

INTRODUCTION

I am talking of millions of men who have been skillfully injected with fear, inferiority complexes, trepidation, servility, despair, abasement.

—Aimé Césaire, Discours sur le Colonialisme

The explosion will not happen today. It is too soon . . . or too late.

I do not come with timeless truths.

My consciousness is not illuminated with ultimate radiances.

Nevertheless, in complete composure, I think it would be good if certain things were said.

These things I am going to say, not shout. For it is a long time since shouting has gone out of my life.

So very long. . . .

Why write this book? No one has asked me for it.

Especially those to whom it is directed.

Well? Well, I reply quite calmly that there are too many idiots in this world. And having said it, I have the burden of proving it.

Toward a new humanism. . . .

Understanding among men. . . .

Our colored brothers. . . .

Mankind, I believe in you. . . .

Race prejudice. . . .

To understand and to love. . . .

From all sides dozens and hundreds of pages assail

me and try to impose their wills on me. But a single line would be enough. Supply a single answer and the color problem would be stripped of all its importance.

What does a man want?

What does the black man want?

At the risk of arousing the resentment of my colored brothers, I will say that the black is not a man.

There is a zone of nonbeing, an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an utterly naked declivity where an authentic upheaval can be born. In most cases, the black man lacks the advantage of being able to accomplish this descent into a real hell.

Man is not merely a possibility of recapture or of negation. If it is true that consciousness is a process of transcendence, we have to see too that this transcendence is haunted by the problems of love and understanding. Man is a *yes* that vibrates to cosmic harmonies. Uprooted, pursued, baffled, doomed to watch the dissolution of the truths that he has worked out for himself one after another, he has to give up projecting onto the world an antinomy that coexists with him.

The black is a black man; that is, as the result of a series of aberrations of affect, he is rooted at the core of a universe from which he must be extricated.

The problem is important. I propose nothing short of the liberation of the man of color from himself. We shall go very slowly, for there are two camps: the white and the black.

Stubbornly we shall investigate both metaphysics and we shall find that they are often quite fluid.

We shall have no mercy for the former governors, the former missionaries. To us, the man who adores the Negro is as "sick" as the man who abominates him.

Conversely, the black man who wants to turn his race

white is as miserable as he who preaches hatred for the whites.

In the absolute, the black is no more to be loved than the Czech, and truly what is to be done is to set man free.

This book should have been written three years ago. . . . But these truths were a fire in me then. Now I can tell them without being burned. These truths do not have to be hurled in men's faces. They are not intended to ignite fervor. I do not trust fervor.

Every time it has burst out somewhere, it has brought fire, famine, misery. . . . And contempt for man.

Fervor is the weapon of choice of the impotent.

Of those who heat the iron in order to shape it at once. I should prefer to warm man's body and leave him. We might reach this result: mankind retaining this fire through self-combustion.

Mankind set free of the trampoline that is the resistance of others, and digging into its own flesh to find a meaning.

Only a few of those who read this book will understand the problems that were encountered in its composition.

In an age when skeptical doubt has taken root in the world, when in the words of a gang of *salauds* it is no longer possible to find the sense of non-sense, it becomes harder to penetrate to a level where the categories of sense and non-sense are not yet invoked.

The black man wants to be white. The white man slaves to reach a human level.

In the course of this essay we shall observe the development of an effort to understand the black-white relation.

The white man is sealed in his whiteness.

The black man in his blackness.

We shall seek to ascertain the directions of this dual narcissism and the motivations that inspire it.

At the beginning of my speculations it seems inappropriate to elaborate the conclusions that the reader will find.

Concern with the elimination of a vicious circle has been the only guide-line for my efforts.

There is a fact: White men consider themselves superior to black men.

There is another fact: Black men want to prove to white men, at all costs, the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect.

How do we extricate ourselves?

A moment ago I spoke of narcissism. Indeed, I believe that only a psychoanalytical interpretation of the black problem can lay bare the anomalies of affect that are responsible for the structure of the complex. I shall attempt a complete lysis of this morbid body. I believe that the individual should tend to take on the universality inherent in the human condition. And when I say this, I am thinking impartially of men like Gobineau or women like Mayotte Capécia. But, in order to arrive at this judgment, it is imperative to eliminate a whole set of defects left over from childhood.

Man's tragedy, Nietzsche said, is that he was once a child. None the less, we cannot afford to forget that, as Charles Odier has shown us, the neurotic's fate remains in his own hands.

However painful it may be for me to accept this conclusion, I am obliged to state it: For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white.

Before beginning the case, I have to say certain things. The analysis that I am undertaking is psychological. In spite of this it is apparent to me that the effective dis-

alienation of the black man entails an immediate recognition of social and economic realities. If there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process:

—primarily, economic;

—subsequently, the internalization—or, better, the epidermalization—of this inferiority.

Reacting against the constitutionalist tendency of the late nineteenth century, Freud insisted that the individual factor be taken into account through psychoanalysis. He substituted for a phylogenetic theory the ontogenetic perspective. It will be seen that the black man's alienation is not an individual question. Beside phylogeny and ontogeny stands sociogeny. In one sense, conforming to the view of Leconte and Damey,¹ let us say that this is a question of a sociodiagnostic.

What is the prognosis?

But society, unlike biochemical processes, cannot escape human influences. Man is what brings society into being. The prognosis is in the hands of those who are willing to get rid of the worm-eaten roots of the structure.

The black man must wage his war on both levels: Since historically they influence each other, any unilateral liberation is incomplete, and the gravest mistake would be to believe in their automatic interdependence. Besides, such a systematic tendency is contrary to the facts. This will be proved.

Reality, for once, requires a total understanding. On the objective level as on the subjective level, a solution has to be supplied.

And to declare in the tone of "it's-all-my-fault" that what matters is the salvation of the soul is not worth the effort.

There will be an authentic disalienation only to the

¹ I. M. Leconte and A. Damey, *Essai critique des nosographies psychiatriques actuelles*.

degree to which things, in the most materialistic meaning of the word, will have been restored to their proper places.

It is good form to introduce a work in psychology with a statement of its methodological point of view. I shall be derelict. I leave methods to the botanists and the mathematicians. There is a point at which methods devour themselves.

I should like to start from there. I shall try to discover the various attitudes that the Negro adopts in contact with white civilization.

The "jungle savage" is not what I have in mind. That is because for him certain factors have not yet acquired importance.

I believe that the fact of the juxtaposition of the white and black races has created a massive psychoexistential complex. I hope by analyzing it to destroy it.

Many Negroes will not find themselves in what follows.

This is equally true of many whites.

But the fact that I feel a foreigner in the worlds of the schizophrenic or the sexual cripple in no way diminishes their reality.

The attitudes that I propose to describe are real. I have encountered them innumerable times.

Among students, among workers, among the pimps of Pigalle or Marseille, I have been able to isolate the same components of aggressiveness and passivity.

This book is a clinical study. Those who recognize themselves in it, I think, will have made a step forward. I seriously hope to persuade my brother, whether black or white, to tear off with all his strength the shameful livery put together by centuries of incomprehension.

The architecture of this work is rooted in the temporal. Every human problem must be considered from the stand-

point of time. Ideally, the present will always contribute to the building of the future.

And this future is not the future of the cosmos but rather the future of my century, my country, my existence. In no fashion should I undertake to prepare the world that will come later. I belong irreducibly to my time.

And it is for my own time that I should live. The future should be an edifice supported by living men. This structure is connected to the present to the extent that I consider the present in terms of something to be exceeded.

The first three chapters deal with the modern Negro. I take the black man of today and I try to establish his attitudes in the white world. The last two chapters are devoted to an attempt at a psychopathological and philosophical explanation of the *state of being* a Negro.

The analysis is, above all, regressive.

The fourth and fifth chapters rest on a fundamentally different basis.

In the fourth chapter I examine a work² that in my opinion is dangerous. The author, O. Mannoni, is, moreover, aware of the ambiguity of his position. That perhaps is one of the merits of his evidence. He has tried to account for a situation. It is our right to say that we are not satisfied. It is our duty to show the author how we differ from him.

The fifth chapter, which I have called *The Fact of Blackness*, is important for more than one reason. It portrays the Negro face to face with his race. It will be observed that there is no common link between the Negro

2. [Dominique] O. Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization* (New York, Praeger, 1964). Originally *Psychologie de la Colonisation* (Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1950).

of this chapter and the Negro who wants to go to bed with a white woman. In the latter there is clearly a wish to be white. A lust for revenge, in any case. Here, in contrast, we observe the desperate struggles of a Negro who is driven to discover the meaning of black identity. White civilization and European culture have forced an existential deviation on the Negro. I shall demonstrate elsewhere that what is often called the black soul is a white man's artifact.

The educated Negro, slave of the spontaneous and cosmic Negro myth, feels at a given stage that his race no longer understands him.

Or that he no longer understands it.

Then he congratulates himself on this, and enlarging the difference, the incomprehension, the disharmony, he finds in them the meaning of his real humanity. Or more rarely he wants to belong to his people. And it is with rage in his mouth and abandon in his heart that he buries himself in the vast black abyss. We shall see that this attitude, so heroically absolute, renounces the present and the future in the name of a mystical past.

Since I was born in the Antilles, my observations and my conclusions are valid only for the Antilles—at least concerning the black man *at home*. Another book could be dedicated to explaining the differences that separate the Negro of the Antilles from the Negro of Africa. Perhaps one day I shall write it. Perhaps too it will no longer be necessary—a fact for which we could only congratulate ourselves.

BLACK SKIN, WHITE MASKS

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."¹ 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

1. Mayotte Capécia, *Je suis Martiniquaise* (Paris, Corr ea, 1948), p. 202.

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 Andr e'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 Andr e 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 Andr e 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 Andr e to take me with him.²

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 having³ 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 con-

3. Gabriel Marcel, *Être et Avoir* (Paris, Aubier, 1935).

cept 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 Loulouze 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 negrify 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 linens clean, they came to me. In the end, they were proud to have their laundry done by Mayotte."⁴

4. Capécia, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

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 hybrids 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 no mere literary illusion; there was no question of literature, and the illusion was probably very slight when Calliéni's soldiers chose young *ramatoa* 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 Malagasies, which was unmarred 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 bushes." (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.⁶

We are thus put on notice that what Mayotte wants is a kind of lactification. 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

Martinique; they are known to be extremely numerous: Aubery, for example, is supposed to have fathered almost fifty.)

6. Capécia, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

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:⁷ "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, coil-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.'"⁸

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-

acter, "are kept in their obsequious attitude by the extreme penalties of fear and force, and this is common knowledge to both the whites and the blacks. Nevertheless, the whites demand that the blacks be always smiling, attentive, and friendly in all their relationships with them. . . ." ("L'oncle Rémus et son lapin," by Bernard Wolfe, *Les Temps Modernes*, May, 1949, p. 888.)

8. "Sur le Martinique de M. Michel Cournot," *Les Temps Modernes*, February, 1950.

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 obsessively 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

9. Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanism of Defence* (New York, International Universities Press, 1946), p. 111.

10. Capécia, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

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

11. *Ibid.*, p. 185.

12. After *Je suis Martiniquaise*, Mayotte Capécia wrote another book, *La négresse 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-

Nor are we kept waiting. Abdoulaye Sadjji, 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. Mournier's work, *L'éveil 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:

scribes 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.

13. In *Présence Africaine*, 1-2-3.

M. Campian is the only white man in Saint-Louis who goes regularly to the Saint-Louis Club¹⁴—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.¹⁵

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 Sadjí'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

14. A club frequented by the local young men. It stands across the street from the Civil Club, which is exclusively European.

15. Sadjí, *op. cit.*, in *Présence Africaine*, no. 2, p. 280.

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.¹⁶

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 Sadjí 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."¹⁷

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

16. *Ibid.*, p. 286.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 281-282.

sending her a letter: "the utmost insolence, perhaps the first 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 tolerates anything from her lord, André, Mactar 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 "*bougnouls*."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 Mactar

18. *Ibid.*, p. 281.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 287. *Bougnoul* is one of those untranslatable coinages of the rabble like the American *jigaboo*. 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.

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 nicknamed him the-real-bad-white-man."²¹

We have seen here how a girl of color reacts to a declaration 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 Sadjì. 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 "signaras" 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 running 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 common to all the mulatto women. The Ninis, the Nanas, and the Nénettes 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 anything but likely. And they are still waiting when old age

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

22. *Ibid.*, p. 489.

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-

23. Anna Freud, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

24. Sadj, *op. cit.*, p. 498.

ited. 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 erethism*.

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,²⁵ the times most favorable²⁶ 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

25. Dublineau, *L'intuition délirante*.

26. Jacques Lacan.

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.

27. Alfred Adler, *Understanding Human Nature* (New York, Greenberg, 1927), p. 80.

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.