people have had to disprove the

notions of Africa as "primitive", "backward", and "inferior". C. L. R. James, who has had some experience in these matters, describes the role of Africa in developing a West Indian National consciousness in the following manner: "The first step to freedom was to go abroad. Before they could see themselves as a free and independent people they had to clear from minds the stigma that anything African was inherently degrading or inferior. The road to West Indian national identity lay through Africa."[5]

The lack of an integral traditional culture, however, has impeded a sense of national identity among Caribbean peoples. This situation has retarded the emergence of strong mass-based independence movements among the colonized and has provided the colonizer with a justification for the independence of his rule. In a speech delivered in Martinique, French President DeGaulle phrased this problem in simple brutal language. Because Africa had a native civilization and an African way of life, he said, it could be decolonized. "But you West Indians," he continued, "have nothing of the kind. You are French.... Look at yourselves on the map, you are no more than dust."[6] This difficulty is chronic in all of the West Indies but perhaps takes its sharpest form in the French islands which are presently considered departments of France. This policy has its origins in the decree of 16 Pluviose, Year II (1792), which proclaimed the abolition of Negro slavery and declared that "all men, without distinction of color, domiciled in French colonies, are French citizens, and enjoy all the rights assured by the Constitution."[7] The outcome of this policy is that today Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Guiana are considered part of metropolitan France and elect their own deputies

to the French National Assembly.

Further for the native intellectual of the French Antilles the problem of identity is compounded by the French policy of assimilation. French culture is assumed to be universal and men are, in principle, valued in relation to merit and intelligence, not race or nationality. Selected individuals are turned away from their environment and converted into évolués--colored Frenchmen. This policy is part of the democratic legacy of the French Revolution of 1789, but Peter Worsley reveals the racist assumption underlying such a belief in the colonial context:

> This policy reposed, as the word évolué indicates, on the simple evolutionist-racist assumption that the indigenous cultures were primitive and backward, and that progress consisted in becoming more and more like the white man, whose culture was the highest pinnacle of human evolution.[8]

The cultural life of the French Antilles and the educational system carry the colonial intellectual to France. France is the beacon, the source of inspiration, admiration, emulation. The young colonial intellectual rapidly acquires French standards and values. His intellectual life is lived in France. That distant ideal is always the focus of his activity. His entire experience projects his orientation abroad and away from his native environment. As a result he is severed from the mass of the people. He is no longer capable of recognizing their needs and aspirations.

The Antillean Black intellectual, then, is encouraged to "assimilate French culture", and in so doing ascends into the educated Black elite. This native elite--originally almost completely mulattoes who were integrated into French culture more fully than the slaves--has

opportunities which are denied to others of their race. An education in France, a career in teaching or perhaps the colonial civil service for example. Pan-African leader George Padmore has summed up the political consequences of this policy for the French colonial territories as a whole:

> Thanks to this device [assimilation] the educated African elite, who, in the British colonies, become the vanguard of the nationalist movements, are in the French colonies associated with the white Frenchmen as junior partners in governing the mass of unassimilated natives still adhering to tribal customs and primitive institutions.[9]

This middle class status is an obstacle to racial and cultural identification.

Frantz Fanon, in his Black Skins, White Masks, has painted a brilliant portrait of the alienation, the inferiority complex that French colonialism has created in the Negro population of Martinique. The destruction of traditional culture, Fanon contends, has created an inferiority complex within the soul of every colonized people. The colonial system works to tear the colonized away from his cultural identity. Fanon continues:

> The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes white as he renounces his blackness, his jungle.[10]

This pattern is internalized by the colonized. The Antillean Black is alienated from his blackness: he wishes to escape from it. Fanon writes of himself: "Out of the blackest part of my soul, across the zebra striping of my mind, surges this desire to be suddenly white. I wish to be acknowledged not as black, but as white."[11] The escape from his blackness severs the Antillean Negro from his cultural roots and frag-

ments his personality. He feels superior to the African because he is more "civilized", closer to the white man. He strives to master the French language for he will be proportionately more white in direct ratio to his proficiency in the language. "A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language.... To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture. The Antilles Negro who wants to be white will be whiter as he gains mastery of the cultural tool that language is," writes Fanon.[12] The middle class only speaks Creole to its servants, and schoolteachers keep a sharp eye out to prevent the children from using the dialect.[13] The Black Martinican who is newly returned from the metropolis speaks only French. He no longer understands Creole and is highly critical of his companions and his surroundings. This behavior is expected of him and those around him wait to seize upon the slightest deviation. There is no forgiveness if he falls below the standard.[14]

Language for the Antillean Black is a means for proving that he has measured up to the standard of the culture; he seeks even greater subtlety of expression. That André Breton should say of Aimé Césaire, "Here is a black man who handles the French language as no white man can," is in one sense a recognition that Césaire has "made it."[15] But as Fanon points out, Césaire is a native of Martinique and a university graduate. That he has great facility with the French language is by no means remarkable--it is the natural vehicle for his expression. There is no reason for the statement to be extraordinary or to be a paradox. The statement, in fact, shows that assimilation is impossible for a native of the French Antilles. The lines between colonizer and colonized

remain clearly drawn. The statement need not, and I think in this case probably should not, be seen as a consciously racist act on the part of Breton. Rather, it is an example of the racism imbedded in colonialist culture--in the language itself. Recall Fanon's statement that language expresses a culture. The extraordinary and paradoxical character of Breton's statement is imposed by the logical structure of colonialism itself. The language of the colonizer offers no alternative way of expressing the situation. The statement is a defense reaction of the colonizing society against the initiatives of the colonized and at its roots draws the line for the Black who has been "assimilated". The colonized remains a black man who, though more proficient in the French language than any white, remains an outsider. French language and culture remain in the possession of the whites. He is still a black, and white colonialist society can still differentiate itself from him, still feel itself in possession of a civilization which others only use. At best the assimilated black is insulated within the spectacle of himself. Assimilation is not a real alternative for him. White society cannot free the Black from the colonial condition. Rather the Black, by his own initiative, must destroy the alienation colonial society imposes on him.

However, as long as the Black accepts the legitimacy of colonial society, and the psychological impact of colonialism makes European supremacy appear as a "natural phenomenon", his only recourse is to attempt to assume the appearances of white civilization. This desire to assimilate white culture is indicative of the disruption of traditional culture patterns and gives rise to social alienation. Anxiety

is the common condition of existence. The Negro's consciousness of self and his place in the world are veiled. He is perpetually on the brink of being a "non-person". (Césaire speaks of chosification.) In his effort to assert himself as a person his genuine self is mediated by what Fanon calls the white mask. Colonial society perpetually throws up the question of "Who am I?" to the Negro and always it grants recognition in direct proportion to the degree to which he exhibits white standards--the degree to which he is white. In order to gain recognition as a human being he must deny himself as a Black: an impossible contradiction as his blackness is the condition of his humanity. Thus, in adopting the language of the mother country the Black not only assumes the world it expresses, but also denies his own world. He becomes estranged both from himself and from his society. (We can see the roots of the imitativeness of much of Caribbean literature, especially before the advent of the négritude writers, in this process.)

Assimilation provides the Negro with no viable alternatives to his condition under colonial domination. Though white society may encourage assimilation on the part of the few, it is threatened by the évolué. To justify his rule the colonizer must monopolize historical initiative. The destruction of a vital native culture is systematically carried out by the colonial regime (and in the Caribbean more completely than in other areas). The persistence of an indigenous culture is seen by the colonizer as a refusal to submit to his supremacy. His position is threatened by autonomous activity on the part of the colonized. Césaire has described the colonial regime as the negation of creative activity on the part of the colonized: the colonizer

is the creator of cultural values while the colonized is his consumer.[16] Independent and autonomous initiatives on the part of the colonized cannot be allowed to challenge the hegemony of the colonizer. The boundaries, physical and psychological, that delineate colonial society and separate the world of the colonizer from the world of the colonized are drawn up, and the soil is cultivated in which myths of respective superiority and inferiority flourish. The supremacy of the colonizer condemns the colonized to marginality, dependency, and inferiority.

The évolué threatens this definition of reality. He is the nigger who doesn't know his place. Fanon provides insight into this phenomenon:

> After all that has been said, it will be understood that the first impulse of the black man is to say no to those who attempt to build a definition of him. It is understandable that the first action of the black man is a reaction, and, since the Negro is appraised in terms of the extent of his assimilation, it is also understandable why the newcomer expresses himself only in French. It is because he wants to emphasize the rupture that has now occurred, he is incarnating a new type of man...[17]

The Black who assimilates is forever shattering the stereotypes that the colonizer needs to sustain himself in his position.

The white becomes patronizing; he speaks to the Black in pidgin, he qualifies the Black's achievements (the black poet, the black doctor). He acts in terms of his stereotypes--"How long have you been in France? You speak French so well." The white response, of course, can have lesser degrees of subtlety, right down to "dirty-nigger-from-the-jungle," but the effect is the same in all cases: to maintain a social and psychological distance. Assimilation leaves the separation imposed by the European intact and condemns the Negro to bear the bur-

den of his alienation.

Every response that the colonized has to the system in which he asserts himself as a human being is a threat to his rulers. The colonizer is threatened when the colonized try to maintain their original culture. The native does not submit to his supremacy. He is threatened when the colonized try to assimilate. His supremacy is undermined. The logic of colonialism demands that the colonized be things, not men, and every time the native acts to affirm his humanity he poses, however indirectly, the question of the abolition of colonial rule. Colonialism is a system which offers only one option for its victims: self-determination and the restructuring of the social order.

To end colonial domination it is imperative that the people of the colonized land effectively alter, in one way or another, the economic, political, and cultural relations imposed upon them by the colonial situation. Any movement for independence which does not come to grips with these issues and work out a program concerning them that is consistent with national liberation must ultimately fail. In this regard the native middle class, cut off from the mass of the population, can play a dangerous and regressive role. Ivar Oxaal, in his Black Intellectuals Come to Power, has provided an illuminating study of the failure of the black middle class in Trinidad to provide leadership and create the mass based politics which could have changed the social relations of colonialism. Dependent on foreign capital, the native elite has a concrete interest combined with an image of itself, society, and its role in it which are antithetical to ending the dependency of the colony. Oxaal writes of Eric Williams' government in

Trinidad:

> The decision to bend over backwards to attract foreign investment meant that an atmosphere of security and well-being had to be generated within the local and expatriate upper middle class business community. These were classes whose views and contacts would be crucial in creating investor confidence. Consistent with this policy was the posture adopted--the lesson of the Chaguaramas debacle had been learned only too well--that P. N. M. (People's National Movement--Williams' party) was a bastion against the "Communist threat". Moreover, the "nationalist" synthesis which P. N. M. claimed to have achieved was not only mythical, but was highly functional in preventing the emergence of class-based politics which might upset the neo-colonial committments already entered into.[18]

In one form or another these conditions obtain throughout most of the West Indies. "Contemporary Caribbean politics," C. L. R. James has written, "consist essentially of the capacity to administer the old colonial system either by means of the brutality of Trujillo, or the democratic forms of Trinidad or Jamaica, or the skillful balancing on the fence of Muñoz Marin."[19]

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The alienation and sense of inferiority imposed by the colonial regime and the inability of the black middle class to contest the condition of colonial society in any effective way pose the question of the capacity of the mass of the population to forge a collective identity and become the makers of their own history. The question posed is that of a national culture and the conditions of its development. In the Caribbean, as perhaps nowhere else, the culture of the colonized has been fragmented as the entire population was torn from its traditional environment. It is perhaps this very fragmentation that has afforded Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon such deep insight into the na-

ture of colonialism. For them, the struggle for national liberation and the attempt to give expression to the emerging national culture are one and the same.

The mass of Blacks responded to the experience of slavery and colonial domination with organized resistance which, in the case of uprisings on board the slave ships, predated even their arrival in the Caribbean. Slave revolts punctuated the history of the West Indies, reaching their culmination with the successful revolution in Haiti led by Toussaint L'Ouverture which gave birth to the first Black republic. Where revolution was not possible, slaves ran away to form maroon colonies which were a source of constant fear for the whites. Other, more indirect forms of resistance, were also common. These included a wide variety of practices such as poisoning the master, sabotaging production, suicide, theft, arson, etc.[20] Equally significant are the cultural defenses which the slaves created, and which, in various forms, persist to the present day. Prominent among these are the Haitian _voodoo_ cult and the _candomble_ cult in Brazil. The cultural process we are concerned with here involves a refusal to accept the world order imposed by the white colonizer and a desire on the part of the colonized for cultural differentiation. It gives rise to what Georges Balandier refers to as a "nationalist consciousness in the raw state."[21] This process takes on a wide variety of forms depending upon the geographical location and social class of the New World Negro, and manifests itself in all spheres of cultural life. The process is most obvious in the case of "Africanisms" existing in the West Indies, but is recognizable even in the urban ghettoes of the northern United States

where the alienation from anything even resembling a traditional culture is most extreme.[22] The resultant culture borrows elements from the dominant white society and combines them with Negro elements to give expression to the Negro's situation in the New World. Elements of this culture can be traced to African antecedents,[23] but it would be a mistake to consider them African. They find expression in a situation that is different from their African context and can no longer find nourishment from traditional African society. They become something unique to Blacks of the Diaspora. The African elements, though no longer vitally linked to the African reality, do contain a sense of Africa as Abiola Irele points out.[24] They allow the Blacks to refuse white society and see themselves as distinct, as bearers of an African heritage, even though they might be cut off from its sources. The popular culture contains, in this sense, in an embryonic form, the dimensions of national culture.

This instinctive reflexive reaction to colonial rule reveals, though perhaps hazily, the emerging dialectic of national liberation and its implications. The native persists in clinging to decaying and dying cultural forms and in so doing resists the definition of reality that the colonizer is trying to impose. He will not be the Sambo that the master wants him to be. This response is anarchic and ineffective, but it nevertheless prevents complete and unimpaired domination. Ambivalence and neurosis characterize the Manichean world of the colonized, but he struggles to assert himself as a human being, to refuse the initiative of the colonizer, even if only by withdrawing into the shadow of his former world. The culture of the colonized is defensive,

a reaction to the threats of the colonizer--and it therefore loses the capacity to innovate. Frantz Fanon has described this situation:

> Within the framework of colonial domination there is not and there never will be such phenomena as new cultural departures or changes in the national culture.... This persistence in following forms of culture which are already condemned to extinction is already a demonstration of nationality; but it is a throwback to the laws of inertia. There is no taking of the offensive and no redefining of relationships. There is simply a concentration on a hard core of culture which is becoming more and more shrivelled up, inert and empty. By the time a century or two of exploitation has passed there comes about a veritable emaciation of the stock of national culture. It becomes a set of automatic habits, some traditions of dress and a few broken down institutions.[25]

Attempts are also made to renew and reanimate the dynamic of cultural life. They have no immediate effect though seen over the long run they help to bring into focus the nature of colonial society and the imperatives it places on the colonized. Their failures clear the ground for later developments. Each of these responses is in itself an inadequate form of resisting colonial domination, but the failures of each raise the issue of the conditions for the revitalized national culture in colonial society.

Césaire has perceived the essence of colonial rule in its relationship to the cultural life of the colonized and its implications for the liberation movement. He has stated, "a political and social regime which suppresses the self-determination of a people, at the same time kills the creative force of the people."[26] The creative force of the people, the vitality of its culture, is bound to political and social self-determination. Both are aspects of the same phenomenon. The colonial regime dominates the total life experience

of the colonized. The degradation of native culture is inextricably linked to the exploitation and degradation of the people. As Fanon has expressed it: "The poverty of the people, national oppression and the inhibition of culture are one and the same thing."[27]

To be successful the struggle against colonialism must involve a total transformation of society; new social relations and new consciousness must emerge from the struggle. The creative power of the people must break free from the shackles of colonial rule and a new image of man must be created. Political revolution and cultural revolution go hand in hand. For the colonized to reassert their creative power and to regain their historical initiative they must take the offensive against colonial rule. Cultural renewal can only emerge within the context of national liberation. There can be no withdrawal into stagnant cultural forms, rather the colonized must aggressively assert themselves against the colonial regime in all of its manifestations--political, economic, social, and cultural. The colonized must clearly pose the question of self-determination and liberation from colonial rule if they are to effectively assert themselves on the stage of history. Césaire has written that true decolonization will be revolutionary or it will not be.[28]

Césaire has further raised the question of the role of the intellectual in this revolutionary transformation. The colonial intellectual, the man of culture (l'homme de culture) as Césaire referred to him in his address to the Second Congress of Black writers and Artists, bears important responsibilities in this struggle. His task, as Césaire has defined it, is to hasten decolonization; to uproot the servitude and

inferiority that the colonial regime has planted in the minds of the people, to make the people aware of their power and to express and give form to their struggle for independence through his creative activity. Césaire has written that the man of culture is the engineer of souls and at the limit of his activity the inventor of souls. He belongs to the people, embraces their sufferings and their hopes--he shows to the people their power and their possibilities. The future society and the future man are mirrored in his work.[29] It is the responsibility of the man of culture, in Césaire's view, to hasten this struggle and prepare the way for its revolutionary conclusion.

In order to assume this role the colonial intellectual must cast off his white mask. He must no longer attempt to assimilate into the white world and he can no longer accept his elite status above the colonized masses. He can no longer deny himself as a Black, and he can no longer feel himself aloof from the people. He must deny the colonizer and embrace the cause of the colonized. The Caribbean intellectual in identifying himself with the mass of Blacks simultaneously raises the question of the national culture. For the intellectual to accept the condition of the masses and take up their cause as his own, it is necessary that the myth of being "primitive" which colonialism has created be destroyed. The shame of being Black must be destroyed. The intellectual must reject the values of the European world. In removing the stigma of the African past and the colonial present from his own mind the West Indian intellectual begins to clear that guilt and disgrace from the minds of the entire colonized population. The re-examination of the past provides the basis for new values and new images of them-

selves with which the colonized can resist those imposed by the colonizer. Those who supposedly have no history begin to discover their past and see their future mirrored in it.

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There are several intellectual currents in the Caribbean which are concerned with establishing racial and cultural identity and with ending the colonial subjugation of Black West Indians. Together these form a loose tradition within the framework of which Aimé Césaire's work developed. Briefly, we may mention the pan-African movements which emerged predominantly in the British West Indies. Pan-Africanism has stressed the historical and cultural unity of the experience of Black people both in Africa and the New World. Stressing the independence of Africa and the emancipation of Blacks in the Caribbean and the United States, pan-Africanism has fostered the idea of African independence movements and Black nationalism in the New World. Some key figures in this current are John Jacob Thomas, Edward Wilmot Blyden, and Sylvester Williams whose ideas and actions forged some of the early formulations of pan-Africanism. Also Jamaican Marcus Garvey, a master propagandist who conveyed the idea of African nationality and Africa as the original home of the race to Negroes everywhere, must be mentioned. The outstanding figure of recent pan-Africanism has been George Padmore of Trinidad who, with W. E. B. DuBois of the United States, guided the Pan-African Congress held in Manchester, England in 1945 and worked tirelessly for African independence and Black emancipation until his death in Ghana in 1959.[30]

Negrismo or Afro-Cubanism was an influential intellectual movement

in Cuba which experimented with the Negro heritage and the elements of a Cuban national culture. It was largely the concern of white writers who, in the main, stereotyped the Black as a primitive and counterposed him to the frustration and unhappiness of the overcivilized white world. Afro-Cubanism's reduction of the Negro to the most primitive level can be clearly seen in the poem "Ñam-Ñam" by Pales Matos:

> Asia dreams its nirvana
> America dances to its jazz,
> Europe plays and theorizes,
> Africa grunts: ñam-ñam.[31]

More lasting contributions are to be found in the work of Nicolás Guillén and Fernando Ortiz who most fully understood the significance of the Negro in Cuban life and popular culture. Guillén is a colored poet of whom G. R. Coulthard has said, "The Negro theme is not just a fashion, a subject for literature, but the living heart of his creative activity."[32] Fernando Ortiz was an ethnographer who made numerous inquiries into Negro and Mulatto life in Cuba emphasizing their contribution to the character and personality of the Cuban people. Aside from the work of these two men the sterile themes and techniques of Afro-Cubanism soon exhausted themselves and the movement shrivelled up. Its net effect, however, was to confirm the integration of the Negro into the national life and culture of Cuba.

A third current in Caribbean intellectual life resulted from the occupation of Haiti by the United States in 1915. Haiti had been independent ever since the revolution of Toussaint L'Ouverture but social unrest and political and economic instability caused the United States Marines to occupy the country in 1915 to protect American strategic interests in the hemisphere. Before the occupation the Haitian elite,

though proud of its independence, took its cultural values from France. But with the advent of the Americans and exposure to their racial prejudices, this elite underwent a profound change which has been described by Naomi Garrett:

> The impact of the American occupation on the Haitian elite was at first stunning. The clash of two widely different ideologies had caused a brutal and violent shock, the brunt of which the Haitians had to bear. All that they held dear--their traditions, institutions, customs, and laws--had been crushed, or, worse still, had been mocked. They had been made conscious, in a humiliating manner, of the racial characteristics which distinguished them from the powerful Americans in their country. To fight the feeling of inferiority that the Occupation had managed to engender within them, they turned within themselves and to their distant past to seek what there was, if anything, in their traditions and their heritage of which they could be proud. Here, at least, was something entirely theirs and inaccessible to the Americans.[33]

The Haitian elite sought an identity outside American dominance. The pre-eminent figure in this revaluation of Haitian history and culture was Dr. Jean Price-Mars, whose ethnographical studies were the source of inspiration for a literary renaissance in Haiti. Dr. Price-Mars clearly posed the question of cultural identification for Caribbean Blacks. "We only have a chance of being ourselves if we do not repudiate a part of our ancestral heritage. And eighty per cent of this heritage is a gift from Africa," he wrote.[34] Price-Mars plunged into the scientific study of Haitian peasant life, seeing in its songs, stories, legends, proverbs, and beliefs the "collective soul of the Haitian people."[35] To free the people from the stigma of their past, he revealed the existence of African civilization which contemporary scientific research had uncovered: "At a certain given moment on the African continent there were centers of Black civilization, not only the traces of

which have been found, but whose splendor radiated beyond the limits of the steppe and the desert."[36] For Dr. Price-Mars the Negro was not "the scum of humanity, without history, without morals, without religion, into whom it was necessary to infuse new moral values, a new human investiture."[37] He hoped that through the revaluation of the African past and the popular culture of the Haitian peasantry, Haitians would no longer see themselves as "colored Frenchmen," but rather as "Haitians pure and simple, that is, men born under specific historical conditions."[38] Through the peasant masses and the heritage of Africa, Haiti could maintain its cultural integrity and forge a national identity.

These several currents form a tradition of Black political and cultural nationalism which Aimé Césaire is a part of, and they form a part of the background against which his ideas matured. Taken as a whole, this tradition can be seen as a part of the historical process of working out the cultural identity of Caribbean Blacks and defining a West Indian nationality. The initial reflexive and anarchic reaction of the slave to his subjugation is elaborated and adapted to changed historical circumstances. Historical relationships are redefined and the inert core of native culture is infused with new life. The response of the colonized becomes increasingly more adequate until it is at last able to take the offensive and challenge the hegemony of the colonizer.

NOTES

[1]This theme is emphasized by Ronald Segal: "Asia has always been granted--however condenscendingly--a history beyond European intrusion. But Africa was a dark continent, lit only by flashes of foreign penetration... (B)ut Africa has had its own sweep of events outside those which European conquest and settlement have recorded.... Scholars studied and disputed in Timbuctu as in Paris, and what Italians accomplished in pigment, the artists of Benin achieved with bronze. The cultures were different, but only on the horizontal. The vertical, the separation into superior and inferior, was a product of conquest." (Emphasis added.) (Ronald Segal, Editorial Forward to Roland Oliver and J. D. Fage, A Short History of Africa, Harmondsworth, 1965, pp. 9-10.) British sociologist Peter Worsley also elaborates on this theme: "The relationship of the rest of the world to Europe had become one of inferiority and backwardness. Even European revolutionaries believed in the coming of socialism in the industrial countries of the West. Non-Europe had been left behind in the evolutionary process, its social institutions and cultural heritages now only so many bizarre and archaic survivals." (Peter Worsley, The Third World, London, 1967, p. 27.) Also see Claude Levi-Strauss, Race and History, (Paris, 1968) for an understanding of the pattern of historical development for "primitive" societies.

[2]C. L. R. James, The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution, New York, 1963, pp. 405, 392.

[3]The development of a national consciousness in the colonial context requires the wish for colonial differentiation on the part of the colonized--that they in some manner distinquish themselves from the colonizer--together with a recasting of foreign and indigenous elements into a new cultural structure adequate to express the conditions created by colonial rule. (Cf. Abriola Irele, "Negritude or Black Cultural nationalism," Journal of Modern African Studies, 3, 3 (1965), pp. 323-324.) In the Caribbean the former requirement has developed along ethnic lines, while the latter is at a rather low stage of development. In this paper we will concern ourselves primarily with the questions of self-identification of Black West Indians who have, in large part, given the islands of the Caribbean their particular stamp. The growth of self-consciousness and cultural expression on the part of Caribbean Negroes is certainly crucial to the formation of a West Indian national consciousness and is a necessary step in its development. However, it must also be recognized that the peoples of the Caribbean are of various backgrounds--European, African, Chinese, East Indian--and all must eventually be confronted when considering the question of national identity.

[4]Robert Hill, "Garveyism and the Rise of African Nationality," lecture delivered at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin (Madison), April 4, 1970.

[5]C. L. R. James, Black Jacobins, p. 402.

[6]Quoted in C. L. R. James, "Parties, Politics, and Economics in the Caribbean," Freedomways, Vol. 4, No. 3, p. 312.

[7]Quoted in Thomas Hodgkin, Nationalism in Colonial Africa, New York, 1957, p. 34.

[8]Peter Worsley, "Revolutionary Theories," Monthly Review, Vol. 21, No. 1 (May, 1969), p. 31.

[9]George Padmore, Pan-Africanism or Communism, (New York, n.d.), p. 195.

[10]Frantz Fanon, Black Skins, White Masks, New York, 1967, p. 18.

[11]Fanon, Black Skins, p. 63.

[12]Fanon, Black Skins, pp. 18, 38.

[13]Fanon, Black Skins, p. 20.

[14]Fanon, Black Skins, pp. 23-24.

[15]Fanon, Black Skins, p. 39.

[16]Aimé Césaire, "L'Homme de culture et ses responsibilités," Présence Africaine, no. 24-25, pp. 117-118.

[17]Fanon, Black Skins, p. 36.

[18]Ivar Oxaal, Black Intellectuals Come to Power: The Rise of Creole Nationalism in Trinidad and Tobago, Cambridge, 1968, pp. 182-183. Also see C. L. R. James, Party Politics in the West Indies (San Juan, Trinidad, 1961), for his most extensive critique of the Williams government and his ideas on what kind of program for decolonization it was possible for that government to carry out.

[19]C. L. R. James, "Parties, Politics, and Economics in the Caribbean," Freedomways, Vol. 4, No. 3, p. 312.

[20]See Raymond and Alice Bauer, "Day to Day Resistance to Slavery," The Journal of Negro History, XXVII (Oct., 1942), pp. 388-419 for a discussion of indirect resistance in the American South. We can safely generalize that such practices were known wherever slavery existed.

[21]Georges Balandier, Sociologie actuelle de l'Afrique noire, (Paris, 2nd edn., 1963), pp. 3-38, cited in Irele, "Negritude," p. 323.

[22]Cf. LeRoi Jones, Blues People, (New York, 1968) for a discussion of Black culture in the United States. Also see Vittorio Lanternari, Religions of the Oppressed, (New York, 1965) for insight into the rela-

tionship between colonialism and messianic religions of those whose traditional culture has been crushed.

[23]Cf. Melville J. Herskovits, The Myth of the Negro Past, (Boston, 1958).

[24]Irele, "Negritude", pp. 326-327.

[25]Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, (New York, 1966), p. 191.

[26]Aimé Césaire, "Culture et colonisation," Présence Africaine, No. 8-9-10 (June, Nov., 1956), p. 194.

[27]Fanon, Wretched of the Earth, p. 191.

[28]Cesaire, "L'Homme de culture," p. 119.

[29]Cesaire, "L'Homme de culture," pp. 117-119.

[30]We follow George Shepperson's distinction between pan-African movements spelled with a small "p" and referring to movements which have a perspective of the unity of African people, culture, and history in the New World and Africa, and Pan-Africanism with a capital "P" referring to a recognizable movement associated with the five Pan-African Congresses (Paris, 1919; London, 1921; London and Lisbon, 1923; New York, 1927; Manchester, 1945) and with the figures of DuBois and Padmore. See George Shepperson, "Pan-Africanism and 'pan-Africanism': Some Historical Notes," Phylon, Vol. XXIII, No. 4 (Winter, 1962), pp. 346-358. Padmore's Pan-Africanism or Communism, (London, 1956) is the outstanding work of this latter current. It is both a history of the Pan-African movement and the statement of a political perspective.

[31]Quoted in G. R. Coulthard, Race and Colour in Caribbean Literature, London, 1962, p. 33.

[32]Coulthard, Race and Colour, p. 34.

[33]Naomi Garret, Renaissance of Haitian Poetry, Paris, 1963, p. 61.

[34]Jean Price-Mars, Ainsi Parla L'Oncle, New York, 1954, p. 220.

[35]Price-Mars, Ainsi Parla L'Oncle, pp. 187-188.

[36]Price-Mars, Ainsi Parla L'Oncle, p. 64.

[37]Price-Mars, Ainsi Parla L'Oncle, p. I.

[38]Price-Mars, Ainsi Parla L'Oncle, p. II.

CHAPTER II

BLACK INTELLECTUALS IN PARIS: THE ORIGINS OF NÉGRITUDE

> Mais c'est l'Europe..., la France qui devait nous faire découvrir les valeurs de la Négritude.
>
> --Léopold Sédar Senghor

> When I met Senghor, I knew myself to be African.
>
> --Aimé Césaire

> Avec Aimé Césaire, qui poursuit, avec le succès que l'on sait, l'expérience commencée par Etienne Léro, la poésie aux Antilles sort résolument de sa tour d'ivoire et accueille dans sa plus intime substance les douloureuses préoccupations historiques, sociales et psychologiques des hommes qui vivent en ce coin du Nouveau Monde français, qui souffrent et qui cherchent la vérité dans les ténèbres d'une culture de confection.
>
> L'accent nouveau que prend avec lui la poésie antillaise est avant tout un accent humain. C'est, avec Aimé Césaire, la voix même de l'homme qui, au sein d'une société, formule son orgueil, ses rêves et ses plaintes.
>
> --Léon Damas

The conditions for artistic creation in the Caribbean in the early decades of the century were severely circumscribed. No cultural tradition existed in which the native intellectual could root his work. Colonial social relations imposed a hierarchy of racial values which was both cause and effect of racial and cultural alienation among the uprooted population. The social order was frozen and permanent: at

the top, the white man--recognized as a full human being; at the bottom, the Negro--not a man but a thing; between, an almost infinite number of gradations, all striving to approach whiteness. The unassimilated mass of the population clung almost instinctively to the remnants of a shattered culture in order to preserve their integrity in the face of this colonial ontology. But the popular culture and consciousness, confused and anarchic, was in itself insufficient to provide a basis upon which to sustain intellectual activity. The contempt the educated native elite felt for the mass prevented popular life from being the focus of the artistic activity which was carried on.

The overwhelming rate of illiteracy in the French Antilles restricted the literary public to the educated native elite whose members considered themselves to be "Black Frenchmen" and tried to emulate the standards of French civilization. This stratum severed itself from the colony and assumed the ornaments of metropolitan life. The évolués of the Antilles sought to take on the appearances of "civilization"--to master the French language in order "to possess the world implied and expressed by that language."[1] Totally dominated by French cultural superiority, this elite held the popular Creole and indeed anything which reminded them of their African past and their colonial identity in utter disdain. France was their motherland.

To write for this audience the Antillean author was compelled to write as a Frenchman and to imitate French literary models. The colonial public judged the work according to its reception in the metropolis. Dr. Price-Mars has described the disastrous effect this mimicry had for Haitian writers and literature:

> [I]n the choice of subjects and the manner of treating them, he [the Haitian writer] applied himself to the imitation of models which drew their authority from the banks of the Seine. Consequently, for a very long time our literary production has been a pale reflection of French literature.[2]

The highest ambition of both writer and public was to integrate themselves into French culture. This aspiration is a reflection of the alienated position of the Antillean elite. Mastery of the French language and French literary models together with the cultivation of European tastes and sensibilities provided this elite with an escape from their "savage" antecedents. The greatest desire of the Antillean author was to "make a conquest of France,"[3] and in this he represented the longings of his class. The cultural orientation was reinforced by the educational system, the narrow audience, and the scant means of writing and earning a living in the Antilles (all of which together often combined to make the aspiring intellectual go to live in France). This step further distanced him from the islands and strengthened the hold of the metropolis on him. The entire position and activity of the native elite served to create an artificial milieu which carried this entire stratum further away from the realities of the colony.

The work of Antillean writers, bounded by the perspective and aspirations of their class, suffered not only from the sterile imitation of French literary models, but also from what Martinican critic René Menil, in a mature reflection upon the sources of his youthful revolt, has described as "<u>l'exotisme colonial</u>."[4] The indigenous writers see themselves and their society through distorting lenses. They view their native land as exotic and picturesque and describe it from a

superficial perspective without personal drama and outside of the life of the people. Lilyan Kesteloot has gathered some examples of such "exotic" poetry in her Les Ecrivans Noirs de la Langue Française.[5]

Mme. Desbordes-Valmore (1786-1859)

> Qui me consolera?--Nous, m'ont dit les voyages
> Laisse-nous t'emporter vers de lointaines fleurs.
> .....
> Viens sous les bananiers, nous trouverons l'ombrage
> Les oiseaux vont chanter en voyant notre amour
> Vos longs soleils, votre ombre et vos fraîcheurs.

Hérédia (1842-1905)

> Là-bas où les Antilles bleues
> Se pâment sous l'ardeur de l'astre occidental.

Saint John Perse (1887)

> Un monde balancé entre des eaux brillantes
> Connaissant le mât lisse des fûts, la
> hune sous les feuilles, les haubans de
> liane, ou trop longues, les fleurs jaunes
> s'achevaient en cris de perruches.

René Maran (1887-1960)

> Ah! toute la douceur de ma petite enfance
> Ces languissantes nuits du port de Fort-deFrance
> Paradis végétaux
> Enchantez-moi longtemps du jeu de vos prestiges.

The Antillean writer looks at his own society through the eyes of a foreigner. This particular aberration writes René Menil, is the result of the colonial situation. The fundamental condition of human existence in colonial society is to be separated from oneself. Menil continues:

> The phenomenon of cultural oppression, inseparable from colonialism, causes in each colonized country the repression of its own national soul (history, religion, customs) in order to introduce into that collectivity

> that which we will call "l'âme-de-l'autre metropolitaine." From there alienation and depersonalization are derived.... I am "exotique-pour-moi" because the vision I have of myself is the vision of a white which has become mine after three centuries of colonial conditioning.[6]

The metropolis is the axis of colonial life, and exoticism is linked to the historical development of the colonial relationship and can only be resolved in proportion to the level of political consciousness attained collectively and individually by those struggling against European domination. Only when the colonial regime is destroyed and replaced by political autonomy will exoticism fully disappear and an authentic expression of Antillean social life be possible. The problem of a genuine Caribbean literature is an expression of the deeper problem of the identity of the Caribbean people and their relation to colonial rule.

The stifling grasp of assimilationist writing upon the literature of the French West Indies began to loosen in the years following the First World War. The barbarity of the war opened to question the previously unchallenged "superiority" of western civilization for both colonizer and colonized alike. If the war gave rise to Spenglerian pessimism in Europe, it combined with the Russian Revolution to release immense activity for national liberation and social emancipation among colonized peoples all over the world. In 1921 René Maran, a West Indian administrator in the Congo, published his novel Batouala, an indictment of French colonial policy in Africa. He was awarded the 1921 Prix Goncourt but the scandal resulting from his exposures caused him to be dismissed from the civil service. Although Maran's work revealed the brutality of French colonialism and helped to awaken an "African" con-

sciousness he regarded himself as a Frenchman and was unable to break away from an assimilationist perspective.

The first significant challenge to cultural assimilation came in 1932 when a group of Martinican students founded a journal, Légitime Défense.[7] The group consisted of René Menil, Jules Monnerot, and Etienne Léro, who was the dominating figure. Government grants took these children from the sluggish backwaters of Martinique to the intellectual ferment of Paris where they experienced the uneasy position of black intellectuals in French society. They could assimilate intellectually but not socially. The French policy of selective assimilation for the elite, combined with discrimination against the rest of the colonized population, made them feel dependent upon the colonizer for their status. Their contingent position, together with the racial prejudice they themselves experienced in the metropolis, divided their allegiance. The only way out of their false position was to fall back on their ethnic loyalties.[8]

In 1932, while still a student at the lycée, Léro was already probing deeply into the problem of the colored writer of the Antilles. In that year, he and his collaborators, all students between the ages of twenty and twenty-three, issued their manifesto, Légitime Défense.[9] Suffocated by "ce monde capitaliste, chrétien, bourgeois" they declared war against "this abominable system of constraints and restrictions, of the extermination of love and of the limitation of the dream, generally designed by the name western civilization."[10] But the special target of their wrath was the Antillean bourgeoisie, "a

few members of mulatto society, intellectually and physically degenerate, taking their literary nourishment from white decadence, who, in the interests of the French bourgeoisie which uses them, have become the ambassadors to a mass which they smother and further which they repudiate because it is too dark."[11] Légitime Défense represented a remarkable shift in cultural values by the sons and daughters of the very elite they so viciously attacked. According to Léon Damas it represented nothing less than "the will of a generation of men of color to denounce the bankruptcy of three centuries of French colonization in the Antilles."[12] The appearance of the review created a stir in Martinique and in France. It was suppressed by French authorities after one issue because of its "subversive" character, and the co-signers of the manifesto temporarily lost their scholarships until the "representatives of Martinican democracy" saw fit to restore their resources.[13] However, for the young group around Légitime Défense this reaction only confirmed the justice of their position and served to sever them more fully from the world of the Martinican bourgeoisie.

The scorn this group of rebellious young students felt for the native bourgeoisie was manifested in their total rejection of the literature that class had produced. Léro assailed its poverty and its distance from the life of the people:

> A foreigner would search in vain in this literature for an original or profound accent, for a sensual and black imagination [l'imagination sensuelle et colorée noir], for an echo of the hates and aspirations of an oppressed people. One of the pontifs of the poetry of this class [cette poésie de classe] has celebrated the death of the Caraibes (which is an indifferent matter for us, since they have been exterminated to the last), but he has killed the re-

> volt of the slave torn from his soil and from his family.[14]

For Léro the impoverished character of Antillean literature could not be separated from the existing social order.

> There, the poet (or the "bard" as they say) is recruited from the class which has the privilege of well-being and instruction.... One is a poet in the Antilles as one is a beadle of a grave-digger, by having a <u>situation</u> [the English word is used] on the side. A doctor, a teacher, a lawyer, a president of the republic gain some small notoriety among the mulatto bourgeoisie by serving their countenance and their tastes in alexandrine verses.[15]

Contact with the European colonizer and the subsequent cultural subjugation were recognized by Léro to be the cause of both the plight of the Antillean bourgeoisie and the inferiority of its literature.

> The Antillean, stuffed until bursting with white morality, white culture, white education, white prejudices, flaunts in his booklets the bloated image of himself. To be a good copy of the pale man for him takes the place of social reason as well as poetic reason. He is never decent enough, solemn enough for his own taste--"You act like a nigger," he does not fail to become indignant if, in his presence, you yield to a natural exhuberance. He does not want to "act like a nigger" in his verses either. It becomes a point of honor for a white to be able to read all of his book without guessing the color of his skin.[16]

Rather than seeing racial and cultural differences as a burden, Léro recognized in them the promise of an authentic Antillean literature. In revolt against the restrictions placed upon the human spirit by western civilization and incensed at the narrow orientation of the native bourgeoisie, Léro, in part drawing inspiration from Langston Hughes and Claude MacKay and from the Haitian poets, saw the basis of a new poetry and a new society in the oppressed masses.

> And if it were necessary to seek poetry there where one is compelled to take refuge, it would be necessary to draw on Creole which is not a written language, but is in the songs of love, of sadness, of revolt of the black workers.... From the day when the black proletariat, sucked dry in the Antilles by a parasite mulatto caste which has sold itself to some degenerate whites, in breaking that double yoke, gains access to the right to eat and to the life of the spirit [esprit], from that day will a new Antillean poetry exist.[17]

For Léro revolution and a new poetry are inseparable. Each nourishes the other. But if he was in revolt against western civilization and the edifice of colonial exploitation upon which it was constructed, it was also from the West that he got the two weapons of his struggle--communism and surrealism.

Communism held great attraction for this young group of intellectuals. Taking as their point of departure a Marxist analysis of the Antilles they discovered a black proletariat descended from African slaves; victims of racism who were oppressed and exploited by both the mulatto bourgeoisie and French colonialism.[18] Communism seemed to be the only possible solution to the economic and social problems of the Antilles. To black intellectuals in Paris the Communist Party seemed to be the only force that took an interest in the cause of the Negro. The Communists looked upon the Blacks as brothers of the Russian and French proletariat and treated them like men. The Communist movement opposed racism and colonialism, the same evils that Légitime Défense attacked. Communists in Paris were also especially active in taking up the cause of colonized Blacks throughout the world in such groups as the Ligue universelle pour la défense de la race noire and the Comité de la défense de la race nègre, both of which Léro and his compatriots

were in contact with.[19] Léro was especially impressed with the role of the Communists in defending the Scottsboro Boys and in Légitime Défense declared that Communism was the only road for Blacks in America.[20] The Légitime Défense group considered themselves Marxists and in the opening statement of the review proclaimed their loyalty to the Communist Party:

> In every country the communist party is in the process of playing the card of the Spirit (in the Hegelian sense of the term). Its defeat...would be for us the definitive "I no longer can." We believe without reserve in its triumph and this because we appeal to the dialectical materialism of Marx, shielded from all tendential interpretation and victoriously put to the test of the facts by Lenin. On this terrain we are prepared to conform to the discipline that such convictions demand.[21]

The three main figures of the group, Etienne Léro, René Menil, and Jules Monnerot, were all members of the French Communist Party, though later in life Monnerot became an anti-communist.

Surrealism was the other weapon in Légitime Défense's arsenal of revolt. It gave Léro and his group an ideal tool with which to attack the ossified relationships of colonial society and they embraced it wholeheartedly. The first page of the manifesto declared, "we accept without reserve surrealism, to which--in 1932--we link our future."[22] A panopoly of surrealists--André Breton, René Crevel, Salvatore Dali, Paul Eluard, Benjamin Peret, and Tristan Tzara--furnished them with both the inspiration and the literary means for assaulting the conventions of bourgeois society which stifle creative human potential. Poetry, Etienne Léro wrote, "must be a stick of dynamite...which explodes inside an individual." Surrealism for Léro was a liberating instrument which caste off ordinary definitions of reality and created new possibilities. "It is the honor and the force of surrealism," he declared,

"to have integrated still more deeply the function of poetry, to have stripped poetry naked." He elaborated the idea with the following metaphor: "A young girl, before seeing her father nude always confuses him with the clothes he wears. The father nude immediately becomes obscure and incomprehensible for her. Thus it is with prudishness and surrealist poetry."[23]

The technological rationality of the West was responsible for the subjugation and degradation of colonized peoples. Surrealism, in this context, represents an attempt by those trapped within the colonial system both physically and intellectually to break free from the domination of that very logic, to create new images of themselves opposed to those forced upon them by colonialism. In surrealism the colonial intellectuals found an attack on western civilization--a permanent revolt against European society, art, and religion. The French surrealists rejected the gods of Reason, Progress, Science, and Culture, and looked to Asia and Egypt for different values and a different relationship between man and the world. Breton, Eluard, and Peret among others revealed cracks in the imposing facade of European superiority to these Antillean intellectuals. To renew sensibility and imagination surrealism appealed to Freudian theories. The vision of the world held by infants and primitive peoples--those whose perceptions had not been conditionned by a corrupt and corrupting civilization--assumed a special importance for the surrealists. This emphasis on primitive peoples and their arts served to legitimate their non-rational culture, the very rationale for considering them inferior. It was no longer a pejorative for surrealism to say that "Negroes have not left the king-

dom of infancy."[24] Surrealism had reversed the entire value system: the more civilized one was, the less pure. For the group around Légitime Défense surrealism was, above all, a reaction to Western civilization and the Antillean bourgeoisie, both of which they condemned. In communism and surrealism they identified the instruments with which they hoped to destroy bourgeois society and culture and create a new man.

Légitime Défense had only a fleeting existence. The journal was banned after one issue. However, the members of the group published in other journals and as late as 1935 Jules Monnerot addressed the Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture (Congrès des écrivains pour la défense de la culture) in their name.[25] The position it held is most readily identifiable with its principal founder, Etienne Léro, who died seven years after the appearance of the manifesto at the age of thirty. Nonetheless, it remains a significant early assault upon the cultural hegemony of Europe and the alienated position of the Antillean bourgeoisie. With the appearance of Léro the sterile and inauthentic literature of the Antilles was superseded by writing which was analytical and self-critical. Others who came after Légitime Défense would develop more fully its perspective on Marxism and surrealism. The importance of Légitime Défense is greater than its immediate accomplishments; it was the beginning of something larger. Léopold Senghor, who was in contact with the group and elaborated its work, later wrote, "more than a review, more than a literary group, Légitime Défense was a cultural movement."[26] The review provided a point of departure for another generation of students. Senghor continues: "when Jules Monnerot,

Etienne Léro, and René Menil hurled the manifesto of Légitime Défense at the Antillean bourgeoisie, Aimé Césaire, then a student at "Khagne" at the lycée Louis-le-Grand, was the first to hear it and to listen to it. Understanding that it was necessary to deepen its message he immersed himself on the one hand in the French sources up to Rimbaud and Lautreaumont; and on the other hand in his own sources, turning to his "Bambara ancestors," to the poetry of black Africa."[27]

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Légitime Défense was important for initially proposing a set of solutions to the problems raised by colonialism, but in itself was unable to provide adequate means for the colonized to resist their subordination. The group severely restricted itself by adopting Marxism and surrealism en bloc from the West, narrowly binding colonial liberation with the fate of these two movements. Further, racial and cultural identity remain problematic in the work of Léro and his companions. The Negro's condition as a proletarian is emphasized over his condition as a Black. Into the breach created by Légitime Défense stepped a later generation of students who enriched and developed its accomplishments and adapted them more completely to the situation of colonized Blacks.

Légitime Défense was succeeded by another group of colonial students in Paris which crystallized around Léopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal (b. 1906), Léon Damas of French Guiana (1912), and Aimé Césaire of Martinique (1913), and also included Leonard Sainville and Aristide Maugée of the Antilles and Birago Diop and Ousmane Soce of Senegal. This group eventually expressed itself through its journal L'Etudiant

Noir, five numbers of which appeared beginning in 1934.[28] Though influenced by Légitime Défense, the members of this later group were not its disciples. Instead they based their revolt against assimilation and alienation on a perception of themselves as non-Europeans--on a conception of themselves as sharing, in one manner or another, an African heritage and an African identity. As a result, Césaire, Senghor, Damas and those around them brought into question the uncritical use of surrealism and Marxism by Légitime Défense. They were sympathetic to these currents but felt that both were European ideologies which had to be adapted to the Negro's situation to be of any use. L'Etudiant Noir included surrealism and communism in its critique of the West rather than unreflectively making them the basis for that critique. "Monnerot and his friends," wrote Senghor, "rejected the traditional values of the Occident in the name of the contemporary values of the Occident, in the name of Communism and Surrealism...whereas, we, in a more fundamental movement [dans un premier mouvement], rejected all western values."[29]

From the perspective of these young men, what appeared to be the universal values of western civilization were the justifications for racism and colonial exploitation and oppression. Only a total revaluation of the historical and social relation of the black man to the West and an uncompromising critique of European society could remove the stigma that 300 years of colonial domination had imposed upon African civilization and the Negro race. And only such a reconsideration could furnish these black intellectuals with the materials that would allow them to liberate themselves from their dependence on western cul-

ture--from their position as the consumers of the culture of the colonized. The task L'Etudiant Noir set for itself was the disalienation of the colonized Black. They no longer desired to integrate themselves into French life, but rather aspired to be the autonomous creators of their own culture. There was a need for new values and new images of the black man to replace those supplied by the colonial regime. This concern for racial identity and racial oppression pushed the group associated with L'Etudiant Noir beyond the narrowly conceived political perspective advanced by Légitime Défense, as Senghor elaborates:

> If the two reviews had undergone the same influences, they differentiated themselves from each other on several points: L'Etudiant Noir affirmed its priority as the primacy of the cultural. For us, politics were only an aspect of culture, whereas Légitime Défense maintained that political revolution must precede a cultural revolution, the latter only being possible if radical political change was achieved.[30]

For Césaire, Senghor, Damas and their compatriots the implications of the question of black identity were so broad that they challenged the foundations of western culture and western civilization. To elaborate their critique they plunged into an intense search into their origins--a voyage of discovery and self-discovery.

Unlike Légitime Défense, the L'Etudiant Noir group did not give themselves unreservedly to Marxism and surrealism as the instruments of liberation but rather tried to critically adapt them to the concrete requirements of the black situation. It is, however, difficult to ascertain the extent to which they were conscious adherents to either of these doctrines in the 1930's. Michel Leiris reports that during this initial period Césaire was a stranger to surrealism; however, since

Césaire did have contact with Léro and Légitime Défense it is difficult to imagine that surrealism was entirely foreign to him.[31] Further, Lilyan Kesteloot states that although Senghor and Damas were intimately linked with Philippe Soupault and Robert Desnos respectively, they practiced surrealism only slightly, while Césaire only adopted surrealism in its entirety during the war.[32] We shall have occasion to examine surrealism in greater detail below when we deal specifically with Césaire. For the moment, it is important to note that from the moment of their initial contact with surrealism the group around L'Etudiant Noir assumed an attitude toward it quite different from that of Légitime Défense. Senghor describes the stance of the former group in a letter to Lilyan Kesteloot, "We accepted surrealism as a means, but not as an end, as an ally and not as a master. We wanted inspiration from surrealism very much, but solely because surrealist writing recovered the power of speech of Black Africa [la parole négro-africaine]."[33]

For Aimé Césaire the theoretical position of Légitime Défense was inadequate because it merely assimilated French Marxism and French surrealism as he has described in a recent interview:

> There were two groups among us. On the one hand, men of the Left, communists of that time, such as J. Monnerot, E. Léro, René Menil, etc., who were communists and who had our sympathy for that. However, what I have to reproach them for--and perhaps I owe this to Senghor--is that they were French communists. There was nothing which would distinquish them from either the French surrealists or the French communists. To put it another way, their poems were color blind.

The Marxism of Légitime Défense neglected the racial dimension of the condition of colonized Blacks and was a source of difference between the two groups. Césaire continues: "At that time I reproached the com-

munists who neglected our black characteristics. They acted like communists, which was good, but like abstract communists. I then maintained that the political dispute will not eliminate our condition as Negroes."[34] Lack of theoretical breadth and flexibility combined with failure to fully appreciate the special situation of the Negro to lead the "abstract communists" of Légitime Défense into sterile dogmatism as Senghor has indicated: "Monnerot and his friends saw only health in communism, and, consequently, the anti-colonial struggle. I note, however, that these curious revolutionaries did not promote the independence of Africa, still less of the Antilles. That is to say, they contented themselves with repeating communist slogans."[35]

Further, Senghor recalls the differences with, and indeed resistance to, Marxism felt by the group around him. He recollects that Antillean students (Léro and his followers) tried to persuade his circle to become Marxists. They were, however, largely unsuccessful in this attempt. Senghor declares:

> We resisted up to the Second World War. What hindered us in Marxism was, with its atheism, a certain contempt for spiritual values: that discursive reason pushed to its ultimate limits which became a materialism without warmth, a blind determinism.[36]

Elsewhere Senghor writes that Marxism was for them a part of the scientific and technological Reason of western man. To adopt socialism and "join the army of the Proletariat" would not change their position as consumers of western culture--still colonized and still dependent. This is not to say that they failed to recognize the importance of Marxism. Senghor writes that although Césaire, Damas, and Diop did not then become Marxists, it does not mean that they denied the critical

value of Marxism and its power of negation. "They knew that 'socialist' revolution alone could destroy, along with capitalism, colonialism."[37] Césaire, Senghor, Damas and the group around L'Etudiant Noir aligned themselves firmly on the Left, but they tried to adapt Marxism to the particularities of the Negro condition. European Marxism alone was not adequate to fit the needs of these young colonial intellectuals, and they caste their nets more widely to develop the foundations of their revolt.

Consciousness of a black identity and the revolt against French assimilationist policies by Césaire, Damas, and Senghor were aided by several parallel though unconnected movements which created a climate that stimulated the growth of their perspective. During the twenties and thirties, in Césaire's view, the Negro became conscious of himself and the appearance of several unconnected movements, Negrismo, the Haitian Renaissance, the Harlem Renaissance, jazz, and Garveyism, expressed this consciousness. Of special importance to the founders of négritude was the poetry and perspective of the Harlem Renaissance. Senghor has recalled how Negro intellectuals from the United States met with their counterparts from Africa and the Caribbean in the Paris salon of Mlle. Paulette Nardal.[38] Further, Césaire earned his Diplôme d'études supèrieures with a monograph on American Negro poetry, while Senghor translated the works of Langston Hughes and others into French.[39] Césaire, in an interview with Haitian poet and militant René Depestre has described the importance of the Harlem Renaissance and its influence on him.

> I remember very well that then we read the poems of Langston Hughes and Claude MacKay. I knew who MacKay was because during the years 1929-1930 an anthology of poetry by Negro North Americans had appeared in France. In 1930, MacKay's novel Banjo appeared, which described the life of the dockers in Marseilles. This was truly one of the first works in which one saw an author speak of the Negro and give the Negro some kind of literary dignity. I must say, then, that without having undergone the influence of the North American Negroes, I have felt, at least, that the North American movement created the indispensible atmosphere for a very clear coming to consciousness among Negroes.... (T)he Negro Renaissance movement in the United States did not influence me in a literal manner, but it created the atmosphere that permitted me to become conscious of the solidarity of the black world.[40]

The interaction of similar intellectual movements led to a growing awareness of the unity of the black experience, whether in Africa or the Americas, and of the bonds common to members of the race.

Racial identity and solidarity were further developed by the composition of the group itself and, paradoxically, by the influence of Paris--the seat of metropolitan culture. Paris was a mecca for young intellectuals from the colonies, drawing together students from all over the colonized world and providing them with the means for communication and interaction. If colonialism had destroyed traditional African society it had also created wider possibilities for its growth. Senghor stresses the importance of Paris in stimulating his own self-awareness during his student years:

> (T)he Metropolis opened to me self-consciousness. If Paris is not the greatest museum of African art, nowhere else has Negro art been so greatly understood, commented upon, exalted, assimilated. Truly Paris, in revealing to me the values of my ancestral civilization, has obliged me to assume them and make them come to fruition within me. Not only me, but a whole generation of Negro students: Antilleans

as well as Africans.[41]

The presence of French West Indians, Africans, and natives of Madagascar in the L'Etudiant Noir group, unlike Légitime Défense which was exclusively Martinican, spurred the development of a broad racial consciousness and solidarity. Césaire recalls that some twenty Blacks of various origins came together for the first time. They discovered each other and the bonds of solidarity between them, and became aware of the value of the culture of Black Africa.[42] Senghor was crucial in aiding the group in discovering the importance of African culture and in recovering the accomplishments and value of African civilization from the degradation heaped upon it by European colonialism. Senghor, Césaire recalls, was instrumental in rediscovering a lost heritage. "In those days, I did not know Africa in the absolute. Very soon I met Senghor who spoke much of Africa. And this impressed me enormously. I owe to him the revelation of Africa and the African particularity."[43] The group tried to promote racial solidarity and to counter-act the antipathy and prejudice between Antillean and African that were the heritage of French domination. Léon Damas writes that one of the objectives of L'Etudiant Noir was to break down the barriers existing between black students in Paris: "L'Etudiant Noir...(had) for an objective the end of tribalization, of the clan system in force in the Latin Quarter. One ceased to be a student essentially Martinican, Guadeloupean, Guianean, African, Madagascaran, to be nothing more than a black student, pure and simple."[44]

To smash the myth of "savage Africa" and to carve themselves an identity other than that of "Frenchmen with white skins," Senghor,

Césaire, and Damas sought to restore the merit and grandeur of African civilization, both as a source of pride for black people everywhere and for its contributions to the human community. Their reappraisal of African history and culture was greatly aided by European anthropology--especially Leo Frobenius, whose Histoire de la civilisation africaine was much read and discussed by these young students. Frobenius was especially important for Césaire and Damas who, as Antilleans, looked upon Africa as outsiders and knew nothing of it firsthand. Frobenius' work represented the first serious attempt to show the importance of the Negro race in the development of ancient Egyptian civilization, as well as to recognize the existence of sophisticated cultural forms in sub-Saharan Africa. Africans, he proclaimed were "civilized to the marrow of their bones!... The idea of the 'barbarous Negro' is a European invention which has, in consequence, dominated Europe until the beginning of this century."[45] For the first time, a western scholar recognized not only the existence of an African civilization but its social and cultural merits. The perspective of Frobenius was carried on and expanded by anthropologists like Maurice Delafosse, Théodore Monod, Georges Hardy, Marcel Griaul, and later Placide Tempels and Melville Herskovits. These anthropological writings not only raised the self-esteem of black men and gave the Negro the aura of "respectability" in some white circles, but provided scientific arguments to counter the ideologies of colonization--the "civilizing mission" of white Europe.

With increasing perception and consciousness of the historical experience and racial identity of black people as well as their relation

to white Europe, the students involved in L'Etudiant Noir began to struggle against the alienation of the colonized and the assimilationist policies of the colonizer. In a manifesto in L'Etudiant Noir Césaire expressed the attitude of the group toward the colonial experience:

> The history of the Negro is a drama in three acts... Negroes were at first enslaved (idiots and brutes it was said)... Then a more indulgent look was turned toward them. It was said that they were better than was believed and attempts were made to mold them. They were assimilated. They were "big children and the school of the Masters, for only a child is perpetually at the Master's school.

Césaire and his fellows rebelled at this condition. He continues:

> Young Negroes of today desire neither servitude nor "assimilation." They want emancipation.... Servitude and assimilation resemble each other: they are two forms of passivity.
>
> During these two periods, the Negro has been equally sterile: Emancipation is, on the contrary, action and creation.
>
> Black youth want to act and create. It wants to have its poets and its novelists who will speak to it of its unhappiness and its grandeur. It wants to contribute to universal life, to the humanization of humanity.[46]

L'Etudiant Noir called on black students, and more widely the black race to liberate themselves from the burdens of assimilation--to reject the hierarchy of values and the alienating relations forced upon them--and to no longer be consumers of western culture, but to produce their own culture on their own terms.

******

In 1939, at the age of twenty-six, Aimé Césaire composed his most outstanding work, Cahier d'un retour au pays natal. The son of a minor functionary in Martinique, he was a precocious student, leaving the college at Fort-de-France to continue his studies at the lycée Louis-le-

Grand in Paris. At a very young age he was admitted to the Ecole Normale Supérieure, the first Negro ever to be admitted. An outstanding student, he stood at the head of his class. It was during his early days in Paris that he made contact with black student groups and commenced his researches into ethnography (notably Frobenius and Delafosse), and French literature (Mallarmé, Lautreaumont, Claudel).[47]

After ten years of activity in France, Césaire decided to return to Martinique. The reasons for this decision are not known to us, but they provided him with the occasion for serious reflection. As an Antillean he was most exposed to the painful alienation of the assimilated intellectual: his own cultural identity was obliterated by 300 years of history. Other colonial intellectuals either remained in France, or, if they returned home, took up the civil service careers their educations had prepared them for. Those who returned joined the native elite which despised the illiterate and unassimilated mass of the population. Césaire was already in revolt against the sham of assimilation. In Etudiant Noir he had cried that black youth did not want to play roles--it wanted to be itself.[48] But who was he? What were the people of Martinique, and what was his relation to them? He was doubly exiled--as a member of the elite he was cut off from the West Indian masses, and as a West Indian he was separated from the cultural sources of Africa. These were his concerns when he accompanied his friend Peter Guberina to the Adriatic coast of Yugoslavia for a holiday before making the voyage home. It was there, in a few weeks, that he wrote the Cahier d'un retour au pays natal to try to answer those questions. The poem was autobiographical. "It was," Césaire noted in his interview with Depestre, "a book in which

I tried to take possession of myself."[49] In it Césaire expressed not only the contradictions of his personal life, but also helped to form a West Indian identity as well as express the condition of the black man in a white world.

The opening lines of the Cahier explode the myth of "les Antilles heureuses" and herald Césaire's revolt against colonialism, the values of the West Indian elite, and the fraud of assimilation. Instead of a tropical paradise, Césaire sees, "the hungry West Indies, pitted with smallpox, dynamited with alcohol, stranded in the mud of this bay, in the dirt of this city sinisterly stranded."[50] The city (Fort-de-France) lies inert, flat, sprawled--its inactivity, poverty, desolation reflected in the lives of its inhabitants.

> At the end of the dawn, life knocked flat, you do not know where to send your aborted dreams, the river of life is so desperately torpid in its bed; there is neither swelling or sinking, but uncertainty of flowing; there is lamentable emptiness; the heavy impartiality of boredom castes its shadow on all things equally; in the stagnant air not one breach is made by a clear bird.[51]

The people are disinherited with "no share in whatever is openly expressed, affirmed, freed in this land.... No share in this scorn, this freedom, this audacity."[52] Disease, famine, fear and anguish haunt the island. Césaire cannot base the identity of either himself or his people on illusion and must face the concrete reality of the black man in the Antilles squarely. "I clearly read in my pulse that exoticism is no sustenance for me."[53]

The degradation of the race is rooted in slavery--the source of cruel suffering and the loss of patrimony. The memory of slavery echoes through the Cahier.

> I hear from below the curses of the chained, the hiccups of the dying, the splash of someone thrown into the sea...the baying of a woman in labour...the scraping of nails seeking throats...the chuckles of the whip...the scurrying of vermin across worn-out bodies.

Slavery threatened to rob the Black of his humanity. "And this country cried for centuries that we were stupid brutes," Césaire declares, "that the pulsations of humanity stopped before the doors of the slave compound...they branded us with red-hot irons and we slept in our excrement and they sold us on the market for less than an ell of English cloth..."[54] "[Our] only incontestable achievement has been the endurance record under the lash," is his reply to the shame that the slave past inspired in the Antillean elite. Slavery gave way to wage slavery in Martinique, but there existed a continuity in the domination and oppression of the Negro. In racist society the Negro was a beast stripped of all humanity. "[O]ne can at any moment seize, beat up or kill--yes really kill him--without having to account to anybody, without having to excuse oneself to anyone."[55] The white man's will to degrade the Black was total.

But the colonizing mission has taken its toll on Europe.

> Hear the white world
> horribly fatigued by its immense effort
> its rebellious articulations crack under the hard stars
> its inflexibility of blue steel pierce the mystic flesh
> hear its treacherous victories trumpeting its defeats
> hear with grandiose alibis the pitiful stumbling
>
> Mercy for our omniscient and naive conquerors![56]

The West has built up the power to rule the world, but the Reason of western man--the instrument of his domination--has limited his capacity to understand. The standards of civilization are the justification for order. Reason is "the whip's corolla," the poet writes, and that very Reason has corrupted the white man's sensibility. He can no longer per-

ceive in human terms. Europe would like to think that history has stopped with its ascendency and that its accomplishments represent a universal humanity. But Europe can only think this way because what it calls Reason has blinded it to the existence of the colonized whose exploitation it profits from but whose humanity it denies. It is in the name of these oppressed and exploited that Césaire denies Europe's claim to represent all humanity, and it is through their rebellion that he proclaims history has not yet run its course. Against the inhuman reason of the West Césaire poses the madness of the colonized.

> Because we hated you, you and
> your reason, we call upon
> the early dementia, the flaming madness
> of a tenacious cannibalism

To the European--insensitive to the suffering of men--it seems madness, but madness is the revolt of the dispossessed asserting their humanity against their oppressors. Césaire exposes western rationality as unreason. Its calculations do not work out. "Two plus two makes five," he declares. There is a logic to the madness of resistance.

> that the forest meows
> that the tree gets the chestnuts [<u>marrons</u>] out of the fire

The master dismisses as absurd the signals from the forest which help the runaway (<u>marron</u>) escape the fire of his slavery.[57] Césaire celebrates the human dimension of the oppressed which lie beyond the rationality of civilized man and which are lost to him. Indeed, the very standards of "civilized" Europe are inadequate to measure man.

> <u>Eia</u> for those who invented nothing
> for those who have never discovered
> for those who never conquered
>
> but, struck, deliver themselves to the essence of all things,

ignorant of surfaces, but taken by the very movement of things
not caring to conquer, but playing the game of the world...

Eia for grief at the udders of reincarnated tears
For those who explored nothing
For those who never mastered

Eia for joy
Eia for love
Eia for grief at the udders of reincarnated tears[58]

The humanity of the slaves and the descendents of slaves is imbedded in their very suffering.

The Negro does not merely acquiesce in his oppression. "The old Negritude progressively disintegrates," Césaire shouts. No more does the Negro fatalistically believe "that he had no power over his own destiny; that an evil God had for all eternity laid his pelvic parts under interdiction; and he ought to be a good Negro; to honestly content himself with being a good Negro; to sincerely believe in his indignity..." History is compressed; the future of the slave is immanent in his past. The belly of the slaver convulses "as the frightful tapeworm of his cargo gnaws the foetid guts of the strange nurseling of the seas!" The "poor old Negro" finds the taste of liberty in his own spilled blood.

And the "poor-old-Negro" is standing up

the seated "poor-old-Negro"
unexpectedly standing
upright in the hold
upright in the cabins
upright on the bridge
upright in the wind
upright under the sun
upright in the blood

upright
and
free

Césaire uses the slave revolt both to mark the beginning of resistance with the beginning of slavery and as a metaphor to trace the development of the Black's struggle for freedom, past, present, future to its final outcome--liberation. In poetic language Césaire presages Fanon's discussion of the inevitable progression of the struggle of the colonized from blind revolt to conscious revolution.

> there he is:
> unexpectedly upright
> in the rigging
> at the bar
> at the compass
> at the map
> under the stars
>
> upright
> and
> free
>
> and the lustral ship advances unafraid on the crumbling water.[59]

The assimilated member of the native elite, however, turns his back on the life and death struggle of the oppressed. He repudiates the colonized and joins the colonizer. "There are those...," Césaire writes, "who believe that one is a Negro as one is a second-class clerk: anticipating better and with the possibility of rising above this state; those who beat the drum of surrender before themselves, those who live in the bottom of their own pit; those who cloak themselves in proud pseudo-morphoses; those who say to Europe: 'Look, I can bow and scrape like you, like you I can pay compliments, in short I am not different from you; pay no attention to my black skin: the sun burned me.'"[60] The assimilated Black can only bow before his superior and deny his identity, his history and his dignity. "I salute the three centuries which support my civic rights and minimized my blood," Césaire declares

sarcastically.[61] Self-denial is the price of acceptance. But assimilation is superficial. Beneath the veneer of "civilization," however, lies the unconquered "savage". It is this inescapable identity which Césaire embraces.

> I know my crimes; there is nothing to be said in my defense
> Dances. Idols. Backsliding. Me too.
>
> I have assassinated God with my laziness with my words with my gestures with my obscene songs
>
> I have carried the plumes of the parrot, the skin of the musk-rat
> I have exhausted the patience of the missionaries, insulted the benefactors of humanity.
> Defied Tyre. Challenged Sidon.
> Worshipped Zambezi.
> The extent of my perversity confounds me!
>
> But why live jungle, still hide the
> live zero of my mendacity,
> why not with a well learned nobleness, celebrate
> the horrible leap of my pahouine ugliness?[62]

Incorrigible and unrepentent, Césaire defiantly hurls his challenge at the West. "Take me as I am. I don't adapt to you."[63]

Césaire accepts his blackness, his négritude. He embraces the struggle of the colonized as his own. But unlike Senghor, he does not seek a noble lineage to legitimate his race. "No," he shouts, "we have never been amazons of the king of Dahomey, nor princes of Ghana with eight hundred camels, nor wise men in Timbuctoo under Askia the Great; nor architects in Djene, nor mahdis nor warriors. Under our armpits, we do not feel the itch of those who bore the lance."[64] Such claims on the part of Blacks subjugated by Europe can only transform the real accomplishments of Africa into a myth of a Golden Age. In the Age of Colonialism and Imperialism the dignity of black people is borne out of

suffering and struggle. Césaire finds his négritude in the depressed sub-proletariat of the Antilles--the descendents of slaves.

> I accept. I accept.
> And the flogged Negro who says: "Pardon, my master"
> and the twenty-nine blows of the legal whip
> and the cell four feet high
> and the spiked iron collar
> and my runaway audacity hamstrung
> and the fleur de lys which flows from the red hot iron on the fat of my shoulder
> and the kennel of Monsieur VAULTIER MAYENCOURT, where I barked six months like a poodle
> and Monsieur BRAFIN
> and Monsieur DE FOURNIOL
> and Monsieur DE LA MAHAUDIERE
> and the yaws
> and the mastiff
> the suicide
> the promiscuity
> the half-boot
> the stock
> the wooden horse
> the turnscrew
> the whip-cord[65]

Neither does Césaire build a one-sided image of the slave as the Great Rebel--such myths only distort the concrete reality upon which the people of the Antilles must found their social identity. "[A]nd the Negro each day more base, more cowardly, more sterile, less profound, more exteriorized, more separated from himself, more shrewd with himself, less immediate with himself. I accept, I accept all that."[66]

In accepting his race in all the complexity of its existence, Césaire calls for the termination of its degradation and makes himself into an instrument of the struggle.

> make me the executioner of these mighty deeds
> this is the time to gird one's loins like a valiant man...

To the victims of slavery and colonialism he swears, "I will not make my peace with the World on your buried backs."[67] Césaire wishes to fuse

himself with the suffering masses and place his skills at the service of their cause. "Embrace me without fear... If all I can do is speak, at least I shall speak for you.... My tongue shall serve those miseries which have no tongue, my voice the liberty of those who founder in the dungeons of despair."[68] He assumes the role of muntu, the African sorceror, who, summoning forth a new world with the power of his word, seeks to restore to his people their lost subjectivity.

> I should discover once again the secret of great communications and of great combustions. I should say storm. I should say river. I should say tornado. I should say leaf. I should say tree. I should be wet by all rains, made damp with all dews. I should like to roll like frenzied blood on the slow current of the eye of words like mad horses, clots of fresh children, curfews, vestiges of temples, precious stones far enough away to discourage miners. Whoever would not comprehend me would not comprehend the roaring of the tiger.[69]

The poet moves from the observer and describer of reality to the transformer of reality. His poetry is praxis--a world-transforming activity. His poems are the "armes miraculeuses" which transform his dream into action. The power of his word smashes the static relationships of colonial society. The poet is the creator, his voice, a spearhead.

> I call the race to be finally free
> to produce out of its closed intimacy
> the succulence of fruit.[70]

He calls upon the revolutionary power of his blackness to reaffirm his humanity.

> my Negritude is not a stone, its deafness thrown against the clamor of the day
> my Negritude is not a speck of dead water on the dead eye of earth
> my Negritude is neither a tower nor a cathedral
>
> it thrusts into the red flesh of the soil
> it thrusts into the warm flesh of the sky

Using the symbolism of his "Bambara ancestors" in the last two lines, Césaire depicts the intimate union of man with the earth and the sky. Césaire has appropriated the spiritual values of Africa to affirm a new humanism.[71]

In his famous essay Black Orpheus, Jean-Paul Sartre contends that Césaire's Negritude is an "anti-racist racism"--a moment of separation or negativity in which black men must identify themselves on the basis of race. This moment, for Sartre, must precede the eventual unity of all oppressed peoples in a common struggle. The Negro becomes conscious of his race in order to deny it. "It is when Negritude renounces itself that it finds itself; it is when it accepts losing that it has won: the colored man--and he alone--can be asked to renounce the pride of his color. He is the one who is walking on this ridge between past particularism--which he has just climbed--and future universalism, which will be the twilight of his Negritude; he is the one who looks to the end of particularism in order to find the dawn of the universal." In Sartre's eyes, only this road will lead to the abolition of racial differences.[72]

It is certainly true that the Negro cannot depend upon the European working class to gain his liberation for him, and he must struggle against his own oppression. However, the struggles of those oppressed by western capitalism are neither logically nor historically separate from each other. Indeed, Césaire's thought goes beyond the category of race to proclaim the solidarity of the oppressed.

As there are hyena-men and leopard-men, I would be a jew-man
a kaffir-man
a hindu-man-from-Calcutta
a man-from-Harlem-who-doesn't-vote[73]

Sartre distorts the complexity of the poet's vision and of the historical process. He confines Negritude to the simple negation in a thesis-antithesis-synthesis progression and ignores the positive and negative dimensions of both Césaire's thought and the black liberation struggle. Negritude, as Césaire conceives of it, is an affirmation of a new humanism--a humanism which will not deny his race and submerge it under some abstract and questionable universal culture, but one which will accept that race and allow it free expression in a community of men. For Césaire the humanism proclaimed by Europe is a lie. Humanism cannot be based on the exploitation of human beings. In a passage that recalls Marx's statement, "The real history of humanity will begin," Césaire calls for a new humanism--one which is universal because all men contribute to it, but one which will allow for their diversity.

for it is not true that the work of man is finished

that we have nothing to do in the world
that we are parasites in the world
that we have only to accept the way of the world

but the work of man has only begun
and it remains for man to conquer all prohibitions immobilized in the corners of his fervor
and no race has a monopoly of beauty, intelligence, strength
and there is room for all at the rendez-vous of conquest...[74]

Césaire's vision is of a regenerated world and a brotherhood of men created in revolutionary struggle--"earth where all is free and fraternal, my earth."[75]

NOTES

[1]Frantz Fanon, Black Skins, White Masks, p. 18.

[2]Dr. Jean Price-Mars, De Saint-Domingue à Haiti, Paris, 1959, p. 91, cited in Kesteloot, Les Ecrivains Noirs de Langue Française, Brussels, 1963, pp. 31-32.

[3]Price-Mars, De Saint Domingue, p. 91, in Kesteloot, Les Ecrivains Noirs, p. 31.

[4]René Menil, "De L'Exotisme Colonial," La Nouvelle Critique 106 (May, 1959), pp. 139-145.

[5]Kesteloot, Les Ecrivains Noirs, pp. 38-39. Significantly Mme. Kesteloot gathered this material from a publication of the French colonial ministry entitled Les Antilles Heureuses, (Paris, 1945) which gathered the works in hommage to "all those who dreamt of the isles with the soul of a poet. The name of Aimé Césaire is only mentioned in this collection.

[6]René Menil, "De L'Exotisme Colonial," p. 140.

[7]Jacques Louis Hymans, ("French Influences of Léopold Senghor's Theory of Negritude, 1928-1948," Race, VII (London, 1965-66), pp. 365-370.) and Immanuel Geiss (Panafrikanismus: Zur Geschichte der Dekolonisation, Europäische Verlaganstalt, Frankfurt/Main, 1968, p. 244.) emphasize the importance of the Revue du Monde Noire as a precurser of négritude. Associated with this review, published by Dr. Leo Sajous, were René Maran, Dr. Jean Price-Mars, Mlle. Paulette Nardal, literary figures from the West Indies; anthropologists Maurice Delafosse and Leo Frobenius; and three prominent figures of the Harlem Renaissance Alain Locke, Langston Hughes, and Claude MacKay. (Also see J. Ayo Langley, "Pan-Africanism in Paris, 1924-36," Journal of Modern African Studies, 7, 1 (1969), pp. 88-89.) However, Léon Damas, with Léopold Senghor and Aimé Césaire a founder of the négritude school, lays stress upon the importance of Légitime Défense and declares that Etienne Léro, its founder, dominated that phase of poetry by French colonials. (See Léon Damas, Poètes d'expression française, Paris, 1947, p. 11.) Furthermore, Légitime Défense represents the first effort in this direction by natives of the French Antilles. Other signers of the manifesto were Thélus Léro, Maurice-Sabas Quitman, Michel Pilotin, Simone Yoyotte, and Auguste Thésée.

[8]Abiola Irele, "Negritude or Black Cultural Nationalism," Journal of Modern African Studies, 3, 3 (1965), pp. 343-344.

[9]The title of the review is taken from a brochure written by Breton against the P. C. F. in 1926. (Kesteloot, Les Ecrivains Noirs, p. 45.)

[10]Légitime Défense, Liechtenstein, 1970, pp. 1-2.

[11]Etienne Léro, "Misère d'une Poésie," Légitime Défense, p. 10.

[12]Damas, Poètes, p. 11.

[13]Irele, "Negritude," p. 345; Damas, Poètes, p. 11.

[14]Léro, "Misère d'une Poésie," p. 10.

[15]Léro, "Misère d'une Poésie," p. 10.

[16]Léro, "Misère d'une Poésie," p. 10.

[17]Léro, "Misère d'une Poésie," pp. 10, 12. It is worth noting here the identification of the colonized black masses with emotional, spiritual, and poetic values--the full range of human experience as opposed to the confining and dehumanizing forces of western capitalism. Léro wrote of Claude MacKay and Langston Hughes as revolutionary poets who brought us "marinés dans l'alcool rouge, l'amour africain de la vie, la joie africaine de l'amour, le rêve africain de la mort." (Léro, "Misère d'une Poésie," p. 12.) This theme runs throughout the négritude poets. It is Césaire's contention that it is Africa's task to humanize the technological world created by the West. However, in certain circumstances this tendency can lead to mystification as in the case of Senghor.

[18]Léopold Senghor, Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malagache de langue française, Paris, 1948, p. 49.

[19]See Langley, "Pan-Africanism in Paris," pp. 69-94.

[20]Etienne Léro, "Civilisation," Légitime Défense, p. 9.

[21]Légitime Défense, p. 1.

[22]Légitime Défense, p. 1.

[23]Léro, "Misère d'une Poésie," p. 12.

[24]Léopold Senghor, Conférence inédite Langage et poésie, cited in Kesteloot, Les Ecrivains Noirs, p. 44.

[25]Kesteloot, Les Ecrivains Noirs, p. 91.

[26]Senghor, Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie, p. 49.

[27]Senghor, Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie, p. 55.

[28]Copies of L'Etudiant Noir are extremely rare. Mme. Kesteloot, whose documentation is otherwise complete, had to rely on testimony and an unpublished manuscript of Léon Damas with regard to it.

[29]Letter from Léopold Senghor to Lilyan Kesteloot, (February, 1960), in Kesteloot, Les Ecrivains Noirs, p. 92.

[30]Letter from Léopold Senghor to Lilyan Kesteloot, (February, 1960), in Kesteloot, Les Ecrivains Noirs, p. 92.

[31]Michel Leiris, Contacts de civilisations en Martinique, Paris, 1955, p. 109.

[32]Kesteloot, Les Ecrivains Noirs, p. 94.

[33]Léopold Senghor, Letter to Lilyan Kesteloot, (February, 1960), in Kesteloot, Les Ecrivains Noirs, p. 94.

[34]"Un Orfeo del Caribe," an interview with Aimé Césaire conducted by René Depestre appearing in Aimé Césaire, Poesías, Havana, n.d., pp. XXII-XXIII.

[35]Léopold Senghor, Letter to Lilyan Kesteloot, (February, 1960), in Kesteloot, Les Ecrivains Noirs, p. 92. It should be noted that Harold Cruse in his The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual (New York, 1967) makes a very similar criticism of the relation of black intellectuals to the Communist Party in the United States although his perspective is quite different from that of Césaire. "It was the white Communist leaders who actually laid down the line, but the Negro leaders followed it without deviation.... The Negro intellectuals and radical theorists of the 1920's and 1930's did not, themselves, fight for intellectual clarity. They were unable to create a new black revolutionary synthesis of what was applicable from Garveyism (especially economic nationalism), and what they had learned from Marxism that was valid." (pp. 150-151.)

[36]Léopold Senghor, Pierre Teilhard du Chardin et la politique Africaine, Paris, 1969, p. 22. It is difficult to ascertain whether or not the rest of the group shared Senghor's religious bias.

[37]Léopold Senghor, Liberté I, Négritude et Humanisme, Paris, 1964, pp. 133-134.

[38]Kesteloot, Les Ecrivains Noirs, p. 63.

[39]Irele, "Negritude," p. 335f.

[40]"Un Orfeo del Caribe," pp. XXIV-XXV.

[41]Senghor, Liberte I, pp. 313-314.

[42]"Un Orfeo del Caribe," p. XXVI.

[43]"Un Orfeo del Caribe," p. XXIII.

[44]Léon Damas, Notre génération (inédit) in Kesteloot, Les Ecrivains Noirs, p. 91.

[45]Leo Frobenius, Histoire de la civilisation africaine, Paris, 1952, pp. 14-15.

[46]Aimé Césaire, text appearing in L'Etudiant Noir cited by Léon Damas in Notre génération (inédit) appearing in Kesteloot, Les Ecrivains Noirs, pp. 99-100.

[47]"Un Orfeo del Caribe," pp. IX, XXV.

[48]Cited in Kesteloot, Les Ecrivains Noirs, p. 99.

[49]"Un Orfeo del Caribe," p. XVIII.

[50]Aimé Césaire, Cahier d'un retour au pays natal, Paris, 1956, p. 11. All translations from the Cahier are by Dr. Emile Snyders and appear in this bi-lingual edition.

[51]Césaire, Cahier, p. 31.

[52]Césaire, Cahier, p. 15.

[53]Césaire, Cahier, p. 73.

[54]Césaire, Cahier, pp. 81-83.

[55]Césaire, Cahier, p. 37.

[56]Césaire, Cahier, pp. 103-105.

[57]Césaire, Cahier, pp. 53-55, and Jahnheinz Jahn, Muntu, London, 1961, p. 144.

[58]Césaire, Cahier, pp. 101-105.

[59]Césaire, Cahier, pp. 129-135.

[60]Césaire, Cahier, pp. 127-129.

[61]Césaire, Cahier, p. 89.

[62]Césaire, Cahier, pp. 59-61.

[63]Césaire, Cahier, p. 69.

[64]Césaire, Cahier, p. 81.

[65]Césaire, Cahier, p. 115.

[66]Césaire, Cahier, p. 123.

[67]Césaire, Cahier, pp. 107, 119.

[68]Césaire, Cahier, pp. 41-43.

[69]Césaire, Cahier, p. 39.

[70]Senghor, Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie, p. 55; Césaire, Cahier, p. 109. Jahnheinz Jahn in Muntu (pp. 135-136) compares the creative force of Césaire's poetic language to the power of the sorceror's word in African philosophy.

[71]Césaire, Cahier, p. 101; Abiola Irele, "Aimé Césaire: An Approach to his Poetry," in Ulli Beier, Introduction to African Literature, Evanston, 1967, p. 67.

[72]Jean-Paul Sartre, "Black Orpheus," (translated by John MacCombie) in Jules Chametzky and Sidney Kaplan, eds., Black and White in American Culture, 1969, pp. 420, 448.

[73]Césaire, Cahier, p. 37.

[74]Césaire, Cahier, p. 125.

[75]Césaire, Cahier, p. 41.

CHAPTER III

RETURN TO THE NATIVE LAND

> Embrace me without fear.... If all I can do is speak, at least I shall speak for you.... My tongue shall serve those miseries which have no tongue, my voice the liberty of those who founder in the dungeons of despair.
>
> --Aimé Césaire

> Nous sommes de ceux qui disent non à l'ombre.
>
> --Aimé Césaire

In 1940, with the fall of France to the Nazis, the French fleet in the Caribbean declared its allegiance to the Vichy regime. Denied freedom of the seas by the allied navies, two French battleships, the Béarn and the Emile-Bertin, were blockaded in Martinique for four years, and the island was inundated with some ten thousand white French sailors, many of whom had managed to send for their families. This influx put an immense strain on food, housing and other facilities on the island. In this atmosphere, the latent racism of the Europeans became overt. Author Peter Geismar describes the tensions on the island:

> The sailors expropriated Fort-de-France's bars, restaurants, hotels, whorehouses, beaches, shops, sidewalks, taxis, and better apartments. In the summer of 1940, any sailor had one hundred times the currency in his pockets than the average Martinican had....

> What money failed to do brute power accomplished. Cafes were immediately segregated: black waiters and women, white customers. In the stores sailors expected to be served before Martinicans.... The servicemen weren't going to fraternize with black males. The women were another matter: the white visitors requisitioned them; they considered every young girl on the island as a prostitute. Rape often replaced remuneration for those unwilling to conform to the sailors' expectations. The police, used to operating in a colonial environment where blacks were always in the wrong, dismissed rape victims as overpriced prostitutes. In military courts, the navy's word always carried more weight than the Martinicans' complaints.[1]

The békés, the local white ruling class, were strong supporters of Admiral Robert's military dictatorship, a fact which Daniel Guerin claims helps account for the sharp swing to the left in Martinique after the war.[2] This prolonged exposure to racial prejudice caused the black West Indians to react. Their response was a combination of French nationalism and racial consciousness. West Indians, with the encouragement of Free French radio broadcasts, came to believe that their France had not lost the war but was sold out by traitors. And among these traitors were none other than the sailors of the French fleet. The Vichy intruders were part of a bad France while they, the Martinicans, were the representatives of the true France. "One then witnessed an extraordinary sight: West Indians refusing to take off their hats while the Marseillaise was being played," recalls Frantz Fanon. "What West Indian can forget those Thursday evenings when on the Esplanade de la Savane, patrols of armed sailors demanded silence and attention while the national anthem was being played?" he asks. True Frenchmen, popular belief held, were not racists, and because of their behavior the sailors were not considered to be French, but were even suspected of

being German. The West Indian felt obliged to defend his "virtuous color" before ten thousand racists. Césaire's presence was an important bulwark in the defense. Upon Césaire's return to Martinique, Fanon recalls, the populace thought that an educated man who proclaimed "that it is good and fine to be a Negro" must be slightly mad. But under the pressures of the racist Vichy regime the people joined in his chorus, a move that was, in Fanon's words, "dancing on the edge of the precipice."[3]

During these years Césaire refused to submit to the restrictions of Admiral Robert's dictatorship and was in continual conflict with the regime. Césaire and his wife Suzanne both taught at the lycee at Fort-de-France. The school-day began with a salute to the flag, a ceremony which both Suzanne and Aimé Césaire missed regularly. Their absence was sufficient cause for both to be threatened with the loss of their jobs. They were only saved by an unexpected petition on their behalf by the parents of their students to Admiral Robert. The students were moved to initiate a defense of the teacher who made Rimbaud and Mallarmé come alive for them and whose courage before foreign authority they admired. Admiral Robert deferred before the pressure of their locally prominent parents and Césaire was "tolerated."[4]

In 1941, Césaire decided to found the review Tropiques. The difficulties were immense. Martinique, cut off from Europe, was thrown back upon its own resources. Intellectual life on the island was atrophied. Its normal subordination to the cultural life of the metropolis was compounded by the lack of freedom of speech and of the press under Robert, the lack of books, reviews and journals from France, shortage

of paper, and the difficulties in gathering an adequate staff. As they continued to put forth new and more radical ideas they lost their more bourgeois collaborators and had to depend on the youth of the island for help and for an audience. Only René Menil, a veteran of Légitime Défense, made any serious and regular contribution. Césaire and his wife had to write a great number of articles themselves, try to recruit collaborators, correct proofs, and handle transactions with the printers and financial problems. Above all, the production of the journal was complicated by governmental censorship and the hostility of the black middle class of Martinique. Tropiques was supposed to restrict itself to "folklore" and not engage in political affairs. From the first the journal was suspected of "subversive tendencies" and its pages came under careful scrutiny for allusions to the contemporary state of affairs. Furthermore, the native bourgeoisie, directly attacked by Tropiques because of their cultural servility, responded by trying to sabotage Césaire's efforts. Unable to officially forbid the review, the government brought pressure to bear on the printers who, one by one, declined to print the journal. This was a long drawn out process, however, and Tropiques appeared for a period of three years.[5]

In spite of the trying conditions they had to work under the writers of Tropiques spoke out courageously. Martinique, a tiny, insignificant island in the backwaters of world affairs whose people had been degraded by their history, became in those years a microcosm of the forces at work throughout the entire world; and Césaire's position as a Martinican gave him a unique perspective on the struggle against fascism and what was necessary to defeat it. Fifteen years later, in his famous Discourse

on Colonialism, Césaire wrote that colonialism had prepared Europe for fascism. Before becoming its victim Europe had been its accomplice. Fascism was nothing else than colonialism brought home and turned against the white man. What occidental civilization condemns in nazism "is not the crime in itself, the crime against man. It is not the humiliation of man in itself, but is the crime against the white man, it is the humiliation of the white man, and having applied colonialist conduct to Europe which up until then had only been turned against the Arabs of Algeria, the coolies of India and the Negroes of Africa." The barbarism that is fascism went to the heart of western society. "At the base of capitalism, desirous of surviving, there is Hitler. At the base of formal humanism and philosophical renunciation, there is Hitler."[6] The experience of the war-time dictatorship of Martinique was part of the raw material from which this perspective developed.

With the spectre of fascism threatening the world, the Caribbean, in Césaire's view, could no longer be seen as isolated and backward, but rather as part of a global system. The peoples of the Caribbean had a historical role to play in the unfolding drama. Only with their participation, and indeed the participation of all the colonized and oppressed could fascism finally be defeated and a new world created. Césaire's voice was a call to action.

> But it is no longer time to be a parasite in the world. Rather it is a question of saving it. It is time to gird one's loins like a valiant man.... Wherever we look, the shadow gains. One after another the hearth fires are extinquished. The circle of the shadow closes itself among the cries of men and the howling of beasts. However, we are among those who say NO to the shadow. We know that the health of the world depends upon us too.

> The earth has need of the most humble of its children.
> The shadow gains...
> --Ah! All hope is not too
> much to look this century in the
> face!--Men of good will will make
> a new light in the world.[7]

Césaire calls upon the people of Martinique to break out of the sterility, silence, and resignation of their existence. Only if they assume their responsibility and resist can colonialism, capitalism, and fascism be rooted out and a fraternal world created.

Before the people of Martinique could play their historical role, however, it was, in Césaire's eyes, necessary that they overcome their own alienation. "The Martinican," Suzanne Césaire wrote, "was stranded because, failing to recognize his own profound nature, he tried to live a life that was not his own." It was a gigantic "collective lie." The writers of Tropiques saw it as necessary to break the legitimacy of assimilation. "Not a single assimilated Martinican will recognize that he only imitates, for his present situation seems to him natural, spontaneous, and borne out of the most legitimate aspirations. And in doing this he will be sincere. He truly does not know that he imitates. He ignores his true nature, which nonetheless exists," continued Mme. Césaire.[8] Unable to attack colonialism, the root of their alienation, by name because of the wartime censorship, the writers of Tropiques focused their attention on the consequences of assimilation in Martinique and on the native elite which, with "neither a great thought nor a strong passion," perpetuated the mediocrity of colonial life. Tropiques played the role of an aesthetic vanguard whose role was to catalyze the consciousness of the people. Assimilation had robbed the people of Martinique

of their voice and only a total reformation of their cultural orientation could restore it.

> Up to now, those who have spoken have not expressed themselves, and those who have something to say have found themselves without a voice. It is only by a total conversion of our aesthetic attitude that we will be able to pass from a formal conception of our art to that art itself. It is not a question of ameliorating condemned art. To ameliorate what is bad is to aggravate the evil. It is necessary to effect a change of quality. It is that change which we announce.[9]

Tropiques sought to analyze and create the conditions for an authentic expression of West Indian culture.

Césaire and his comrades emphasized the negro element of Antillean culture and reacted against the "false elites" which, hateful of its origins, rejected that component and embraced French culture uncritically. To root out the alienation of the people it was necessary that Tropiques pose the question of their identity and remove the stigma attached to Africa and the slave past. The accomplishment of this task entailed the continuation of the work Césaire had begun as a student in Paris. The review dedicated long articles to the revaluation of African culture which put in question the absolute supremacy of occidental civilization, and also the work of Leo Frobenius was emphasized. "Africa did not only mean a reaching out elsewhere for us, but also a deepening of ourselves," wrote Suzanne Césaire.[10] Menil and Césaire also called for a re-examination of the folklore of Martinique, seeing in it the living record of the black experience in the Antilles. "When one has stripped all the archives, gone through all the dossiers, searched through all the papers of the abolitionists, it is to these stories that those who wish

to seize the great misery of our slave fathers in all its eloquence and pathos will turn."[11] The writers of Tropiques did not deny French influences or claim to be purely African but instead sought to forge a cultural synthesis based upon historical experience, capable of expressing the unique heritage of the people of Martinique.

Tropiques also stressed the solidarity of the race and devoted much attention to the discussion of American Negro poetry. For Césaire, the Negro poet of the United States was a symbol of the entire race, outcaste, enslaved, humiliated because of color. This inquiry also afforded Césaire and his comrades the opportunity to criticize their own role. The black poet must be the spokesman of his people who "must assume their total nature" and with seriousness and passion "make his heroes from the everyday Negro." He must have the courage to accept his color and his social origins and recognize his fraternity with the miserable masses of his race. He must represent them and live their problems.[12] Because the journal was officially forbidden from engaging in politics, Mme. Kesteloot suggests that the discussion of American poetry provided the vehicle for bringing certain themes before the public. It was, in her view, a call to the black writers of Martinique to accept their responsibilities to the people who, like the American Blacks, were enslaved and humiliated.[13]

Surrealism was an essential component of Tropiques. Menil had been influenced by it at least since the time of his involvement with Légitime Défense, and Césaire and his wife became conscious adherents to its doctrines in the 1940's. "I was ready to receive surrealism," Césaire recalls, "because I had advanced only by taking my departure from the same

authors as the surrealists.... Surrealism has given me what I searched for confusedly. I have received it with joy because I have found in it as much a confirmation as a revelation."[14] The review included the work of such surrealists as Victor Brauner, André Breton, Jorge Cáceres, Charles Duits, Pierre Mabille, and Francis Picabia. It also published valuable information concerning surrealist activity in Chile and "para-surrealist" activity in Venezuela as well as maintaining contact with New York where the review Triple V directed by Breton, Duchamp, and Max Ernst appeared in 1942.[15] Tropiques regularly featured theoretical articles by Menil and Suzanne Césaire and the poetry of Aimé Césaire which later appeared in his anthology Les Armes Miraculeuses.[16] The three leading figures of Tropiques had completely absorbed the perspectives of surrealism. André Breton, one of the founders and key figures of French surrealism, spent two months in Martinique during the war and recalled of Césaire, "nothing he said was foreign to me.... I felt myself in close communion with one of them, being aware of a being of will among us and not distinquishing, in essence, his will from mine."[17]

Surrealism was a weapon in the struggle against the alienation of the Caribbean Black and against the forces represented by the Vichy regime. "A society," wrote Suzanne Césaire, "tainted in its origins by crime, supported by injustice and hypocrisy in its present, rendered fearful of its future by bad conscience, morally, historically, and necessarily must disappear. And among the machines of war that modern society puts at our disposal...our audacity has chosen surrealism which offers us the best chance of success. Here and now the result is ob-

tained. In the course of these hard years of the domination of Vichy the image of liberty has not been totally tarnished here for a moment, and we owe that to surrealism.... Blind because they are ignorant, they [the government and the bourgeoisie] do not see the insolent and agressive laughter through our pages.... [F]ar from contradicting, attenuating, or diverting our revolutionary sense of life, surrealism aims it." Surrealism was inseparable from the revolutionary struggle. "The surrealist cause, in art as in life, is the same cause as liberty."[18]

As has been discussed above, surrealism was a part of the revolt against occidental rationality and to the black Martinican it offered a path to self-discovery, a way of breaking through the alienation that western rationality had imposed upon him. Suzanne Césaire wrote that surrealism was the sole force which "permits us to rediscover that unique and original faculty which the primitive and the infant still have traces of. It is the sole force which raises the curse of an insuperable barrier between the internal world and the external world."[19] Surrealism provided the instrument for smashing the alienated forms of consciousness created by colonialism and leading the black Martinican to discover his négritude. Through surrealism a cultural synthesis could be forged which expressed the unique position of the Negro in the Caribbean and freed him to become the autonomous creator of his own culture and his own history. Aimé Césaire has recently discussed the role of surrealism in creating a new black identity:

> I don't deny the French influences. Whether I want to be or not, I am a poet in the French language and it is evident that French literature has influenced me. But what I insist strongly upon is that there

> has been, aside from the elements that French literature brought me, there has been in me, at the same time, an effort to create a new language capable of expressing the African heritage. To say it another way, for me French was an instrument that I wanted to bend into a new expression. I wanted to make an Antillean French, a Black French, that, even though being French, will carry the Negro mark.... [Surrealism] was an instrument that dynamited the French language. It made everything jump. It shook literally everything. That was very important because the traditional forms, the burdensome forms, already made, crushed me....

Surrealism for Césaire was "a plunge into Africa," a means for rediscovering his ancestral heritage.

> I reasoned in the following manner: I said well, if I could apply surrealism to my particular situation I can appeal to the unconscious forces. For me, it was the call to Africa. I said to myself: it is true that superficially we are French. We are marked by French customs. We have been marked by Cartesianism, by French rhetoric, but if all this is broken, if you go down to the depths, what you will find is fundamentally Negro.[20]

The writers of Tropiques, like all artists in the Caribbean, have been circumscribed by their environment. Illiteracy and the degree to which alienation and the social structure which sustains it have endured and maintained their hold on the popular consciousness have limited the effectiveness of their activity. These artists have had to strike a difficult and sometimes dangerous balance between the intellectual nourishment offered by the metropolis and the sustenance racial and cultural identification provide in the colony. At times, as was the case with Léon Damas, their poetry may touch the mass, but only in an ultimate sense have they sparked a popular consciousness. On the whole, the impact of their work has been confined to the educated elite. Yet the efforts of Césaire and his comrades are nonetheless important for that.

Out of the youth who read Tropiques arose a new generation of radical intellectuals, men like Frantz Fanon, Edouard Glissant, Joseph Zobel, and Georges Desportes, as well as René Depestre and Pierre Mabille in Haiti, who are carrying on the tasks of disalienation and decolonization in the spirit of their master. The entire cadre of cultural activity has been transformed since the days of Césaire's youth and new prospects and possibilities are emerging.

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The forces set in motion by the war worked great changes in the consciousness of the people of Martinique. The old regime and the old parties were completely discredited by Vichy and a sharp turn to the left marked the political development of the island. In July and August of 1943 there were massive popular demonstrations which, supported by the local army, forced Admiral Robert to yield and rallied the island to the Free French. These demonstrations, Fanon writes, were the consequence of the birth of the proletariat. "Martinique for the first time systematized its political consciousness. It is logical that the elections that followed the Liberation should have delegated two communist deputies out of three."[21] The extent and intensity of this leftward surge were first really measured in the elections of 1945. Although the rapid growth of the party was phenomenal its success in a national election was uncertain. Césaire, who was elected Deputy to the National Assembly in this election, recalls his own political development and the stunning outcome of the election in a recent interview:

> I was on the left, a communist sympathizer, but I was not a member of the Party. It was only in 1945 that it seemed to me that the communist party was the only healthy force in Martinique. All other parties were discredited under Vichy. It was necessary for us to rebuild the world.... In the last elections in Martinique, on the eve of the war, the communist party had not had 1,000 votes, not even 10%. It was truly a small movement of intellectuals. I thus accepted the candidacy in 1945, but was convinced that I would not be elected.... That was an absolutely unbelievable triumph. I found myself, slightly astounded, in the National Assembly.[22]

The election was an overwhelming victory for the left. The communists won fourteen of the thirty-six seats on the island's Conseil Général while the socialists won a dozen of those remaining. Césaire was elected mayor of Fort-de-France. Two communist deputies, Césaire and Léopold Bissol, were seated in the National Assembly while the third, Emanuel Very, a socialist (S. F. I. O.), got in because of an anti-communist bloc.[23]

To stem the communist tide, the other parties formed an anti-communist bloc (a fact which has served to discredit the socialists), and the administration was willing to resort to fraud and intimidation at the polls. Césaire reported to the National Assembly that in the commune of St. Pierre the socialist mayor presided over two polling places and personally counted the ballots with the result that the communists received only 25 votes in a district where 50% of the municipal council was communist. At Carbet the communists were expelled from the polling place for protesting the fact that the mayor put 200 ballots in the urn, and later the representative of another candidate caught the presiding officer of the polling place putting in another 400 envelopes.

The mayor of Schoelcher impeded voters he suspected of having sympathy for the communists by demanding from them identification not required by law. In the commune of Lorrain, the Socialist mayor reinforced his police force with two hundred civilian militia. He forbid all vehicular traffic except his own, which shuttled Socialist voters to the polls. The militia, armed with cudgels, was posted on the edge of the commune to prevent voters from an outlying quarter whose communist sympathies were known, from reaching the polling place. When the voters from this district appeared the police charged them, seriously injuring several and sending them to the hospital. The administration passively cooperated in these activities. Their only intervention was to take 2,000 votes from the communists because they seemed fraudulent. "The governor of Martinique has not acted," Césaire charged, "because he knows that the principal beneficiary of the maneuvers that have been pointed out to him must be the party which he publicly boasts of belonging to and to which the Minister of Over-Seas France belongs." In spite of these tactics, the communists scored a landslide victory, receiving 34,659 of the 55,007 votes caste according to the official count.[24]

The end of the war brought another great change to Martinique. Martinique along with Guadeloupe, Guiana, and Réunion legally became departments of France, enjoying the same legal status as the metropolitan departments. Paradoxically, Césaire, who had done so much to arouse the consciousness of the people of Martinique and fought so hard against assimilation, was one of the chief architects of the law of March 19, 1946 which approved the departmentalization of the former colonies.[25]

Although the relations between the metropolis and the colonies were the cause of the alienation of the Antillean Black, the bonds between France and her West Indian colonies were strong. The impact of the French Revolution in the islands was profound. The French revolutionaries sided with the black slaves and against their masters and abolished slavery. The Declaration of the Rights of Man have continued to exert a powerful influence even after the Emperor married a planter's daughter and reinstituted slavery. The memory of Victor Schoelcher, the "Emancipator", is still a presence in the Antilles. With the fall of Admiral Robert the island declared its allegiance to Free France, the "true France", and, did not move for independence. As Césaire expressed the situation, "From men who have been recognized for centuries as formal citizens of a state, but whose citizenship has been marginal, how can it not be understood that their first collective step would be, not to reject the empty form of their citizenship, but to make an attempt to transform it into full citizenship, to go from a mutilated citizenship to citizenship pure and simple."[26]

There were also, however, more concrete political reasons which led to the option of departmentalization. It appeared that integration into metropolitan France was the most promising and practical way of ending the colonial domination of these territories. In 1946 the Communist Party was in power and Maurice Thorez was the vice-president of the French government. It seemed to West Indian communists that a "revolution from above" executed under the auspices of a Communist government would end the subordination of the colonies. But they did not reckon on the counter-revolution of Marshall Plan Europe. "They did not

foresee," Guadeloupan Henri Rousseau Nadir lamented, "that the staunch defenders of the colonial working man would be expelled from the government."[27] Nonetheless, those who sought departmentalization hoped that integration would result in the application of France's social laws to the colonies and thus secure positive benefits for the depressed population. Their vision was of harmonious, fraternal relationships between territories which allowed for diversity. "[W]ithin the framework of what is beginning to be known as the French Union," wrote Césaire, "there must no longer be a place, either between individuals or between collectivities, for the relation of masters to servants, but a fraternity must be established, within the terms of which, there will be a France more united and more diverse than ever, multiple and harmonious, from which the greatest revelations can be expected."[28]

The spectre of United States imperialism also lurked behind the desire to departmentalize. Césaire and his comrades, fearing that if the islands became independent they would be snatched up by their avaricious neighbor to the north, sought French protection and what they hoped would be the opportunity for development within a democratic framework as an alternative. While the other Caribbean islands were trying to federate after the war, Césaire urged the National Assembly to move more rapidly toward departmentalization. A federation of the British, French, and American Antilles, he stressed, could only be a political and economic protectorate of the United States.[29] This fear, Césaire felt, was not unfounded, and he cited several events which documented American intentions. In 1948, a resolution was adopted at the Bogota Conference which affirmed that the security of the American continent demanded the elim-

ination of European presence in that part of the world. The American military believed that Martinique and Guadeloupe were indispensable bases for the defense of the Panama Canal, and Senator Wiley declared that the United States must obtain strategic bases and airfields in the French Antilles. William Bullit testified before the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee that if the French communists continued to gain strength the peace would be menaced because of French holdings in the Antilles. The Chicago Tribune echoed Bullit saying that if the European powers fell to communist aggression and their colonies became Soviet bases in America, United States security would be directly threatened. The only solution, the Tribune continued, was to exclude European powers from Latin America and American waters. Césaire, along with Mlle. Gerty Archimède, deputy from Guadeloupe, was moved to protest the pro-American propaganda being spread through the French Antilles by the Caribbean Commission and the United States. The "papers" released by an American information agency in Fort-de-France attacked the evils of French colonialism and held forth the promise of a Caribbean republic and the "American way of life."[30] Though these schemes failed to have any serious effect in the French Antilles, the fear of American domination was an almost constant factor in Césaire's political thinking for more than ten years.

The United States, however, continued to exercise a pernicious influence on the political life of the island in another way. American imperialism allied with British and French colonialists to contain the nationalist movements that were emerging throughout the Third World after the war. Césaire rapidly found himself sucked into the whirlpool of Cold War politics. In March of 1950, on the occasion of the ratification of a

Franco-American mutual defense pact, he launched a bitter indictment of the government's policies and priorities from the floor of the National Assembly. The Assembly, he declared, did not give any attention to the questions that were most important to its overseas constituents: labor, health, or education. Instead, the pages of the Journal Officiel devoted to colonial affairs were filled with Viet Nam, Madagascar, killings in Martinique, incidents in Ivory Coast, "blood, massacres, war, always works of death, never works of life." Meanwhile the over-seas territories remained trapped in poverty and despair. Martinique, in spite of the law of departmentalization, had been refused the guarantees enjoyed by metropolitan France. The social security laws were not applied, schools were in ruins, and hospitals impoverished and grossly inadequate. The real standard of living was the same as in 1880 and perhaps the same as during slavery. "Everywhere," Césaire cried, "a systematic refusal, an obstinate refusal, each time we ask for more justice and more humanity.... We ask for bread and we are offered arms." France has denied all the colonized whether in the Antilles, Africa, or Asia, the most elementary guarantees of civilization and expects them to fight in the defense of values that they are denied the benefit of.

Césaire went on to examine the wider implications the French posture had for the colonies within the context of the Cold War. American imperialism was the greatest menace to the French Union he stated, but in spite of the threat that the United States posed to colonial peoples they were not being enlisted to resist it. Instead, they were being called upon to join a crusade against the Soviet Union. But, in Césaire's

view, the Soviet Union was not an enemy but a friend. The Soviet Union, he declared, had successfully abolished colonialism and had brought its national minorities to an unprecedented degree of civilization and prosperity within thirty years time. It had done all for them that the French colonies could have wished from the French government. Instead, poverty, oppression, ignorance, and racial discrimination ruled over the French territories. The French Union was not a union, but a "prison of peoples." The colonized had to resist the reactionary colossus of the Western powers. "In associating ourselves more closely than ever with the French people in order to lead the fight for peace, the fight against the anti-Soviet war of aggression, we, the overseas peoples (peuples d'outre-mer), are conscious of leading, at the same time as the struggle for liberty, bread, and the conquest of human dignity."[31] The power block politics of the Cold War forced one to choose sides. Césaire, long an enemy of capitalism and the bourgeoisie, caste his lot and the lot of the colonized peoples with the party of the proletariat and with the Soviet Union. American imperialism, Césaire warned, "is the only domination one does not escape from."[32] His choice, paradoxically, caused him to choose France rather than independence.

Departmentalization has brought some positive benefits to the French West Indies. Daniel Guerin reports that some, if not all, of the social laws have been extended to the islands, wages have gone up and there have been increased salaries for civil servants, metropolitan financial aid has assisted the islands in launching several public works projects, and there has been fiscal reform.[33] However, the net result of the law has

been frustration and disappointment. The gap between legal status and the application of the law has remained wide. In fact the government, in particular the Minister of Over-Seas France, effectively delayed the integration of the administration of the islands into that of France for over two years.[34] Césaire also had frequent occasion to protest that under the pretext of assimilation, policies were being carried out which daily widened the distance between the Antilles and France. Workers had been assessed for social security without receiving benefits. Civil servants in Martinique were denied the free hospital care that they previously had on the grounds that the fonctionnaires of France did not enjoy the same privilege, while at the same time the Martinicans were denied the social security benefits that were available to their French counterparts. Contrary to promise, the metropolitan fiscal policy was applied to Antillean businessmen and taxpayers, while schools, hospitals, dispensaries and roads were denied to the islands. "The State," Césaire shouted, "violating all the promises, takes everything from us and gives us nothing.... It is always assimilation of the bad and never assimilation of the good."[35]

Césaire and others who supported departmentalization hoped that such a move would improve the plight of the Antillean masses by implementing the social laws and social security legislation of France. Their hopes, however, soon faded. "What we desired, above all, in asking for the transformation of these countries into departments," Césaire commented bitterly to the National Assembly in 1947, "was, very precisely, the assimilation of the lot of the worker of Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Réunion. We have not seen any concrete measure taken in two years. I

think it would be possible to make a slight effort."[36] The laws were only partially and inadequately applied and failed to provide effective relief for the colonial populace. Rather than the laws of France being applied as a matter of course, as was consistent with the law of departmentalization, legislation for these territories was exceptional and application was often subject to the recommendation of various ministries.[37] The social security benefits that are received by the Martinican people are inadequate and inferior to metropolitan standards. For example, in Martinique, a family with six children is allowed 10,000 francs per month, whereas in France the allotment is 30,000.[38] Guerin reports that there is no unemployment compensation, and when the head of a family is out of work, family allotments cease. Obviously this is a great hardship in an area where so much employment is seasonal. Wages have risen, but remain below those of metropolitan France, while the cost of living has soared in the Antilles since departmentalization. In 1961, Guerin wrote that the cost of living was 65 per cent higher than in France.[39]

Departmentalization also failed to bring about any significant progress in important public works projects, and the islands lagged behind their Caribbean neighbors. Césaire, in 1949, admonished the government for its neglect and indifference toward the needs of the people. "Of course, the work on the port and the airfield advance. But not a school, not a hospital, not a dispensary. Everything to the rum and banana trusts, but nothing, absolutely nothing, for the Martinican man."[40] Funds marked for investment have been drastically cut: 4,000,000,000 francs in 1954 against 5,600,000,000 in 1952, according to Guerin. "The result," Césaire

declared to the Assembly, "is that the works already begun in Martinique cannot be continued, unemployment becomes more severe, and stagnation settles in, in a country where there is much to do."[41] Furthermore, failure to grant the new departments powers of self-administration prevented the execution of several projects. Césaire contends that the prefect of the island appointed by the Minister of the Interior refused to allow work to begin on hospital, school, and sewer projects for which funds had been allocated, and in one case money needed for badly needed schools was shifted to port facilities. The prefect then failed to account for the funds which had been granted and they were cut off. Such irresponsible behavior paralyzed the progress of many works which were important to the people of the island.[42]

Departmentalization had a disastrous effect on the civil service. Native officials were replaced by a flood of metropolitan civil servants who knew nothing of West Indian problems and only thought of returning to France once they had served their time abroad. Daniel Guerin has characterized the new regime as, "the tyranny of a bureaucracy that has come in from the outside, a careless, incompetent, routine-ridden and, worst of all, often racist army of irresponsibles."[43] The narrow application of the law of March 19, 1946 further aggravated the problem of the civil service. Salaries paid to the fonctionnaires in the over-seas departments were the same as those in the metropolis. No allowance was made for the drastically higher cost of living abroad, and, as was mentioned above, the civil servants in the Antilles lost some of the hospital and social security benefits received by their French counterparts.

Césaire spoke out repeatedly for equal treatment for indigenous and metropolitan civil servants and for equal salaries and benefits for civil servants both overseas and in France including a residency allowance for those serving in the new departments to compensate for the high cost of living and bring their real wages into line with those in France. His pleas went largely unheeded, however, and the history of the new departments since 1946 have been punctuated by long and bitter strikes by the civil servants, the justice of whose cause has won great popular sympathy and support. As a result of this situation the public services in these departments have been in a state of almost continual chaos.[44] Integration of the administration has also cost the island its local autonomy. Before 1946 the local authorities were able to deal with innumerable problems, but since departmentalization they have had to go through the bureaucratic maze of various uncoordinated ministries in Paris. This situation has recently moved Césaire, as mayor of Fort-de-France, to complain: "The centralization has become intolerable. If Brittany suffers from it, how can Martinique not suffer from it? If I want to build a school I have to ask permission from Paris: it is the logic of oppression that is a part of every centralized system."[45] The bureaucratic quagmire that has accompanied departmentalization has paralyzed development in the new departments.

Beneath the legal veneer of departmentalization lies the old colonial reality. Integration has violated the spirit of the law of March 19, 1946, and has become what Césaire described in the National Assembly as "a policy of dupery and fraud."[46] The whole pathology of underdevelopment, poverty, unemployment, overpopulation, disease, illiteracy, is

rampant in the island. Sixty per cent of the land remains concentrated in the hands of the narrow class of white Creoles, leading Césaire to remark, "It is more than capitalism, it is still feudalism."[47] These large planters, through control of the sugar refineries, decimated the entire class of small planters who planted their cane on the sides of the mornes and who accounted for a substantial proportion of the island's production.[48] Césaire charged in the Assembly that "the political course followed now by the government consists, conforming to the most constant norms of the spirit of reaction, of depending upon a single class, the class of great colons, to which, it is clear, the interests of the proletariat and the middle classes are sacrificed without pity."[49] The economic development of the island is further stifled by rigid trade restrictions which recall the mercantilist system. Production is restricted with regard to both type and amount, and the distorted economy forces the island to import many essential goods. Imports are far greater than exports (in 1952 twice as much was imported as was exported) greatly retarding capital accumulation. All imports must come through France, and Martinique is forbidden to trade with its Latin American and Caribbean neighbors. The Compagnie générale transatlantique, enjoying monopoly privileges for the island, charges outrageous freight rates which far surpass those it charges for neighboring countries in competitive situations.[50] The desired integration was never achieved and the island's life remains in the stranglehold of powerful special interests.

Césaire spoke against these conditions continually in the National Assembly, attempting to improve the social welfare of the population; calling for the full extension of democratic rights; and urging indus-

trial and economic development, and agrarian reform. He demanded that the French government face its responsibilities toward the people of the Antilles. However, despite his passionate interventions, his pleas went unheard. Self-government, Césaire stated, was the only solution to the dilemmas of departmentalization.

> The departmental regime...is incapable of promoting the politics of industrialization which is essential if the Antilles are not to perish.
>
> The departmental regime is incapable of making a true agrarian reform.
>
> The departmental regime is impotent to reform our burdensome and parasitic commercial relations.
>
> Well, if that is the case, it is, whether one wishes it or not, the condemnation of the departmental regime. It is necessary to substitute a new framework--whatever the name, decentralization, autonomy, autogestion--but, in any case, a new framework which permits the Antilleans and Guianeans to settle their problems locally, with regard to their own needs and according to their own perspective.

Such autonomy, for Césaire, did not necessarily imply independence but could take place within the framework of the French constitution: however, as early as 1949, Césaire warned that if, instead of true assimilation, departmentalization were used as the pretext for heaping injustices upon the territories, the government's actions would create a national sentiment in Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guiana, and Réunion.[51] The French government, however, has responded to the need for self-government with repression. Basic democratic liberties are denied, and each new department is subjected to the arbitrary rule of a prefect, more powerful than any colonial governor, backed up by the C. R. S. and the gendarmes. Repression has been a nearly constant factor in the new departments, and the force and intimidation behind the regime stand exposed. Césaire's parliamentary interventions are continually punctu-

ated with protests against the abuse of police authority against workers and peasants, the supression of political groups, and the arbitrary arrest and imprisonment of individuals sympathizing with local autonomy.[52] The failure to improve the condition of the masses of people combined with the oppressive and authoritarian regime prepared the soil in which a social movement has begun to mature in the territories.

In Martinique, the social movement was born, as we have seen, in the agitation against Admiral Robert during the war, and the popular democratic struggle against the reactionary békés and prefects continued after Liberation. In February of 1948, Georges Gratiant, Mayor of Fort-de-France, forbid a demonstration by the right-wing Rassemblement Populaire Française. The R. P. F. turned to Pierre Trouillet, the anti-communist prefect, who authorized the demonstration without advising the mayor of his decision. On February 8, the R. P. F. assembled in the streets with shouts of "Vive Pétain!" The mayor, at the head of a large crowd of counterdemonstrators, met the procession and announced that it was illegal. Both groups made their way to the Palais de Justice where the prefect ordered the mayor arrested, and, without warning, the police attacked the republican demonstrators with clubs. A dozen people had to be hospitalized including a municipal counselor.[53]

The same period saw increased labor militancy and the growth of a trade union movement. In March of the same year Trouillet sent the police to the small village of Carvet where a strike was in progress. The troop of gendarmes was fed and housed by the factory owner who called the workers together under the pretext of giving them back pay. The police opened fire, killing three and wounding many more.[54] At Basse-Point,

in 1950, a white overseer, protected by a police escort, threatened strikers with a pistol. The workers responded by disarming the police and lynching him. The administration tried to use this against the union's leadership. Sixteen union leaders were held in jail for two years before being acquitted at Bordeaux.[55] Between January and March of 1954, there was virtually a general work stoppage. Police and C. R. S. were sent into the countryside, villages were placed under martial law, and thirty-nine unionists were jailed.[56]

The ferment and discontent caused by departmentalization are the raw materials of a national consciousness. "[I]f today we assist in the awakening of a national sentiment in the Antilles," Césaire wrote in 1956, "we owe it to the law of March 19, 1946.... [T]en years after the law which transformed the French Antilles into departments of France, the national idea was born in each of them through the deception and nausea of the present, and it is upon this reality alone that it is possible to build the future."[57] Along with the emergence of a national consciousness in the Antilles came a change in Césaire's political orientation. His relations with the Communist Party were not entirely harmonious, and he was not given the scope necessary to express his singularity as a Black and as a Martinican. He recalls:

> I had a quarrel with the French Communist Party, with the P. C. F., and it is very important to insist on the letter "F".... I am a Martinican. I am a man of color. I am a Negro. Now I was in a party which, effectively, reflected the image of administrative France. I felt I was attached to the P. C. F. exactly as I was attached administratively to the French government. That posed a series of problems for me not counting the reserves I had about the politics of world communism, about Stalinism which was repugnant to me because, once again, I was, if

> you like, a man of specificity. There was existentially something that I lived badly (vivais très mal), that was me, a Martinican, in a French party.[58]

In 1956, after the revelations about Stalin at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Césaire resigned from the P. C. F., criticizing the French party, its lack of internal democracy and its relationship with colonial peoples, in his celebrated letter to Maurice Thorez, the Secretary General of the party. Césaire made it clear that he was not disavowing Marxism or communism, but the practice of the French party. "It is neither Marxism or communism that I renounce," he declared in the letter, "but it is the use that some have made of Marxism and communism that I reject. What I desire is that Marxism and communism be put at the service of black peoples and not black peoples at the service of Marxism and communism. That the doctrine and the movement be made for men and not men for the doctrine and the movement."[59] The P. C. F. had failed to dissociate itself from the "pseudo-socialism" of Stalin, and its undemocratic structure and practice as well as its paternalism stifled the struggles of colonized.

"We, men of color," Césaire explained in the letter, "at this precise moment of historical evolution, have, in our consciousness, taken possession of the whole range of our singularity. And we are ready to assume in all its planes and all its dimensions, the responsibilities which flow from this prise de conscience. The singularity of our "situation in the world" is not to be confused with any other."[60] The P. C. F., however, smothered the initiative of the colonized. Instead of alliance and solidarity, Césaire found subordination and resignation. And among party members he saw inveterate assimilationism, unconscious chauvinism,

and a belief--shared with the bourgeoisie--in the superiority of the West, their belief that the European pattern of historical evolution is the only possible and only desirable path through which the entire world must pass. The Europeanocentric perspective of the French party prevented the growth of flexible communist movements in the colonies:

> There will never be an African, Madagascaran, or Antillean variant of communism because French communism finds it more convenient to impose its own on us. There will never be an African, Madagascaran, or Antillean communism because the French Communist Party thinks of its duties toward colonial peoples in terms of exercising its doctrinal authority, and even the anticolonialism of the French communists still carries the stigma of the colonialism it combats.[61]

The party imposed distinctions upon the colonial parties which were more suitable to Europe and whose rigid application prevented the formation of the broad-based, flexible organizations Césaire saw as essential for the anticolonial struggle. The a priori application of ideological categories in circumstances where they did not fit led to the creation of artificial divisions which prevented the unity of genuine anti-colonialist forces and to the degeneration of the communist parties into sterile sects. Worse still, the P. C. F. all too often used the colonies as pawns in its own political intrigues, as was illustrated by its support of Guy Mollet-Lacoste's policies in North Africa.[62] Against the practice and perspective of the P. C. F., Césaire insisted upon the validity and integrity of the struggles of colonized peoples for self-determination. "The colonial question can't be treated as simply part of a larger whole, a part which others may treat, when they consider it appropriate, with mere compromises."

The struggle of the colonized had dimensions beyond those of the struggle against capital, and it could not be subordinated to the struggle and interests of the French proletariat. "[T]he struggle of colonial peoples against colonialism, the struggle of peoples of color against racism is much more complex--let me say, of a whole other nature than the struggle of the French worker against French capitalism and cannot in any way be considered as a part, as a fragment of that struggle.[63]

The French Communist Party was a European institution whose policies had isolated Martinique from its Caribbean neighbors and from Black Africa, which for Césaire was the source of the regeneration of the Antilles. Césaire did not deny solidarity with the proletariat, but he declared: "There are no allies by divine right. There are allies that the place, the moment, the nature of things impose upon us." Communism renders colonial peoples a disservice, he continued, if the alliance with the French proletariat excludes other necessary, natural, legitimate and fruitful alliances.[64] Césaire refused to subordinate the anticolonial struggle to the needs of the Communist Party and the European proletariat. His resignation brought a sudden change to the political scene in Martinique. Césaire resigned his post as mayor of Fort-de-France in order to provoke new municipal elections. The Communist Party opposed him in the campaign, but failed to win even a single seat on the Municipal Council, while Césaire swept to victory with 82.5 per cent of the vote.[65]

Césaire has continued to struggle for decolonization and autonomy from his independent position, although political realities have tempered his course since his break with the communists. Departmentalization has

raised the question of nationalism in the Antilles, but the conditions necessary for its resolution have not yet appeared. Alienation remains deep-rooted, and, although social unrest continues, there exist only the first awakenings of a national consciousness and a nascent independence movement. The Antilles remain "stammering and uncertain of being."[66] Departmentalization has maintained the relations of colonialism and is the greatest obstacle to progress in the Antilles. It can no longer be tolerated. The ultimate goal for the Antilles is self-administration and association with their Caribbean neighbors.[67] But the path is long and tortuous, and each territory must find its own way to national maturity. Without the support of a strong nationalist movement, faced with French economic blackmail, the threat that independence would mean, as with Guinée, the end of all economic aid, and always under the shadow of the United States, Césaire has tried to secure the solution to the Antilles problems while maintaining close relations with France. He has pressed for greater autonomy, democracy, and social and economic improvement within the French political structure.

The people of the Antilles, in Césaire's view, must have the right to self-determination; whether or not autonomy demands independence from France is not clear at the moment. To the members of the National Assembly he has insisted that France's persistent failure to meet the legitimate needs of the people of the Antilles could only create another Viet Nam, another Algeria.[68] For the moment, however, Césaire's goal has been to open up the historical possibilities for the Antilles. "I do not have a solution <u>toute faite</u>, but I believe that it is essential to

keep from enclosing oneself in an abstract formula. At the present hour, the problem is to thaw the blocked up situation in the Antilles and to give to history the mobility without which it is no longer history."[69]

NOTES

[1]Peter Geismar, Fanon, New York, 1971, pp. 22-23.

[2]Daniel Guerin, The West Indies and Their Future, London, 1961, p. 112.

[3]Frantz Fanon, Toward the African Revolution, New York, 1967, pp. 22-23.

[4]Kesteloot, Les Ecrivains Noirs, p. 212.

[5]Kesteloot, Les Ecrivains Noirs, pp. 212-213. Tropiques, like Etudiant Noir, is unavailable and we have to depend upon Mme. Kesteloot's documentation.

[6]Aimé Césaire, Discours sur le Colonialisme, Paris, 1955, pp. 12-13. (Emphasis in the original.)

[7]Aimé Césaire, "Presentation," Tropiques, 1 (April, 1941), cited in Kesteloot, Les Ecrivains Noirs, p. 214.

[8]Suzanne Césaire, "La psychologie du Martiniquais," Tropiques, 5 (April, 1942), cited in Kesteloot, Les Ecrivains Noirs, p. 217.

[9]René Menil, "Naissance de notre art," Tropiques, 1 (April, 1941), cited in Kesteloot, Les Ecrivains Noirs, p. 216.

[10]Suzanne Césaire, "Leo Frobenius et la probleme des civilisations," Tropiques, 1 (April, 1941), cited in Kesteloot, Les Ecrivains Noirs, pp. 220-221.

[11]René Menil and Aimé Césaire, introduction to a special number of Tropiques dedicated to Folklore Martiniquaise, 4 (January, 1942), cited in Kesteloot, Les Ecrivains Noirs, p. 226.

[12]Aimé Césaire, "Introduction à la poésie nègre américaine," Tropiques, 2 (July, 1941), cited in Kesteloot, Les Ecrivains Noirs, pp. 224-225.

[13]Kesteloot, Les Ecrivains Noirs, pp. 224-225.

[14]"Un Orfeo del Caribe," pp. XX-XXI.

[15]Jean-Louis Bédouin, Vingt Ans de Surrealisme: 1939-1959, Paris, 1961, p. 33.

[16]For a discussion of this poetry, which is beyond the scope of this thesis, see Kesteloot, Les Ecrivains Noirs, pp. 239-249.

[17]André Breton, Martinique: charmeuse de serpents, Paris, 1948, pp. 89, 95.

[18]Suzanne Césaire, "Le surrealisme et nous," Tropiques, 8-9, (1943), cited in Bédouin, Vingt Ans de Surrealisme, p. 35. The articles in Tropiques became more aggressive as it became apparent that it would be suppressed.

[19]Michel Leiris, Brisées, Paris, 1966, p. 270; Suzanne Césaire, "Le surrealisme et nous," Tropiques, 8-9 (1943), cited in Kesteloot, Les Ecrivains Noirs, p. 234.

[20]"Un Orfeo del Caribe," pp. XX-XXII.

[21]Fanon, Toward the African Revolution, p. 24.

[22]Aimé Césaire, "Nous sommes à la veille de 1789," Le Nouvelle Observateur, 329 (March 1, 1971), p. 35.

[23]Guerin, The West Indies and Their Future, p. 36.

[24]Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, May 22, 1947, pp. 1713-1716.

[25]See Victor Sablé, La transformation des isles d'amérique en départments français, Paris, 1955, pp. 142-166, for a more complete discussion of the background of this legislation.

[26]Aimé Césaire, "Décolonisation pour les Antilles," Présence Africaine, 7 (April-May, 1956), p. 9.

[27]Henri Rousseau Nadir, Les Colonisés devant l'Union Française, Paris, 1953, p. 47, cited in Guerin, The West Indies and Their Future, p. 147.

[28]Cited in Sablé, La transformation des isles d'amérique, p. 149.

[29]Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, July 10, 1947, p. 2896.

[30]Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, March 15, 1950, p. 2077; Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, June 20, 1950, pp. 5072-5074.

[31]Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, March 15, 1950, pp. 2075-2077.

[32]Aimé Césaire, Discours sur le Colonialisme, p. 70.

[33]Guerin, The West Indies and Their Future, pp. 147-148.

[34]Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, July 10, 1947, pp. 2895-2896.

[35]Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, July 11, 1949, pp. 4570-4571.

[36]Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, December 29, 1947, p. 6445.

[37]Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, August 5, 1948, pp. 5372-5373.

[38]Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, February 11, 1954, p. 182.

[39]Guerin, The West Indies and Their Future, p. 148.

[40]Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, July 4, 1949, pp. 4140-4141.

[41]Guerin, The West Indies and Their Future, p. 148; Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, March 26, 1954, p. 1316.

[42]Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, July 4, 1949, pp. 4140-4141.

[43]Guerin, The West Indies and Their Future, pp. 149-150.

[44]Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, March 31, 1950, pp. 2697-2699; Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, June 10, 1953, pp. 3006-3007.

[45]Césaire, "Nous sommes à la veille de 1789," p. 34.

[46]Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, March 27, 1954, p. 1317.

[47]Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, July 18, 1961, p. 1761.

[48]Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, June 30, 1960, p. 1600.

[49]Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, March 26, 1954, p. 1317.

[50]Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, March 26, 1954, pp. 1316-1318; Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, June 30, 1960, pp. 1599-1603.

[51]Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, July 18, 1961, p. 1763; Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, July 11, 1949, p. 4571.

[52]See for example Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, March 26, 1954, p. 1315; Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, July 18, 1961, p. 1763.

[53]Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, May 4, 1948, p. 2486.

[54]Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, March 16, 1948, p. 1732.

[55]Guerin, The West Indies and Their Future, p. 114.

[56]Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, March 26, 1954, p. 1315.

[57]Césaire, "Décolonisation pour les Antilles," pp. 9-10.

[58]Césaire, "Nous sommes à la veille de 1789," p. 34.

[59]Aimé Césaire, Lettre à Maurice Thorez, Paris, 1956, p. 12.

[60]Césaire, Lettre à Maurice Thorez, p. 8.

[61]Césaire, Lettre à Maurice Thorez, pp. 11, 13.

[62]Césaire, Lettre à Maurice Thorez, pp. 8-11.

[63]Césaire, Lettre à Maurice Thorez, pp. 8-9.

[64]Césaire, Lettre à Maurice Thorez, pp. 14-15.

[65]Guerin, The West Indies and Their Future, p. 115.

[66]Césaire, "Décolonisation pour les Antilles," p. 12.

[67]Aimé Césaire, "Crise dans les départments d'outre-mer," Présence Africaine, 36 (1961), pp. 109-111.

[68]Assemblée Nationale, Journal Officiel, Paris, July 16, 1961, p. 1763.

[69]Césaire, "Nous sommes à la veille de 1789," p. 35.

CHAPTER IV

NEGRITUDE AND THE BLACK REVOLUTION

> No one can truly wish for the spread of African culture if he does not give practical support to the creation of the conditions necessary to the existence of that culture; in other words, to the liberation of the whole continent.
>
> --Frantz Fanon

> We are African peoples, we have not invented many things, we do not possess today the special weapons which others possess, we have no big factories, we don't even have for our children the toys which other children have, but we do have our own hearts, our own heads, our own history. It is this history which the colonialists have taken away from us. The colonialists usually say that it was they who brought us into history: today we show them that this is not so. They made us leave history, our history, to follow them, right at the back, to follow the progress of their history. Today, in taking up arms to liberate ourselves, in following the example of other peoples who have taken up arms to liberate themselves, we want to return to our history, on our own feet, by our own means and through our own sacrifices.
>
> --Amilcar Cabral

The course of Aimé Césaire's intellectual development can best be understood as a deepening rather than an evolution of his thought. His concern has been to remain true to the original revolutionary impulse of his conception of négritude, to elaborate it and to adapt it to changing conditions. For him négritude has remained a weapon in the

struggle against the alienation brought about by European domination. However, négritude has become more widely known through the work of Léopold Senghor and Jean-Paul Sartre's "Black Orpheus" through which it has taken on such mystical associations as "the African personality" and "the Negro essence" which have robbed it of its revolutionary content. Differences between Césaire and Senghor have been apparent almost from the outset of their enterprise in spite of the close interaction between the two of them. Their different orientations toward the world have been manifest in political, ideological, and aesthetic spheres.[1] Césaire, for reasons of personal modesty and solidarity, has refused to elaborate theoretically his conception of négritude, and has resisted attempts to distinquish himself from his long-time comrade, preferring to emphasize their common bonds.

> There have been, before all else, sentimental affinities between us. One feels oneself to be a Negro or one does not feel oneself to be a Negro. But there was also a political side. It was, after all, a movement of the left. I have never thought, even for an instant, that emancipation could be better achieved by the right. That is not possible. We have thought, Senghor and I, that emancipation put us on the left...[2]

This position, however, avoids entirely the question of revisionism, and its consequence has been to allow others to speak in Césaire's name and dilute his message.

Senghor's négritude is essentially a defense of African culture and its contribution to universal civilization in the face of occidental prejudice. Négritude, as Senghor has defined it, is "the ensemble of values of the civilizations of the black world," or, more precisely, "the communal warmth, the image-symbol and the cosmic rhythm

which instead of sterilizing while dividing, fecundates while uniting."[3] In his eyes, the African is spiritual and intuitive, the antithesis of the formal Reason of the West, and he contributes his unique values to a universal human culture which would otherwise be incomplete. "Emotion is African, as Reason is Hellenic," he has declared. "It is this gift of emotion which explains négritude... For it is their emotive attitude towards the world which explains the cultural values of Africans."[5] Without this uniquely African gift to the world, Senghor claims, the civilization of the Twentieth Century would not have been universal.[6]

Senghor's emphasis on African spirituality tempered the influence of Marxism upon him and eventually caused him to regard it as insufficient. From his first contact with Marxism as a student in Paris his relationship with it has been uneasy. What disturbed him about Marxism was "its atheism, a certain contempt for spiritual values: that discursive reason pushed to its ultimate limits, which became a materialism without warmth, a blind determinism." He saw in scientific socialism an ideology which denied the values of African civilization and of the collective personality of the Africans. Marxism, which was "only greco-latin rationality rethought by a German Jewish brain," could not be adopted without being adapted to the African personality. In his revision of Marxism, Senghor emphasized Marx's Humanism:

> The essential merit of Marx is not having taught us political economy as one might think, but Humanism, having revealed to us Man in and through the economic history of concrete men, with their needs--material and spiritual --their alienation, their struggles, their future triumph in rediscovered liberty. His goal, he has defined it for us, is to "penetrate the real internal ensemble of the production relations of bourgeois society," "to unveil the economic law of the movement of modern so-

> ciety." In this sense, Marx is the founder of sociology, that is, modern Humanism.

Senghor has also borrowed from Marx's analysis of colonialism although he ultimately seems to see its impact as ideological rather than economic:

> One can easily guess the impression that the Marxian analysis could make upon the consciousness of the young elite from abroad. They applied it immediately to their cause, to the colonial fact. Colonization revealed itself in a brutal light, which put the monstrosities of the system in relief; the power of the Great Bank and Big Commerce which had organized overseas l'économie de traite; the poverty of the "natives" wage, and the "tropical" primary materials sold at low prices. It was, above all, the colonial ideology of assimilation which denounced the Négritude movement as racism fomented by World Communism. Marx was right.[7]

Senghor, however, has continued to reject what he terms the mechanical materialism and the deterministic logic of Marxism. He sees Marxism as a European body of thought whose predictions have failed to come true. The proletarian revolution was not made in western Europe, but in eastern Europe under the pressure of military defeat. For him, events since the war, particularly the eastern European experience, illustrate the contention that Marxism and communism are a part of the scientific and technological Reason of the West and lack the "human dimension" of African culture. The State, he writes, has nowhere whithered away, but in both eastern and western Europe, the capitalist State has made the revolution, increasing wages and decreasing the number of workers. Both regimes become more similar as in the West technicians replace capitalists and in the East technocrats come to power. In Senghor's view, Marx has not clearly explained how personalization and liberty become possible by simply building a "communist" society.[8] Senghor's revision of Marx, however, has led him to deny the radical power of

negation of the Marxist dialectic, the refusal to accept the world as it is. In rejecting what he perceives as Marx's materialism, Senghor has turned to a spiritual ideology in which the links between past, present and future are blurred and the concept of culture is elevated to the point where it hides the other realities of social life.

Senghor's reservations about Marxism have caused him to look to Catholic Humanist philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin for inspiration. This move, in Senghor's eyes, was not so much a rejection of Marx as an attempt to go beyond him.

> Concerned with international life in a like manner as Marx and Engels, more concerned than them with the phenomena of race and nation, Teilhard shows us that the conflicts among human groups...are natural facts. That after all, they are at times necessary in the process of socialization. That we are presently, with the cold war, with the conflict of class, nations and races, in an epoch of extreme divergence; but that already a movement of pan-human convergence has begun, favored by tension itself and the power of our technical means--peaceful and military. From this movement the Planetary Civilization, the symbiosis of all the particular civilizations, will be borne. And the savant has invited us, we the underdeveloped peoples, to bring our contribution to the construction of the Civilization of the Universal. Marx and Engels ignored us. Teilhard restores our dignity to us and invites us to enter the dialogue.[9]

Senghor's adherence to the Civilization of the Universal, however, has led him to mystify the realities of the colonial situation and make of négritude a metaphysical doctrine, a spirit rooted in the earth of Africa and the heart of the Negro.[10] Colonialism is seen by him as a civilizing work to be criticized in detail only. Where Césaire explicitly analyzed the ambiguity and alienation involved in the colonial's use of the French language, Senghor praises it as the best of all possible languages. Assimilation, in Senghor's eyes, was not a bad

thing. What was wrong was that assimilation was not applied totally and without hypocrisy. However, it was fortunate that even the partial application of the "immortal principles of 1789" was able to bring the fruits of French culture to the colonies. Senghor has exaggerated the benefits of cultural influences to the point of obscuring the real exploitation of colonialism.

> Since the beginning of the century this gap [the absence of the peoples of Africa and Asia from participation in the Civilization of the Universal] has progressively filled itself by the action of three factors: the extension of European colonialism, the intensification of international relations, and the independence of former colonies. The converging action of these three factors has thrown people into the arms of one another, while revealing to them the new faces of their brothers and the complementary values of their different civilizations. It is in this context that it is necessary to study Négritude in order to understand its values and measure its renovating force.[11]

Césaire has written that "from colonization to civilization the distance is infinite." The difference between his position and that of Senghor is evident.[12]

Césaire has maintained his revolutionary orientation. For him, *négritude is not a metaphysical philosophy, but a simple acknowledgement of the facts: "To be conscious of being a Negro when one lives in a world infected with racism; to think that this consciousness imposes particular duties on its possessor--one of solidarity with the most insulted people of History--does not in any way merit the pomp* of an "ism." It is only a question of decency and very elementary."[13] The questions of black identity and black culture cannot be posed outside of the context of the great historical insult of colonialism. Far

from seeing colonialism as a benevolent force, Césaire stresses the brutality and barbarism upon which it is based.

> The first idea which the examination of reality imposes is this: colonialism is a regime of mad exploitation of immense masses of human beings, which has its origin in violence and can only sustain itself by violence.

Pillage. Rape. Theft. The violence of the colonizer knows no bounds. The first examples of total war have been the wars of extermination waged against "inferior races" under the banners of colonialism. The natural outcome of the internal logic of colonialism as Césaire perceives it is genocide.[14]

Colonialism does not produce a convergence of different culture values leading to the construction of a universal civilization, but rather its result is degradation and chaos. "Colonization...," Césaire declares, "is the pure and simple negation of civilization." Founded on contempt for the indigenous population and justified by that contempt, colonization dehumanizes even the most civilized man.[15] Instead of embracing one another as brothers and benefitting from the complementary values of their different cultures, Césaire sees that between colonizer and colonized there is "hardly any human contact, but relations of domination and submission which transform the colonizer into a pawn, an adjutant, a prison guard, a stump (of a man???) (chicote) and the native into an instrument of production."[16] Colonial intervention disrupts and dislocates the structures upon which the native culture is based, and the possibilities for the growth and renewal of that culture are suppressed as long as colonial domination remains. The native culture is condemned to a marginal position subordinate to

European culture. Cultural contact in the colonial situation leads not to a universal synthesis, but to the disruption of all culture.

> In every colonized country, we state that the harmonious synthesis that constituted the indigenous culture has been dissolved and that a great jumble of cultural traits of different origins which overlap without harmonizing have been substituted. It is not perforce barbarism through lack of culture. It is barbarism through cultural anarchy.

Whereas Senghor's view is that the colonized have maintained their culture intact throughout the period of European dominance and are capable of contributing to the Universal Civilization, Césaire sees that everywhere that there has been colonization, "entire peoples have been emptied of their culture, of all culture."[17] Colonialism, capitalism, and racism have brutalized the West and conditioned the peoples of Europe to accept the most heinous of crimes in the name of Civilization and Humanism. The colonized is brutalized and reduced to a thing, a non-human. His culture is robbed of all vital expression. In the colonial situation, "not a single human value can triumph."[18] The struggle to renew culture, for Césaire, cannot be separated from the struggle to build a new world.

The barbarism and anarchy of the colonial situation can only be ended by a struggle which destroys the relations of domination and forges a new culture and a new consciousness in its course. "Decolonization is not automatic...," Césaire emphasized in his address to the Second Congress of Black Writers and Artists in 1959. "It is always the result of a struggle, always the result of a push. Even the most peaceful of them is always the result of a rupture."[19] The struggle for a national culture is at the heart of the struggle for national liberation, the at-

tempt by the colonized to become the creators of their own history. For Césaire, culture is not a mystical emanation from the racial or national soul, but rather it is a part of the totality of social relations and is closely linked to the political, economic and social structure of a society. Cultural life must be decolonized, but this process cannot be separated from other structural changes. As Fanon has expressed it, "To fight for a national culture means in the first place to fight for the liberation of the nation, that material keystone which makes the building of a national culture possible."[20] The struggle to create a new and genuine means of cultural expression is of crucial importance in insuring that decolonization as a whole is thoroughgoing and successful. The struggle against colonialism is not over when the enemy is defeated, Césaire warns. A cultural revolution is necessary to uproot and destroy the alienation and sense of inferiority imbedded in the colonized and push decolonization to its proper conclusion. "In brief, for us it cannot be a question of displacing colonialism or of internalizing servitude. It is necessary to destroy that, to extirpate it in the proper sense of the word, that is to tear it out by the roots, and here is why true decolonization will be revolutionary or it will not be."[21]

Césaire's remarks at the Second Congress of Black Writers and Artists were made against the background of African independence and were addressed to the questions about the nature and function of négritude raised by decolonization, the emergence of neo-colonialism in Africa, and the rise to power of native elites. Because négritude is often regarded as simply the ideology of the African bourgeoisie

(Senghor, for example, is President of Senegal) it is important to note Césaire's position on the conditions necessary for the fullest expression of négritude and his conception of the elements of a national culture.[22] The difference between colonization and decolonization, Césaire stresses, is not one of degree, but one of kind. No decolonization is bad in itself, but only the decolonization that destroys the last vestiges of colonialism allows for the most complete expression of black culture.

> [E]ven at the heart of decolonization there are degrees. All decolonizations are not equal, and if "good decolonization" can only be defined by opposition to a "less good decolonization" I will say that this latter is the one which, in the heart of independence only considers utilizing the colonial structures while adapting them to a new reality. While true decolonization is the one which recognizes that its task is to definitively smash the colonial structures.... Too often one sees true colonial or colonialist structures perpetuated or reconstituted at the heart of those societies which form nations liberated from the colonial yoke. Or still, at the heart of imperfectly decolonized nations one risks seeing the recurrence of typically colonialist phenomena at any moment, utilized not by the colonizer or imperialism, but by a group of men, or a class of men who, in the liberated nation, are the epigones of colonialism and serve the instruments invented by colonialism.[23]

The substitution of black faces for white does not change the essential nature of colonialism, nor is it a sufficient condition for the authentic expression of black culture.

True decolonization, in Césaire's view, is only possible with the maturation of national consciousness among the masses. It is they who suffer most from colonial oppression, and it is they who embody the national sentiment most immediately and most evidently. Only with the liberation of the creative force of the masses of the people will the

truest expression of the national culture, of black culture, emerge. A vital synthesis must be created which, based on traditional culture but drawing its inspiration from the future, expresses new realities and re-establishes the historical continuity disrupted by European intervention.

> For us, the problem is not a utopian and sterile attempt at reduplication, but a transcendence. We do not want to revive a dead society.... It is necessary for us, with the aid of all our enslaved brothers, to create a new society, rich with all the productive power of modern society and warm with the fraternity of antiquity.[24]

What elements of the old and what new elements will make up the emerging culture can only be decided by the masses of people. Through their actions alone will the shackles which fetter them be thrown off and will their cultural life become a vital and dynamic means of self-expression. They will once again become the makers of their own history; no longer reduced to instruments of production, but daily creating and expressing their humanity through their activity.

The artist, the intellectual, the man of culture has an important role to play in the struggle to end the colonial bondage of the people. It is the duty of the intellectual in the colonial situation to prepare for complete and successful decolonization by bringing order to the cultural chaos that permeates the colonized society. His creative activity expresses and gives form to the national sentiment of the masses, purifies it, and forges it into a revolutionary consciousness.

> There is never a paucity of national sentiment. There is only an insufficient number of men of culture. National sentiment exists always and everywhere: it may be restrained, it may assume unexpected or even ridiculous forms. But it <u>exists</u>, even in the most <u>assimilated</u>, that is the most disadvantaged countries, and it con-

> tains the potential for the entire cultural renaissance. But this sentiment must be detected. It must be magnified. It must be given back its value in this world of false values. And this is precisely the role of the writer and the artist and forms the basis of his legitimacy.[26]

The artist's creation emanates from the consciousness of the people and brings that consciousness to light, dialectically creating and recreating it. The raw national consciousness of the masses is worked and polished into a revolutionary instrument adequate to the tasks of decolonization. The intellectual shows the people their own potential and their own possibilities. "It is for the poets, the artists, the writers, the men of culture, to mix memories as well as hopes into the daily ration of sufferings and injustices; to build the great reserves of faith, the great silos of force from which the people can, at critical moments, draw the courage to assert themselves and force the future. Some have said that the writer is an engineer of souls... We are the propagators of souls, the multipliers of souls, and at the limit the inventors of souls."[27] Through his creative activity, the intellectual must seek to decolonize the consciousness of the people and liberate them from all the vestiges of mental and spiritual subordination implanted by colonial oppression. Only then will decolonization be complete and the colonized be free to realize their own creative power. The cultural struggle, however, is not separate from the total struggle for liberation, but rather is a reciprocal and complementary part of it. Césaire's conception of négritude, as an expression of black culture and the conditions for its realization, demands political and economic solutions and finds its adequate reflection in the struggles for

black liberation and self-determination.

Négritude was borne and matured as a weapon of resistance against colonial oppression. Once Africans had seized the levers of political power questions were raised about the function and validity of the doctrine in this new context. For Césaire the question was how to remain faithful to négritude and develop it to meet the changing conditions. "Since independence it [négritude] has been able to take on a more constructive emphasis. If anything, négritude is more necessary today than ever. It has moral and ethical implications that should concern everyone. It must be valid for the whole Negro world. It is a philosophy which is emerging, bringing unity, making a synthesis of the traditional and the modern. It can have a vital role in directing the evolution of Africa."[28] In order to remain faithful to the spirit of négritude, Césaire writes, political independence must be seen as a means, not an end. It must be an intermediate step which puts more resources at the disposal of the African peoples and increases the concrete possibilities for their future development. Césaire quotes Sékou Touré, President of the Republic of Guinée, in this regard.

> Independence is the means chosen by the party to destroy the structure of the colonial system. When we say "decolonization," we mean the destruction of the habits, conceptions, the way of acting of the colonizer. We intend to replace them with formulas that are Guinean formulas, thought out by the people of Guinée, adapted to the conditions, means, and aspirations of the people of Guinée.[29]

Négritude still has a vital role to play in the decolonization of Africa. It is the duty of Africa's political leaders to remain true to négritude's radical message, to mobilize the people, to encourage their in-

itiative in building a democratic, non-exploitative, and communal society, and from the crucible of the anti-colonial struggle create a new man who embodies the new values of a liberated Africa. "The true political leaders of Africa," Sékou Touré affirms, "can only be men engaged, fundamentally engaged against all the forms and forces of the depersonalization of African culture.... Decolonization does not only consist of liberation from the colonial presence. It must necessarily be completed by the liberation of the mind (esprit) of the 'colonized.' Colonization, in order to enjoy a certain security, has always needed to create and maintain a psychological climate favorable to its justification.... That is why the national liberation struggle is only complete if, once disengaged from the colonial apparatus, the country becomes conscious of the negative values, knowingly injected into its life, its thought, and its traditions."[30] Unless Africa's political leaders live up to their duty, négritude will degenerate into the established ideology of a new ruling elite.

Négritude, as developed in the work of Aimé Césaire, has been a call to arms for the black world. He has sought a redefinition of black identity and black culture so that black peoples could free themselves from the stigma of colonialism and see their path to freedom and independence. While stressing the unity of the black experience Césaire has emphasized that the cultural life of a people is based upon the concrete realities of their existence, not some mystical quality in their possession. Césaire's effort at disalienation, therefore, demands specific analyses and programs for the liberation of black peoples in the various situations they find themselves. These national differences

can only enrich négritude and the value of the black contribution to the world. The idea of a universal civilization has validity in Césaire's eyes only if it allows a rich diversity of particular cultures. Such a universal civilization, however, cannot be identified with the existing world order. Instead, it can only be understood as a task yet to be achieved, the emerging outline of which can be seen in the solidarity of the exploited and oppressed against capitalism and colonialism. Césaire's conception of each national liberation struggle is not narrow but embraces solidarity with all those who battle against the common enemy. He offers us the poet's vision of a new man in a free and fraternal world regenerated by the struggle of the disinherited to repossess their birthright.

NOTES

[1]Renate Zahar, Kolonialismus und Entfremdung: Zur politischen Theorie Frantz Fanons, Frankfurt/Main, 1969, p. 72. Also see Aimé Patri, "Deux poètes noirs en langue française: Aimé Césaire et Léopold Sédar Senghor," Présence Africaine, 3 (1948), pp. 378-387 for a discussion of the poetic differences between Césaire and Senghor. In the remainder of this essay we shall confine our discussion to the political and ideological aspects of négritude. Also see the critiques of the metaphysical interpretations of négritude of Senghor and Sartre in Gabriel d'Arboussier, "Une dangereuse mystification: la théorie de la négritude," La Nouvelle Critique, 7 (June, 1949), pp. 34-47, and Albert Franklin, "Négritude: Réalité ou mystification?" Présence Africaine, 14 (November, 1952), pp. 287-303.

[2]"Un Orfeo del Caribe," pp. XXXI-XXXIII.

[3]See L.-V. Thomas, "Senghor à la recherche de l'homme nègre," Présence Africaine, LIV (2e Trimestre, 1965), pp. 7-36 for the most convenient description of Senghor's négritude.

[4]Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Négritude et civilisation de l'universel," Présence Africaine, 46 (2e Trimestre, 1963), p. 10, and Senghor, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin et la Politique Africaine, p. 20.

[5]Senghor, "Psychologie du Negro-Africain," Diogène, 37 (1962); tr. John Reed and Clive Wake in Senghor: Prose and Poetry, (London, 1965), p. 33; cited in Irele, "Negritude--Literature and Ideology," p. 519.

[6]Senghor, "Négritude et civilisation de l'universel," p. 10.

[7]Senghor, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, pp. 22, 26, 23, 25-27.

[8]Senghor, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, pp. 30-31. Also see Peter Worsley, The Third World, p. 120.

[9]Senghor, Théorie et pratique du socialisme sénégalaise, Dakar, 1962, p. 69, cited in Thomas, "Senghor à la recherche de l'homme nègre," p. 13.

[10]Senghor, "Négritude et civilisation de l'universel," p. 10.

[11]Senghor, "Négritude et civilisation de l'universel," pp. 9-10.

[12]Aimé Césaire, Discours sur le Colonialisme, Paris, 1955, p. 10.

[13]Aimé Césaire, "Sur le poèsie nationale," Présence Africaine, 4 (October-November, 1955), pp. 39-41.

[14]Aimé Césaire, "Le colonialisme n'est pas mort," La Nouvelle Critique, 51 (January, 1954), pp. 11, 13, 18.

[15]Césaire, Discours, pp. 17-19.

[16]Césaire, Discours, pp. 21-22.

[17]Aimé Césaire, "Culture et colonisation," Présence Africaine, 8-9-10 (June-November, 1956), pp. 194-201.

[18]Césaire, Discours, p. 10.

[19]Aimé Césaire, "L'homme de culture et ses responsibilités," Présence Africaine, 24-25 (February-May, 1959), p. 116.

[20]Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, p. 187.

[21]Césaire, "L'homme de culture," p. 119, (Original emphasis.)

[22]See Earl Ofari, "Marxism, Nationalism, and Black Liberation," Monthly Review, 10 (March, 1971), p. 31 for an example of the interpretation of négritude as the ideology of the black bourgeoisie.

[23]Césaire, "L'homme de culture," pp. 118-119.

[24]Césaire, Discours, pp. 34-35.

[25]Césaire, "L'homme de culture," p. 117; Césaire, "Culture et colonisation," p. 205.

[26]Césaire, "L'homme de culture," p. 117.

[27]Césaire, "L'homme de culture," p. 118.

[28]Ellen Conroy Kennedy, "Aimé Césaire: An Interview with an Architect of Negritude," Negro Digest, XVII, 7 (May, 1968), p. 58.

[29]Cited in Aimé Césaire, "La pensée politique de Sékou Touré," Présence Africaine, 29 (December-January, 1960), pp. 65-66.

[30]Césaire, "La pensée politique de Sékou Touré," p. 68.

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