

1 THE NEGRO AND LANGUAGE

The way we experience language will provide insight into race relations. Bc I deem it important, I will start this book talkin bout language. I think it will provide us insight into the psyche of poc, or I guess u could say “the other.” It is implicit that to speak is to exist absolutely for the other.

Black ppl got 2 dimensions. Black ppl act diff with yt ppl than they do with other black ppl. This is a result of colonialism, more specifically racist theories yt ppl come up with that both yt and black ppl have accepted. These theories suggest black ppl are not human, that blacks need to “evolve” like yt ppl.



Think of it this way. Colonialism is the major artery that is fed from the heart of the sort of racist ass theories I was talkin bout before. The theories have tried to prove that the Negro is a stage in the slow evolution of monkey into human. This is just the reality of the situation.

What with everything going on in our lifetime, it's not just enough to just get this. As they say, “what matters is not to know the world but to change it.”

This matters appallingly in our lifetime.

The simple act of speaking indicates a knowledge of grammar. It also indicates that someone has immersed themselves in a culture. Just by speaking a language u breathe life into the civilization bc thru the act u become apart the very civilization of whose language ur speaking. To grasp a language means, above anything else, to assume a culture; to support the weight of a civilization. I ain't sayin its like that for everybody. As u read I ask u to concede certain points that, however unacceptable they may seem in the beginning. I ask this bc I am positive that u will find the measure of their validity in the facts I will lay out.

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This problem we will discuss in this chapter is all about how when the Antilles, aka my ppl, speak french, they are feeding into the bs idea that I was talking about earlier (that blacks need to evolve like yt ppl). Thinkin of it this way, black ppl in the Antilles will be proportionately “whiter” -that is, they come closer to being a real human being -bc of their mastery of the French language. I am not unaware that this is one of the attitudes ppl have face to face with Being. A person who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language. What we are getting at becomes plain: Mastery of language affords remarkable power. Being more like yt ppl, being more “human” just means being able to have power. It’s like what Paul Avery says. Language is “the god gone astray in the flesh.”¹

This whole paper is me just tryna investigate this phenomenon.² I wanna start by showing why the black ppl in the Antilles has always to face the problem of language. Later, I will broaden my case study to include every colonized man.

All of the things i’m talking about happens because yt ppl have tried to kill and bury my ppl’s culture. Bc of this we have mad inferiority complexes. Every colonized people aka every people in whose soul got a inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality. They all find themselves face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. What happen is that states that have been colonized have to figure out their colonizers language. They try to rise to west’s cultural standards. The language that the ppl who r colonized uses signifies their primitive nature. In order to get out of that they gotta be more white, take on white ppl language. Just look at niggas in the French colonial army to see what I’m saying. Dudes in the French colonial army, and particularly in the Senegalese regiments, serve as interpreters. (They the middleman b/w the master and the followers.) They are used to convey the master’s orders to their fellows. They get honor from doing it. See what I mean?

So.. have you ever read a book where some white dude was going on and on about his city.. Spending mad time describing the quiet of his city, how cool the dock looked, or how cool the trees looked.. You know just going on and on about things that fascinate people who have nothing to do.

¹ Charmes (Paris, Gallimard, 1952).

² Le langage et l’agressivité.

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If you let them they will go on and on talking to you about how awesome their city is, especially if you've never been there. Same thing will happen if u tlk to a dude in Martinique. The diff is that the Martinique dude will also go on and on about places beyond his city. The knowledge of what happens beyond make black ppl damn near demigods. This is some real shit that happens. When they come back ppl be like damn that nigga made it and it shows in their interactions.

To express it in genetic terms, black ppl's phenotype undergoes a straight up mutation.³ Ppl 4rm the motherland be having mixed feelings about them though. Seeing niggas come back to their country acting brand new is weird. And I mean even before they leave they be on some weird shit. But when they come back u can tell something changed by how they carry themselves. They start greeting ppl diff. For instance, they won't greet with the same hand shape, the wide sweep of the arm. Instead they'll bow a little bit and change the way they talk. They be changing up on a nigga bc they know that when they go to France ppl will be stereotyped and shit bc of the way they talk. If they are like "Ah come fom Mahtinique, it's the fuhst time Ah've eveh come to Fance," ppl will def look at them diff. Niggas who leave feel like they can't talk Creole bc is beneath them. The middle class in the Antilles don't even do that. The only time they speak Creole is when they talk to their servants. In schools students are taught to hate Creole, to avoid using certain sayings they learned. Some families even forbid it.

My mother wanting a son to keep in mind
 if you do not know your history lesson
 you will not go to mass on Sunday in
 your Sunday clothes
 that child will be a disgrace to the family
 that child will be our curse

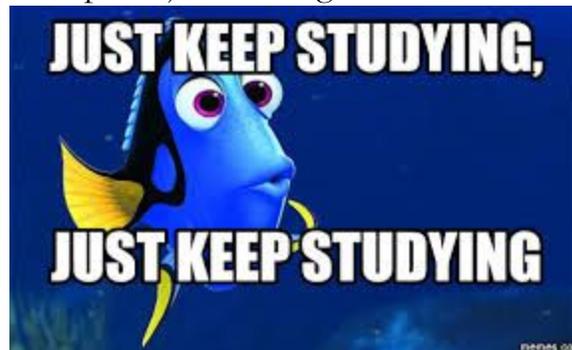
³ By that I mean that niggas who return home give the impression that they have completed a cycle, that they have added to themselves something that was lacking. They return literally full of themselves.

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shut up I told you you must speak French
 the French of France
 the Frenchman's French
 French French⁴

Personally, I try to talk a certain way bc I know ppl will think of me different if I don't. Ppl will be like that nigga can't even speak French. Dudes who talk "right", who have mastered french put on this pedestal like they almost white. In France ppl will look at dudes and be like them niggas talk like a book. In Martinique ppl will be like they talk like yt ppl. Niggas who go to France will work hard af to not talk like the stereotype. They will damn near perfect pronouncing them R's. They will practice talking like white french ppl like mad crazy. They will spend hella time in they room just listening to themselves speak..just reading out loud.



Some dude I just met told me a story. They were like a nigga from Martinique landed at Le Havre and went into a bar. With confidence they guy called, "Waiterrr! Bing me a beeya." The story was crazy to me bc they guy must have worked hella hard to not eat his R's so that he could avoid being seen as the stereotypical Martinique nigga. Thing is, he still ain't say the shit right. He ended up using too many R's.

There's a psychological thing that happens to ppl. They be thinking that the world will open to the extent to which frontiers are broken down. Niggas be feeling trapped in they city, lost in an atmosphere that offers not the slightest outlet, niggas be breathing in this appeal of Europe like pure air. Aimé Césaire was being generous in his book, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* when he talked about this. He described France as a "flat, sprawling city, stumbling over its own common sense, winded by its load of endlessly repeated crosses, pettish at its destiny, voiceless, thwarted in every direction, incapable of feeding on the juices of its soil, blocked, cut off, confi ned, divorced from fauna and flora."⁵

⁴ Léon-G. Damas, "Hoquet," in *Pigments*, in Leopold S.-Senghor, ed., *Anthologie de la nouveite poésie nègre et malgache* (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1948), pp. 15–17.

⁵ *Cahiers* (Paris, Présence Africaine, 1956), p. 30.

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Césaire's description of it is anything but poetic. It is understandable, then, when black ppl in Martinique hear that they going to France. It makes sense that they change. The crazy thing is that this happens independently of any reflective process. In the U.S an org called Pearce and Williamson aka Peckham did a study. Basically, they found out that a biochemical alteration takes place after ppl get married. They even discovered the presence of certain hormones in the husband of a pregnant woman. It would be cool to see if this happens to niggas who go to France. I would love to see a study done on psychic changes both before they leave home and after they have spent a month in France.

The stuff I'm bringing up has haunted the human sciences. At the heart of the human sciences lies these q's Should ppl have a main type of human reality and then talk about deviations from there, or should ppl continue to strive for a concrete and ever new understanding of man?

It's y the idea that after the age of twenty-nine a man can no longer love and that he must wait until he is forty-nine before his capacity for affect revives is legit 2 ppl. Tbh shit had me shook.



But in reflecting on this I see that we just have to face the whole problem, bc all these discoveries, all these inquiries lead only in one direction: to make man admit that he is nothing, absolutely nothing—and so ppl gotta stop being so f'in narcissistic. Ppl gotta stop basing their actions/society on the idea that they are diff from the other “animals.” As ppl we just have to surrender this idea of us. Having reflected on that, I grasp my narcissism with both hands and I turn my back on the degradation of those who would make man a mere mechanism. Niggas in philosophy are too resistant to talk about this shit so I have turned to psychoanalysis to question things/find answers. I have turned to it bc, there I can look at, what I would like to call, ppl's engine failures.

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Niggas who arrives in France change bc the France represents something sacred. Bc of their experience in France they have Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Voltaire (writers/philosophers who helped him to think bigger and better). It also gave gave them their physicians, their department heads, etc. Niggas who leave sort of wrap themselves in a magic bubble. I say this in the sense that France feels like a magic circle in which the words Paris, Marseille, Sorbonne, Pigalle become the keys to the vault. When u leave it feels like apart of the essence of who you are is amputated. Apart of your being diminishes as the silhouette of the ship grows clearer. The ppl saying goodbye as you leave reflect your own mutation, your power. But as you leave you say goodbye to it. When ppl come back they answers only in French, and often no longer understand Creole.

There is a story relevant to this in folklore that I want to share. After several months of living in France, a country boy returns to his family. The little boy sees a farm implement, he asks his father, "Tell me, what does one call that apparatus?" His father replies by dropping the tool on the boy's feet, and the amnesia vanishes. Remarkable therapy. It's the same with the niggas who get back from France. They no longer understands the dialect, they talks about the Opéra, which he may never have seen except from a distance, but above all they get judgy. They will be petty about the littlest thing. They act like they know everything. They betray themselves in their own speech thou.

It's crazy to go the the Savannah, where a lot of them spend their time. Everyone immediately waits for them to speak. As soon as the school day ends, they all go to the Savannah. The Savannah seems to have its own poetry. Imagine a square about 600 feet long and 125 feet wide, its sides bounded by worm-eaten tamarind trees, one end marked by the huge war memorial nation's gratitude to its children, the other by the Central Hotel; a miserable tract of uneven cobbles, pebbles that roll away under one's feet; and, amid all this, three or four hundred young fellows walking up and down, greeting one another. They don't form groups. They just walk and say to each other, "How's it going?" "O.K. How's it with you?" "O.K." And that goes on for fifty years. Yes, this city is deplorably played out. So is its life. They meet and talk. And if the newcomer soon gets the floor, it is because they were waiting for the dude. First of all, let's take a min to reflect on how these niggas be holding themselves. Everybody watch everything you do. They be waiting for you to slip up. If you do, your name will be all in the streets. There is no forgiveness when one who claims a superiority falls below the standard. If you slip up that shit will be remembered forever.

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For there is also no forgetting: When he marries, his wife will be aware that she is marrying a joke, and his children will have a legend to face and to live down.

What makes niggas act brand new? What is the source of this new way of being? Every dialect is a way of thinking, Damourette and Pichon said. And the fact that niggas adopts a language different from the language they were raised to learn shows some type of dislocation or separation took place. Professor D. Westermann, in *The African Today* (p. 331), says that the Negroes' inferiority complex is particularly intensified among the most educated, who must struggle with it unceasingly. Their way of doing so, he adds, is frequently naive: "The wearing of European clothes, whether rags or the most up-to-date style; using European furniture and European forms of social intercourse; adorning the Native language with European expressions; using bombastic phrases in speaking or writing a European language; all these contribute to a feeling of equality with the European and his achievements."

On the basis of other studies and my own personal observations, I want to try to show why this shit takes place w/ the Antille niggas. To be clear, idk if this applies to every race that has been subjected to colonization so I am not saying that it does. I do know about the Antilles thou.

To give u some context, people born in Dahomey or the Congo act like they natives of the Antilles. And to give u even more context, black ppl in the Antilles get annoyed when they are suspected of being Senegalese. This is because the Antilles Negro is perceived as more "civilized" than the African. Bc of this they are considered to be closer to the white man; and this difference prevails not only in back streets and on boulevards but also in public service and the army. Any Antilles Negro who performed his military service in a Senegalese infantry regiment is familiar with this bs.

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Any given person from the Antilles will have to deal with 2 diff identities. On one side u got the Europeans. This is fact regardless of whether born in his own country or in France. On the other u got the Senegalese. I remember a day when, in the midst of combat, we had to wipe out a machine-gun nest. The Senegalese were ordered to attack three times, and each time they were forced back. Then one of them wanted to know why the toubabs did not go into action. 'Tbh, sometimes I didn't know whether I was I was a toubab.⁶ Crazy thing is that niggas would this and think that the European identification is normal. Shit.. nobody tryna be taken for a nig***. The Europeans hate the Senegalese, and the Antilles Negro is right under white ppl in the racial hierarchy. I know it's an extreme example. I just use it cuz its an entertaining example.

The other day I was talking recently with someone from Martinique. Nigga told me that some Guadeloupe niggas were trying to “pass” as Martinicans. He was like



He told me that ppl peeped their game real quick. He was like them niggas was ghetto af.

It is said that niggas love jabber (to act like they European). By extension it was applied to any officer. When I think of the word jabber I think of little kids calling and shouting for the sake of calling and shouting—children in the midst of play, to the degree to which play can be considered an initiation into life. The Negro loves to jabber, and from this theory it is not a long road that leads to a new proposition: The Negro is just a child.

The psychoanalysts have a fine start here, and the term orality is soon heard. But we have to go farther. The problem of language is too basic to allow us to hope to state it all here. Piaget's remarkable studies have taught us to distinguish the various stages in the mastery of language, and Gelb and Goldstein have shown us that the function of language is also broken into

⁶ Literally, this dialect word means European; by extension it was applied to any officer. (Note in Charles Lam Markmann BSWM translation.)

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periods and steps. The interesting thing is the black man confronted by the French language. We tryna see y the Antilles Negro loves speaking French so much.

Jean-Paul Sartre, in *Orphée Noir*, which prefaces the *Anthology de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache*, tells us that the black poet will turn against the French language; but they won't in the Antilles. This brings me to what Michel Leiris said. Basically he was like

Even now, despite the fact that it is a language that everyone knows more or less, though only the illiterate use it to the exclusion of French, Creole seems already predestined to become a relic eventually, once public education (however slow its progress, impeded by the insufficiency of school facilities everywhere, the paucity of reading matter available to the public, and the fact that the physical scale of living is often too low) has become common enough among the disinherited classes of the population.

And, the author adds:

In the case of the poets that I am discussing here, there is no question of their deliberately becoming “Antilleans”—on the Provençal picturesque model—by copping some dead ass language which, furthermore, is f'in devoid of all external radiance regardless of its intrinsic qualities; this shiz is a matter of their asserting, in opposition to white ppl filled with the most f'd up racial prejudices, whose arrogance is more and more plainly demonstrated to be unfounded, the integrity of their personalities.⁷

It ain't that many dudes like Gilbert Gratiant, writing in dialect. That nigga is a rarity. I also wanna point out that the poetic merit of such creation is weird af. There are, in contrast, real works of art translated from the Peul and Wolof dialects of Senegal. I have been feeling the linguistic studies of Sheik Anta Diop. But they don't got stuff like that in the Antilles. The language spoken officially is French; teachers keep a close watch over the children to make sure they do not use Creole. I don't even want to get into the reasons rn. Let me lay out the prob 4 u: In the Antilles/in Brittany, there is a dialect and there is the French language. Crazy thing is that Bretons speak a diff language but they do not consider themselves inferior to the French people. Why? Bc the Bretons have not been civilized by the white man.

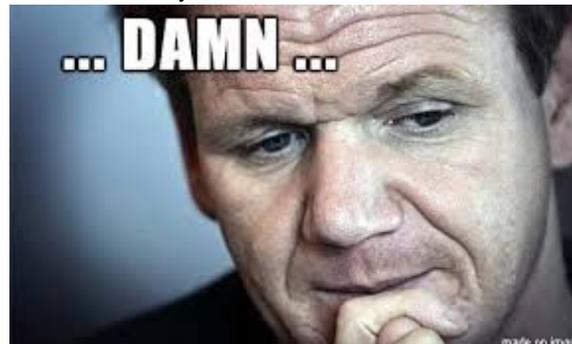
⁷ “Martinique-Guadeloupe-Haiti,” *Les Temps Modernes*, February, 1950, p. 1347.

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By refusing to multiply our elements, we take the risk of not setting a limit to our field. It is essential to key black ppl into the jewels that i'm dropping. Black ppl need to get that all the shit they be tryn a do.. Making themselves like yt pl aint never saved anyone. Lemme give u this analogy. So..while it is true that I have to throw off an attacker who is strangling me, because I literally cannot breathe, the fact remains solely on the physiological issue at hand. To say the cause of me not breathing is some psychological element would be wrong af.

What is there to say? Purely and simply this: When a bachelor of philosophy from the Antilles refuses to apply for certification as a teacher on the ground of his color, I say that philosophy has never saved anyone.



When someone else strives and strains to prove to me that black men are as intelligent as white men, I say that intelligence has never saved anyone; and that is true, for, if philosophy and intelligence are invoked to proclaim the equality of men, they have also been employed to justify the extermination of men.

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Before going any farther I find it necessary to say certain things. I am speaking here, on the one hand, of alienated (duped) blacks, and, on the other, of no less alienated (duping and duped) whites. If one hears a Sartre or a Cardinal Verdier tell ppl that ppl need to stop being so upset about “the color problem”, one can conclude only that their position is normal. Anyone can amass references and quotations to prove that “color prejudice” is a thing of the past and should be eliminated.-/

Sartre begins *Orphée Noir* thus: “What then did you expect when you unbound the gag that had muted those black mouths? That they would chant your praises? Did you think that when those heads that our fathers had forcibly bowed down to the ground were raised again, you would find adoration in their eyes?”⁸ Idk; but anybody looking into my eyes for anything but a perpetual question will have to lose their sight; neither recognition nor hate. And if I cry out, it will not be a black cry. No, from the point of view adopted here, there is no black problem. Or at any rate if there is one it concerns the whites only accidentally. It is a story that takes place in darkness, and the sun that is carried within me must shine into the smallest crannies.

Dr. H. L. Gordon, attending physician at the Mathari Mental Hospital in Nairobi, declared in an article in *The East African Medical Journal* (1943): “A highly technical skilled examination of a series of 100 brains of normal Natives has found naked eye and microscopic facts indicative of inherent new brain inferiority. . . . Quantitatively,” he added, “the inferiority amounts to 14.8 percent.”⁹

It has been said that the Negro is the link between monkey and man (aka yt ppl) . And only on page 108 of his book does Sir Alan Burns come to the conclusion that “we are unable to accept as scientifically proved the theory that the black man is inherently inferior to the white, or that he comes from a different stock. . . .” Lemme me add that it would be easy to prove how crazy shit like this is: “It is laid down in the Bible

⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Orphée Noir*, in *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache*, p. ix

⁹ Quoted in Sir Alan Burns, *Colour Prejudice* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1948), p. 101.

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that the separation of the white and black races will be continued in heaven as on earth, and those blacks who are admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven will find themselves separately lodged in certain of those many mansions of Our Father that are mentioned in the New Testament.” Or this: “We are the chosen people—look at the color of our skins. The others are black or yellow: That is because of their sins.” All u gotta do is call on humanity, on the belief in dignity, on love, on charity. It’s hella easy to prove, or to win the admission, that the black is the equal of the white. That’s not my point though. What I want to do is help the black man to free himself of the arsenal of complexes that has been developed by the colonial environment.

M. Achille, who teaches at the Lycée du Parc in Lyon, once during a lecture told of a personal experience. Niggas everywhere had shit like this happen to them. It would be hard to meet a nigga who hasn’t. Being a Catholic, Achille took part in a student pilgrimage. A priest, observing the black face in his flock, said to him, “You go ’way big Savannah what for and come ’long us?” Very politely Achille gave him a truthful answer, and it was not the young fugitive from the Savannah who came off the worse. Everyone laughed at the exchange and the pilgrimage proceeded. But if we stop right here, we shall see that the fact that the priest spoke pidgin-nigger leads to certain observations:

1. “Oh, I know the blacks. They must be spoken to kindly; talk to them about their country; it’s all in knowing how to talk to them. For instance. . . .” I am not at all exaggerating: yt ppl talk to black ppl like they an adult talking to a child. They steady smirking, whispering, patronizing, cozening.



It is not one white man I have watched, but hundreds; and I have not limited my investigation to any one class. I be seeing physicians, policemen, employers..everybody do the shit. I just know that there is one yt person reading this, overlooking my purpose, thinking that I should have directed my attention elsewhere, that there are white men who do not fit my description.

#NotAllWhitePpl

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My response to that bs is to say that the subject of our study is the dupes and those who dupe them, the alienated, and that if there are white men who behave naturally when they meet Negroes, they certainly do not fall within the scope of our examination (duh). I mean c'mon now! If my patient's liver is functioning as it should, I am not going to take it for granted that his kidneys are sound. Having found the liver normal, I leave it to its normality, which is normal, and turn my attention to the kidneys: As it happens, the kidneys are diseased. Which means simply that, side by side with normal people who behave naturally in accordance with a human psychology, there are others who behave pathologically in accordance with an inhuman psychology. And it happens that the existence of racist yt ppl has made a certain number of realities to the elimination of which I should like to contribute here. Talking to Negroes in this way gets down to their level, it puts them at ease, it is an effort to make them understand us, it reassures them. . . .

The physicians of the public health services know this very well. 50 11 European patients, one after another, come in: "Please sit down. . . . Why do you wish to consult me? . . . What are your symptoms? . . ." Then comes a Negro or an Arab: "Sit there, boy. . . . What's bothering you? . . . Where does it hurt, huh? . . ." When, that is, they do not say: "You not feel good, no?"

2. To speak pidgin to a Negro makes him angry, because he himself is a pidgin-nigger-talker. Ppl will hear this and say that there is no wish, no intention to anger black ppl. I grant this but..



it is just this absence of wish, this lack of interest, this indifference, this automatic manner of classifying him, imprisoning him, primitivizing him, decivilizing him, that makes him angry.

If a man who speaks pidgin to a man of color or an Arab does not see anything wrong or evil in such behavior, it is because he has never stopped to think. I myself have been aware, in talking to certain patients, of the exact instant at which I began to slip. . . . Examining this seventy-three-year-old farm woman, whose mind was never strong and who is now far gone in dementia, I am suddenly aware of the collapse of the antennae with which I touch and through which I am touched. The fact that I adopt a language suitable to dementia, to feeble-mindedness; the fact that I “talk down” to this poor woman of seventy-three; the fact that I condescend to her in my quest for a diagnosis, are the stigmata of a dereliction in my relations with other ppl.

What an idealist, people will say. Not at all. It is just that niggas ain’t shit. Ppl love to make basic shit sound unrealistic so that they can be a shitty person. I make it a point always to talk to the so-called *bicots*¹⁰ in normal French. Tell me why they understood me? I mean they answer me as well as their varying means permit; but I will not allow myself to resort to paternalistic “understanding.” “G’morning, pal. Where’s it hurt? Huh? Lemme see—belly ache? Heart pain?” I don’t play that shit with them. The Becky’s and Joe’s, who work in free clinics, have mastered the whack tone. One feels perfectly justified when the patient answers in the same fashion. “You see? I wasn’t kidding you. That’s just the way they are.” When the opposite occurs, they stop fronting and behave like an actual human. The whole structure crumbles. A black man who says to you: “I am in no sense your boy, Monsieur. . . .” Something new under the sun.

Yt ppl be wildin. So..okay..You in a bar, right? You in Rouen or Strasbourg, and you have the misfortune to be spotted by an old drunk. He sits down at your table right off. “You—Africa? Dakar, Rufisque, whorehouse, dames, café, mangoes, bananas. . . .” You stand up and leave, and your farewell is a torrent of abuse: “You didn’t play big shot like that in your jungle, you dirty nigger!” Mannoni has described what he calls the Prospero complex. We shall come back to these discoveries, which will make it possible for us to understand the psychology of colonialism. But we can already state that to talk pidgin-nigger is to express this thought: “You’d better keep your place.” Bc really..I meet Russian and German dudes who speaks French badly. With gestures I try to give them the information that they requests, but at the same time I can hardly forget that they have a language of his own, a country, and that perhaps he is a lawyer or an engineer there. In any case, he is foreign to my group, and his standards must be different. When it comes to the case of the Negro, nothing of the kind. He has no

¹⁰ Vulgar French for Arab. (Note from BSWM Charles Lam Markmann translation.)

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culture, no civilization, no “long historical past.” This may be the reason for why niggas try to come up by the way they do: to prove the existence of a black civilization to the white world at all costs.

Willy-nilly, the Negro has to wear the livery that the white man has sewed for him. Check out children’s picture magazines: Out of every nigga’s mouth comes the ritual “Yassuh, boss.” It is mad crazy to see it in motion pictures. Most of the American films for which French dialogue is dubbed in offer the type-Negro: “Sho’ good!” In one of these recent films, *Requins d’acier*, one character was a black crewman in a submarine who talked in the most classic dialect imaginable. What is more, he was all ni****, walking backward, shaking at the slightest sign of irritation on the part of an officer being petty af; ultimately he was killed in the course of the voyage. Yet I am convinced that the original dialogue did not resort to the same means of expression. And, even if it did, its hella sus that in a democratic France that includes sixty million citizens of color, dubbing must repeat every stupidity that crosses the ocean. It is because the Negro has to be shown in a certain way; and from the Negro in *Sans Pitié*—“Me work hard, me never lie, me never steal”—to the servant girl of *Duel in the Sun* one meets the same stereotype. Yeah, ppl always working to be a good ni**** once this has been laid down, the rest follows of itself. To make niggas talk pidgin is to fasten them to a bs effigy, to snare them, to imprison them, the eternal victims of an essence, of an appearance for which they not even responsible for.

So ofc, just as a Jew who spends \$ without thinking about it is sus, a black man who quotes Montesquieu had better be watched. Please understand me: watched in the sense that he is starting something. Ofc I ain’t saying that the black student is sus to his fellows or to his teachers. But outside uni circles there is an army of fools: What is important is not to educate them, but to teach the Negro not to be the slave of their archetypes. That these imbeciles are the product of a psychological economic system I will grant. But that don’t get us much farther along.

When a Negro talks of Marx, first thing ppl say is: “We have brought you up to our level and now you turn against your benefactors. Ingrates! Obviously nothing can be expected of you.” And then too there is that dumb af argument of the plantation-owner in Africa: Our enemy is the teacher. What I am asserting is that the European has a fixed concept of the Negro, and there is nothing more exasperating than to be asked: “How long have you been in France? You speak French so well.” It can be argued that ppl say this because many Negroes speak pidgin. But that would be too easy. You are on a train and you ask another passenger: “I beg your pardon, sir,

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would you mind telling me where the dining-car is?” “Sure, fella. You go out door, see, go corridor, you go straight, go one car, go two car, go three car, you there.”

KEEP THAT BITCH NIGGA SHIT



No, speaking pidgin-nigger closes off the black man; it perpetuates a state of conflict in which the white man injects the black with extremely dangerous foreign bodies. Nothing is more crazier than to hear a black man express himself properly, for then in truth he is putting on the white world. I have had opportunities to talk with students of foreign origin. They speak French badly: Little Crusoe, alias Prospero, is at ease then. He explains, informs, interprets, helps them with their studies. But they'll trip out to see a nigger has made himself just as knowledgeable. With him this game cannot be played, he is a complete replica of the white man. So there is nothing to do but to give in.¹¹

Bc of all this, it is understood that the first impulse of the black man is to say no to those who attempt to build a definition of him. It is understandable that the first action of the black man is a reaction, and, since the Negro is appraised in terms of the extent of his assimilation, it is also understandable why newcomers expresses themselves only in French. They wanna emphasize their “come up.” They are incarnating a new type of man and they impose it on their associates and their fam. And so their old mother can't understand them no more. When niggas talk to their moms about shit like.. Their duds, the family's crummy joint, the dump . . . all of it, ofc, is tricked out with the appropriate accent.

In every country of the world there are climbers, “the ones who forget who they are,” and, in contrast to them, “the ones who remember where they came from.” Niggas from the Antilles will go home from France expressing themselves in a dialect if they

¹¹ “I knew some Negroes in the School of Medicine ... in a word, they were a disappointment; the color of their skin should have permitted them to give us the opportunity to be charitable, generous, or scientifically friendly. They were derelict in this duty, this claim on our good will. All our tearful tenderness, all our calculated solicitude were a drug on the market. We had no Negroes to condescend to, nor did we have anything to hate them for; they counted for virtually as much as we in the scale of the little jobs and petty chicaneries of daily life.” Michel Salomon, “D'un juif à des nègres,” *Présence Africaine*, No. 5, p. 776.

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wanna make it plain that nothing has changed. One can feel this at the dock. Fam and friends will be waiting on them to get there. Waiting for them not only because they are physically arriving, but in the sense of waiting for the chance to strike back. They need a minute or two in order to make their diagnosis. If the voyager tells his acquaintances, “I am so happy to be back with you. Good Lord, it is hot in this country, I shall certainly not be able to endure it very long,” they know: A European has got off the ship.

@ uni’s: When students from the Antilles meet in Paris, they got two possibilities:

—either to stand with the white world (aka, the real world lol), speak French..and really just try to confront certain problems and incline to a certain degree of universality in their conclusions;

—OR to throw the deuces to the bs, aka Europe,¹² and band together w/ ppl in their dialect, making themselves quite comfortable in what we shall call the Umwelt of Martinique; by this I mean—and this applies particularly to my brothers of the Antilles—that when one of us tries, in Paris or any other university city, to study a problem seriously, they are accused of self-aggrandizement, and the best way to show that you are not the one is to remind them of the Antilles by exploding into dialect.

This must be recognized as one of the reasons why so many friendships don’t make it after a few months of life in Europe. My theme being the disalienation of black ppl, I want to make them feel that whenever there is a lack of understanding between them and they ppl in the presence of white ppl there is a lack of judgment.

A Senegalese learns Creole in order to pass as an Antilles native: I call this alienation.

The Antilles Negroes who know Senegalese ppl never weary of roasting them ppl. I call this a lack of judgment.

It becomes evident that we were not mistaken in believing that a study of the language of the Antilles Negro would be able to show us some characteristics of their world.

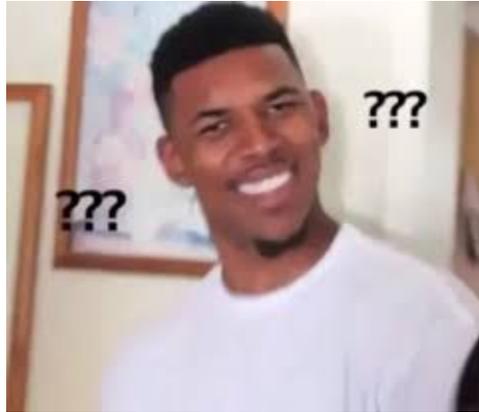
As I said at the start, there is a retaining-wall relation between language and group. To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture. Niggas from The A who wanna be white will be the whiter as they gain greater mastery of the cultural tool that language

¹² A generic term for other people, applied especially to Europeans.

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is. It was prolly more than a year ago in Lyon, I remember, in a lecture I had drawn a parallel between Negro and European poetry, and a French acquaintance of mine told me enthusiastically, “At bottom you are a white man.”



The fact that I could even investigate the shiz (mind you, I think the problem is interesting af) through the white man’s language gave me honorary citizenship. You gotta know that, historically, niggas who have wanted to speak French felt that way bc it is known to be the key that can open doors which were still barred to them fifty years ago. In the Antilles Negro who comes within this study we find a quest for subtleties, for refinements of language—so many further means of proving to himself that he has measured up to the culture.¹³ It has been said that the orators of the Antilles have a gift of eloquence that would leave any European wildin.

This makes me think back to a story I remember: In the election campaign of 1945, Aimé Césaire, who was tryna be deputy, addressed a large audience in the boys’ school in Fort-de-France. In the middle of his speech a woman fainted. The next day, an acquaintance told me about this, and commented: “Français a té tellement chaud que la femme là tombé malcadi.¹⁴ The power of language!

Some other facts are worth a certain amount of attention: for example, Charles-André Julien introducing Aimé Césaire as “a Negro poet with a university degree,” or again, quite simply, the expression, “a great black poet.” These phrases dudes just have on

¹³ Compare for example the almost incredible store of anecdotes to which the election of any candidate gives rise. A filthy newspaper called the *Canard Déchainé* could not get its fi ll of overwhelming Monsieur B. with devastating Creolisms. This is indeed the bludgeon of the Antilles: He can’t express himself in French.

¹⁴ “Le français (l’élégance de la forme) était tellement chaud que la femme est tombée en transes” [His French (the refinement of his style) was so exciting that the woman swooned away].

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deck, which seem in a common-sense way to fill a need—for Aimé Césaire is really black and a poet— have a hidden subtlety, a permanent rub.

Idk anything about Jean Paulhan except that he writes very interesting books; Idk how old Roger Caillois is, since the only evidence I have of his existence are the books of his that streak across my horizon. I dont want nobody accusing me of affective allergies; what I am trying to say is that there is no reason why André Breton should say of Césaire, “Here is a black man who handles the French language as no white man today can.”¹⁵ And, even though Bretons 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. We see the same thing in Michel Leiris bks:

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. The numb. 1 goal in literature is 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 w/in the framework of the French language, and it would be artifice for them to resort to a mode of speech that they aint never really gon use now except as something learned. 16 But we should be honored, black ppl reproach me, that a white man like Breton writes such things. Let us go on. . . .

¹⁵ Introduction to Cahier d'un retour au pays natal, p. 14.