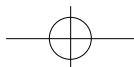
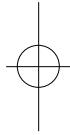
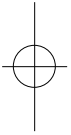
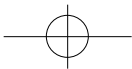
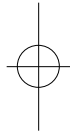
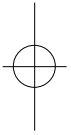


# ***Dialogues of Negritude***





# ***Dialogues of Negritude***

An Analysis of the Cultural  
Context of Black Writing

Jean Baptiste Popeau

CAROLINA ACADEMIC PRESS  
Durham, North Carolina

Copyright © 2002  
Jean Baptiste Popeau  
All Rights Reserved.

ISBN: 0-89089-149-4  
LCCN: 2001099059

Carolina Academic Press  
700 Kent Street  
Durham, North Carolina 27701  
Telephone (919) 489-7486  
Fax (919) 493-5668  
E-mail: cap@cap-press.com  
www.cap-press.com

Printed in the United States of America.

## **CONTENTS**

Preface	vii
Notes and References	ix
Acknowledgments	xi
Introduction	1
Black Literature and Sociology of Literature	2
Sartre and Poetry	8
The Dialogic Principle	10
Negritude and Western Philosophy	15
Negritude and Western Literature	17
The Scope of Black Literature Studied	24
Notes and References	27
Chapter 1. The Place of Blacks in Euro-American Speculative Thought	31
Negativity and Sterility	32
The Role of Speculative Philosophy: Hegel	35
Negativity and Creativity	38
Notes and References	52
Chapter 2. The Place of Blacks in Euro-American Literature	55
Shakespeare	55
Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin	57
The Position of Blacks Prior to Publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin	58
Theories of "Race"	59
Noble Savagery and Christian Meekness	61
Colonialism and Violence in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness	65
Michel Tournier's Friday Or The Other Island	70
Notes and References	75
Chapter 3. Historical and Theoretical Origins of Negritude	79
Introduction	79
The Harlem Renaissance	82
Programme and Values of the Harlem Renaissance	85
White Supremacy in the Thirties	90

vi Contents

Negritude in Metropolitan France	92
Surrealism and the Negritude Writers	95
Léon Damas, Early Negritudist	98
Jacques Roumain (1907-1944)	102
The Negritude Ideology of Césaire and Senghor	104
The Negritude Writers and Modernism	111
Exile and Alienation	113
Senghor's Concept of Negritude	114
Wole Soyinka, Negritude and Tigrityde	119
Comparisons and Contrasts in the Negritude of Césaire and Senghor	121
Notes and References	122
Chapter 4. The Negritude Poetry of Aimé Césaire and Léopold Senghor	129
Aimé Césaire: Language, Ideology and Poetry	129
Cahier D'Un Retour Au Pays Natal: the Fusion of the Political and the Aesthetic	136
Cahier as Myth	145
A Redefinition of Hierachies	158
Cahier, Humour and Blackness	161
Conclusion	163
The Negritude Poetry of Léopold Senghor	164
Negritude as Dialogue	171
Notes and References	176
Chapter 5. The Negritude of James Baldwin and Richard Wright	183
James Baldwin's Another Country	185
Richard Wright's Native Son	187
Legacies of Slavery	192
The Negro and Negation	194
The Personal and the Political	197
Notes and References	203
Chapter 6. Wilson Harris: A Break from Negritude's Self-Other Relation	207
Notes and References	215
Conclusion: The Legacy of Negritude	219
Notes and references	233
Bibliography	237
Index	243

## PREFACE

This study aims to examine the historical origins of Negritude as a theoretical debate and poetic knowledge which sought to lay the foundations of a dialogue between Africa and its diaspora with the Western world. Chapters 1 and 2 examine the basic structure and content of the discourse about Blacks in Western speculative thought and literature. W. F. Hegel's excursions from his philosophy to make empirical statements upon Africa and Africans in *Philosophy of History* and *Philosophy of Mind* is discussed as an example of a certain line of thought about Blacks in the Western tradition which conceives the Negro as the very embodiment of negation. On the other hand Hegel's analysis of the slave in his Master-Slave dialectic is examined as justifying rebellion against an oppressive status quo, one of the historical roles the Negro is associated with, symbolized in the San Domingo revolution. Hegel's comments upon the Black and the suggestiveness of the Master-Slave dialectic in its application to the historical situation of Blacks in Western culture create a Manichaeian view of Negroes whose legacy is still potent. The Negro in Western culture is regarded either as the very embodiment of negation, or, an anti-bourgeois rebel. This line of enquiry is continued by way of an examination of the relevant works of William Shakespeare, Harriet Beecher-Stowe, Joseph Conrad, Michael Tournier, Norman Mailer, Herman Melville, C. L. R. James, Jean Genet, Frantz Fanon.

Literature has been a powerful medium for the formulation of the Manichaeian images created of the Black in the Western psyche: *Othello* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* have been important in the creation of the Negro's image either as the jealous and uncontrollable Black lover, or, the meek Christian. Michel Tournier's *Friday, or The Other Island* is a rich entry into the debate on the Black in Western culture, answering in the twentieth century the ideologies established by Defoe surrounding the Negro in the eighteenth century, without however, Defoe's popular success, at least in the English speaking world. It is Defoe's ideas which have had the more popular resonance.

Chapters 3 and 4 examine the ideologies of Negritude and its literature respectively. Negritude was a complex of both ideology, and, literature and it is necessary to examine how theory and literature combine to enter into dialogue with the thesis on the Black in Western culture. Chapter 5 examines the debate between James Baldwin and Richard

## viii Preface

Wright in the fifties and sixties as the continuation of a similar debate between Léopold Senghor and Aimé Césaire in the thirties. The argument between Baldwin and Wright is, I maintain, a debate *within* Negritude to the extent that it manifests as a discussion about the role of the Negro in modernity. This question assumed, of course, great importance during the agitation for civil rights in the sixties and seventies, both in the USA and Britain, and echoes of Negritude reverberated during this period, symbolized in the 'Black is beautiful' mantra of the African-American students recalling the, 'it is good and beautiful to be Black' slogan of the Negritude ideologues of the thirties.

Chapter 6 examines the work of the Guyanese Novelist Wilson Harris as an author born in the West Indies who refuses some of the dilemmas posed by the Negritude theorists in the formulation of their ideology. Harris's is an interesting critique of the politics of protest exemplified in Negritude. His, is of course not the only critique of Negritude in the Black world; Negritude has had a legion of critics, the most famous perhaps being Wole Soyinka. Most of its critics refer nonetheless to the importance of Negritude, an importance which this study seeks to analyse, and, in its conclusion, to assess.

The Negro has symbolically been defined by the West as what I term a sterile negativity, that is, a destructive negativity bent on negation for its own sake. On the other hand negativity can manifest as a creative act. In *The Rebel* Camus suggests that rebellion as a reaction to the absence of law may manifest as a challenge to a lawless system using the ethics of the rebel's humanity, and, as such, a paradoxical conservatism. Rebellion may be a reasoned demand for order in a world without law or order, in which case it may be a profoundly positive negativity. Camus writes:

If men cannot refer to common values, which they all separately recognize, then man is incomprehensible to man. The rebel demands that these values should be clearly recognized as part of himself because he knows or suspects that, without them, crime and disorder would reign in the world. An act of rebellion seems to him like a demand for clarity and unity. The most elementary rebellion, paradoxically, expresses an aspiration to order.<sup>1</sup>

Negritude's claim is that its rebellion in a state of disorder—colonialism—is a creative negativity, that is, a justified negation of oppressive assimilation in favour of a world in which the Negro's otherness can be legitimized.

The form of Negritude's rebellion, poetry and theory, necessitated a dialogue with the Other; the Negro being forced into this dialogue due to his unique relationship with the Other who was already part of his

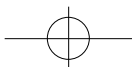
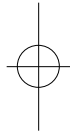
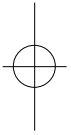


Preface ix

self in the form of his culture. Even an internal dialogue with other Blacks involved a reckoning with the Other who lurked over the Blacks' consciousness in the form of his language.

**Notes and References**

1. Albert Camus. *The Rebel*, Trans. by A. Bower, Penguin Books, (London, 1971), p29.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my family for their towering support, to Michael Phillipson, my great PhD supervisor, Paul Filmer, for his supportive reading of the manuscript, Jane, for her support with translations, M for her painstaking reading of the text and valuable alterations.

Use of the translation of 'Mot' from *Aimé Césaire: The Collected Poetry*, (1983) trans. by C. Eshleman and A. Smith, London, University of California Press by kind permission of the publisher.

Use of the translation of 'À New York', by kind permission of the publisher Editions du Seuil, Paris.

'À New York', reprinted with the permission of the University Press of Virginia. Translation: *To New York* from the book *The Negritude Poets* by Ellen Conroy Kennedy (1975). Appears by permission of the publisher, Thunder's Mouth Press.

In memoriam, Fatine Popeau, 1913–1966

