

Hello and Goodbye to Negritude

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Why did we choose such an ambivalent title for this essay? First of all we must stress the ever-increasing imprecision of the connotations and the content of the concept "negritude." [This term initially referred to a form of revolt of the spirit against the historic vilification and denaturalization of a group of human beings, who, during the colonization process, were baptized generically and pejoratively as "Negroes."]

However, as it developed into an ideology, and even an ontology, the concept of negritude began to adopt one or various meanings, all of them ambiguous, until it presented the following paradox: formulated to awaken and to encourage self-esteem and confidence in the strength of the social groups that slavery had reduced to the status of beasts of burden, negritude now makes them evaporate into a somatic metaphysics.

Far from arming their class-consciousness against the violence of capitalism, negritude dissolves its *negroes* and *African negroes* into an essentialism that is perfectly inoffensive to a system that strips men and women of their identity. Currently, the "negrologists" of negritude present it in the form of an exclusively Black worldview within American or African societies, independent of the position they occupy in production, property, and the distribution of material and spiritual goods. We have, in fact, a *Weltanschauung* of antiracist origins, which, retrieved by neocolonialism, attempts in its shadow, and through sophistry, to separate the oppressed Blacks from the conditions that would fertilize their liberation struggle. Negritude, formerly a literary and artistic protest movement, now transformed into an ideology of a colonial state, is not, however, a spontaneously generated phenomenon. Negritude has a past: it is, in effect, tightly linked to the history and to the social structures shaped by the scandalous New World slave trade and the plantation system.

It is therefore necessary to go back to the origins of negritude, to the various paths that lead to it and to its equivalents in colonial society, in order to show that, during its life, it has been, in literature and in art, the modern equivalent of cultural marronage with which the masses of slaves and their descendants opposed deculturation and assimilation to the colonial West.

Questions Regarding Method

The original sin of negritude and the misfortunes that debased it derive from the fairy godmother that supported it at its baptismal font, namely anthropology. The crisis that has shaken negritude coincides with the winds that revolution has blown over the fields upon which anthropology, be it cultural, social, applied, or structural (and with a Black or a White mask) used to carry out its wise research. [The first charge against the various schools of anthropology is to have given preference to the European contribution in the analysis of cultural elements that specify the metabolism of our societies. This contribution has always been the ideal reference model, the measure, par excellence, of all ferment of culture or civilization. This basic Eurocentrism even postulated an identity of divine right between the typically colonial concept of "White" and that of the universal human being. The creative expressions of Africans and their descendants were isolated and became a heterogeneous heap of *africanisms*, morbidly encased in the immaculate organism of the Americas. Given this racist point of view, slave revolts, political and cultural maronage and the participation of Blacks in peasant struggles, were rarely considered decisive contributions to the formation of societies and national cultures in Latin America.]

In 1941, Melville J. Herskovits dedicated a famous study to the "Black heritage" of the American continent, and devised a scale of "intensities of African survival." He never worried about offering a correlative "scale of the intensity of European survivals." African influences were mechanically juxtaposed to modes of feeling, thinking, and acting that were supposedly inherited from the Christian West by the mixed, Creole nations of our hemisphere. Herskovits and his disciples lost sight of the fact that within the geographic and socioeconomic space between the southern United States and the north of Brazil, even though there was an historic rupture between ethnicity and culture, between infra- and superstructure, such a dissociation was not exclusively characteristic of the African heritage. It could be a double or even a triple rupture if we were to include the Indian ethnic groups and cultures. The elements inherited from Europe, Africa, and the Precolumbian world were restructured and remetabolized (and not unilaterally reinterpreted by the Blacks), due to the effects of material living conditions and of the emancipation struggles that were the origins of our various national structures. More than a quarter of a century after the Herskovits hypothesis, the influence of Africa is still being studied as though it were a racial plankton, eternally suspended in the waves of the national liberation process, of the *sui generis* societies of America. When dealing with the problem of nationalism, setting aside the singular experience of Haiti, it has only been in analyses and studies performed in Cuba since 1959 that one can clearly

see the historical role of the descendants of African slaves, both during the political emancipation movements and in the structure of sociocultural values.

In their ethnocentric hunt for African "isms," anthropologists and ethnologists have not included the European heritage in their inventories, when, actually, the mixture of races has equally conditioned private and social behavior and the formation of a conscience and psyche of the descendants of Europeans. There is no such thing as an ethnology of the "White strata" of our population: their specifically Creole American relationship to work, religion (Latin American Catholicism), collective festivities (carnival), magic, culinary traditions, art, music, and body movement—including their gait, dance, copulation—and various other types of behavior that display the reciprocity of the phenomena of syncretism and transculturation. The African presence in the cultures of the New World is talked about as though, before the slave trade, in addition to the Amerindian cultures, there would have existed in America well-structured Greco-Roman or Anglo-Saxon cultures, onto which, much later, well or badly, the African savage was grafted. [The scandalously segregating, terrorist role that racial dogma exerts on our countries, be it in its negrophobic form or under more refined disguises, has accustomed people to consider the African contribution as a strident note in formerly well-organized sociocultural groupings.]

When one studies the objective dynamic of our national cultures, there is a tradition of distinguishing, from the Caribbean to Brazil, the *Hispanic*, *Iberian*, *Latin*, *Anglo*, *Gallic*, *Batavian*, *Indian*, and *Afro-American* cultures. This logic of separating and mechanically juxtaposing our common heritage, far from being innocent, presents close ties of cause and effect with the racist adventures of colonialism and imperialism. There exists a sociohistoric determinism within the Western hemisphere that, since the "discovery," within very particular economic, cultural, religious, psychological, and ecological conditions, acts dialectically upon the life of various social types that have molded, through antagonisms of class and "race," our national realities. Historical creativity has not been the exclusive privilege of one social group considered in isolation. [America, unilaterally termed *Latin* or *Anglo-Saxon*, arbitrarily proclaimed *White* or *Black*, is actually, the simultaneous social creation of multiple ethnic groups, aboriginal or originating in various African and European countries.] It is the ethnohistoric result of a painful process of racial mixture and of symbiosis, that has transformed or even transmuted, with the rigor of a nutritional phenomenon, the original social types, the multiple African, Indian, and European substances and contributions, to produce absolutely novel ethnic groups and cultures within the world history of civilizations.

Under the plantation system, and under the equally oppressive na-

tional systems that succeeded it, what were initially Africanisms, Indianisms, and Europeanisms, have ended up, transmuted through the metabolic confrontation of their own singularly vital elements, into a heterogeneous *Americanism* that has been reciprocally advantageous for all the people of our original family of societies. The value scales brought from abroad and those that ruled locally, at levels that varied from one society to another, have been the object of a universal process of American *Creolization*. The study of this dialectic development must break with arbitrary cuts and ethnocentric classifications. This requires the revision of postulates, methods, and conventional anthropological concepts, which, since the eighteenth century, have been concerned with our identities.

In the first place, why should Africanology shed light on the *mutations of identity* of the European and African heritage in the Americas? Within the framework of an anthropology that would scientifically unify cultural and political practices, we feel that there would be material for autonomous discipline that would simply and plainly be Americanology. Its methods of analyzing our global societies should then omit generic denominations, always loaded with racism or ethnoeurocentrism, which, beneath the apparently innocent terms *Hispanic*, *Iberian*, *Luso*, *Latin*, *Anglo*, *Indian*, *Batavian*, and *Gallic*, unilaterally prefix the description of our intrinsic American identities.

Towards the end of his life, the eminent professor Roger Bastide proposed methodological tools that were more appropriate for the evaluation of our sociohistorical situations and junctures. He, however, considered it useful to maintain the prefix *Afro* before the word Americanology. By preserving *Afro* he rendered inevitable the correlative preservation of the other erroneous meanings that the old, racist ethnocentrism traditionally attributes to the form and content of our Americanness. Only plain Americanology, without the prefixes of *Afro*, *Indo*, or *Eurocentrism*, could free the analysis and reevaluation of our sociocultural phenomena from the conceptual and methodological imperialism that has divided, dismembered, fractured, "epidermized," and racialized our knowledge of the laws of our history.

This having been said, one should not underestimate the research findings on popular religion, familial ties, customs, musical expressions, and folklore, all of which describe the originality of the popular cultures of this continent. Some scientists, particularly Ortiz, Price-Mars, Arthur Ramos, Alfred Metraux, Roger Bastide, Edison Carneiro, Aquiles Escalante, Acosta Saignes, Frazier, Leiris, Aguirre Beltrán, etc., who have studied the African influence on the New World (some unilaterally as was the case with Herskovits), have accumulated over more than half a century a prodigious number of observations and analyses that will permit scientific anthropology, once it has been liberated from all its ethnocen-

trism, to correctly identify our people within the history of the national societies they have formed in this hemisphere.

The obvious ties between imperialism and anthropology are not always direct ties. In the same manner the links between negritude and neocolonialism are not necessarily reciprocal expressions. There is, nevertheless, an overwhelming disproportion between the considerable knowledge anthropology has harvested and the derisible tools of action it has finally placed in the hands of those social groups that have been the subjects of their field study.

In the first studies conducted by anthropologists (frequently of high scientific value) one is struck by the scarce connection of the data to the question of nationalism, that is, the liberation struggles that our people were involved in, in order to unify democratically, for their exclusive benefit, the historic components of their identity. There is no anthropology that studies the original types of resistance to slavery, such as *cultural marronage*, that was practiced on this continent by Africans and their descendants. Neither are there, at present, field projects, which would be highly significant, on mining societies, on the sugar industry, fruit companies, coffee plantations, etc. Anthropology has wisely compartmentalized the map of the Caribbean and Latin America, without bumping into the flamboyant imperialist installations on the way. In using a fine-tooth comb to go over each nook and cranny of Latin America, ethnology has frequently stopped to reveal, at times quite brilliantly, the mythology, family ties, racial prejudices, oral literature, sexual and culinary mores, musical and artistic creations, eternal folklore, without ever adequately showing the historical relationship between capitalism and this original and contradictory crucible of cultures and civilizations. Where are the anthropologists or ethnologists who had the idea of taking as their field of study the boards of management of neocolonial banks and exchanges? Where is the anthropology of the military caste, of so-called Inter-American economic and political institutions, of pseudolegal mechanisms, of "Papadocracies" and military dictatorships? To summarize: How long should we continue to rule into squares the elementary structures of imperialist power, which, together with the indigenous oligarchies, continues to underdevelop our societies?

Origin of the American Social Types

The human essence of the Blacks, Whites, and Mulattoes within the region of America that concerns us, encompasses, historically, all of the social and racial interactions from the sixteenth century to our day, among colonists, slaves, freed slaves, and their descendants on this continent. This slave society "epidermized," somatized, and deeply racialized the production interrelationships, thus adding to the innate contradictions

and alienations of capitalism a new type of class conflict that acquired its own characteristics within the specific framework of the American colonies: namely *passionate racial antagonism*.

[This racism or class egotism reduced the human essence of imported labor from various African ethnic groups to a fantastic *inferior Black essence*; and the human essence of the owners who came from various European nations became a no less extravagant *superior White essence*.] This double mythological reduction on the one hand shaped the erroneous good conscience of the colonizers who voluntarily left Christian and "White" Europe, and on the other hand served to downgrade, deform, and dismantle the social conscience of the slaves forcefully brought from pagan "Black" Africa. Even though the racial problem is the psychological aspect of the socioeconomic structures of colonialism, the secret of "White" racism, as well as the antiracism or antiracist racism of the "Blacks," must not be looked for in the psychological makeup of these social types, but in the objective analysis of their interactions, as determined by slavery and colonization.

The "peculiar institution" of slavery, as a way of dominating both economically and physically, shaped at the level of superstructural relations, aided by the dominant and deforming myth of "antagonistic races," a type of cultural aggression and terrorism that functioned efficiently, although frequently with the help of a separate economic structure and with the operational strength of a vital contradiction. Colonization locked African labor into the double trap of economic and psychological vassalage, thus doubly alienating the consciousness of the plantation workers. The African human being, thus submitted to this twofold deculturating pressure, was transformed into an invisible man, a nameless bone in history, exposed day and night to the peril of irreversibly losing the remains of his human identity. Often the concept of alienation is used to qualify the fantastic loss of identity inherent in slavery. This concept only inadequately covers the sterilization that threatens the cultural personality of the colonized Black man. In this case the concept of "zombification" is a more appropriate one. It is no coincidence that the myth of the *zombi*, which originated in Haiti, is equally well known in other American countries.

Within the many-sided irrational relations of slavery and colonization, the fetishism of the merchandise served as a model for the genesis of the racial dogma. Just as money and skin color became an abstract, passionately powerful symbol, the color *white* became the universal symbol for wealth, political power, beauty, and social well-being inherited from the "Greco-Roman miracle"; the color *black*, became a symbol for poverty, political impotence, physical and moral ugliness, the congenital characteristics of "African barbarism and primitivism." The color of the human

beings dominated them, obsessed them, and miserably clouded their consciousness and their perceptions, until color became a kind of generalized equivalent, of a biological nature, to productive relations. Thus fetishism, extrapolated from an essentially economic setting, was *colored* (and it is important to use this term) with somatic, ethical, aesthetic, and ontological meanings. The Black man as merchandise had his own intrinsic value, with the sole difference that the African slave could not be valued like a metal coin, because of his irreversible aging process. Nevertheless, in addition to property, production tools, labor, and capital, African slaves provided their European masters with supplementary "capital": the white color of their skin, the mask and sign of proprietorship and political and cultural power that accrued automatically to the colonizing class.

The African human being baptized as "Negro" by the triangular trade pattern, turned into the "mineral man" who guaranteed primitive accumulation within a capitalist economy. This absolute depersonalization inherent in servile labor brought with it a complementary form of alienation, the pure and simple assimilation of the colonized, the disappearance of their psychological being, in short, their zombification. The colonial system wished to transform the Africans and their descendants into Anglo-Saxon and Latin subproducts of Europe in the Americas. The capitalist West made sure that the dependent labor force would lose not only its freedom but also its collective and imaginative memory that permits people to transmit the truths and particular experiences of their social and cultural vitality from generation to generation. In the case invented by the plantation economy, the famous "Je est un autre" of Arthur Rimbaud, became: "I am an inferior model of the white European." "I" was a production instrument, an exchange value, a value of usage, an animal and motor work force, in short, a subhuman-biological-combustible, transformed by external hostile powers into colonial merchandise, who, in addition, before the use of electricity and steam, was also the creator of wealth that unknowingly enabled the first industrial revolution of the modern world. Thus colonization robbed the Africans who were deported to America of their past, their history, their elemental confidence in themselves, their legends, their family patterns, their beliefs, and their art. Even the beauty of their skin became an eternal source of frustration, an unsurmountable obstacle between the prefabricated condition imposed upon them and the taking of their rightful places in history and society. Depersonalization and alienation surpassed the limits of the economic and social course of servile labor, to penetrate through the pores of Blacks, even the visceral structures of their demolished personality. This threatening, deculturating pressure is responsible for the poor opinion "colored" men and women of the Americas had, for a long time, of the role of their bodies, their spirit, and their identity in the history of civilization.

Cultural Marronage: Genesis of Negritude

How did the African slaves and their Creole American descendants react to the social and racial oppression that depersonalized their lives? What did they do to restructure the disembodied components of their historic identity in this unfamiliar world? Marronage was the process by means of which some slaves abandoned their plantation and sought refuge in the mountains, to preserve, as best as possible, their identity. Analogously, in the cultural area, it can be said that they attempted to escape the hegemony of the colony, endowing it with their own values, "marronaging" wherever possible the horrible deculturing and assimilating mechanisms of the civilization imposed on them. The sociocultural history of the downtrodden masses of the western hemisphere, is, in a global sense, the history of ideological marronage that permitted them not just to reinterpret Europe with its sword, its cross, and its whip through their "African mentality," but to demonstrate heroic creativity, in order to painfully reprocess new ways of feeling, thinking, and acting. This prodigious effort of self-defense became manifest in religion, magic, music, dance, and popular medicine, in Creole jargon, cuisine, oral literature, sexual life, the family, and other expressions of the wisdom and optimistic genius of these people. With the exception of Haiti, the slave rebellion failed on the political level. The majority of the heroic armed movements that marked the history of slavery between 1519 and the end of the nineteenth century, were sooner or later totally wiped out. From the Caribbean to Brazil (not counting the groups of Bush Negroes of Guyana and the Jamaican maroons), the *palenques*, *cumbes*, *quilombos*, or maroon republics, did not evolve, as they did in Haiti, into a real liberation war and a nationally independent society.

In its sociopolitical form, marronage, according to some sociologists, was a very healthy collective self-defense mechanism. Also, on the cultural level it proved to be healthy, for, by searching for the new truth of their lives, the American slaves took from the anguish of their "Black condition" its deepest dynamism to maintain and to stimulate in them the universal feeling of liberty and human identity. This was the cognitive process that in the popular plantation cultures often transformed the existential drama from the status of servitude into a healthy creative explosion.

In the case of religion and mythology the marronage of the slaves' forceful evangelization program led to extraordinary results.

It created on plantations and in maroon communities a clandestine and fruitful network of correspondences and mythical and ritualistic interrelationships between the representations and the gestures of Catholicism and the African Yoruba, Fon, Fanti Ashanti, Bantu, Congo, etc. cults.

These mental and motor replies to a crisis situation that threatened to

destroy or to zombify their social consciousness, reveal a very sane attitude of the slaves, both in resisting and in creatively adapting to the ferociously hostile conditions of the American socioeconomic scene. The concrete demands of the struggle against slavery and colonization drove the slave to an obstinate search for a new psychological and cultural equilibrium. The marronage of the dominant values permitted them to rework their shredded African traditions. Thanks to the power of their collective and imaginary memory they could create new rules of life in a society that restructured their personality. This vital creativity could be seen in the most varied areas, from methods of agriculture to matrimonial and family standards, from religion to folklore, from language to modes of cooking and eating, from funerary rituals to bodily expressions through dance and copulation, from magic to popular remedies, from music to oral literature and social games, from the manner of carrying children to female hair styles, and from mythology to armed resistance.

Marronage did not express itself with the same efficiency in all the areas of culture and life. The language of the masters could not be marooned, even though there is a certain influence of African languages in Latin-American Spanish and Portuguese. Aside from the Creole languages of Haiti, Guadalupe, and Martinique, the Papiamentu spoken in Curaçao and Aruba, and the Antillean and Guyanese pidgins, marronage of European languages was not very generalized. Nor did the legal traditions of West Africa; and the political and economic thought of the precolonial societies of the African continent disappear. In the same fashion, the technology, iron work, spinning, statuary, and wood and ivory sculpture, as well as other expressions of the creative intellect of the African people, were submerged by the purely "socioeconomic" sensitivity of colonial America. Marronage, a legitimate self-defense movement, contributed to a limitation of the mental devastations. It saved from zombification all that could be saved in religion, magic, plastic arts, dance, music, and of course, the ability to resist oppression. Historically, marronage could not conspire against the attitudes of "Uncle Tomism," the fear and shame of being Black, the inhibition and cultural dualism, the replacing of being by seeming, psychic bipolarism, the inferiority complex, compensating aggression, the denial of the self, intellectual "Bovaryism," imitation, forms of social ambivalence, and other psychological disorders that still characterize the behavior of many Blacks and Mulattoes in our society. Slavery, colonization, and imperialism with their triple impact on America have seriously marked the social types. Stereotyped images, mythical portraits that the descendants of Africans find of themselves in the "White mirror," as well as the narcissistic opinion that descendants of Europeans discover in the "Black mirror" of their interrelationships, are echoes of racist myths of the past. They are manifestations of the spiritual misery of the various stages of the expansion of capitalism.

The Twentieth Century in America: Identity Crisis with the Will to be Born Again

The African heritage reevaluation and identification movements can be traced directly to Haiti between 1791–1804 and the end of the nineteenth century. These movements would find their way into the various social sciences (history, sociology, ethnology, and anthropology) as well as music, literature, and the visual arts. This general renovation of the oppressed spirits within the continent naturally had to distinguish itself and to differentiate itself according to the national structures of each of our Mestizo societies. The historic, exotic, and indigenous factors that have led to a Cuban, a Haitian, a Jamaican, a Dominican, a Brazilian, and an Antillean identity, as well as our common American or Caliban identity, do not coincide with each other simply and plainly at any level. In Latin America and the Caribbean there is no social awareness or a literary or artistic sensitivity that constitutes an organized, homogeneous, uniformly American bloc, without frontiers or peculiarities, that is interchangeable or can be superimposed upon its expressions. One observes, instead, an historical family, shaped by its people and its national cultures. People and culture have been dialectically shaped, both by the diversity and the harmony of the material and spiritual conditions of colonization and the struggles that put an end to the colonial period. Even though our national lineage globally experienced the same ethnohistorical adventures of an antidevelopmental world capitalism, each nation that emerged from the popular fight against the colonial conditions has its own very original system of contradictions of class and race. In spite of a doubly common origin and social situation, at the economic level (underdevelopment, plantation system) and at the superstructural level (mutation of institutions, religions, traditions, and Euro-African idiosyncracies), the four national cultures of our insular and continental countries' linguistic groups each present very precise characteristics upon analysis, due to the sociohistoric sedimentation imposed by the economic and political policies of seven different empires (six European powers, plus the ascending imperial United States). Among the islands, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic speak Spanish; Jamaica, Trinidad-Tobago, Barbados, Santa Lucia, etc. are English speaking; Haiti, Martinique, and Guadalupe are Francophone; and Curaçao and Aruba are Dutch speaking. On the continent Brazil speaks Portuguese; Suriname, Dutch; Guyana and Belize, English; French Guyana, French; and Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, etc. are all Spanish speaking.

Of the colonizing countries, although they belong to the same western civilization of Greco-Roman, Anglosaxon, Germanic, and Scandinavian cultures, each has its own history and pronounced national traits, and each has practiced its own colonization policies according to its level of

development and the expansionary tactics of its capitalism. All these factors, be they of diversification or of association, in addition to the intercolonial rivalries and contradictions, determined the variety of historical class and race relations in our societies. All these levels of differentiation and heterogeneity, however, did not manage to destroy within the insular and continental Caribbean the existence of a very real civilization. Historical unity depends upon multiple sociological, anthropological, psychological, linguistic, ecological, and geographic realities that translate into similar behavior patterns within social groups; similarity between the tough, past work experiences on the plantations as well as present-day industrial and agricultural enterprises; similarities in popular religious forms, psychological peculiarities, and types of alienation; similarities of folklore, mythology, dance and song rhythms, games, cooking, feelings, and movements expressed in the street, in the home, in public festivities, and in intimate lovemaking. There are, in short, a variety of Antillean and Latin American ways of "marooning" socioeconomic oppression, cultural colonialism, and racism; there is an historical similarity in our Calibanesque ways of dreaming, feeling, having fun, thinking, acting, working to the south of the Rio Bravo. The diverse conditions of social existence of our people before the slave trade and during slavery, in national societies that only indigenized the methods and values of colonization, have structured an intolerable lifestyle, *serious identity crises*, that have reached a global scale, in the century of the great socialist October Revolution and of decolonization, and have triggered a *general will to be reborn* observable in syndical and political struggles as well as in literary and artistic emancipation. This universal process of self-determination in economics, politics, literature, music, and art that can even be seen in the oppressed people, had various names after the First World War. But behind the multiplicity of names, postulates, concepts, schools and *vanguardisms*, we discover from a distance, a vast general phenomenon of a search for an identity. Among the Blacks in the U.S., this identification process, initiated in 1895 by William E. B. DuBois, is correctly known by the name—which is equally valid everywhere—of *renaissance*. This concept, according to Littré, "is used upon occasions to identify a supplemental movement, following a period of oppression."

Is this not exactly what occurred among the people of our hemisphere and its political and literary intelligentsia, after centuries of slavery, colonization, and sociocultural hibernation? The first signs of this "supplemental movement of the minds" began to show before this century in Haiti, with Firmin, H. Price, Janvier, O. Durand, and others; in Cuba the eminently synthetic genius of José Martí propelled it, with an intensity that had no precedents, leaving an impact on the islands and on the continent linking it tightly to the second independence struggle of America on a political, literary, and anthropological level. In a much less visceral form, the reno-

vation of intellectual and artistic activities in Latin America can be observed in the originality of Rodó and Rubén Darío, and the modernists in general, such as Enrique José Varona, Justo Sierra, Manuel Díaz Rodríguez, José Vasconcelos, Antonio Caso, Alfonso Reyes, B. Sanín Cano, J. García Monje, and other intellectuals of the area within America that concerns us. With the Mexican Revolution this new spirit was revitalized both on the islands and on the continent with the work of essayists, novelists, and poets of the country of Benito Juárez, and also, significantly, by the great neo-Aztec muralists which Siqueiros has called "the first artistic manifestation in Latin America that deserves a front-row seat in the concert of universal culture." Also, during the 1920s and 1930s, at least six vanguard movements, which suffered different fortunes and vicissitudes, emerged on the literary and artistic scene of Latin America and the Caribbean, some following the example of the European vanguard, others surviving independently. Among this half dozen of *isms*, which were discussed by our friend Oscar Collazo, we are missing one *ism*: *negritism*, which has a legitimate right to a place in the sun of Americanisms "in search of our expression."

Negritude in the midst of this identity crisis?

Could it have been a mask of an *Americanism* without a doctrine in the midst of the effervescence of spirits?

Has it shown signs of a renaissance, like the "Black and White" vanguards of the United States, of Mulatto Brazil, and of the rest of America of "one color or another?"

We have followed the historic roads that lead to *negritude*, in order to present it better, at this time when we are bidding it hello and goodbye, to present it, alive or dead, flaming body of the future, or a celebrated corpse, both in its structure and in its literary, artistic, and social function.

In Search of the Formula for "Americanism" or Americanness

The year 1928 symbolically witnessed the birth of Che Guevara and three works that offer (just like the author of *Man and Socialism in Cuba*) decisive points of reference within the "history of the spiritual organization of our America." They are, *Ainsi Parla l'Oncle*, by the "Black" Haitian Price-Mars; *Seven Interpretive Essays of Peruvian Reality* (*Siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana*), by the Peruvian "Indian Mestizo" José Carlos Mariátegui; and *Six Essays in Search of Our Expression* (*Seis ensayos en busca de nuestra expresión*) by the "Creole White man" of the Dominican Republic, Pedro Henriquez Ureña. These three great works reflect the converging Creole aspects of the descendants of Africans, Indians, and Europeans in Latin America.

I have purposely brought together these three great minds, all con-

nected to José Martí, to show the triple historical complexity of the road taken by our people, sometimes in the midst of contradictions and solitude, to arrive from Toussaint L'Ouverture to Fidel Castro, from Simón Bolívar to Che Guevara, from Tupac Amaru to Salvador Allende, from Tiradentes to Sandino, and to reach the level to which the Cuban Revolution has brought Latin American consciousness. In none of the great books that we have just mentioned can we find the entirety of sociohistoric roots of our Americanness. In them we find, planted in parallel rows, Mariátegui's "Indian" trunk, the "Black" trunk of Price-Mars, and the "White Creole" trunk of Henriquez Ureña. In each one of three studies the historically Creole unity of the American trunk of our common identity was absent. It was through this trunk that the knowledge and the tenderness of the creator of the idea "Our America" was supposed to be grafted upon the knowledge of the world. The descendants of Africans, who had become Creole and Americanized in the midst of the atrocious conditions that we are already familiar with, could not in 1823, identify with the *Alocución a la poesía* and other admirable *Silvas americanas* by Andrés Bello; nor could they identify in 1845 with Domingo Sarmiento's *Facundo*, or in 1872 with *Martín Fierro*, and in 1879 with *La vuelta de Martín Fierro* by José Hernández; nor could they later identify with the law-abiding, philanthropic and jocular *negritism* of Rubén Darío, the modernists and the postmodernists; or with José Enrique Rodó, whose Americanism was inclined more towards the aerial aestheticism of *Ariel* than towards the solid reality of the people of Caliban. Of the six great names mentioned in Henriquez Ureña's essay, Bello, Sarmiento, Montalvo, Martí, Darío, and Rodó, the suns around which "the literary history of Spanish America" turns, none, with the exception of José Martí, has offered a definition of the self, an emancipation of the spirit and the sensitivity, useful *at once* to all the social types that have emerged from our common colonial tragedy.

The fact is that although the declarations of cultural independence within the hemisphere between 1823 and 1928 were just, brilliant, and well-received, they continued to be, with the exception of Haiti, unilateral, Eurocentric, and always sacrificed one or two of the trunks of our multinationality.

Since the 1920s, the wind of renaissance has begun to blow simultaneously in the spirits of the United States, the Caribbean, Brazil, and Latin America in general. There was never a pan-negritism or a pan-negritude as the sole vanguard, with manifestations of the romantic school. The anthologies gave the illusion of such structures by amalgamating and superimposing the most diverse authors in the same books under a generic racial title. In the francophone countries of the American and African Third World, the vision of a "zionist" *negritude* began to emerge, with the anthology by Léopold Sedar Senghor, with a famous

prologue by Jean-Paul Sartre, "Black Orpheus" ("Orphée Noir"), and during the 1950s and 1960s, with the writing of university theses destined to recapture academically and politically, for the sake of neocolonialism, the spiritual tempests and cyclones of Caliban. But our great brother William Du Bois had already said it: "The Blacks do not have a Zion, nor an ecumenical meeting point such as 'Next year in Dakar!'" These were parallel movements without any type of linkages, which in each country were molded to the national cultural contents and contours, as well as to the diversity of class origins, talents, and individual tastes.

In the western hemisphere the first was the "Black Renaissance" movement of the U.S., more precisely located in Harlem, which revolved around the main figures of the new intelligentsia that included Frederick Douglass, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Booker T. Washington, as well as W. E. B. DuBois, James Weldon Johnson, Alain Locke, Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Jean Toomer, and Sterling Brown. The majority of these creators, particularly DuBois, Langston Hughes, and Claude McKay came directly from the people, and from expressions of cultural marronage like jazz, the blues, and Negro spirituals. This "colored" intelligentsia took from the people the vitality and the innovative beauty of their productions. The vanguard movement of these North American intellectuals was not at all bourgeois, elitist, or aristocratic. Although this essay does not concern itself with North America, it is necessary to evoke for the sake of analogy the extraordinary reevaluation effort of U.S. Blacks, their forms of cultural self-defense, fertilized by the vanguard of poets, musicians, and essayists. This process of identification became as or more valid than the renovation that took place in the "White" arts and letters in the United States led by such brilliant men of the "lost generation" as Hemingway, Faulkner, Fitzgerald, Tom Wolfe, Dos Passos, etc. The "Black" Renaissance constitutes a prodigious "tomorrow that shines like a flame"—and an immense rainbow over the still long road that the citizens of the country that produced John Brown and Frederick Douglass, Gabriel Posser and Walt Whitman, Emerson and DuBois, Faulkner and Bessie Smith, Hemingway and Langston Hughes, must still cover together.

Jacques Roumain, in his work as a novelist, poet, essayist, ethnologist, and political leader, maintained up to his premature death a very revolutionary interpretation of the class and race issues in Haitian social history. He was able to establish, as was done after his death by Jacques Stephen Alexis and other heirs to his ideology, the real historical relation between economic oppression and racial inequality. In 1939 Roumain published an essay on the "Complaints of the Black Man" ("Quejas del Hombre negro"), that seems to indicate that, had he not died prematurely at the age of 37, he undoubtedly would have founded, upon rigorously Marxist

foundations, a scientific anthropology of the Caribbean, and perhaps of all of Latin America. He writes:

The slogan of the protection of the White woman, the unavoidable inferiority of the Black race, the mission of the White man, this mission that Kipling used to call, with his imperturbable imperialist humor, a burden, the *white man's burden* [Roumain's italics], hide the egotism of the rapacious and unscrupulous class; and finally racial prejudice, which, directed at once like a divisive instrument and a pushing aside, permits the domination of a wide strata of the White population in the United States.

It is perhaps Roumain who has given the best definition of racial prejudice we know:

It is impossible to see in color prejudice something other than the ideological expression of the antagonism of classes, which, at the same time reflects the contradictions within the production system. It is this double overlapping in the economic infrastructure that makes it difficult for the superficial observer to analyse a phenomenon that, at first sight, seems to relate solely to psychology.

At the end of this brilliant anthropological study, Roumain invited all the oppressed, the Black and White peasant workers, to prepare together, on top of the discriminatory ruins fomented by capitalism, a new *Abolition of Slavery* (racial and salaried) for the "reconstruction of the world." That same year, 1939, so fruitful in the history of his spirit, he expressed similar ideas in verse form, in a poem of epic dimensions entitled "Ebony Wood." In this capital text, having lyrically reviewed the terrible adventure of the slave trade and colonization, and having overcome the affective givens of the "Black condition," Roumain drops the bow and arrow of the *negritude* of Philoctetes and Pyrrhus, to surpass the morbid enchantment of a bad conscience, and to proclaim in body and in soul, to be of the "universal race of the oppressed":

Africa, I have guarded your memory, Africa
you are within me
like a splinter in a wound,
like a tutelary fetish in the center of the village
make of me the stone for your slingshot
of my mouth, the lips of your sore
of my knees the broken columns of your humiliation.

HOWEVER

I only want to be of your race
peasant workers of all countries

.....
As the contradiction of features

results in the harmony of the face
 we proclaim the unity of suffering
 and of revolt
 of all the people on the entire surface of the world
 and we beat the mortar of fraternal times
 into the dust of the idols.

(Brussels, June 1939)

Only the revolutionary fighter with a perfect understanding of the dialectics of colonial history, could, in one of the most beautiful lyrical expressions of the twentieth century, express and philosophically go beyond the racial concept. In one same gesture of pride and generosity, Roumain was able to synthesize in "a song of all and for all" (Sartre) the oppressed men of the world, the tragic class and racial experience that international capitalism imposed upon the West Africans and their descendants on the American continent.

These general considerations on Americanness as a triumphant movement among the best authors of our world, lead us directly to the man who has assumed, with the greatest precision and original grace, the Creole essence within the Caribbean and Latin America: Nicolás Guillén. There is no negrism in Guillén (as there is none in Martí). Fernández Retamar was correct when he declared that the racial sentiment is integrated by Guillén into the Cuban identity, into the historic essence of the country. It is not a *literary fashion*, but a *manner of being* Cuban, Antillean, American. In fact, what pertains most precisely to the art of Nicolás is the constant felicity with which he has been able to project into the orbit of the social revolution a way in which to live fully, clearly, and lyrically the radical values of our Americanness. At the level of great poetic creativity, Guillén drew on the resources of Góngora and Lope de Vega, the secret metabolism of the *son*, and the flavor and knowledge of popular genius. Alfred Melon has called Guillén, the "poet of synthesis." In his work, Melon has done a masterly job at understanding this sovereign poet. We are dealing with an exceptional feat, quite extraordinary with regard to Marxist criticism, and not easy to accomplish following the essays that Marinello, Augier, Noël Salomon, Mirta Aguirre, E. Martínez Estrada, Reemar, Claude Couffon, Robert Marquez and other critics have dedicated to the work of Guillén. In 1931 Emilio Ballagas had the right idea: "With the original, sincere, and strong poetry of Guillén, we began to be America . . ." Six years later, in 1937, Juan Marinello also arrived at the essence of Guillén's poetry; "an American happening," par excellence: "The poetry of Guillén fulfills this desire, it is part of our flesh because in it we find our yesterday, our present, and our tomorrow. This poetry, this strange and adjusted expression, is an American happening of the widest significance because it is a definitive triumph of the 'mestizoized' Antilles."

It is at this level that we must read and listen to the American words of Guillén. In his case it is not a question of *isms*. Romanticism, modernism, negrism are all transformed into the lyrical becoming of a Cuban identity. The renewal brought by Guillén into the lyrical work of the continent can only be compared, *mutatis mutandis*, to the profoundly innovative Americanness of Neruda and Vallejo, of Carpentier, of João Guimarães Rosa or of Gabriel García Marquez. Guillén himself is a "vanguardism," a day and night school, to whom all the social types of Cuba and of the Caribbean refer to quench their thirst for justice and beauty. The poetry of Nicolás Guillén, beginning with the famous "Here we are!" from his poem "Arrival," is an effort crowned with the success of rehabilitating the body and the spirit of our America. Guillén was able to accomplish this double transmutation of identity because he comes from the same country as José Martí. In Guillén's motherland the *Cuban quest for nationalism* followed a social process of transmutation of ethnic and cultural values from *mambismo* between 1868–1895 to the worker's movement of Mella and Martínez Villena, from Céspedes to Jesús Menéndez, from Máximo Gómez to Lázaro Peña, from Antonio Maceo to Fidel Castro, despite one hundred long years of vicissitude, until the decisively unifying action of the present-day socialist revolution, wherein the people of Martí and those of his continent have begun, not only at the level of poetry but also in their real life, to "be America."

Negritude in the French-Speaking Antilles

The Martinican, Guadelupan, and Guyanese negritude movement, more or less contemporaneous with the Haitian renaissance of 1928 that took off with *Ainsi parla l'oncle* and *La Revue Indigène*, constitutes a vanguardism that does not, however, coincide with that of Haiti. This movement was organically formed in Paris, where its initiators attended university. They included Étienne Lérot, Jules Monnerot, René Menil, Aimé Césaire, Léon Damas, Léonard Sainville, Aristide Maugée, the Achille brothers (the only Haitian of the Antillean group was Doctor Sajous of Cayes, Haiti); these were joined, two years later, by the African students Léopold Sedar Senghor, Osmane Sosé and Birago Diop, all from Senegal. At the beginning, and possibly until its dismemberment by World War II, this group was ideologically very heterogeneous, and included the strict Marxist René Menil, a man of exemplary loyalty, and Jules Monnerot, who was to lose himself in the desert of low-grade anticommunism. These young intellectuals started—aside from the *Revue du monde noir*, a bilingual publication with Andrée Nardal and Sajous with the collaboration of Price-Mars, A. Locke, C. McKay, Félix Eboué and René Maran—two equally ephemeral publications: *Légitime défense* (1932) and *L'Étudiant noir* (1934), which, with various arms (Marxism, surrealism, Freudianism,

not counting the ethnology of Frobenius, Delafosse, George Hardy, Robert Delavignette, Théodore Monod) opened heavy artillery fire on both the "bourgeois, Christian, capitalist world and upon colonial oppression and racism." Facing the absurdity of a world where the fascism of Benito Mussolini for ten years had villified the Italy of Dante, Giordano Bruno, Leonardo, and Antonio Gramsci, and where Adolph Hitler was at the verge of launching Nazi bestiality upon Germany and Europe, eight young Martinican intellectuals published an explosive text, entitled *The Manifesto of Legitimate Defense*, where they openly took a political and cultural position.

This manifesto, easily traceable to the francophone colonized Caribbean, was rapidly stifled by the French police, but was to reemerge two years later in *L'Étudiant noir* published by Césaire and Senghor.

Within this context, so well analyzed by André Lucrèce (with the three mortgages: ethnology, Freudianism, and surrealism, in which negritude would be stuck until it reached a crisis within the confusingly paired concepts of master/slave, White/Black, reason/emotion, class/race, culture/civilization, Prospero/Caliban, Senghor/Césaire), an Antillean and African vanguardism would be articulated by the "racial" troika of Aimé Césaire, Léon Damas and Léopold Sedar Senghor.

From where does the fortunate word-concept *negritude* come? Césaire, who used it for the first time in *L'Étudiant noir*, answers:

Since the Antilleans were ashamed of being Negroes, they looked for some kind of circumlocution with which to refer to a Negro. They talked about "the man with the tanned skin" and other similar stupidities . . . so we adopted the word *nègre* (Negro) as the *challenge word*. This was a name of challenge. It was somewhat of a reaction of an angry young man. Since they were ashamed of the word *nègre*, we then decided to use the term *nègre*. I must confess that when we founded *L'Étudiant noir*, I really wanted to call it *L'Étudiant nègre*, but there was too much resistance in the Antilles. Some considered the word *nègre* too offensive, for this reason I took the liberty of talking about negritude. There was within us a will to defiance, a violent affirmation of the word *nègre* and of the word *negritude*.

On another occasion, and in answer to the precise question of Lilyan Kesteloot: "I would like to know what is your exact position with regard to *negritude*?" Césaire subjected himself for the first time to public self-criticism in which he was careful to dot all his *i*'s:

. . . There is an obvious fact: negritude has brought with it certain dangers. It has had the tendency to transform itself into a school, to transform itself into a church, to transform itself into a theory and into an ideology. I am in favor of negritude from a literary point of view and as a personal ethic, but I am against an ideology based on negritude. I am posi-

tive that negritude cannot resolve everything; I am particularly in agreement with the viewpoint of those who criticise negritude because of certain ways it has been used.) When a theory, for example a literary theory, begins to serve a certain policy, I believe it becomes very controversial . . . On whether negritude acts as a forecaster . . . well, not really, because I believe there are other elements, that there are philosophical elements, etc., that must define us. I absolutely reject that idyllic type of pan-negrism based on confusionism; I tremble to think that it could be confused with negritude. . . .

One must also point to the work of Henri Bangou, a Guadalupan historian and essayist. The following are a few of his critical evaluations of negritude:

It is absolutely impossible to separate the work of Césaire and his negritude from a total compromise on the political level, both with regard to decolonization in general and with the liberation of the oppressed people. From this point of view Senghor's negritude is totally different. It is formal and mystical, and thus equally racist, since it makes one believe that there are essential Black traits that are different from distinctive White traits. We find nothing similar in Jacques Roumain or Price-Mars or Depestre. . . . There is another misunderstanding that must be dissipated; Césaire's negritude has nothing to do with masochistic self satisfaction, with that type of beatific return to the past, that type of primitivism that would not hesitate to make of the liberated people new victims of the developed world, if these would have the time to sing to the Black soul and to primitive agrarian communism.

Ideological Role of Negritude

In speaking about negritude and Sartre's *Black Orpheus*, let us make it clear that it was not Sartre who originated all the misunderstandings we have pointed out. It is not for nothing that Jean-Paul Sartre, in addition to having written his famous preface to Senghor's "Anthology" and another hundred well-known texts, was the author of a study entitled *The Critique of Dialectical Reasoning*. In *Black Orpheus*, written in 1948, one could already see, in spite of his serious struggles with historic materialism, that there was nevertheless no incomplete or hasty understanding of Marxist dialectics. Sartre's discourse was based upon three fundamental premises that almost thirty years ago clarified the class content of the anthropological notion of negritude, before its pure and simple retrieval by Prospero (as opposed to Caliban):

1. The Black man, just like the White worker, is the victim of the capitalist structure of our society; this situation is revealed in his close solidarity, that surpasses skin pigmentation, with certain classes of Europeans who

are as oppressed as he is; he is encouraged to project a society without privileges where skin pigmentation is considered a simple accident. But although oppression is only one, it is shaped by history and by geographical conditions: the Black man is the victim because he is black, because he is a colonized native or a deported African. And because he is oppressed on account of his race he must thus gain awareness of his race. . . . Insulted, enslaved, he rises, he picks up the word "negro" that has been hurled at him like a stone, and he proudly becomes revindicated as a "negro" before the White man.

2. In fact, negritude appears like the weak point within a dialectic progression: the theoretical and practical affirmation of the supremacy of the White man is the thesis; the position of negritude is the antithesis; But this negative moment is not sufficient in itself, and the negroes who use it, know it very well; they know that it points to the preparation of the synthesis or the realization of the human being within a society without races. Therefore, negritude must be destroyed, it is a transition, not a point of arrival, it is the middle and not the ultimate end.
3. What will happen if the "negro" casting aside his negritude in favor of revolution only wishes to consider himself as master? What will happen if he will only permit himself to be defined by his objective social condition? . . . Will the source of poetry stop? Or will the great black river color, in spite of everything, the ocean into which it flows.

The truth of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Black Orpheus* revolves around three axes. In discussing them in 1948, in a West infected by racism, the author of *The Words* expressed as well as his ideology would permit him to, the historical drama of the West African ethnic groups and of their descendants who had been dispersed throughout the Americas. He was right in asserting that the achievement of class awareness and the solidarity of the colonized people had been prepared ideologically from the 1920s to the 1940s by parallel identity movements of the cultural or political pan-African conferences, which had given an important place to the *notion of race*. Sartre showed how the Black proletariat was doubly alienated: as human beings whose work power is confiscated and as human beings whose pigmentation is viewed pejoratively, thus making color an object of change of genetic history, a social fetish, an evil essence of human relations. In reading the lyrical productions of the francophone descendants of Africans, Sartre saw that the awareness of this double alienation—and the obsessive preoccupation to overcome them with their dual class/race aspects—had fostered the creativity of the most important poets of Léopold Sedar Senghor's *Anthology*. In 1948, wherever one looked in the West, what could one see? Black workers taking the chestnuts destined for the "White" colonial oligarchies out of the fire. Both in America and in Africa, the vast majority of Blacks were cane cutters, cooks, street cleaners, fire tenders, agricultural workers, or factory laborers, whose arms and muscles only counted for the services they rendered to the insolently

oppressive minorities. In 1948, save for Haiti and the United States, there still weren't any bourgeois Blacks on the historic scene who were accomplices to the colonialist activities of the West. From reading the sixteen poets whose work had been compiled by Senghor, Sartre concluded that negritude would be called on sooner or later to make common cause with the socialist October Revolution and the liberation movement of the colonized people. His study therefore had other merits. He accurately analyzed, for example, what Léon Laleau wanted to express in his poem "Treason."

This obsessive heart that does not correspond
to my language or to my clothing
and on which bite, like on a hook,
sentiments and habits
borrowed from Europe. Do you feel the suffering
and this unequalled exasperation
to dominate with words from France
this heart that came to me from Senegal?

Thus Sartre offered an analysis acceptable by a Marxist, with regard to the difference between Christian "pain," which invites the oppressed to morose and masochistic resignation, and the suffering of the slaves of America, which was dynamically incorporated into history through *voodoo*, music, dance, which transformed the anguish of the "Black condition" through a state of healthy and legitimate defense, into a creative sociocultural factor. This we have humbly called "sociocultural marronage." Sartre also understood the importance of the "colored" intelligentsia in the rehabilitation of black skin, the physical beauty of Blacks, and the rationalization of the socioeconomic concept of race, which was accomplished by Roumain, Guillén, DuBois, Langston Hughes, Fanon, Césaire, Claude McKay, Paul Nègre, Morisseau-Leroy, Damas, Regino Pedrosa, Gui Tirolén, Jean F. Brierre, Emilio Roumer, etc.*

Let us now briefly refer to Senghor's negritude. Léopold Senghor, with his vital, mystical, and neoromantic perspective, considered one of the

*Other very subtle aspects linked to the psychoaffective consequences of colonization have been philosophically explained by Sartre. But this great text, *Black Orpheus*, contains errors that are as glaring as its emeralds of truth. For example, for Sartre, the racial consciousness formation "is differentiated by its nature (my italics) from that which Marxism tries to awaken in the White man The awareness of race is thus fixed upon the Black soul, or, better said, since the term recurs in the *Anthology*, on a common thought and conduct of Blacks that is called "negritude." Here a Marxist cannot agree with Sartre. The Africans who were deported to America were forced to form a racial consciousness not because they had a "Black soul" or a negritude that was consubstantial to their nature, but because of the specific colonial capitalist mode of production. The condition of enslaved Africans has been defined by the American plantation system of production and the distribution of goods. Racial consciousness is imposed upon the plantation workers by strictly dated circumstances.

historic forms of alienation (racial dogma) that emerged out of the bourgeois work ethic, out of the production and distribution of goods, as an eternally intrinsic objectivation of the "Black African man" (at least since Grimaldi's little negroid statuettes).] He made of negritude a timeless, a historical phenomenon headed for a passionate and irrational return towards the vital, towards "Black emotion."

Historic circumstances have not selected, however, one sole nation or one particular "race" to advance the New World renaissance. A universalizing class, the proletariat, with its natural allies, is irreversibly on the road towards this qualitative jump that Lenin and his people forced history to take in 1917. The passion and the sacrifices of the Blacks have been consummated. Black and White, as well as all other "racial" categories of capitalism, are disappearing from the historic scene. The cursed pair class/race will be erased more and more in the laws, constitutions, customs, and ways of dreaming and acting of human beings. Black and White, as social types of a bygone social structure, only maintain a mythical existence within the delirium of the Old South or within the colonial insanity known as Apartheid.

Recently Cuban troops crossed the South Atlantic, following the inverse route of the slave trade and its slave boats. For the first time since the fifteenth century, an African country, formerly plundered by the raiders that fed upon the market of "pieces of ebony," witnessed the arrival on its shores and the penetration in its air space of the caravelles that came from the Caribbean. What did the Angolans discover onboard? Raceless brothers, plain Cubans, of the type of José Martí, Antonio Maceo, Mella, and Fidel, carriers of the good news of a well-armed solidarity. The American brother did not come to pick up a knife or a rifle against his African brother, but he came to help him expel from his invaded home the agents of Prospero, traitors to his nation and to Africa. This is no tempest in a literary glass of water, but an alliance of free men that cuts off the arms of colonial violence. The *route to Angola*, constitutes in 1976 a sea and air trip of sheer humanity, aware of its internationalist rights and duties; it is the crossing of a Caliban who can pilot the modern boats and airplanes. It is a success without precedent in the history of the African/American couple.

The fact is that there is no negritude of tomorrow not even on this December night. This morning, in rising before the cocks of Havana, the Black Orpheus of my youth has discovered a lifeless fairy between the blue sheets of this essay. It is time to say hello to our Mother America and to the revolution that it has started here. It is time for good Cuban coffee and to say goodbye to negritude!

12

Latin America in Africa

PIERRE VERGER

It was not the Latin Americans themselves who had an influence on Africa, but instead, the old freed slaves and their descendants returning to their original continent after having remained involuntarily in the Americas for some time.

One exception to this generalization is the case of certain White Brazilian families, who, during the anti-Portuguese movement that followed Brazil's declaration of independence in 1822, left Pernambuco over a period of several years and settled in Mossamedes. They took with them all their belongings, including their African slaves, so that they could rebuild large agricultural plantations, patriarchal in nature, similar to the ones they had abandoned in Brazil.¹ However, this phenomenon comes closer to Portuguese colonization than to Latin American influence.

The real Latin American influence, transmitted via the freed slaves, was a consequence of the slave trade. But this return movement of some thousands of freed slaves did not arise in all Latin American countries. Its point of departure was limited to Brazil, and Bahia in particular, within the first few decades of the nineteenth century. It was not until the second half of the century that the movement extended to Cuba. We know very little about it with regard to other Latin American countries.

Likewise, the places they returned to were also limited, including certain regions along the coast of the Gulf of Benin, such as Agoué, Ouidah, Porto Novo, Badagry, and Lagos, which were then the main slave export ports. The slave trade ended in Brazil around 1851, and some fifteen years later it also ceased in Cuba.

In this study we will refer to the Brazilian influence along the Gulf of Benin, since it is the most visible influence that still exists.

The ports that the Cuban and Brazilian freed slaves returned to are located now in Nigeria and the People's Republic of Benin, the same territories they had come from. But once they had returned, the repatriates could not return to their native inland villages without running the risk of being imprisoned again and sent back as slaves, due to the war that the Dahoman King had been waging for many years with his neighbors, and because of the intertribal conflicts that were devastating the Yoruba nation.

This was the sad fortune of forty passengers aboard the Portuguese ship *General Rego*, who, backed by a letter written by the British consul