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A Dying Colonialism
Toward the African Revolution
The Wretched of the Earth

Frantz Fanon

BLACK SKIN,
WHITE MASKS

Translated from the French by
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Translator's Note

I would like to acknowledge the contributions made to this translation by André Leveillé of Rome, Italy, and Doctors Ruth M. and William F. Murphy of Lincoln and Boston, Massachusetts. To M. Leveillé I am indebted for many clarifications of French terms and slang, on certain events of the postwar period that received more attention in France than in America, on relevant details of daily life in France, and on matters Antillean and Algerian. To the Doctors Murphy I am grateful for help with the terminology of psychology and psychiatry and elucidations on European practices in the field.

—C.L.M.
And, even though Breton may be stating a fact, I do not see why there should be any paradox, anything to underline, for in truth M. Aimé Césaire is a native of Martinique and a university graduate.

Again we find this in Michel Leiris:

If in the writers of the Antilles there does exist a desire to break away from the literary forms associated with formal education, such a desire, oriented toward a purer future, could not take on an aspect of folklore. Seeking above all, in literature, to formulate the message that is properly theirs, and in the case of some of them at least, to be the spokesmen of an authentic race whose potentials have never been acknowledged, they scorn such devices. Their intellectual growth took place almost exclusively within the framework of the French language, and it would be artifice for them to resort to a mode of speech that they virtually never use now except as something learned.16

But we should be honored, the blacks will reproach me, that a white man like Breton writes such things.
Let us go on. . .

16. Michel Leiris, op. cit

Chapter Two
THE WOMAN OF COLOR
AND THE WHITE MAN

Man is motion toward the world and toward his like. A movement of aggression, which leads to enslavement or to conquest; a movement of love, a gift of self, the ultimate stage of what by common accord is called ethical orientation. Every consciousness seems to have the capacity to demonstrate these two components, simultaneously or alternatively. The person I love will strengthen me by endorsing my assumption of my manhood, while the need to earn the admiration or the love of others will erect a value-making superstructure on my whole vision of the world.

In reaching an understanding of phenomena of this sort, the analyst and the phenomenologist are given a difficult task. And, if a Sartre has appeared to formulate a description of love as frustration, his Being and Nothingness amounting only to an analysis of dishonesty and inauthenticity, the fact remains that true, authentic love—wishing for others what one postulates for oneself, when that postulation unites the permanent values of human reality—entails the mobilization of psychic drives basically freed of unconscious conflicts.

Left far, far behind, the last sequelae of a titanic struggle carried on against the other have been dissipated.
Today I believe in the possibility of love; that is why I endeavor to trace its imperfections, its perversions.

In this chapter devoted to the relations between the woman of color and the European, it is our problem to ascertain to what extent authentic love will remain unattainable before one has purged oneself of that feeling of inferiority or that Adlerian exaltation, that overcompensation, which seem to be the indices of the black Weltanschauung.

For after all we have a right to be perturbed when we read, in *Je suis Martiniquaise*: “I should have liked to be married, but to a white man. But a woman of color is never altogether respectable in a white man’s eyes. Even when he loves her, I knew that.” This passage, which serves in a way as the conclusion of a vast delusion, prods one’s brain. One day a woman named Mayotte Capécia, obeying a motivation whose elements are difficult to detect, sat down to write 202 pages—her life—in which the most ridiculous ideas proliferated at random. The enthusiastic reception that greeted this book in certain circles forces us to analyze it. For me, all circumlocution is impossible: *Je suis Martiniquaise* is cut-rate merchandise, a sermon in praise of corruption.

Mayotte loves a white man to whom she submits in everything. He is her lord. She asks nothing, demands nothing, except a bit of whiteness in her life. When she tries to determine in her own mind whether the man is handsome or ugly, she writes, “All I know is that he had blue eyes, blond hair, and a light skin, and that I loved him.” It is not difficult to see that a rearrangement of these elements in their proper hierarchy would produce something of this order: “I loved him because he had blue eyes, blond hair, and a light skin.” We who come from the Antilles know one thing only too well: Blue eyes, the people say, frighten the Negro.

When I observed in my introduction that, historically, inferiority has been felt economically, I was hardly mistaken.

There were evenings, unhappily, when he had to leave me alone in order to fulfill his social obligations. He would go to Didier, the fashionable part of Fort-de-France inhabited by the “Martinique whiteys,” who are perhaps not too pure racially but who are often very rich (it is understood that one is white above a certain financial level), and the “France whiteys,” most of them government people and military officers.

Among André’s colleagues, who like him had been marooned in the Antilles by the war, some had managed to have their wives join them. I understood that André could not always hold himself aloof from them. I also accepted the fact that I was barred from this society because I was a woman of color; but I could not help being jealous. It was no good his explaining to me that his private life was something that belonged to him alone and that his social and military life was something else, which was not within his control; I nagged so much that one day he took me to Didier. We spent the evening in one of those little villas that I had admired since my childhood, with two officers and their wives. The women kept watching me with a condescension that I found unbearable. I felt that I was wearing too much makeup, that I was not properly dressed, that I was not doing André credit, perhaps simply because of the color of my skin—in short, I spent so miserable an evening that I decided I would never again ask André to take me with him.


2. Ibid., p. 150.
It was Didier, the preserve of the richest people in Martinique, that magnetized all the girl's wishes. And she makes the point herself: One is white above a certain financial level. The houses in this section had long dazzled the lady. I have the feeling, however, that Mayotte Capécia is laying it on: She tells us that she did not go to Fort-de-France until she was grown, at about the age of eighteen; and yet the mansions of Didier had beguiled her childhood. There is an inconsistency here that becomes understandable when one grasps the background. It is in fact customary in Martinique to dream of a form of salvation that consists of magically turning white. A house in Didier, acceptance into that high society (Didier is on a hill that dominates the city), and there you have Hegel's subjective certainty made flesh. And in another way it is quite easy to see the place that the dialectic of being and having would occupy in a description of this behavior. Such, however, is not the case with Mayotte. She is looked at with distaste. Things begin their usual course. . . It is because she is a woman of color that she is not accepted in this society. Her resentment feeds on her own artificiality. We shall see why love is beyond the reach of the Mayotte Capécias of all nations. For the beloved should not allow me to turn my infantile fantasies into reality: On the contrary, he should help me to go beyond them. The childhood of Mayotte Capécia shows us a certain number of characteristics that illustrate the line of orientation she follows as an adult. And each time there is a movement or a contact, it will have a direct relation to her goal. It would seem indeed that for her white and black represent the two poles of a world, two poles in perpetual conflict: a genuinely Manichean concep- of the world; the word has been spoken, it must be remembered—white or black, that is the question.

I am white: that is to say that I possess beauty and virtue, which have never been black. I am the color of the daylight. . . .

I am black: I am the incarnation of a complete fusion with the world, an intuitive understanding of the earth, an abandonment of my ego in the heart of the cosmos, and no white man, no matter how intelligent he may be, can ever understand Louis Armstrong and the music of the Congo. If I am black, it is not the result of a curse, but it is because, having offered my skin, I have been able to absorb all the cosmic effluvia. I am truly a ray of sunlight under the earth. . . .

And there one lies body to body with one's blackness or one's whiteness, in full narcissistic cry, each sealed into his own peculiarity—with, it is true, now and then a flash or so, but these are threatened at their source.

From the first this is how the problem appears to Mayotte—at the fifth year of her age and the third page of her book: “She took her inkwell out of the desk and emptied it over his head.” This was her own way of turning whites into blacks. But she quite soon recognized the futility of such attempts; and then there were Lou- luze and her mother, who told her that life was difficult for a woman of color. So, since she could no longer try to blacken, to nigritfy the world, she was going to try, in her own body and in her own mind, to bleach it. To start, she would become a laundress: “I charged high prices, higher than elsewhere, but I worked better, and since people in Fort-de-France like their linen clean, they came to me. In the end, they were proud to have their laundry done by Mayotte.”


I am sorry that Mayotte Capécia has told us nothing about her dreams. That would have made it easier to reach her unconscious. Instead of recognizing her absolute blackness, she proceeds to turn it into an accident. She learns that her grandmother was white.

I found that I was proud of it. I was certainly not the only one who had white blood, but a white grandmother was not so ordinary as a white grandfather.\(^5\) So my mother, then,

5. Since he is the master and more simply the male, the white man can allow himself the luxury of sleeping with many women. This is true in every country and especially in colonies. But when a white woman accepts a black man there is automatically a romantic aspect. It is a giving, not a seizing. In the colonies, in fact, even though there is little marriage or actual sustained cohabitation between whites and blacks, the number of hybrists is amazing. This is because the white men often sleep with their black servants. None the less, that does not provide any foundation for this passage from Mannoni:

Thus one part of our drives would quite naturally impel us toward the most alien types. That is not mere literary illusion; there was no question of literature, and the illusion was probably very slight when Gallieni’s soldiers chose young *ramatao* as their more or less temporary wives. In fact these first contacts presented no difficulties at all. This was in part due to the healthy sex life of the Malagasy, which was unmarrased by complexes. But this only goes to show that racial conflicts develop gradually and do not arise spontaneously. (*Prospero and Caliban*, p. 112).

Let us not exaggerate. When a soldier of the conquering army went to bed with a young Malagasy girl, there was undoubtedly no tendency on his part to respect her entity as another person. The racial conflicts did not come later, they coexisted. The fact that Algerian colonists go to bed with their fourteen-year-old housemaids in no way demonstrates a lack of racial conflicts in Algeria. No, the problem is more complicated. And Mayotte Capécia is right: It is an honor to be the daughter of a white woman. That proves that one was not "made in the bush." (This expression is applied exclusively to all the illegitimate children of the upper class in

was a mixture? I should have guessed it when I looked at her light color. I found her prettier than ever, and cleverer, and more refined. If she had married a white man, do you suppose I should have been completely white? . . . And life might not have been so hard for me? . . . I daydreamed about this grandmother whom I had never known and who had died because she had loved a colored man of Martinique. . . . How could a Canadian woman have loved a man of Martinique? I could never stop thinking of our priest, and I made up my mind that I could never love anyone but a white man, a blue-eyed blonde, a Frenchman.\(^5\)

We are thus put on notice that what Mayotte wants is a kind of lactivist. For, in a word, the race must be whitened; every woman in Martinique knows this, says it, repeats it. Whiten the race, save the race, but not in the sense that one might think: not "preserve the uniqueness of that part of the world in which they grew up," but make sure that it will be white. Every time I have made up my mind to analyze certain kinds of behavior, I have been unable to avoid the consideration of certain nauseating phenomena. The number of sayings, proverbs, petty rules of conduct that govern the choice of a lover in the Antilles is astounding. It is always essential to avoid falling back into the pit of niggerhood, and every woman in the Antilles, whether in a casual flirtation or in a serious affair, is determined to select the least black of the men. Sometimes, in order to justify a bad investment, she is compelled to resort to such arguments as this: "X is black, but misery is blacker." I know a great number of girls from Martinique, students in France, who admitted to me with complete candor—completely white candor—that they would find it impossible to marry

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black men. (Get out of that and then deliberately go back to it? Thank you, no.) Besides, they added, it is not that we deny that blacks have any good qualities, but you know it is so much better to be white. I was talking only recently to one such woman. Breathless with anger, she stormed at me, "If Césaire makes so much display about accepting his race, it is because he really feels it as a curse. Do the whites boast like that about theirs? Every one of us has a white potential, but some try to ignore it and others simply reverse it. As far as I am concerned, I wouldn't marry a Negro for anything in the world." Such attitudes are not rare, and I must confess that they disturb me, for in a few years this young woman will have finished her examinations and gone off to teach in some school in the Antilles. It is not hard to guess what will come of that.

An enormous task confronts the Antillean who has begun by carefully examining the objectivity of the various prejudices prevailing in his environment. When I began this book, having completed my medical studies, I thought of presenting it as my thesis. But dialectic required the constant adoption of positions. Although I had more or less concentrated on the psychic alienation of the black man, I could not remain silent about certain things which, however psychological they may be, produce consequences that extend into the domains of other sciences.

Every experience, especially if it turns out to be sterile, has to become a component of reality and thus play a part in the restructuring of reality. That is to say that the patriarchal European family with its flaws, its failures, its vices, closely linked to the society that we know, produces about 30 per cent neurotics. The problem is to create, with the help of psychoanalytical, sociological, political lessons, a new family environment capable of reducing, if not of eliminating, the proportion of waste, in the asocial sense of the word.

In other words, the question is whether basic personality is a constant or a variable.

All these frantic women of color in quest of white men are waiting. And one of these days, surely, they will be surprised to find that they do not want to go back, they will dream of "a wonderful night, a wonderful lover, a white man." Possibly, too, they will become aware, one day, that "white men do not marry black women." But they have consented to run this risk; what they must have is whiteness at any price. For what reason? Nothing could be simpler. Here is a story that suits their minds:

One day St. Peter saw three men arrive at the gate of heaven: a white man, a mulatto, and a Negro.

"What do you want most?" he asked the white man.

"Money."

"And you?" he asked the mulatto.

"Fame."

St. Peter turned then to the Negro, who said with a wide smile: "I'm just carrying these gentlemen's bags."

7. The smile of the black man, the grin [in English in the original], seems to have captured the interest of a number of writers. Here is what Bernard Wolfe says about it: "It pleases us to portray the Negro showing us all his teeth in a smile made for us. And his smile as we see it—as we make it—always means a gift..."

Gifts without end, in every advertisement, on every screen, on every food-product label, ... The black man gives Madame the new "dark Creole colors" for her pure nylons, courtesy of the House of Vigny; her "imaginative, cool-like" bottles of Golliwog toilet water and perfume. Shoeshines, clothes white as snow, comfortable lower berths, quick baggage-handling; jazz, jitterbug, jive, jokes, and the wonderful stories of Br'er Rabbit to amuse the little children. Service with a smile, every time. ... "The blacks," writes anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer in _The American Spirit: A Study in National Char-
Not long ago Etiemble described one of his disillusionments: "I was stupefied, as an adolescent, when a girl who knew me quite well jumped up in anger because I had said to her, in a situation where the word was not only appropriate but the one word that suited the occasion: 'You, as a Negress—.' 'Me? a Negress? Can't you see I'm practically white? I despise Negroes. Niggers stink. They're dirty and lazy. Don't ever mention niggers to me.'"

I knew another black girl who kept a list of Parisian dance-halls “where-there-was-no-chance-of-running-into-niggers.”

We must see whether it is possible for the black man to overcome his feeling of insignificance, to rid his life of the compulsive quality that makes it so like the behavior of the phobic. Affect is exacerbated in the Negro, he is full of rage because he feels small, he suffers from an inadequacy in all human communication, and all these factors chain him with an unbearable insularity.

Describing the phenomenon of ego-withdrawal, Anna Freud writes:

As a method of avoiding “pain,” ego-restriction, like the various forms of denial, does not come under the heading of the psychology of neurosis but is a normal stage in the development of the ego. When the ego is young and plastic, its withdrawal from one field of activity is sometimes com-

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pensated for by excellence in another, upon which it concentrates. But, when it has become rigid or has already acquired an intolerance of “pain” and so is obsessionally fixated to a method of flight, such withdrawal is punished by impaired development. By abandoning one position after another it becomes one-sided, loses too many interests and can show but a meagre achievement.9

We understand now why the black man cannot take pleasure in his insularity. For him there is only one way out, and it leads into the white world. Whence his constant preoccupation with attracting the attention of the white man, his concern with being powerful like the white man, his determined effort to acquire protective qualities—that is, the proportion of being or having that enters into the composition of an ego. As I said earlier, it is from within that the Negro will seek admittance to the white sanctuary. The attitude derives from the intention.

Ego-withdrawal as a successful defense mechanism is impossible for the Negro. He requires a white approval.

In the midst of her mystical euphoria and her rhapsodic canticles, it seems to Mayotte Capécia that she is an angel and that she soars away “all pink and white.” Nevertheless, in the film, Green Pastures, God and the angels are black, but the film was a brutal shock to our author: “How is it possible to imagine God with Negro characteristics? This is not my vision of paradise. But, after all, it was just an American film.”10

Indeed no, the good and merciful God cannot be black: He is a white man with bright pink cheeks. From black to white is the course of mutation. One is white as one is

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rich, as one is beautiful, as one is intelligent.

Meanwhile, André has departed to carry the white message to other Mayottes under other skies: delightful little genes with blue eyes, bicycling the whole length of the chromosome corridor. But, as a good white man, he has left instructions behind him. He is speaking of his and Mayotte's child: "You will bring him up, you will tell him about me, you will say, 'He was a superior person. You must work hard to be worthy of him.'" 11

What about dignity? He had no need now to achieve it: It was injected now into the labyrinth of his arteries, entrenched in his little pink fingernails, a solidly rooted, white dignity.

And what about the father? This is what Etiemble has to say about him: "A fine specimen of his kind; he talked about the family, work, the nation, our good Pétain and our good God, all of which allowed him to make her pregnant according to form. God has made use of us, said the handsome swine, the handsome white man, the handsome officer. After which, under the same God-fearing Pétainist proprieties, I shove her over to the next man."

Before we have finished with her whose white lord is "like one dead" and who surrounds herself with dead men in a book crowded with deplorably dead things, we feel that we should like to ask Africa to send us a special envoy. 12

Nor are we kept waiting. Abdoulaye Sadjé, in Nini, 13 offers us a description of how black men can behave in contact with Europeans. I have said that Negrophobes exist. It is not hatred of the Negro, however, that motivates them; they lack the courage for that, or they have lost it. Hate is not inborn; it has to be constantly cultivated, to be brought into being, in conflict with more or less recognized guilt complexes. Hate demands existence, and he who hates has to show his hate in appropriate actions and behavior; in a sense, he has to become hate. That is why the Americans have substituted discrimination for lynching. Each to his own side of the street. Therefore we are not surprised that in the cities of (French?) black Africa there are European quarters. Mounier's work, L'écueil de l'Afrique noire, had already attracted my interest, but I was impatiently awaiting an African voice. Thanks to Alioune Diop's magazine, I have been able to coordinate the psychological motivations that govern men of color.

There is wonder, in the most religious sense of the word, in this passage:

scribe are in one way or another either semi-criminals or "sho' good" niggers.

In addition—and from this one can foresee what is to come—it is legitimate to say that Mayotte Capécia has definitively turned her back on her country. In both her books only one course is left for her heroines: to go away. This country of niggers is decidedly accursed. In fact, there is an aura of malediction surrounding Mayotte Capécia. But she is centrifugal. Mayotte Capécia is barred from herself.

May she add no more to the mass of her imbecilities.

Depart in peace, mudslinging storyteller. . . . But remember that, beyond your 500 anemic pages, it will always be possible to regain the honorable road that leads to the heart.

In spite of you.

11. Ibid., p. 185.

12. After Je suis Martiniquaise, Mayotte Capécia wrote another book, La nègresse blanche. She must have recognized her earlier mistakes, for in this book one sees an attempt to re-evaluate the Negro. But Mayotte Capécia did not reckon with her own unconscious. As soon as the novelist allows her characters a little freedom, they use it to belittle the Negro. All the Negroes whom she de-

M. Campian is the only white man in Saint-Louis who goes regularly to the Saint-Louis Club—a man of a certain social standing, for he is an engineer with the Department of Bridges and Highways, as well as deputy director of Public Works in Senegal. He is said to be very much of a Negrophile, much more so than M. Roddin, who teaches at the Lycée Faidherbe and who gave a lecture on the equality of the races in the Saint-Louis Club itself. The good character of the one or the other is a constant theme for vehement discussions. In any event, M. Campian goes to the club more often, and there he has made the acquaintance of very well-behaved natives who show him much deference, who like him and who feel honored by his presence among them.  

The author, who is a teacher in black Africa, feels obligated to M. Roddin for his lecture on racial equality. I call this an outrage. One can understand the complaints that Mounier heard from the young Africans whom he had occasion to meet: “What we need here are Europeans like you.” One is constantly aware that for the black man encountering a toubab with understanding offers a new hope of harmony. 

Analyzing various passages of Abdoulaye Sadjji’s story, I shall attempt to grasp the living reactions of the woman of color to the European. First of all, there are two such women: the Negress and the mulatto. The first has only one possibility and one concern: to turn white. The second wants not only to turn white but also to avoid slipping back. What indeed could be more illogical than a mulatto woman’s acceptance of a Negro husband? For it must be understood once and for all that it is a question of saving the race.

Hence Nini’s great problem: A Negro has had the gall to go so far as to ask her to marry him. A Negro had the gall to write to her:

The love that I offer you is pure and strong, it has nothing of a false tenderness intended to lull you with lies and illusions. . . . I want to see you happy, completely happy, in a setting to frame your qualities, which I believe I know how to appreciate. . . . I should consider it the highest of honors and the greatest of joys to have you in my house and to dedicate myself to you, body and soul. Your graces would illuminate my home and radiate light to the darkest corners. . . . Furthermore, I consider you too civilized and refined to reject brutally the offer of a devoted love concerned only with reassuring your happiness. 

This final sentence should not surprise us. Normally, the mulatto woman should refuse the presumptuous Negro without mercy. But, since she is civilized, she will not allow herself to see her lover’s color, so that she can concentrate her attention on his devotion. Describing Mactar, Abdoulaye Sadjji writes: “An idealist and a convinced advocate of unlimited progress, he still believed in the good faith of men, in their honesty, and he readily assumed that in everything merit alone must triumph.”

Who is Mactar? He has passed his baccalaureate, he is an accountant in the Department of Rivers, and he is pursuing a perfectly stupid little stenographer, who has, however, the least disputable quality: She is almost white. Therefore one must apologize for taking the liberty of

14. A club frequented by the local young men. It stands across the street from the Civil Club; which is exclusively European.
16. Ibid., p. 286.
17. Ibid., p. 281-282.
sending her a letter: "the utmost insolence, perhaps the
test that any Negro had dared to attempt." 18

One must apologize for daring to offer black love to a
white soul. This we encounter again in René Maran: the
fear, the timorousness, the humility of the black man in
his relations with the white woman, or in any case with
a woman whiter than he. Just as Mayotte Capécia toler-
ates anything from her lord, André, Maeter makes himself
the slave of Nini, the mulatto. Prepared to sell his
soul. But what is waiting for this boor is the law of plea
in bar. The mulatto considers his letter an insult, an
outrage to her honor as a “white lady.” This Negro is
an idiot, a scoundrel, an ignoramus who needs a lesson.
That lesson she is prepared to give him; she will teach
him to be more courteous and less brazen; she will make
him understand that “white skins” are not for “bou-
gnous.” 19

Having learned the circumstances, the whole mulatto
“society” plays chorus to her wrath. There is talk of
taking the matter into court, of having the black man
brought up on criminal charges. “There will be letters to
the head of the Department of Public Works, to the
governor of the colony, to call their attention to the black
man’s behavior and have him dismissed in recompense for
the moral havoc that he has inflicted.” 20

Such an offense against principle should be punished by
castration. And ultimately a request is made that Maeter

be formally reprimanded by the police. For, “if he returns
to his unhealthy follies, we will have him brought into
line by Police Inspector Dru, whose colleagues have nick-
named him the-real-bad-white-man.” 21

We have seen here how a girl of color reacts to a decla-
ration of love made by one of her own. Let us inquire
now what happens in the case of a white man. Once more
we resort to Sadji. The long passage that he devotes to
the reactions produced by the marriage of a white man
and a mulatto will provide the vehicle.

For some time a rumor had been repeated all over Saint-
Louis... It was at first a little whisper that went from
one to another, making the wrinkled faces of the old “sig-
naras” glow, putting new light into their dull eyes; then
the younger women, showing the whites of their eyes and
forming their heavy lips into circles, shouted the news, which
caused amazement everywhere. “Oh, it can’t be! ... How
do you know it’s true? Can such things happen? ... It’s
sweet... It’s such a scream.” The news that had been run-
ning through Saint-Louis for a month was delightful, more
delightful than all the promises in the world. It crowned a
certain dream of grandeur, of distinction, which was com-
mon to all the mulatto women. The Ninis, the Nunas, and
the Nénétons live wholly outside the natural conditions of
their country. The great dream that haunts every one of
them is to be the bride of a white man from Europe. One
could say that all their efforts are directed to this end, which
is almost never attained. Their need to gesticulate, their
love of ridiculous ostentation, their calculated, theatrical,
revolting attitudes, are just so many effects of the same mania
for grandeur. They must have white men, completely white,
and nothing else will do. Almost all of them spend their
entire lives waiting for this stroke of luck, which is any-
thing but likely. And they are still waiting when old age

18. Ibid., p. 281.
19. Ibid., p. 287. Bougnoul is one of those untranslatable coins-
ages of the rabble like the American figabo. Originated by the
North African colonists, bougnoul means, generically, any “native”
of a race inferior to that of the person using the word. (Translator’s
note.)
20. Ibid., p. 288.
21. Ibid., p. 289.
overtakes them and forces them deep into dark refuges where the dream finally grows into a haughty resignation.

Very delightful news. . . M. Darrivey, a completely white European employed in the civil service, had formally requested the hand of Dédée, a mulatto who was only half-Negro. It was unbelievable. 22

Something remarkable must have happened on the day when the white man declared his love to the mulatto. There was recognition, incorporation into a group that had seemed hermetic. The psychological minus-value, this feeling of insignificance and its corollary, the impossibility of reaching the light, totally vanished. From one day to the next, the mulatto went from the class of slaves to that of masters.

She had been recognized through her overcompensating behavior. She was no longer the woman who wanted to be white; she was white. She was joining the white world.

In *Magie noire*, Paul Morand described a similar phenomenon, but one has since learned to be leery of Paul Morand. From the psychological point of view, it may be interesting to consider the following problem. The educated mulatto woman, especially if she is a student, engages in doubly equivocal behavior. She says, “I do not like the Negro because he is savage. Not savage in a cannibal way, but lacking refinement.” An abstract point of view. And when one points out to her that in this respect some black people may be her superiors, she falls back on their “ugliness.” A factitious point of view. Faced with the proofs of a genuine black esthetic, she professes to be unable to understand it; one tries then to explain its canon to her; the wings of her nose flare, there is a sharp intake of breath, “she is free to choose her own husband.” As a last resort, the appeal to subjectivity. If, as Anna Freud says, the ego is driven to desperation by the amputation of all its defense mechanisms, “in so far as the bringing of the unconscious activities of the ego into consciousness has the effect of disclosing the defensive processes and rendering them inoperative, the result of analysis is to weaken the ego still further and to advance the pathological process.” 23

But in Dédée’s case the ego does not have to defend itself, since its claims have been officially recognized: She is marrying a white man. Every coin, however, has two sides; whole families have been made fools of. Three or four mulatto girls had acquired mulatto admirers, while all their friends had white men. “This was looked on particularly as an insult to the family as a whole; an offense, moreover, that required amends.” 24 For these families had been humiliated in their most legitimate ambitions; the mutilation that they had suffered affected the very movement of their lives, the rhythm of their existence.

In response to a profound desire they sought to change, to “evolve.” This right was denied to them. At any rate, it was challenged.

What is there to say, after these expositions? Whether one is dealing with Mayotte Capécia of Martinique or with Nini of Saint-Louis, the same process is to be observed. A bilateral process, an attempt to acquire—by internalizing them—assets that were originally prohib-

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22. Ibid., p. 489.


It is because the Negress feels inferior that she aspires to win admittance into the white world. In this endeavor she will seek the help of a phenomenon that we shall call affective ethism.

This work represents the sum of the experiences and observations of seven years; regardless of the area I have studied, one thing has struck me: The Negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation. Therefore I have been led to consider their alienation in terms of psychoanalytical classifications. The Negro's behavior makes him akin to an obsessive neurotic type, or, if one prefers, he puts himself into a complete situational neurosis. In the man of color there is a constant effort to run away from his own individuality, to annihilate his own presence. Whenever a man of color protests, there is alienation. Whenever a man of color rebukes, there is alienation. We shall see later, in Chapter Six, that the Negro, having been made inferior, proceeds from humiliating insecurity through strongly voiced self-accusation to despair. The attitude of the black man toward the white, or toward his own race, often duplicates almost completely a constellation of delirium, frequently bordering on the region of the pathological.

It will be objected that there is nothing psychotic in the Negroes who are discussed here. Nevertheless I should like to cite two highly significant instances. A few years ago I knew a Negro medical student. He had an agonizing conviction that he was not taken at his true worth—not on the university level, he explained, but as a human being. He had an agonizing conviction that he would never succeed in gaining recognition as a colleague from the whites in his profession and as a physician from his European patients. In such moments of fantasy intuition, the times most favorable to psychosis, he would get drunk. Finally, he enlisted one day in the army as a medical officer; and, he added, not for anything in the world would he agree to go to the colonies or to serve in a colonial unit. He wanted to have white men under his command. He was a boss; as such he was to be feared or respected. That was just what he wanted, what he strove for: to make white men adopt a Negro attitude toward him. In this way he was obtaining revenge for the imago that had always obsessed him: the frightened, trembling Negro, abased before the white overlord.

I had another acquaintance, a customs inspector in a port on the French mainland, who was extremely severe with tourists or travelers in transit. "Because," he explained to me, "if you aren't a bastard they take you for a poor shit. Since I'm a Negro, you can imagine how I'm going to get it either way. . . ."

In Understanding Human Nature, Adler says:

When we demonstrate cases . . . it is frequently convenient to show relationships between the childhood impressions and the actual complaint . . . this is best done by a graph. . . . We will succeed in many cases in being able to plot this graph of life, the spiritual curve along which the entire movement of an individual has taken place. The equation of the curve is the behavior pattern which this individual has followed since earliest childhood. . . . Actually we see this behavior pattern, whose final configuration is subject to some few changes, but whose essential content, whose energy and meaning remain unchanged from earliest childhood, is the determining factor, even though the relations

to the adult environment . . . may tend to modify it in some instances.27

We are anticipating, and it is already clear that the individual psychology of Adler will help us to understand the conception of the world held by the man of color. Since the black man is a former slave, we will turn to Hegel too; and, to conclude, Freud should be able to contribute to our study.

Nini and Mayotte Capécia: two types of behavior that move us to thought.

Are there no other possibilities?

But those are pseudo-questions that do not concern us. I will say, however, that every criticism of that which is implies a solution, if indeed one can propose a solution to one’s fellow—to a free being.

What I insist on is that the poison must be eliminated once and for all.


Chapter Three

THE MAN OF COLOR
AND THE WHITE WOMAN

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. Now—and this is a form of recognition that Hegel had not envisaged—who but a white woman can do this for me? By loving me she proves that I am worthy of white love. I am loved like a white man.

I am a white man.

Her love takes me onto the noble road that leads to total realization. . . .

I marry white culture, white beauty, white whiteness. When my restless hands caress those white breasts, they grasp white civilization and dignity and make them mine.

Some thirty years ago, a coal-black Negro, in a Paris bed with a “maddening” blonde, shouted at the moment of orgasm, “Hurrah for Schoelcher!” When one recalls that it was Victor Schoelcher who persuaded the Third Republic to adopt the decree abolishing slavery, one understands why it is necessary to elaborate somewhat on the possible aspects of relations between black men and white women.
It will be argued that this little tale is not authenticated; but simply that it could be born and survive through the years is an indication: It is no fallacy. For the anecdote renews a conflict that, active or dormant, is always real. Its persistence attests to the black world’s endorsement. To say it another way, when a story flourishes in the heart of a folklore, it is because in one way or another it expresses an aspect of “the spirit of the group.”

In analyzing _Je suis Martiniquaise_ and _Ninti_, we have seen how the Negress behaves with the white man. Through a novel by René Maran—which seems to be autobiographical—let us try to understand what happens when the man is black and the woman white.

The problem is admirably laid out, for the character of Jean Veneuse will make it possible for us to go much more deeply into the attitude of the black man. What are the terms of this problem? Jean Veneuse is a Negro. Born in the Antilles, he has lived in Bordeaux for years; so he is a European. But he is black; so he is a Negro. There is the conflict. He does not understand his own race, and the whites do not understand him. And, he observes, “The Europeans in general and the French in particular, not satisfied with simply ignoring the Negro of the colonies, repudiate the one whom they have shaped into their own image.”

The personality of the author does not emerge quite so easily as one might wish. An orphan sent to a provincial boarding-school, he is compelled to spend his vacations there. His friends and acquaintances scatter all over France on the slightest pretext, whereas the little Negro

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2. Ibid., p. 87.
3. Ibid., pp. 18-19.
seems possible to find a resemblance between the ending of *Un homme pareil aux autres* and that of Gide's *Strait is the Gate*. This departure, this tone of emotional pain, of moral impossibility, seems an echo of the story of Jérôme and Alissa.

But there remains the fact that Veneuse is black. He is a bear who loves solitude. He is a thinker. And when a woman tries to start a flirtation with him, he says, “Are you trying to smoke out an old bear like me? Be careful, my dear. Courage is a fine thing, but you’re going to get yourself talked about if you go on attracting attention this way. A Negro? Shameful—it’s beneath contempt. Associating with anybody of that race is just utterly discrediting yourself.”

Above all, he wants to prove to the others that he is a man, their equal. But let us not be misled: Jean Veneuse is the man who has to be convinced. It is in the roots of his soul, as complicated as that of any European, that the doubt persists. If the expression may be allowed, Jean Veneuse is the lamb to be slaughtered. Let us make the effort.

After having quoted Stendhal and mentioned the phenomenon of “crystallization,” he declares that he loves Andréé spiritually in Mme. Coulanges and physically in Clarisse. It is insane. But that is how it is: I love Clarisse, I love Mme. Coulanges, even though I never really think of either of them. All they are for me is an excuse that makes it possible for me to delude myself. I study Andréé in them and I begin to know her by heart. . . . I don’t know. I know nothing. I have no wish to try to know anything; or, rather, I know nothing any more except one thing: that the Negro is a man like the rest, the equal of the others, and that his heart, which only the ignorant consider simple, can be as complicated as the heart of the most complicated of Europeans.⁵

For the simplicity of the Negro is a myth created by superficial observers. “I love Clarisse, I love Mme. Coulanges, and it is Andréé Marielle whom I really love. Only she, no one else.”⁶

Who is Andréé Marielle? You know who she is, the daughter of the poet, Louis Marielle. But now you see that this Negro, “who has raised himself through his own intelligence and his assiduous labors to the level of the thought and the culture of Europe,”⁷ is incapable of escaping his race.

Andréé Marielle is white; no solution seems possible. Yet, association with Payot, Gide, Morés, and Voltaire seemed to have wiped out all that. In all good faith, Jean Veneuse “believed in that culture and set himself to love this new world he had discovered and conquered for his own use. What a blunder he had made! Arriving at maturity and going on to serve his adopted country in the land of his ancestors was enough to make him wonder whether he was not being betrayed by everything about him, for the white race would not accept him as one of its own and the black virtually repudiated him.”⁸

Jean Veneuse, feeling that existence is impossible for him without love, proceeds to dream it into being. He proceeds to dream it alive and to produce verses:

> When a man loves he must not speak;  
> Best that he hide it from himself.

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Andrée Marielle has written to him that she loves him, but Jean Veneuse needs authorization. It is essential that some white man say to him, "Take my sister." Veneuse has put a certain number of questions to his friend, Coulanges. Here, more or less in extenso, is what Coulanges answers:

Old boy [Coulanges uses the English expression],

Once again you bring me your problem, once again I will give you my opinion—once and for all. Let us proceed in an orderly fashion. Your situation as you have explained it to me is as clear as it can be. Allow me nevertheless to clear the ground before me. It will be all to your good.

How old were you, anyway, when you left home to go to France? Three or four, I think. You have never seen your native island since, and you have not the slightest interest in seeing it again. You have lived in Bordeaux ever since. And ever since you became a colonial official, Bordeaux is where you have spent the greatest part of your leaves. In short, you are really one of us. Perhaps you are not altogether aware of the fact. In that case, accept the fact that you are a Frenchman from Bordeaux. Get that into your thick head. You know nothing of your compatriots of the Antilles. I should be amazed, in fact, if you could even manage to communicate with them. The ones I know, furthermore, have no resemblance to you.

In fact you are like us—you are "us." Your thoughts are ours. You behave as we behave, as we would behave. You think of yourself—others think of you—as a Negro? Utterly mistaken! You merely look like one. As for everything else, you think as a European. And so it is natural that you love as a European. Since European men love only European women, you can hardly marry anyone but a woman of the country where you have always lived, a woman of our good old France, your real and only country. This being the case, let us get on to the subject of your latest letter. On the one hand we have one Jean Veneuse, who resembles you like a brother; on the other hand we have Mlle. Andrée Marielle. Andrée Marielle, whose skin is white, loves Jean Veneuse, who is extremely brown and who adores Andrée Marielle. But that does not stop you from asking me what must be done. You magnificent idiot! . . .

As soon as you are back in France, rush to the father of the girl who already belongs to you in spirit and strike your fist savagely on your heart as you shout at him: "I love her. She loves me. We love each other. She must marry me. Otherwise I will kill myself here and now."³

When the question is put directly, then, the white man agrees to give his sister to the black—but on one condition: You have nothing in common with real Negroes. You are not black, you are "extremely brown."

This procedure is quite familiar to colored students in France. Society refuses to consider them genuine Negroes. The Negro is a savage, whereas the student is civilized. "You're 'us,'" Coulanges tells him; and if anyone thinks you are a Negro he is mistaken, because you merely look like one. But Jean Veneuse does not want this. He cannot accept it, because he knows.

He knows that, "enraged by this degrading ostracism, mulattoes and Negroes have only one thought from the moment they land in Europe: to gratify their appetite for white women."

The majority of them, including those of lighter skin who often go to the extreme of denying both their countries and their mothers, tend to marry in Europe not so much out of love as for the satisfaction of being the master of a European woman; and a certain tang of proud revenge enters into this.

And so I wonder whether in my case there is any difference from theirs; whether, by marrying you, who are a

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³. Ibid., pp. 152-154.
European, I may not appear to be making a show of contempt for the women of my own race and, above all, to be drawn on by desire for that white flesh that has been forbidden to us Negroes as long as white men have ruled the world, so that without my knowledge I am attempting to revenge myself on a European woman for everything that her ancestors have inflicted on mine throughout the centuries.  

What a struggle to free himself of a purely subjective conflict. I am a white man, I was born in Europe, all my friends are white. There are not eight Negroes in the city where I live. I think in French, France is my religion. I am a European, do you understand? I am not a Negro, and in order to prove it to you, I as a public employee am going to show you the genuine Negroes the differences that separate me from them. Indeed, read the book again and you will be convinced:

Who knocked at the door? Ah, yes, of course.
"Is that you, Soua?"
"Yes, major."
"What do you want?"
"Roll call, major. Five men guard. Seventeen men prisoners—everybody here."
"Anything else new? Any word from the runner?"
"No, suh, major."  

Monsieur Veneuse has native bearers. He has a young Negro girl in his house. And to the Negroes who seem downcast that he is leaving, he feels that the only thing for him to say is, "Please go away. Please go away. You see ... how unhappy it makes me to leave you. Please go now. I will not forget you. I am leaving you only because this is not my country and I feel too alone here, too empty, too deprived of all the comfort that I need but that you, luckily for you, do not yet require."  

When we read such passages we cannot help thinking of Félix Eboué, unquestionably a Negro, who saw his duty quite differently in the same circumstances. Jean Veneuse is not a Negro and does not wish to be a Negro. And yet, without his knowledge, a gulf has been created. There is something indefinable, irreversible, there is indeed the *that within* of Harold Rosenberg.  

Louis-T. Achille said in his report to the Interracial Conferences of 1949:

Insofar as truly interracial marriage is concerned, one can legitimately wonder to what extent it may not represent for the colored spouse a kind of subjective consecration to wiping out in himself and in his own mind the color prejudice from which he has suffered so long. It would be interesting to investigate this in a given number of cases and perhaps to seek in this clouded motivation the underlying reason for certain interracial marriages entered into outside the normal conditions of a happy household. Some men or some women, in effect, by choosing partners of another race, marry persons of a class or a culture inferior to their own whom they would not have chosen as spouses in their own race and whose chief asset seems to be the assurance that the partner will achieve denaturalization and (to use a loathsome word) "deracialization." Among certain people of color, the fact that they are marrying someone of the white race seems to have overridden every other considera-

tion. In this fact they find access to complete equality with that illustrious race, the master of the world, the ruler of the peoples of color...14

We know historically that the Negro guilty of lying with a white woman is castrated. The Negro who has had a white woman makes himself taboo to his fellows. It is easy for the mind to formulate this drama of sexual preoccupation. And that is exactly the ultimate goal of the archetype of Uncle Remus: Br'er Rabbit, who represents the black man. Will he or will he not succeed in going to bed with the two daughters of Mrs. Meadows? There are ups and downs, all told by a laughing, good-natured, easy-going Negro, a Negro who serves with a smile.

During the time when I was slowly being jolted alive into puberty, I had the honor of being able to look in wonder on one of my older friends who had just come back from France and who had held a Parisian girl in his arms. I shall try to analyze this problem in a special chapter.

Talking recently with several Antilleans, I found that the dominant concern among those arriving in France was to go to bed with a white woman. As soon as their ships docked in Le Havre, they were off to the houses. Once this ritual of initiation into “authentic” manhood had been fulfilled, they took the train for Paris.

But what is important here is to examine Jean Veneuse. To this end, I shall resort in considerable measure to a study by Germaine Guex, La névrose d'abandon.

Contrasting what she calls the abandonment neurosis, which is pre-Oedipal in nature, to the real post-Oedipal conflicts described by orthodox Freidians, Dr. Guex ana-

lyzes two types, the first of which seems to illustrate the plight of Jean Veneuse: “It is this tripod—the anguish created by every abandonment, the aggression to which it gives rise, and the devaluation of self that flows out of it—that supports the whole symptomatology of this neurosis.”15

We made an introvert of Jean Veneuse. We know characterologically—or, better, phenomenologically—that autistic thinking can be made dependent on a primary introversion.16

In a patient of the negative-aggressive type, obsession with the past and with its frustrations, its gaps, its defeats, paralyzes his enthusiasm for living. Generally more introverted than the positive-loving type, he has a tendency to go back over his past and present disappointments, building up in himself a more or less secret area of bitter, disillusioned resentments that often amounts to a kind of autism. But, unlike the genuine autistic person, the abandonment-neurotic is aware of this secret zone, which he cultivates and defends against every intrusion. More egocentric than the neurotic of the second type (positive-loving), he views everything in terms of himself. He has little capacity for disinterestedness: His aggressions and a constant need for vengeance inhibit his impulses. His retreat into himself does not allow him to have any positive experience that would compensate for his past. Hence the lack of self-esteem and therefore of affective security is virtually total in such cases; and as a result there is an overwhelming feeling of impotence in relation to life and to people, as well as a complete rejection of the feeling of responsibility. Others have betrayed him and thwarted him, and yet it is only


from these others that he expects any improvement in his lot. 17

A magnificent description, into which the character of Jean Veneuse fits perfectly. For, he tells us, "arriving at maturity and going off to serve my adopted country in the land of my ancestors was enough to make me wonder whether I was not being betrayed" by everything about me, for the white race would not accept me as one of its own and the black virtually repudiated me. That is precisely my position. 18

The attitude is one of recrimination toward the past, devaluation of self, incapability of being understood as he would like to be. Listen again to Jean Veneuse:

Who can describe the desperation of the little Hottentots whose parents, in the hope of making real Frenchmen of them, transplant them to France too early? From one day to the next they are locked into boarding schools, these free, joyful children, "for your own good," as their weeping parents tell them.

I was one of these intermittent orphans, and I shall suffer for it throughout my life. At the age of seven I and my introduction to learning were turned over to a gloomy school far out in the country. ... The thousand games that are supposed to enliven childhood and adolescence could not make me forget how painful mine were. It is to this schooling that my character owes its inner melancholy and that fear of social contact that today inhibits even my slightest impulses. ... 19

And yet he would have liked to be surrounded, enclosed. He did not like to be abandoned. When school vacations came, all the other boys went home; alone—note that word alone—he remained in the big empty white school. ... 

Oh, those tears of a child who had no one to wipe them. ... He will never forget that he was apprenticed so young to loneliness. ... A cloistered existence, a withdrawn, secluded existence in which I learned too soon to meditate and to reflect. A solitary life that in the end was profoundly moved by trifles—it has made me hypersensitive within myself, incapable of externalizing my joys or my sorrows, so that I reject everything that I love and I turn my back in spite of myself on everything that attracts me. 20

What is going on here? Two processes. I do not want to be loved. Why not? Because once, very long ago, I attempted an object relation and I was abandoned. I have never forgiven my mother. Because I was abandoned, I will make someone else suffer, and desertion by me will be the direct expression of my need for revenge. I will go to Africa: I do not wish to be loved and I will flee from love-objects. That, Germaine Guex says, is called "putting oneself to the proof in order to prove something." I do not wish to be loved, I adopt a defensive position. And if the love-object insists, I will say plainly, "I do not wish to be loved."

Devaluation of self? Indeed yes.

This lack of esteem of self as an object worthy of love has grave consequences. For one thing, it keeps the individual in a state of profound inner insecurity, as a result of which it inhibits or falsifies every relation with others. It is as something that has the right to arouse sympathy or love that the individual is uncertain of himself. The lack of affective self-valuation is to be found only in persons who

18. My italics—F.F.
20. Ibid., p. 227.
21. Ibid., p. 228.
in their early childhood suffered from a lack of love and understanding.\textsuperscript{22}

Jean Veneuse would like to be a man like the rest, but he knows that this position is a false one. He is a beggar. He looks for appeasement, for permission in the white man's eyes. For to him there is "The Other."

Affective self-rejection invariably brings the abandonment-neurotic to an extremely painful and obsessive feeling of exclusion, of having no place anywhere, of being superfluous everywhere in an affective sense. . . . "I am The Other" is an expression that I have heard time and again in the language of the abandonment-neurotic. To be "The Other" is to feel that one is always in a shaky position, to be always on guard, ready to be rejected and . . . unconsciously doing everything needed to bring about exactly this catastrophe.

It would be impossible to overestimate the intensity of the suffering that accompanies such desertion states, a suffering that in one way is connected to the first experiences of rejection in childhood and that brings them back in all their strength. . . . \textsuperscript{23}

The abandonment-neurotic demands proofs. He is not satisfied with isolated statements. He has no confidence. Before he forms an objective relation, he exacts repeated proofs from his partner. The essence of his attitude is "not to love in order to avoid being abandoned." The abandonment-neurotic is insatiable. That is because he claims the right to constant amends. He wants to be loved completely, absolutely and forever. Listen:

My dearest Jean,
I got your letter of last July only today. It is completely mad. Why torture me this way? You—are you aware of the fact?—you are incomparably cruel. You give me happiness mixed with anxiety. You make me the happiest and at the same time the unhappiest of women. How many times shall I have to tell you that I love you, that I belong to you, that I am waiting for you? Come.\textsuperscript{24}

The abandonment-neurotic has finally deserted. He is called back. He is needed. He is loved. And yet what fantasies! Does she really love me? Does she look at me objectively?

"One day a man came, a great friend of Daddy Ned who had never seen Pontaponte. He came from Bordeaux. But good God, he was dirty! God, how ugly he was, this man who was such a good friend of Daddy Ned! He had a hideous black face, completely black, which showed that he must not wash very often."\textsuperscript{25}

Looking eagerly for external reasons for his Cinderella complex, Jean Veneuse projects the entire arsenal of racial stereotypes onto a child of three or four years. And to Andrée he says, "Tell me, Andrée darling . . . in spite of my color, would you agree to marry me if I asked you?"\textsuperscript{26}

He is frightfully full of doubt. Here is Germaine Guex on that subject:

The first characteristic seems to be the dread of showing oneself as one actually is. This is a broad field of various fears: fear of disappointing, fear of displeasing, of boring, of wearying . . . and consequently of losing the chance to create a bond of sympathy with others or if this bond does exist of doing damage to it. The abandonment-neurotic doubts whether he can be loved as he is, for he has had the cruel experience of being abandoned when he offered

\textsuperscript{22} Guex, op. cit., pp. 31-32.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., pp. 35-36.
\textsuperscript{24} Maran, op. cit., pp. 203-204.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., pp. 84-85.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., pp. 247-248.
himself to the tenderness of others as a little child and hence without artifice.  

Jean Veneuse does not, however, lead a life devoid of compensations. He flirts with art. His reading list is impressive, his essay on Suerès is quite perceptive. That too is analyzed by Germaine Guex: “Imprisoned in himself, locked into his artificial reserve, the negative-aggressive feeds his feeling of irreparable loss with everything that he continues to lose or that his passivity makes him lack. . . . Therefore, with the exception of such privileged sectors as his intellectual life or his profession,” he cherishes a deep-seated feeling of worthlessness.  

Where does this analysis lead us? To nothing short of proving to Jean Veneuse that in fact he is not like the rest. Making people ashamed of their existence, Jean-Paul Sartre said. Yes: teaching them to become aware of the potentials they have forbidden themselves, of the passivity they have paraded in just those situations in which what is needed is to hold oneself, like a sliver, to the heart of the world, to interrupt if necessary the rhythm of the world, to upset, if necessary, the chain of command, but in any case, and most assuredly, to stand up to the world.  

Jean Veneuse is the crusader of the inner life. When he sees Andrée again, when he is face to face with this woman whom he has wanted for months and months, he takes refuge in silence, the eloquent silence of those who “know the artificiality of words and acts.”  

Jean Veneuse is a neurotic, and his color is only an attempt to explain his psychic structure. If this objective difference had not existed, he would have manufactured it out of nothing.  

Jean Veneuse is one of those intellectuals who try to take a position solely on the level of ideas. Incapable of realizing any concrete contact with his fellow man. Is he treated decently, kindly, humanly? Only because he has stumbled on some servant secrets. He “knows those people,” and he is on guard against them. “My vigilance, if one can call it that, is a safety-catch. Politely and artlessly I welcome the advances that are made to me. I accept and repay the drinks that are bought for me, I take part in the little social games that are played on deck, but I do not allow myself to be taken in by the good will shown me, suspicious as I am of this excessive cordiality that has rather too quickly taken the place of the hostility in the midst of which they formerly tried to isolate me.”  

He accepts the drinks, but he buys others in return. He does not wish to be obligated to anyone. For if he does not buy back, he is a nigger, as ungrateful as all the others.  

Is someone mean? It is simply because he is a nigger. For it is impossible not to despise him. Well, it is clear to me that Jean Veneuse, alias René Maran, is neither more nor less than a black abandonment-neurotic. And he is put back into his place, his proper place. He is a neurotic who needs to be emancipated from his infantile fantasies. And I contend that Jean Veneuse represents not an example of black-white relations, but a certain mode of behavior in a neurotic who by coincidence is black. So the purpose of our study becomes more precise: to enable the man of color to understand, through specific examples, the psychological elements that can alienate his fellow Negroes.

28. My italics—F.F.  
29. Guex, op. cit., p. 44.  
I will emphasize this further in the chapter devoted to phenomenological description, but let us remember that our purpose is to make possible a healthy encounter between black and white.

Jean Veneuse is ugly. He is black. What more is needed? If one rereads the various observations of Germaine Guex, one will be convinced by the evidence: Un homme pareil aux autres is a sham, an attempt to make the relations between two races dependent on an organic unhealthiness. There can be no argument: In the domain of psychoanalysis as in that of philosophy, the organic, or constitutional, is a myth only for him who can go beyond it. If from a heuristic point of view one must totally deny the existence of the organic, the fact remains, and we can do nothing about it, that some individuals make every effort to fit into pre-established categories. Or, rather, yes, we can do something about it.

Earlier I referred to Jacques Lacan; it was not by accident. In his thesis, presented in 1932, he violently attacked the idea of the constitutional. Apparently I am departing from his conclusions, but my dissent will be understood when one recalls that for the idea of the constitutional as it is understood by the French school I am substituting that of structure—"embracing unconscious psychic life, as we are able to know it in part, especially in the form of repression and inhibition, insofar as these elements take an active part in the organization peculiar to each psychic individuality." 31

As we have seen, on examination Jean Veneuse displays the structure of an abandonment-neurotic of the negative-aggressive type. One can attempt to explain this reactionally—that is, through the interaction of person and environment—and prescribe, for example, a new environment, "a change of air." It will properly be observed that in this case the structure has remained constant. The change of air that Jean Veneuse prescribed for himself was not undertaken in order to find himself as a man; he did not have as his purpose the formulation of a healthy outlook on the world; he had no striving toward the productiveness that is characteristic of psychosocial equilibrium, but sought rather to corroborate his externalizing neurosis.

The neurotic structure of an individual is simply the elaboration, the formation, the eruption within the ego, of conflictual clusters arising in part out of the environment and in part out of the purely personal way in which that individual reacts to these influences.

Just as there was a touch of fraud in trying to deduce from the behavior of Nini and Mayotte Capécia a general law of the behavior of the black woman with the white man, there would be a similar lack of objectivity, I believe, in trying to extend the attitude of Veneuse to the man of color as such. And I should like to think that I have discouraged any endeavors to connect the defeats of Jean Veneuse with the greater or lesser concentration of melanin in his epidermis.

This sexual myth—the quest for white flesh—perpetuated by alienated psyches, must no longer be allowed to impede active understanding.

In no way should my color be regarded as a flaw. From the moment the Negro accepts the separation imposed by the European he has no further respite, and "is it not understandable that thenceforward he will try to elevate himself to the white man’s level? To elevate himself

in the range of colors to which he attributes a kind of hierarchy?\textsuperscript{32}

We shall see that another solution is possible. It implies a restructuring of the world.


Chapter Four

THE SO-CALLED DEPENDENCY COMPLEX
OF COLONIZED PEOPLES

\textit{In the whole world no poor devil is lynched, no wretch is tortured, in whom I too am not degraded and murdered.}

—Aimé Césaire, \textit{Et les chiens se taissent}

When I embarked on this study, only a few essays by Mannoni, published in a magazine called \textit{Psyché}, were available to me. I was thinking of writing to M. Mannoni to ask about the conclusions to which his investigations had led him. Later I learned that he had gathered his reflections in a forthcoming book. It has now been published: \textit{Prospero and Caliban: Psychology of Colonization}. Let us examine it.

Before going into details, I should like to say that its analytic thought is honest. Having lived under the extreme ambivalence inherent in the colonial situation, M. Mannoni has managed to achieve a grasp—unfortunately too exhaustive—of the psychological phenomena that govern the relations between the colonized and the colonizer.

The basic characteristic of current psychological research seems to be the achievement of a certain exhaustiveness. But one should not lose sight of the real.