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Editorial Note

The political essays, articles, and notes by Frantz Fanon published in the present volume cover the most active period of his life, from the publication of *Peau Noir, Masques Blancs* [*Black Skin, White Masks*] in 1952—he was then twenty-eight years old—to that of *Les Damnés de la Terre* [*The Wretched of the Earth*] in 1961 which was to coincide, within a matter of days, with the date of his death.

Most of these writings have already appeared in various reviews and periodicals, the reference and the date of which we give in each case. But they were widely scattered and difficult to get hold of. Those that appeared in *El Moudjahid*, in particular, are hardly to be found today, and they had in fact been accessible, when they appeared, only to a limited number of readers.

Brought together as they are here, in their chronological order, these writings reveal a singularly living unity. They mark the successive stages of a single combat, which develops and broadens, but the objective and the means of which had been seen and determined from the beginning. The three books so far published give us three analyses crystallized at precise stages of Fanon's development. The texts that follow constitute a guiding thread by which we may follow him more closely from day to day, the itinerary of a mind in constant evolution, growing ever broader and richer while continuing to be true to itself.

The first two articles, "The North-African Syndrome" and "West Indians and Africans," published in 1952 and 1955, may mark the first stages. At this time Frantz Fanon had completed his psychiatric studies: he was thus in a position, on the basis of his daily medical experience, to give a scientific account of the situation of the colonized. On the other hand this situation was one that he had lived historically, that he was still living; it was
for him a personal experience which he could judge from within as well. Having decided to dissociate himself both from the “great white error” and from the “great black mirage,” he initiated a new, revolutionary approach. To present the question of the colonized and to solve it, he was in a privileged position: his consciousness of it, the clarity of his vision, strengthened the firmness of his commitment.

Fanon was to choose to practice in Algeria, an outstandingly colonized country, to live and fight among other colonized people like himself. The theme is taken up again and amplified in “Racism and Culture,” a lecture delivered in 1956 before the First Congress of Negro Writers. Here the analysis becomes sharper, the challenge radical, the commitment open and precise. His diagnosis of racism which “is not an accidental discovery” but “fits into a definite pattern, which is the pattern of the exploitation of one group of men by another,” implies one solution and one only: “The logical end of this will to fight is the total liberation of the national territory.” “The struggle has suddenly become total, absolute.” This is not a verbal struggle. From the time he became a psychiatrist at the Blida hospital, and even more after the outbreak of the insurrection, Fanon was a militant in the Algerian revolutionary organization. At the same time he carried on a remarkable medical activity, innovating at many levels, deeply, viscerally close to his patients whom he regarded as primarily victims of the system he was fighting. He collected clinical notes and analyses on the phenomena of colonialist alienation seen through mental diseases. He explored local traditions and their relations to colonization. This material remains untouched, but it too is scattered, and we hope to be able to assemble it and present it in a separate volume.

His work as an FLN [National Liberation Front] militant soon attracted the attention of the French police. Late in 1956, before leaving for Tunis, he made final a much older total commitment through his letter of resignation, “Letter to the Resident Minister.” It is, together with the “Letter to a French-
“For Algeria.” The experience thus accumulated in the very thick of the battle was later to furnish the material for *L’An Cinq de la Révolution Algérienne*, published in 1959.*

In Tunis, Fanon was called upon to participate in the Press Services of the FLN. He was one of the team of editors of *El Moudjahid* of which the first issues then appeared. Relentlessly he lashed out at the colonialist system, its total nature, its unbroken unity, the solidarity which, whether they willed it or not, bound those that were on its side, while at the same time the genocide of one million Algerians was being carried out. His analysis, “French Intellectuals and Democrats and the Algerian Revolution,” aroused the indignation of the French Left. In it he denounced the hypocrisy of those who considered colonialism and its sequels, war, torture, as only a monstrous excrescence which had only to be circumscribed and reproved, whereas it was really a perfectly logical, perfectly coherent whole, in which all those who lived within it were inevitably accomplices.

Fanon had thus grasped the means of amplifying one of his first themes: the common nature of the struggle of all the colonized. Being one of the first to envisage concretely—not as a “prophetic vision” but as an immediate battle objective—the unity of Africa, he was constantly linking the fate of the Algerian Revolution with that of the continent as a whole, considering it, as he did, the vanguard of the African Revolution. *El Moudjahid* constantly developed this line: *The Algerian Revolution and the Liberation of Africa*—this title given to a booklet of FLN articles and documents widely distributed at this period well indicates the importance that the Algerian revolutionaries then attributed to it.

The articles in *El Moudjahid* were never signed. The anonymity was complete. The articles published here, checked

*Published in the United States in 1965 under the title, *Studies in a Dying Colonialism*. 

by Mrs. Fanon, are those we are absolutely certain were written by Fanon. His contribution, to be sure, was not limited to these particular articles. But as in every team, and particularly in this revolution in full ferment, there was constant osmosis, interaction, mutual stimulation. At the very time when Fanon's thinking was reaching new dimensions in contact with the creative nucleus of the Algerian Revolution, it would transmit new impulses to the latter. We have assembled the texts thus produced under the title, "Toward the Liberation of Africa."

The idea of Africa that was growing in Fanon's mind found concrete expression in the mission that he conducted in the countries of West Africa, after having been ambassador at Accra. He was to study, in particular, the conditions of a closer alliance between Africans, the recruiting of Negro volunteers, the opening of a new front South of the Sahara. The pages that we publish in the last chapter, "African Unity," are those of an unpublished travel notebook in which this plan assumes its full clarity and its violence.

Fanon returned from this mission exhausted: he had contracted leukemia. He devoted his last strength to writing Les Damnés de la Terre. He was to die a year after having witnessed the fall of his friend, Lumumba, the African leader whose African vision was closest to his. He believed steadfastly in the forthcoming total liberation of Africa, convinced, as he had written in L'An Cinq de la Révolution Algérienne, that the African revolution had created "an irreversible situation."

FRANÇOIS MASPERO

Paris, 1964
I

The Problem of the Colonized
The “North African Syndrome”

It is a common saying that man is constantly a challenge to himself, and that were he to claim that he is so no longer he would be denying himself. It must be possible, however, to describe an initial, a basic dimension of all human problems. More precisely, it would seem that all the problems which man faces on the subject of man can be reduced to this one question:

“Have I not, because of what I have done or failed to do, contributed to an impoverishment of human reality?”

The question could also be formulated in this way:

“Have I at all times demanded and brought out the man that is in me?”

I want to show in what is to follow that, in the specific case of the North African who has emigrated to France, a theory of inhumanity is in a fair way to finding its laws and its corollaries.

All those men who are hungry, all those men who are cold, all those men who are afraid...

All those men of whom we are afraid, who crush the jealous emerald of our dreams, who twist the fragile curve of our smiles, all those men we face, who ask us no questions, but to whom we put strange ones.

Who are they?

I ask you, I ask myself. Who are they, those creatures starving for humanity who stand buttressed against the impalpable frontiers (though I know them from experience to be terribly distinct) of complete recognition?

Who are they, in truth, those creatures, who hide, who are

hidden by social truth beneath the attributes of *bicot, bou­nioule, arabe, raton, sidi, mon z’ami*?¹

**FIRST THESIS.**—*That the behavior of the North African often causes a medical staff to have misgivings as to the reality of his illness.*

Except in urgent cases—an intestinal occlusion, wounds, accidents—the North African arrives enveloped in vagueness.

He has an ache in his belly, in his back, he has an ache everywhere. He suffers miserably, his face is eloquent, he is obviously suffering.

“What’s wrong, my friend?”

“I’m dying, monsieur le docteur.”

His voice breaks imperceptibly.

“Where do you have pain?”

“Everywhere, monsieur le docteur.”

You must not ask for specific symptoms: you would not be given any. For example, in pains of an ulcerous character, it is important to know their periodicity. This conformity to the categories of time is something to which the North African seems to be hostile. It is not lack of comprehension, for he often comes accompanied by an interpreter. It is as though it is an effort for him to go back to where he no longer is. The past for him is a burning past. What he hopes is that he will never suffer again, never again be face to face with that past. This present pain, which visibly mobilizes the muscles of his face, suffices him. He does not understand that anyone should wish to impose on him, even by way of memory, the pain that is already gone. He does not understand why the doctor asks him so many questions.

“What does it hurt?”

“In my belly.” (He then points to his thorax and abdomen.)

“When does it hurt?”

“All the time.”

“Even at night?”

¹ Terms of contempt applied in France to Arabs in general and to Algerians in particular.—*Tr.*
“Especially at night.”
“It hurts more at night than in the daytime, does it?”
“No, all the time.”
“But more at night than in the daytime?”
“No, all the time.”
“And where does it hurt most?”
“Here.” (He then points to his thorax and abdomen.)

And there you are. Meanwhile patients are waiting outside, and the worst of it is that you have the impression that time would not improve matters. You therefore fall back on a diagnosis of probability and in correlation propose an approximate therapy.

“Take this treatment for a month. If you don’t get better, come back and see me.”

There are then two possibilities:
1. The patient is not immediately relieved, and he comes back after three or four days. This sets us against him, because we know that it takes time for the prescribed medicine to have an effect on the lesion. He is made to understand this, or more precisely, he is told. But our patient has not heard what we said. He is his pain and he refuses to understand any language, and it is not far from this to the conclusion: It is because I am Arab that they don’t treat me like others.

2. The patient is not immediately relieved, but he does not go back to the same doctor, nor to the same dispensary. He goes elsewhere. He proceeds on the assumption that in order to get satisfaction he has to knock at every door, and he knocks. He knocks persistently. Gently. Naïvely. Furiously.

He knocks. The door is opened. The door is always opened. And he tells about his pain. Which becomes increasingly his own. He now talks about it volubly. He takes hold of it in space and puts it before the doctor’s nose. He takes it, touches it with his ten fingers, develops it, exposes it. It grows as one watches it. He gathers it over the whole surface of his body and after fifteen minutes of gestured explanations the interpreter (appropriately baffling) translates for us: he says he has a belly-ache.
All those forays into space, all those facial spasms, all those wild stares were only meant to express a vague discomfort. We experience a kind of frustration in the field of explanation. The comedy, or the drama, begins all over again: approximate diagnosis and therapy.

There is no reason for the wheel to stop going round. Some day an X-ray will be taken of him which will show an ulcer or a gastritis. Or which in most cases will show nothing at all. His ailment will be described as “functional.”

This concept is of some importance and is worth looking into. A thing is said to be vague when it is lacking in consistency, in objective reality. The North African’s pain, for which we can find no lesional basis, is judged to have no consistency, no reality. Now the North African is a-man-who-doesn’t-like-work. So that whatever he does will be interpreted a priori on the basis of this.

A North African is hospitalized because he suffers from lassitude, asthenia, weakness. He is given active treatment on the basis of restoratives. After twenty days it is decided to discharge him. He then discovers that he has another disease.

“My heart seems to flutter inside here.”

“My head is bursting.”

In the face of this fear of leaving the hospital one begins to wonder if the debility for which he was treated was not due to some giddiness. One begins to wonder if one has not been the plaything of this patient whom one has never too well understood. Suspicion rears its head. Henceforth one will mistrust the alleged symptoms.

The thing is perfectly clear in the winter; so much so that certain wards are literally submerged by North Africans during the severe cold spells. It’s so comfortable within hospital walls.

In one ward, a doctor was scolding a European suffering from sciatica who spent the day visiting in the different rooms. The doctor explained to him that with his particular ailment, rest constituted one half of the therapy. With the North Africans, he added, for our benefit, the problem is different: there is no need to prescribe rest; they’re always in bed.
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In the face of this pain without lesion, this illness distributed in and over the whole body, this continuous suffering, the easiest attitude, to which one comes more or less rapidly, is the negation of any morbidity. When you come down to it, the North African is a simulator, a liar, a malingerer, a sluggard, a thief.²

SECOND THESIS.—That the attitude of medical personnel is very often an a priori attitude. The North African does not come with a substratum common to his race, but on a foundation built by the European. In other words, the North African, spontaneously, by the very fact of appearing on the scene, enters into a pre-existing framework.

For several years medicine has shown a trend which, in a very summary way, we can call neo-Hippocratism. In accordance with this trend doctors, when faced with a patient, are concerned less with making a diagnosis of an organ than with a diagnosis of a function. But this orientation has not yet found favor in the medical schools where pathology is taught. There is a flaw in the practitioner's thinking. An extremely dangerous flaw.

We shall see how it manifests itself in practice.

I am called in to visit a patient on an emergency. It is two o'clock in the morning. The room is dirty, the patient is dirty. His parents are dirty. Everybody weeps. Everybody screams. One has the strange impression that death is hovering nearby. The young doctor does not let himself be perturbed. He "objectively" examines the belly that has every appearance of requiring surgery.

He touches, he feels, he taps, he questions, but he gets only groans by way of response. He feels again, taps a second time, and the belly contracts, resists... He "sees nothing." But what if an operation is really called for? What if he is overlooking something? His examination is negative, but he doesn't dare to leave. After considerable hesitation, he will send his patient to a center with the diagnosis of an abdomen requiring surgery. Three days later he sees the patient with the "abdomen requiring surgery" turn up smilingly in his office, completely

² Social Security? It's we who pay for it!
cured. And what the patient is unaware of is that there is an exacting medical philosophy, and that he has flouted this philosophy.

Medical thinking proceeds from the symptom to the lesion. In the illustrious assemblies, in the international medical congresses, agreement has been reached as to the importance of the neurovegetative systems, the diencephalon, the endocrine glands, the psychosomatic links, the sympathalgias, but doctors continue to be taught that every symptom requires its lesion. The patient who complains of headaches, ringing in his ears, and dizziness, will also have high blood-pressure. But should it happen that along with these symptoms there is no sign of high blood-pressure, nor of brain tumor, in any case nothing positive, the doctor would have to conclude that medical thinking was at fault; and as any thinking is necessarily thinking about something, he will find the patient at fault—an indocile, undisciplined patient, who doesn’t know the rules of the game. Especially the rule, known to be inflexible, which says: any symptom presupposes a lesion.

What am I to do with this patient? From the specialist to whom I had sent him for a probable operation, he comes back to me with a diagnosis of “North African syndrome.” And it is true that the newly arrived medico will run into situations reminiscent of Molière through the North Africans he is called upon to treat. A man who fancies himself to be ill! If Molière (what I am about to say is utterly stupid, but all these lines only explicate, only make more flagrant, something vastly more stupid), if Molière had had the privilege of living in the twentieth century, he would certainly not have written Le Malade Imaginaire, for there can be no doubt that Argan is ill, is actively ill:

“Comment, coquine! Si je suis malade! Si je suis malade, impudente!”

The North African syndrome. The North African today who goes to see a doctor bears the dead weight of all his compatriots.

8 “What, you hussy! you doubt if I'm sick! You doubt if I'm sick, you impudent wench!”
Of all those who had only symptoms, of all those about whom the doctors said, "Nothing you can put your teeth into." (Meaning: no lesion.) But the patient who is here, in front of me, this body which I am forced to assume to be swept by a consciousness, this body which is no longer altogether a body or rather which is doubly a body since it is beside itself with terror—this body which asks me to listen to it without, however, paying too much heed to it—fills me with exasperation.

"Where do you hurt?"

"In my stomach." (He points to his liver.)

I lose my patience. I tell him that the stomach is to the left, that what he is pointing to is the location of the liver. He is not put out, he passes the palm of his hand over that mysterious belly.

"It all hurts."

I happen to know that this "it all" contains three organs; more exactly five or six. That each organ has its pathology. The pathology invented by the Arab does not interest us. It is a pseudo-pathology. The Arab is a pseudo-invalid.

Every Arab is a man who suffers from an imaginary ailment. The young doctor or the young student who has never seen a sick Arab knows (the old medical tradition testifies to it) that "those fellows are humbugs." There is one thing that might give food for thought. Speaking to an Arab, the student or the doctor is inclined to use the second person singular. It's a nice thing to do, we are told . . . to put them at ease . . . they're used to it . . . I am sorry, but I find myself incapable of analyzing this phenomenon without departing from the objective attitude to which I have constrained myself.

"I can't help it," an intern once told me, "I can't talk to them in the same way that I talk to other patients."

Yes, to be sure: "I can't help it." If you only knew the things in my life that I can't help. If you only knew the things in my life that plague me during the hours when others are benumbing their brains. If you only knew . . . but you will never know.

The medical staff discovers the existence of a North African
syndrome. Not experimentally, but on the basis of an oral tradition. The North African takes his place in this asymptomatic syndrome and is automatically put down as undisciplined (cf. medical discipline), inconsequential (with reference to the law according to which every symptom implies a lesion), and insincere (he says he is suffering when we know there are no reasons for suffering). There is a floating idea which is present, just beyond the limit of my lack of good faith, which emerges when the Arab unveils himself through his language:

“Doctor, I’m going to die.”

This idea, after having passed through a number of contortions, will impose itself, will impose itself on me.

No, you certainly can’t take these fellows seriously.

THIRD THESIS.—That the greatest willingness, the purest of intentions require enlightenment. Concerning the necessity of making a situational diagnosis.

Dr. Stern, in an article on psychosomatic medicine, based on the work of Heinrich Meng, writes: “One must not only find out which organ is attacked, what is the nature of the organic lesions, if they exist, and what microbe has invaded the organism; it is not enough to know the ‘somatic constitution’ of the patient. One must try to find out what Meng calls his ‘situation,’ that is to say, his relations with his associates, his occupations and his preoccupations, his sexuality, his sense of security or of insecurity, the dangers that threaten him; and we may add also his evolution, the story of his life. One must make a ‘situational diagnosis.’”

Dr. Stern offers us a magnificent plan, and we shall follow it.

1. Relations with his associates. Must we really speak of this? Is there not something a little comical about speaking of the North African’s relations with his associates, in France? Does he have relations? Does he have associates? Is he not alone? Are they not alone? Don’t they seem absurd to us, that is to say

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without substance, in the trams and the trolleybuses? Where do they come from? Where are they going? From time to time one sees them working at some building, but one does not see them, one perceives them, one gets a glimpse of them. Associates? Relations? There are no contracts. There are only bumps. Do people realize how much that is gentle and polite is contained in this word, “contact”? Are there contacts? Are there relations?

2. Occupations and preoccupations. He works, he is busy, he busies himself, he is kept busy. His preoccupations? I think the word does not exist in his language. What would he concern himself with? In France we say: Il se préoccupe de trouver du travail (he concerns himself with looking for work); in North Africa: he busies himself looking for work.

“Excuse me, Madame, but in your opinion, what are the preoccupations of a North African?”

3. Sexuality. Yes, I know what you mean; it consists of rape. In order to show to what extent a scotomizing study can be prejudicial to the authentic unveiling of a phenomenon, I should like to reproduce a few lines from a doctoral thesis in medicine presented in Lyon in 1951 by Dr. Léon Mugniery:

“In the region of Saint Etienne, eight out of ten have married prostitutes. Most of the others have accidental and short-time mistresses, sometimes on a marital basis. Often they put up one or several prostitutes for a few days and bring their friends in to them.

“For prostitution seems to play an important role in the North African colony... It is due to the powerful sexual appetite that is characteristic of those hot-blooded southerners.”

Further on:

“It can be shown by many examples that attempts made to house North Africans decently have repeatedly failed.

“These are mostly young men (25 to 35) with great sexual needs, whom the bonds of a mixed marriage can only temporarily stabilize, and for whom homosexuality is a disastrous inclination..."

5 Emphasis added.
“There are few solutions to this problem: either, in spite of the risks involved in a certain invasion by the Arab family, the regrouping of this family in France should be encouraged and Arab girls and women should be brought here; or else houses of prostitution for them should be tolerated . . .

“If these factors are not taken into account, we may well be exposed to increasing attempts at rape, of the kind that the newspapers are constantly reporting. Public morals surely have more to fear from the existence of these facts than from the existence of brothels.”

And to conclude, Dr. Mugniery deplores the mistake made by the French government in the following sentence which appears in capitals in his thesis: “THE GRANTING OF FRENCH CITIZENSHIP, CONFERRING EQUALITY OF RIGHTS, SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN TOO HASTY AND BASED ON SENTIMENTAL AND POLITICAL REASONS, RATHER THAN ON THE FACT OF THE SOCIAL AND INTELLECTUAL EVOLUTION OF A RACE HAVING A CIVILIZATION THAT IS AT TIMES REFINED BUT STILL PRIMITIVE IN ITS SOCIAL, FAMILY AND SANITARY BEHAVIOR.” (p. 45).

Need anything be added? Should we take up these absurd sentences one after the other? Should we remind Dr. Mugniery that if the North Africans in France content themselves with prostitutes, it is because they find prostitutes here in the first place, and also because they do not find any Arab women (who might invade the nation)?

4. *His inner tension.* Utterly unrealistic! You might as well speak of the inner tension of a stone. Inner tension indeed! What a joke!

5. *His sense of security or of insecurity.* The first term has to be struck out. The North African is in a perpetual state of insecurity. A multisegmented insecurity.

I sometimes wonder if it would not be well to reveal to the average Frenchman that it is a misfortune to be a North African. The North African is never sure. He has rights, you will tell me, but he doesn’t know what they are. Ah! Ah! It’s up to

* Emphasis added.
him to know them. Yes, sure, we're back on our feet! Rights, Duties, Citizenship, Equality, what fine things! The North African on the threshold of the French Nation—which is, we are told, his as well—experiences in the political realm, on the plane of citizenship, an imbroglio which no one is willing to face. What connection does this have with the North African in a hospital setting? It so happens that there is a connection.

6. *The dangers that threaten him.* Threatened in his affectivity, threatened in his social activity, threatened in his membership in the community—the North African combines all the conditions that make a sick man.

Without a family, without love, without human relations, without communion with the group, the first encounter with himself will occur in a neurotic mode, in a pathological mode; he will feel himself emptied, without life, in a bodily struggle with death, a death on this side of death, a death in life—and what is more pathetic than this man with robust muscles who tells us in his truly broken voice, “Doctor, I’m going to die”?

7. *His evolution and the story of his life.* It would be better to say the history of his death. A daily death.

A death in the tram,
a death in the doctor’s office,
a death with the prostitutes,
a death on the job site,
a death at the movies,
a multiple death in the newspapers,
a death in the fear of all decent folk of going out after midnight.

A death,
yes a death.

All this is very fine, we shall be told, but what solutions do you propose?

As you know, they are vague, amorphous . . .

“You constantly have to be on their backs.”

“You’ve got to push them out of the hospital.”
"If you were to listen to them you would prolong their convalescence indefinitely."

"They can't express themselves."
And they are liars
and also they are thieves
and also and also and also
the Arab is a thief
all Arabs are thieves
It's a do-nothing race
dirty
disgusting
Nothing you can do about them
nothing you can get out of them
sure, it's hard for them being the way they are
being that way
but anyway, you can't say it's our fault.

—But that's just it, it is our fault.
It so happens that the fault is YOUR fault.
Men come and go along a corridor you have built for them, where you have provided no bench on which they can rest, where you have crystallized a lot of scarecrows that viciously smack them in the face, and hurt their cheeks, their chests, their hearts.
Where they find no room
where you leave them no room
where there is absolutely no room for them
and you dare tell me it doesn't concern you!
that it's no fault of yours!

This man whom you thingify by calling him systematically Mohammed, whom you reconstruct, or rather whom you dissolve, on the basis of an idea, an idea you know to be repulsive (you know perfectly well you rob him of something, that something for which not so long ago you were ready to give up everything, even your life) well, don't you have the impression that you are emptying him of his substance?
Why don't they stay where they belong?

Sure! That's easy enough to say: why don't they stay where they belong? The trouble is, they have been told they were French. They learned it in school. In the street. In the barracks. (Where they were given shoes to wear on their feet.) On the battlefields. They have had France squeezed into them wherever, in their bodies and in their souls, there was room for something apparently great.

Now they are told in no uncertain terms that they are in "our" country. That if they don't like it, all they have to do is go back to their Casbah. For here too there is a problem.

Whatever vicissitudes he may come up against in France, so some people claim, the North African will be happier at home . . .

It has been found in England that children who were magnificently fed, each having two nurses entirely at his service, but living away from the family circle, showed a morbidity twice as pronounced as children who were less well fed but who lived with their parents. Without going so far, think of all those who lead a life without a future in their own country and who refuse fine positions abroad. What is the good of a fine position if it does not culminate in a family, in something that can be called home?

Psychoanalytical science considers expatriation to be a morbid phenomenon. In which it is perfectly right.

These considerations allow us to conclude:

1. The North African will never be happier in Europe than at home, for he is asked to live without the very substance of his affectivity. Cut off from his origins and cut off from his ends, he is a thing tossed into the great sound and fury, bowed beneath the law of inertia.

2. There is something manifestly and abjectly disingenuous in the above statement. If the standard of living made available to the North African in France is higher than the one he was accustomed to at home, this means that there is still a good deal to be done in his country, in that "other part of France."

That there are houses to be built, schools to be opened, roads
to be laid out, slums to be torn down, cities to be made to spring from the earth, men and women, children and children to be adorned with smiles.

This means that there is work to be done over there, human work, that is, work which is the meaning of a home. Not that of a room or a barrack building. It means that over the whole territory of the French nation (the metropolis and the French Union), there are tears to be wiped away, inhuman attitudes to be fought, condescending ways of speech to be ruled out, men to be humanized.

Your solution, sir?

Don’t push me too far. Don’t force me to tell you what you ought to know, sir. If YOU do not reclaim the man who is before you, how can I assume that you reclaim the man that is in you?

If YOU do not want the man who is before you, how can I believe the man that is perhaps in you?

If YOU do not demand the man, if YOU do not sacrifice the man that is in you so that the man who is on this earth shall be more than a body, more than a Mohammed, by what conjurer’s trick will I have to acquire the certainty that you, too, are worthy of my love?
West Indians and Africans

Two years ago I was finishing a work\(^1\) on the problem of the colored man in the white world. I knew that I must absolutely not amputate reality. I was not unaware of the fact that within the very entity of the "Negro people" movements could be discerned which, unfortunately, were utterly devoid of any attractive features. I mean, for example, that the enemy of the Negro is often not the white man but a man of his own color. This is why I suggested the possibility of a study which could contribute to the dissolution of the affective complexes that could oppose West Indians and Africans.

Before taking up the discussion we should like to point out that this business of Negroes is a dirty business. A business to turn your stomach. A business which, when you are faced with it, leaves you wholly disarmed if you accept the premises of the Negro-baiters. And when I say that the expression "Negro people" is an entity, I thereby indicate that, except for cultural influences, nothing is left. There is as great a difference between a West Indian and a Dakarian as between a Brazilian and a Spaniard. The object of lumping all Negroes together under the designation of "Negro people" is to deprive them of any possibility of individual expression. What is thus attempted is to put them under the obligation of matching the idea one has of them.

Is it not obvious that there can only be a white race? What would the "white people" correspond to? Do I have to explain the difference that exists between nation, people, fatherland,


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community? When one says "Negro people," one systematically assumes that all Negroes agree on certain things, that they share a principle of communion. The truth is that there is nothing, a priori, to warrant the assumption that such a thing as a Negro people exists. That there is an African people, that there is a West Indian people, this I do believe. But when someone talks to me about that "Negro people," I try to understand what is meant. Then, unfortunately, I understand that there is in this a source of conflicts. Then I try to destroy this source.

I shall be found to use terms like "metaphysical guilt," or "obsession with purity." I shall ask the reader not to be surprised: these will be accurate to the extent to which it is understood that since what is important cannot be attained, or more precisely, since what is important is not really sought after, one falls back on what is contingent. This is one of the laws of recrimination and of bad faith. The urgent thing is to rediscover what is important beneath what is contingent.

What is at issue here? I say that in a period of fifteen years a revolution has occurred in West Indian-African relations. I want to show wherein this event consists.

In Martinique it is rare to find hardened racial positions. The racial problem is covered over by economic discrimination and, in a given social class, it is above all productive of anecdotes. Relations are not modified by epidermal accentuations. Despite the greater or lesser amount of melanin that the skin may contain, there is a tacit agreement enabling all and sundry to recognize one another as doctors, tradesmen, workers. A Negro worker will be on the side of the mulatto worker against the middle-class Negro. Here we have proof that questions of race are but a superstructure, a mantle, an obscure ideological emanation concealing an economic reality.

In Martinique, when it is remarked that this or that person is in fact very black, this is said without contempt, without hatred.

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2 Let us say that the concessions we have made are fictitious. Philosophically and politically there is no such thing as an African people. There is an African world. And a West Indian world as well. On the other hand, it can be said that there is a Jewish people; but not a Jewish race.
THE PROBLEM OF THE COLONIZED

One must be accustomed to what is called the spirit of Martinique in order to grasp the meaning of what is said. Jankelevitch has shown that irony is one of the forms that good conscience assumes. It is true that in the West Indies irony is a mechanism of defense against neurosis. A West Indian, in particular an intellectual who is no longer on the level of irony, discovers his Negritude. Thus, while in Europe irony protects against the existential anguish, in Martinique it protects against the awareness of Negritude.

It can be seen that a study of irony in the West Indies is crucial for the sociology of this region. Aggressiveness there is almost always cushioned by irony.³

It will be convenient for our purpose to distinguish two periods in the history of the West Indies: before and after the war of 1939-1945.

Before the War

Before 1939, the West Indian claimed to be happy, or at least thought of himself as being so.⁴ He voted, went to school when he could, took part in the processions, liked rum and danced the beguine. Those who were privileged to go to France spoke of Paris, of Paris which meant France. And those who were not privileged to know Paris let themselves be beguiled.

There were also the civil servants working in Africa. Through them one saw a country of savages, of barbarians, of natives, of servants. Certain things need to be said if one is to avoid falsifying the problem. The metropolitan civil servant, returning from Africa, has accustomed us to stereotypes: sorcerers, makers of fetishes, tom-toms, guilelessness, faithfulness, respect for the white man, backwardness. The trouble is that the West Indian speaks of Africa in exactly the same way and, as the civil servant is not only the colonial administrator but the

³ See, for example, the Carnival and the songs composed on this occasion.
⁴ We might say: like the French lower middle class at this period, but that is not our point of approach. What we wish to do here is to study the change in attitude of the West Indian with respect to Negritude.
constable, the customs officer, the registrar, the soldier, at every level of West Indian society an inescapable feeling of superiority over the African develops, becomes systematic, hardens. In every West Indian, before the war of 1939, there was not only the certainty of a superiority over the African, but the certainty of a fundamental difference. The African was a Negro and the West Indian a European.

These are things everyone gives the impression of knowing, but which no one takes into account.

Before 1939 the West Indian who volunteered in the Colonial Army, whether he was illiterate or knew how to read and write, served in a European unit, whereas the African, with the exception of the natives of the five territories, served in a native unit. The result to which we wish to draw attention is that, whatever the field considered, the West Indian was superior to the African, of a different species, assimilated to the metropolitan. But inasmuch as externally the West Indian was just a little bit African, since, say what you will, he was black, he was obliged—as a normal reaction in psychological economy—to harden his frontiers in order to be protected against any misapprehension.

We may say that the West Indian, not satisfied to be superior to the African, despised him, and while the white man could allow himself certain liberties with the native, the West Indian absolutely could not. This was because, between whites and Africans, there was no need of a reminder; the difference stared one in the face. But what a catastrophe if the West Indian should suddenly be taken for an African!

We may say also that this position of the West Indian was authenticated by Europe. The West Indian was not a Negro; he was a West Indian, that is to say a quasi-metropolitan. By this attitude the white man justified the West Indian in his contempt for the African. The Negro, in short, was a man who inhabited Africa.

In France, before 1940, when a West Indian was introduced in Bordeaux or Paris society, the introducer always added,
"from Martinique." I say "Martinique," because—as people may or may not know—Guadeloupe, for some reason or other, was considered to be a country of savages. Even today, in 1952, we hear Martiniquans insist that they (the natives of Guadeloupe) are more savage than we are.

The African, for his part, was in Africa the real representative of the Negro race. As a matter of fact, when a boss made too great demands on a Martiniquan in a work situation, he would sometimes be told: "If it's a nigger you want, go and look for him in Africa," meaning thereby that slaves and forced labor had to be recruited elsewhere. Over there, where the Negroes were.

The African, on the other hand, apart from a few rare "developed" individuals, was looked down upon, despised, confined within the labyrinth of his epiderm. As we see, the positions were clear-cut: on the one hand, the African; on the other, the European and the West Indian. The West Indian was a black man, but the Negro was in Africa.

In 1939 no West Indian in the West Indies proclaimed himself to be a Negro, claimed to be a Negro. When he did, it was always in his relations with a white man. It was the white man, the "bad white man," who obliged him to assert his color, more exactly to defend it. But it can be affirmed that in the West Indies in 1939 no spontaneous claim of Negritude rang forth.

It was then that three events occurred successively.

The first event was the arrival of Césaire.

For the first time a lycée teacher—a man, therefore, who was apparently worthy of respect—was seen to announce quite simply to West Indian society "that it is fine and good to be a Negro." To be sure, this created a scandal. It was said at the time that he was a little mad and his colleagues went out of their way to give details as to his supposed ailment.

What indeed could be more grotesque than an educated man, a man with a diploma, having in consequence understood a good many things, among others that "it was unfortunate to be a Negro," proclaiming that his skin was beautiful and that
the "big black hole" was a source of truth. Neither the mulattoes nor the Negroes understood this delirium. The mulattoes because they had escaped from the night, the Negroes because they aspired to get away from it. Two centuries of white truth proved this man to be wrong. He must be mad, for it was unthinkable that he could be right.

Once the excitement had died down, everything seemed to resume its normal course . . . And Césaire was about to be proved wrong, when the second event occurred: I am referring to the French defeat.

The downfall of France, for the West Indian, was in a sense the murder of the father. This national defeat might have been endured as it was in the metropolis, but a good part of the French fleet remained blockaded in the West Indies during the four years of the German occupation. This needs to be emphasized. I believe it is essential to grasp the historic importance of those four years.

Before 1939 there were about two thousand Europeans in Martinique. These Europeans had well-defined functions, were integrated into the social life, involved in the country's economy. Now from one day to the next, the single town of Fort-de-France was submerged by nearly ten thousand Europeans having an unquestionable, but until then latent, racist mentality. I mean that the sailors of the Béarn or the Emile-Bertin, on previous occasions in the course of a week in Fort-de-France, had not had time to manifest their racial prejudices. The four years during which they were obliged to live shut in on themselves, inactive, a prey to anguish when they thought of their families left in France, victims of despair as to the future, allowed them to drop a mask which, when all is said and done, was rather superficial, and to behave as "authentic racists."

It may be added that the West Indian economy suffered a severe blow, for it became necessary to find—again without any transition—at a time when nothing could be imported, the wherewithal to feed ten thousand men. Moreover, many of those sailors and soldiers were able to send for their wives and
children, who had to be housed. The Martiniquan held those white racists responsible for all this. The West Indian, in the presence of those men who despised him, began to have misgivings as to his values. The West Indian underwent his first metaphysical experience.

Then came Free France. De Gaulle, in London, spoke of treason, of soldiers who surrendered their swords even before they had drawn them. All this contributed to convincing the West Indians that France, their France, had not lost the war but that traitors had sold it out. And where were these traitors, if not camouflaged in the West Indies? One then witnessed an extraordinary sight: West Indians refusing to take off their hats while the *Marseillaise* was being played. 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? What had happened?

By a process easy to understand, the West Indians had assimilated the France of the sailors into the bad France, and the *Marseillaise* that those men respected was not their own. It must not be forgotten that those sailors were racists. Now “everybody knows that the true Frenchman is not a racist; in other words, he does not consider the West Indian a Negro.” Since these men did so consider him, this meant that they were not true Frenchmen. Who knows, perhaps they were Germans? And as a matter of fact, the sailor was systematically considered as a German. But the consequence that concerns us is the following: before ten thousand racists, the West Indian felt obliged to defend himself. Without Césaire this would have been difficult for him. But Césaire was there, and people joined him in chanting the once-hated song to the effect that it is fine and good to be a Negro! . . .

For two years the West Indian defended his “virtuous color” inch by inch and, without suspecting it, was dancing on the edge of a precipice. For after all, if the color black is virtuous, I shall be all the more virtuous the blacker I am! Then there
emerged from the shadows the very black, the "blues," the pure. And Césaire, the faithful bard, would repeat that "paint the tree trunk white as you will, the roots below remain black." Then it became real that not only the color black was invested with value, but fiction black, ideal black, black in the absolute, primitive black, the Negro. This amounted to nothing less than requiring the West Indian totally to recast his world, to undergo a metamorphosis of his body. It meant demanding of him an axiological activity in reverse, a valorization of what he had rejected.

But history continued. In 1943, weary of an ostracism to which they were not accustomed, irritated, famished, the West Indians, who had formerly been separated into closed sociological groups, broke all barriers, came to an agreement on certain things, among others that those Germans had gone too far and, supported by the local army, fought for and won the rallying of the colony to the Free French. Admiral Robert, "that other German," yielded. And this leads us to the third event.

It can be said that the demonstrations on the occasion of the Liberation, which were held in the West Indies, in any case in Martinique, in the months of July and August 1943, 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. In Martinique, the first metaphysical, or if one prefers, ontological experiment, coincided with the first political experiment. Auguste Comte regarded the proletarian as a systematic philosopher. The proletarian of Martinique is a systematized Negro.

After the War

Thus the West Indian, after 1945, changed his values. Whereas before 1939 he had his eyes riveted on white Europe, whereas what seemed good to him was escape from his color, in 1945 he discovered himself to be not only black but a Negro, and it was in the direction of distant Africa that he was hence-
forth to put out his feelers. The West Indian in France was continually recalling that he was not a Negro: from 1945 on, the West Indian in France was continually to recall that he was a Negro.

During this time the African pursued his way. He was not torn; he did not have to situate himself simultaneously with reference to the West Indian and with reference to the European. These last belonged in the same bag, the bag of the starvers, of the exploiters, of the no-goods. To be sure, there had been Eboué, who though a West Indian, had spoken to the Africans at the Brazzaville conference and had called them “my dear brothers.” And this brotherhood was not evangelical; it was based on color. The Africans had adopted Eboué. He was one of them. The other West Indians could come, but their pretensions to superiority were known. But to the Africans’ great astonishment, the West Indians who came to Africa after 1945 appeared with their hands stretched out, their backs bowed, humbly suppliant. They came to Africa with their hearts full of hope, eager to rediscover the source, to suckle at the authentic breasts of the African earth. The West Indians, civil servants and military, lawyers and doctors, landing in Dakar, were distressed at not being sufficiently black. Fifteen years before, they said to the Europeans, “Don’t pay attention to my black skin, it’s the sun that has burned me, my soul is as white as yours.” After 1945 they changed their tune. They said to the Africans, “Don’t pay attention to my white skin, my soul is as black as yours, and that is what matters.”

But the Africans were too resentful of them to allow them so easy a turnabout. Recognized in their blackness, in their obscurity, in what fifteen years before had been sin, they resented any encroachment on the West Indian’s part in this realm. They discovered themselves at last to be the possessors of truth, centuries-old bearers of an incorruptible purity. They rejected the West Indian, reminding him that they had not deserted, that they had not betrayed, that they had toiled, suffered, struggled on the African earth. The West Indian had said no to the
white man; the African was saying no to the West Indian.

The latter was undergoing his second metaphysical experience. He then suffered despair. Haunted by impurity, overwhelmed by sin, riddled with guilt, he was prey to the tragedy of being neither white nor Negro.

He wept, he composed poems, sang of Africa, of Africa the hard and the beautiful, Africa exploding with anger, tumultuous bustle, splash, Africa land of truth. At the Institute of Oriental Languages in Paris he learned Bambara. The African, in his majesty, rejected all approaches. The African was getting his revenge and the West Indian was paying . . .

If we now try to explain and summarize the situation, we may say that in Martinique, before 1939, there was not on one side the Negro and on the other side the white man, but a scale of colors the intervals of which could readily be passed over. One needed only to have children by someone less black than oneself. There was no racial barrier, no discrimination. There was that ironic spice, so characteristic of the Martinique mentality.

But in Africa the discrimination was real. There the Negro, the African, the native, the black, the dirty, was rejected, despised, cursed. There an amputation had occurred; there humanity was denied.

Until 1939 the West Indian lived, thought, dreamed (we have shown this in Black Skin, White Masks), composed poems, wrote novels exactly as a white man would have done. We understand now why it was not possible for him, as for the African poets, to sing the black night, "The black woman with pink heels." Before Césaire, West Indian literature was a literature of Europeans. The West Indian identified himself with the white man, adopted a white man's attitude, "was a white man."

After the West Indian was obliged, under the pressure of European racists, to abandon positions which were essentially fragile, because they were absurd, because they were incorrect, because they were alienating, a new generation came into being. The West Indian of 1945 is a Negro.

In Cahier d'un retour au pays natal (logbook of a return to
the native land) there is an African period, for on page 49 we read:

\[ \text{By dint of thinking of the Congo} \]
\[ \text{I have become a Congo humming with forests and rivers} \]

Then, with his eyes on Africa, the West Indian was to hail it. He discovered himself to be a transplanted son of slaves; he felt the vibration of Africa in the very depth of his body and aspired only to one thing: to plunge into the great "black hole."

It thus seems that the West Indian, after the great white error, is now living in the great black mirage.
II

Racism and Culture
The unilaterally decreed normative value of certain cultures deserves our careful attention. One of the paradoxes immediately encountered is the rebound of egocentric, sociocentric definitions.

There is first affirmed the existence of human groups having no culture; then of a hierarchy of cultures; and finally, the concept of cultural relativity.

We have here the whole range from overall negation to singular and specific recognition. It is precisely this fragmented and bloody history that we must sketch on the level of cultural anthropology.

There are, we may say, certain constellations of institutions, established by particular men, in the framework of precise geographical areas, which at a given moment have undergone a direct and sudden assault of different cultural patterns. The technical, generally advanced development of the social group that has thus appeared enables it to set up an organized domination. The enterprise of deculturation turns out to be the negative of a more gigantic work of economic, and even biological, enslavement.

The doctrine of cultural hierarchy is thus but one aspect of a systematized hierarchization implacably pursued.

The modern theory of the absence of cortical integration of colonial peoples is the anatomic-physiological counterpart of this doctrine. The apparition of racism is not fundamentally

Text of Frantz Fanon's speech before the First Congress of Negro Writers and Artists in Paris, September 1956. Published in the Special Issue of Présence Africaine, June-November, 1956.
determining. Racism is not the whole but the most visible, the most day-to-day and, not to mince matters, the crudest element of a given structure.

To study the relations of racism and culture is to raise the question of their reciprocal action. If culture is the combination of motor and mental behavior patterns arising from the encounter of man with nature and with his fellow-man, it can be said that racism is indeed a cultural element. There are thus cultures with racism and cultures without racism.

This precise cultural element, however, has not become encysted. Racism has not managed to harden. It has had to renew itself, to adapt itself, to change its appearance. It has had to undergo the fate of the cultural whole that informed it.

The vulgar, primitive, over-simple racism purported to find in biology—the Scriptures having proved insufficient—the material basis of the doctrine. It would be tedious to recall the efforts then undertaken: the comparative form of the skulls, the quantity and the configuration of the folds of the brain, the characteristics of the cell layers of the cortex, the dimensions of the vertebrae, the microscopic appearance of the epiderm, etc. . . .

Intellectual and emotional primitivism appeared as a banal consequence, a recognition of existence.

Such affirmations, crude and massive, give way to a more refined argument. Here and there, however, an occasional relapse is to be noted. Thus the “emotional instability of the Negro,” the “subcritical integration of the Arab,” the “quasi-generic culpability of the Jew” are data that one comes upon among a few contemporary writers. The monograph by J. Carothers, for example, sponsored by the World Health Organization, invokes “scientific arguments” in support of a physiological lobotomy of the African Negro.

These old-fashioned positions tend in any case to disappear. This racism that aspires to be rational, individual, genotypically and phenotypically determined, becomes transformed into cultural racism. The object of racism is no longer the individual man but a certain form of existing. At the extreme, such terms as “message” and “cultural style” are resorted to. “Occidental
values” oddly blend with the already famous appeal to the fight of the “cross against the crescent.”

The morphological equation, to be sure, has not totally disappeared, but events of the past thirty years have shaken the most solidly anchored convictions, upset the checkerboard, restructured a great number of relationships.

The memory of Nazism, the common wretchedness of different men, the common enslavement of extensive social groups, the apparition of “European colonies,” in other words the institution of a colonial system in the very heart of Europe, the growing awareness of workers in the colonizing and racist countries, the evolution of techniques, all this has deeply modified the problem and the manner of approaching it.

We must look for the consequences of this racism on the cultural level.

Racism, as we have seen, is only one element of a vaster whole: that of the systematized oppression of a people. How does an oppressing people behave? Here we rediscover constants.

We witness the destruction of cultural values, of ways of life. Language, dress, techniques, are devalorized. How can one account for this constant? Psychologists, who tend to explain everything by movements of the psyche, claim to discover this behavior on the level of contacts between individuals: the criticism of an original hat, of a way of speaking, of walking . . .

Such attempts deliberately leave out of account the special character of the colonial situation. In reality the nations that undertake a colonial war have no concern for the confrontation of cultures. War is a gigantic business and every approach must be governed by this datum. The enslavement, in the strictest sense, of the native population is the prime necessity.

For this its systems of reference have to be broken. Expropriation, spoliation, raids, objective murder, are matched by the sacking of cultural patterns, or at least condition such sacking. The social panorama is destructured; values are flaunted, crushed, emptied.

The lines of force, having crumbled, no longer give direction.
In their stead a new system of values is imposed, not proposed but affirmed, by the heavy weight of cannons and sabers.

The setting up of the colonial system does not of itself bring about the death of the native culture. Historic observation reveals, on the contrary, that the aim sought is rather a continued agony than a total disappearance of the pre-existing culture. This culture, once living and open to the future, becomes closed, fixed in the colonial status, caught in the yoke of oppression. Both present and mummified, it testifies against its members. It defines them in fact without appeal. The cultural mummification leads to a mummification of individual thinking. The apathy so universally noted among colonial peoples is but the logical consequence of this operation. The reproach of inertia constantly directed at "the native" is utterly dishonest. As though it were possible for a man to evolve otherwise than within the framework of a culture that recognizes him and that he decides to assume.

Thus we witness the setting up of archaic, inert institutions, functioning under the oppressor's supervision and patterned like a caricature of formerly fertile institutions...

These bodies appear to embody respect for the tradition, the cultural specificities, the personality of the subjugated people. This pseudo-respect in fact is tantamount to the most utter contempt, to the most elaborate sadism. The characteristic of a culture is to be open, permeated by spontaneous, generous, fertile lines of force. The appointment of "reliable men" to execute certain gestures is a deception that deceives no one. Thus the Kabyle djemaas named by the French authority are not recognized by the natives. They are matched by another djemaa democratically elected. And naturally the second as a rule dictates to the first what his conduct should be.

The constantly affirmed concern with "respecting the culture of the native populations" accordingly does not signify taking into consideration the values borne by the culture, incarnated by men. Rather, this behavior betrays a determination to objectify, to confine, to imprison, to harden. Phrases such as "I
know them," "that's the way they are," show this maximum objectification successfully achieved. I can think of gestures and thoughts that define these men.

Exoticism is one of the forms of this simplification. It allows no cultural confrontation. There is on the one hand a culture in which qualities of dynamism, of growth, of depth can be recognized. As against this, we find characteristics, curiosities, things, never a structure.

Thus in an initial phase the occupant establishes his domination, massively affirms his superiority. The social group, militarily and economically subjugated, is dehumanized in accordance with a polydimensional method.

Exploitation, tortures, raids, racism, collective liquidations, rational oppression take turns at different levels in order literally to make of the native an object in the hands of the occupying nation.

This object man, without means of existing, without a raison d'être, is broken in the very depth of his substance. The desire to live, to continue, becomes more and more indecisive, more and more phantom-like. It is at this stage that the well-known guilt complex appears. In his first novels, Wright gives a very detailed description of it.

Progressively, however, the evolution of techniques of production, the industrialization, limited though it is, of the subjugated countries, the increasingly necessary existence of collaborators, impose a new attitude upon the occupant. The complexity of the means of production, the evolution of economic relations inevitably involving the evolution of ideologies, unbalance the system. Vulgar racism in its biological form corresponds to the period of crude exploitation of man's arms and legs. The perfecting of the means of production inevitably brings about the camouflage of the techniques by which man is exploited, hence of the forms of racism.

It is therefore not as a result of the evolution of people's minds that racism loses its virulence. No inner revolution can explain this necessity for racism to seek more subtle forms, to
evolve. On all sides men become free, putting an end to the lethargy to which oppression and racism had condemned them.

In the very heart of the "civilized nations" the workers finally discover that the exploitation of man, at the root of a system, assumes different faces. At this stage racism no longer dares appear without disguise. It is unsure of itself. In an ever greater number of circumstances the racist takes to cover. He who claimed to "sense," to "see through" those others, finds himself to be a target, looked at, judged. The racist's purpose has become a purpose haunted by bad conscience. He can find salvation only in a passion-driven commitment such as is found in certain psychoses. And having defined the symptomatology of such passion-charged deliria is not the least of Professor Baruk's merits.

Racism is never a super-added element discovered by chance in the course of the investigation of the cultural data of a group. The social constellation, the cultural whole, are deeply modified by the existence of racism.

It is a common saying nowadays that racism is a plague of humanity. But we must not content ourselves with such a phrase. We must tirelessly look for the repercussions of racism at all levels of sociability. The importance of the racist problem in contemporary American literature is significant. The Negro in motion pictures, the Negro and folklore, the Jew and children's stories, the Jew in the café, are inexhaustible themes.

Racism, to come back to America, haunts and vitiates American culture. And this dialectical gangrene is exacerbated by the coming to awareness and the determination of millions of Negroes and Jews to fight this racism by which they are victimized.

This passion-charged, irrational, groundless phase, when one examines it, reveals a frightful visage. The movement of groups, the liberation, in certain parts of the world, of men previously kept down, make for a more and more precarious equilibrium. Rather unexpectedly, the racist group points accusingly to a manifestation of racism among the oppressed. The "intellectual
primitivism" of the period of exploitation gives way to the "medieval, in fact prehistoric fanaticism" of the period of the liberation.

For a time it looked as though racism had disappeared. This soul-soothing, unreal impression was simply the consequence of the evolution of forms of exploitation. Psychologists spoke of a prejudice having become unconscious. The truth is that the rigor of the system made the daily affirmation of a superiority superfluous. The need to appeal to various degrees of approval and support, to the native's cooperation, modified relations in a less crude, more subtle, more "cultivated" direction. It was not rare, in fact, to see a "democratic and humane" ideology at this stage. The commercial undertaking of enslavement, of cultural destruction, progressively gave way to a verbal mystification.

The interesting thing about this evolution is that racism was taken as a topic of meditation, sometimes even as a publicity technique.

Thus the blues—"the black slave lament"—was offered up for the admiration of the oppressors. This modicum of stylized oppression is the exploiter's and the racist's rightful due. Without oppression and without racism you have no blues. The end of racism would sound the knell of great Negro music . . .

As the all-too-famous Toynbee might say, the blues are the slave's response to the challenge of oppression.

Still today, for many men, even colored, Armstrong's music has a real meaning only in this perspective.

Racism bloats and disfigures the face of the culture that practices it. Literature, the plastic arts, songs for shopgirls, proverbs, habits, patterns, whether they set out to attack it or to vulgarize it, restore racism. This means that a social group, a country, a civilization, cannot be unconsciously racist.

We say once again that racism is not an accidental discovery. It is not a hidden, dissimulated element. No superhuman efforts are needed to bring it out.

Racism stares one in the face for it so happens that it belongs in a characteristic whole: that of the shameless exploitation of
one group of men by another which has reached a higher stage of technical development. This is why military and economic oppression generally precedes, makes possible, and legitimizes racism.

The habit of considering racism as a mental quirk, as a psychological flaw, must be abandoned.

But the men who are a prey to racism, the enslaved, exploited, weakened social group—how do they behave? What are their defense mechanisms?

What attitudes do we discover here?

In an initial phase we have seen the occupying power legitimizing its domination by scientific arguments, the "inferior race" being denied on the basis of race. Because no other solution is left it, the racialized social group tries to imitate the oppressor and thereby to deracialize itself. The "inferior race" denies itself as a different race. It shares with the "superior race" the convictions, doctrines, and other attitudes concerning it.

Having witnessed the liquidation of its systems of reference, the collapse of its cultural patterns, the native can only recognize with the occupant that "God is not on his side." The oppressor, through the inclusive and frightening character of his authority, manages to impose on the native new ways of seeing, and in particular a pejorative judgment with respect to his original forms of existing.

This event, which is commonly designated as alienation, is naturally very important. It is found in the official texts under the name of assimilation.

Now this alienation is never wholly successful. Whether or not it is because the oppressor quantitatively and qualitatively limits the evolution, unforeseen, disparate phenomena manifest themselves.

The inferiorized group had admitted, since the force of reasoning was implacable, that its misfortunes resulted directly from its racial and cultural characteristics.

Guilt and inferiority are the usual consequences of this dialectic. The oppressed then tries to escape these, on the one hand by proclaiming his total and unconditional adoption of the new
cultural models, and on the other, by pronouncing an irreversible condemnation of his own cultural style.¹

Yet the necessity that the oppressor encounters at a given point to dissimulate the forms of exploitation does not lead to the disappearance of this exploitation. The more elaborate, less crude economic relations require a daily coating, but the alienation at this level remains frightful.

Having judged, condemned, abandoned his cultural forms, his language, his food habits, his sexual behavior, his way of sitting down, of resting, of laughing, of enjoying himself, the oppressed flings himself upon the imposed culture with the desperation of a drowning man.

Developing his technical knowledge in contact with more and more perfected machines, entering into the dynamic circuit of industrial production, meeting men from remote regions in the framework of the concentration of capital, that is to say, on the job, discovering the assembly line, the team, production "time," in other words yield per hour, the oppressed is shocked to find that he continues to be the object of racism and contempt.

It is at this level that racism is treated as a question of persons. "There are a few hopeless racists, but you must admit that on the whole the population likes ..."

With time all this will disappear.

This is the country where there is the least amount of race prejudice ...

At the United Nations there is a commission to fight race prejudice.

Films on race prejudice, poems on race prejudice, messages on race prejudice...

Spectacular and futile condemnations of race prejudice. In

¹ A little-studied phenomenon sometimes appears at this stage. Intellectuals, students, belonging to the dominant group, make "scientific" studies of the dominated society, its art, its ethical universe.

In the universities the rare colonized intellectuals find their own cultural system being revealed to them. It even happens that scholars of the colonizing countries grow enthusiastic over this or that specific feature. The concepts of purity, naïveté, innocence appear. The native intellectual's vigilance must here be doubly on the alert.
reality, a colonial country is a racist country. If in England, in Belgium, or in France, despite the democratic principles affirmed by these respective nations, there are still racists, it is these racists who, in their opposition to the country as a whole, are logically consistent.

It is not possible to enslave men without logically making them inferior through and through. And racism is only the emotional, affective, sometimes intellectual explanation of this inferiorization.

The racist in a culture with racism is therefore normal. He has achieved a perfect harmony of economic relations and ideology. The idea that one forms of man, to be sure, is never totally dependent on economic relations, in other words—and this must not be forgotten—on relations existing historically and geographically among men and groups. An ever greater number of members belonging to racist societies are taking a position. They are dedicating themselves to a world in which racism would be impossible. But everyone is not up to this kind of objectivity, this abstraction, this solemn commitment. One cannot with impunity require of a man that he be against "the prejudices of his group."

And, we repeat, every colonialist group is racist.

"Acculturized" and deculturized at one and the same time, the oppressed continues to come up against racism. He finds this sequel illogical, what he has left behind him inexplicable, without motive, incorrect. His knowledge, the appropriation of precise and complicated techniques, sometimes his intellectual superiority as compared to a great number of racists, lead him to qualify the racist world as passion-charged. He perceives that the racist atmosphere impregnates all the elements of the social life. The sense of an overwhelming injustice is correspondingly very strong. Forgetting racism as a consequence, one concentrates on racism as cause. Campaigns of deintoxication are launched. Appeal is made to the sense of humanity, to love, to respect for the supreme values...

Race prejudice in fact obeys a flawless logic. A country that
lives, draws its substance from the exploitation of other peoples, makes those peoples inferior. Race prejudice applied to those peoples is normal.

Racism is therefore not a constant of the human spirit. It is, as we have seen, a disposition fitting into a well-defined system. And anti-Jewish prejudice is no different from anti-Negro prejudice. A society has race prejudice or it has not. There are no degrees of prejudice. One cannot say that a given country is racist but that lynchings or extermination camps are not to be found there. The truth is that all that and still other things exist on the horizon. These virtualities, these latencies circulate, carried by the life-stream of psycho-affective, economic relations...

Discovering the futility of his alienation, his progressive deprivation, the inferiorized individual, after this phase of deculturation, of extraneousness, comes back to his original positions.

This culture, abandoned, sloughed off, rejected, despised, becomes for the inferiorized an object of passionate attachment. There is a very marked kind of overvaluation that is psychologically closely linked to the craving for forgiveness.

But behind this simplifying analysis there is indeed the intuition experienced by the inferiorized of having discovered a spontaneous truth. This is a psychological datum that is part of the texture of History and of Truth.

Because the inferiorized rediscovers a style that had once been devalorized, what he does is in fact to cultivate culture. Such a caricature of cultural existence would indicate, if it were necessary, that culture must be lived, and cannot be fragmented. It cannot be had piecemeal.

Yet the oppressed goes into ecstasies over each rediscovery. The wonder is permanent. Having formerly emigrated from his culture, the native today explores it with ardor. It is a continual honeymoon. Formerly inferiorized, he is now in a state of grace. Not with impunity, however, does one undergo domination. The culture of the enslaved people is sclerosed, dying. No life
any longer circulates in it. Or more precisely, the only existing life is dissimulated. The population that normally assumes here and there a few fragments of life, which continues to attach dynamic meanings to institutions, is an anonymous population. In a colonial system these are the traditionalists.

The former emigre, by the sudden ambiguity of his behavior, causes consternation. To the anonymity of the traditionalist he opposes a vehement and aggressive exhibitionism.

The state of grace and aggressiveness are the two constants found at this stage. Aggressiveness being the passion-charged mechanism making it possible to escape the sting of paradox.

Because the former emigre is in possession of precise techniques, because his level of action is in the framework of relations that are already complex, these rediscoveries assume an irrational aspect. There is an hiatus, a discrepancy between intellectual development, technical appropriation, highly differentiated modes of thinking and of logic, on the one hand, and a "simple, pure" emotional basis on the other . . .

Rediscovering tradition, living it as a defense mechanism, as a symbol of purity, of salvation, the decultured individual leaves the impression that the mediation takes vengeance by substantializing itself. This falling back on archaic positions having no relation to technical development is paradoxical. The institutions thus valorized no longer correspond to the elaborate methods of action already mastered.

The culture put into capsules, which has vegetated since the foreign domination, is revalorized. It is not reconceived, grasped anew, dynamized from within. It is shouted. And this headlong, unstructured, verbal revalorization conceals paradoxical attitudes.

It is at this point that the incorrigible character of the inferiorized is brought out for mention. Arab doctors sleep on the ground, spit all over the place, etc. . . .

Negro intellectuals consult a sorcerer before making a decision, etc. . . .

"Collaborating" intellectuals try to justify their new attitude.
The customs, traditions, beliefs, formerly denied and passed over in silence are violently valorized and affirmed.

Tradition is no longer scoffed at by the group. The group no longer runs away from itself. The sense of the past is rediscovered, the worship of ancestors resumed . . .

The past, becoming henceforth a constellation of values, becomes identified with the Truth.

This rediscovery, this absolute valorization almost in defiance of reality, objectively indefensible, assumes an incomparable and subjective importance. On emerging from these passionate espousals, the native will have decided, "with full knowledge of what is involved," to fight all forms of exploitation and of alienation of man. At this same time, the occupant, on the other hand, multiplies appeals to assimilation, then to integration, to community.

The native's hand-to-hand struggle with his culture is too solemn, too abrupt an operation to tolerate the slightest slip-up. No neologism can mask the new certainty: the plunge into the chasm of the past is the condition and the source of freedom.

The logical end of this will to struggle is the total liberation of the national territory. In order to achieve this liberation, the inferiorized man brings all his resources into play, all his acquisitions, the old and the new, his own and those of the occupant.

The struggle is at once total, absolute. But then race prejudice is hardly found to appear.

At the time of imposing his domination, in order to justify slavery, the oppressor had invoked scientific argument. There is nothing of the kind here.

A people that undertakes a struggle for liberation rarely legitimizes race prejudice. Even in the course of acute periods of insurrectional armed struggle one never witnesses the recourse to biological justifications.

The struggle of the inferiorized is situated on a markedly more human level. The perspectives are radically new. The opposition is the henceforth classical one of the struggles of conquest and of liberation.
In the course of struggle the dominating nation tries to revive racist arguments but the elaboration of racism proves more and more ineffective. There is talk of fanaticism, of primitive attitudes in the face of death, but once again the now crumbling mechanism no longer responds. Those who were once unbudgeable, the constitutional cowards, the timid, the eternally inferiorized, stiffen and emerge bristling.

The occupant is bewildered.

The end of race prejudice begins with a sudden incomprehension.

The occupant’s spasmed and rigid culture, now liberated, opens at last to the culture of people who have really become brothers. The two cultures can affront each other, enrich each other.

In conclusion, universality resides in this decision to recognize and accept the reciprocal relativism of different cultures, once the colonial status is irreversibly excluded.