

the form of comedic styles in which clumsy or eccentric Black people manage to save the day. In *Disorduries* (1987), the bumbling Fat Boys (the rap group) and in *B.A.P.S.* (Black American Princesses), the two homegirls—Halle Berry and Denise Desselle—save the day by teaching the old White man—who is about to be ripped off by his nephew—how to be Black, with soul music, food, and jive. In so doing, they revive an interest for life in the old White man. Because of their *Négritude*, they are unpredictable, and therefore, they inadvertently—sometime consciously—thwart all the relatives' plans to get hold of their old man's fortune.

Blacks also tend to be more compassionate in Hollywood as they nurse many White actors back to health, as in *Regarding Henri* (1991) with Harrison Ford and Bill Nunn, or *Gladiator* (2000) with Russell Crowe and Djimon Hounsou. In the movie *Men In Black* (1997), Will Smith makes things look good with the way he talks, dresses, walks, and reacts in front of the aliens. This in *Men in Black* contrasts to the cold Tommy Lee Jones, full of composure. Chris Tucker, in *Money Talk* (1997), unleashes tons of the spontaneity Senghor mentions, and with which the Negro embraces situations. In *The Fifth Element* (1997), he is a feisty transvestite jester. Cuba Gooding Jr. floods *Jerry McGuire* (1996)—and the award of his win of the Best Supporting Actor Oscar for it—with uncontrollable emotion, with the vigor and alertness Senghor explains. However, Gooding's performance becomes minor as Berry enters the scene. At the 2002 Oscar ceremony, an effusion of emotion overwhelms her as she tries to deliver her acceptance speech, crying her heart out, grimacing, sobbing, and gasping between words. In one episode of the TV show *The Practice*, Bobby, the White head lawyer admits that the difference between his Black colleague Eugene and him, is that Eugene defends his clients from the heart while he sees *only clients* to defend. Likewise, the Black secretary, Rebecca, is affectionate, sensitive, and intuitive as she senses and emotionally responds to everyone in the firm. The spin-off *Boston Legal* (2007) adds a cross-dressing-two-persona Black character—Clarence and Clarice, played by Gary Anthony Williams—who is so emotional that is always clumsy in the show. In *Blood Diamond* (2006), Hounsou combines anger with unpredictable emotional reactions that on several occasions jeopardize the mission, his life, and his companion's (Leonardo DiCaprio).

In truth, the success of Black comedians has always depended on how skilled they are in exploiting the “difference” between Black and White people, or more precisely, the lack of *Négritude* in Whites and the excess of it in Blacks.

Négritude represents an alternative or antithetical view of Blackness (as superior) to the one promulgated by White societies (as inferior). As Sartre has explained, it was a necessary movement in the Black people's struggle to affirm their African identity and to be considered as such. *Négritude* was the most coherent ideology offering the most valuable approach to race relations, because a (colorblind) synthesis—which Senghor also looks forward to—is far from possible, although race mixing is a current reality. Indeed, a racial theory—

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permanent, universal, biologico-genetic differences between the races—undergirds *Négritude*. I explore and question some of the views of race implicit in *Négritude* in the chapters on “Ideology” and “Racism.” However, *Négritude* being an ideology, its criticism falls in the criticism of ideology in general as expressed in the preceding chapter.

Négritude and the Race/Class Dialectic in Haiti

The closer the people are, in terms of their skin color and physical characteristics to a white European the more they are considered “not black.” Among the elites in Haiti there are people who could be considered black in America. They are mulattoes and do not racially identify with “black.” Black means poor. Race and class identities come together very closely.

Anne Malena and Pascale De Souza (2003)

Over the past few years, few books have looked at Haiti from an ideological perspective. But also, few books “positively” address the understanding of Haiti’s turbulent history. It could simply be a marginalization of the first independent Black Country since Europeans set out to conquer the world. Haiti often gets a negative coverage in the media. If not it is as Philippe R. Girard (2005) puts it: “Writing a book on the history of Haiti can be a depressing experience. One must consult the thesaurus regularly to find synonyms for ‘cruelty’, ‘poverty’, ‘thug’, and ‘callousness,’ while looking in vain for an opportunity to mention ‘hope’, and ‘success’ unaccompanied by ‘lack of’” (2003). I hope that the new studies of Haiti that are coming out will offer dialectic analyses. For now, and to name a few among the new material, I have the new edition of Paul Farmer’s popular *The Uses of Haiti* (2006). It does not lose sight of the organized impoverishment of Haitian masses and offers a comprehensive treatment of the subject. For what I need, I have to go back to earlier works. Micheline Labelle’s *Idéologie de couleur et classes sociales en Haïti* (1978), although published twenty-nine years ago, is extremely detailed, perhaps too much, but still provides solid explanations of Haiti’s plight. Her in-depth study argues that the color dichotomy is part of a larger set of Haitian concepts of race and color, and that together these concepts constitute an ideology of color. The color distinction within Haitian society is conceptual rather than genetic, and seems primarily to be a political or social ideology for the elite. Following Labelle, come two excellent contributions from David Nicholls, *Haiti in Caribbean Context: Ethnicity, Economy, and Revolt* (1988), and from Alex Dupuy, *Haiti in the World Economy: Class, Race and Underdevelopment Since 1700* (1989).

For our concern, Nicholls does not deny the place of color and class, and argues that cultural racism (the mix of color and culture) is the dominant causal element in Haitian history. The mulattoes, in order to set themselves apart from the slaves, turn to France for their whiteness and culture, therefore emphasizing

whiteness and European-ness. The blacks, however, hate the French and the whiteness associated with them. Since mulattos are with the white French, the blacks hate the mulattoes.

Dupuy, on the other hand, stresses the economic aspect to explain Haiti's chronic underdevelopment. Since its independence in 1804, Haiti has inherited a dependent and underdeveloped economy. The American occupation of Haiti (1915-1934) is the culmination of the pillage of Haiti's resources by foreign capital, and the creation of a middle class of professionals and state bureaucrats that come out of it exacerbates the already existing divisions. This rising class, however, was almost entirely Black. To maintain their existence as a class, they have developed an ideology celebrating their African-ness against white Americans and the mulatto elite.

David P. Geggus's *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* (2002), which also explores the paucity of true material on Haiti. His focus is more on the impressive Haitian revolution that shook the world and its connections with the 1789 French revolution. Along the lines of Mabelle, Nicholls and Dupuy comes David Howard's comprehensive *Coloring the Nation: Race and Class in the Dominican Republic* (2001). Although focusing on the Dominican Republic, the work provides an in-depth look at the determining fear of Blackness or African ancestry in the Caribbean, and how race, color, and ethnicity shape identity not only in the Dominican Republic but also in the Caribbean countries in general. To these printed materials, I add Charles Najman's powerful documentary film *Haiti: the End of the Chimères* (2004), which among other things reveals President Aristide's manipulative skills and how poverty is Haiti's ultimate enemy.

My contribution adds little to the profound analyses of Haiti provided by various experts in the field. It is very brief and intended to reflect on Haiti's fate and illustrate how Senghor's ideology of *Négritude* spawned both the Noirist ideology, with its emphasis on Afrocentric essentialism, and Mulâtrism, with its emphasis on *métissage*. According to Ralph Pezzullo (2006), "[W]estern racism reinforced color prejudices in Haiti, which paved the way for the noirist rhetoric. However, compounding irony upon irony, the proponents of *métissage* in turn, used the essentialist stance to exclude and segregate, rather than integrate and mix; and how all this play and display of color is as blinding as it is revealing, and serves to efface and hide, and yet reinforces and perpetuates, the even more crucial distinctions of class.

If there is race/class dialectic in Haiti, it is because there is a profound coincidence between class and skin color, dating back to the system of slavery and colonialism. As most of the slaves were, so most of the poor are Black today. Throughout its modern history, the color question has played a crucial role in politics as well as in social and economic development. According to Nicholls, a Haitian was born into one of the following groups: Whites at the top; Blacks at the bottom, the majority of whom are slaves; and the free "people of color" or *affranchis*—most of whom are Mulattoes—in the middle. This last group com-

prises people of all shades, depending on how much "White blood" and how much "Black blood" they had. One could add another group, "the maroons or maroons which consisted of slaves that had escaped from the plantations and lived in the hills as outlaws" (23). From the nineteenth century to the present day, partly due to a deep fear and hatred of Blacks, a light skin, which has been considered "closer" to Whites, has been an indication of prosperity. It is this dynamic between class and color that animates the Haitian political scenes.

Racial and Ethnic Ideologies and their Influence on Social and Political Realities

Most of the Black elite, even when they come from poor peasant families and make it via army promotion, share the rich Mulattoes attitudes. They both are culturally Europeanized and publicly hostile towards African cultural values. In spite of their common objective however, conflicts between *affranchis* and Blacks have continued. The divisions and conflicts are further cultivated in "ethnic ideologies," which in turn instigate antagonism between mulattoes and Black political leaders. Dupuy explains that Haiti has maintained two dominant ethnic ideologies in its social and political scenes. They are the *noiriste* (Black nationalist) and the *mulâtriste* (Mulatto) ideologies and both have been immensely influenced by Senghor's *Négritude* theory on race and culture.

Senghor's psychological theory differentiates "Black" and "White" souls, especially during the ethnological movement led by Price Mars, J. C. Dorsainvil, and Arthur Holly. It is then incorporated into the *noiriste* movement, which has been initiated around the time of the US occupation (1915-1935). Michael Deibert (2007) explains that in 1928, "Mars published *Ainsi parla l'oncle [Thus Spoke Uncle]*, a landmark book in the *Négritude* movement in the French Caribbean, which sought to look back to African traditions for cultural legitimacy rather than to those of the region's colonial powers, an argument that found receptive ears among Haitians enduring a humiliating U.S. occupation" (20). The movement revives people's interest in African ancestry and Black specificities. It raises a new consciousness of ethnic heritage and brings a revisionist look at Mulattoes as substitutes for the White colonizers and thus, as responsible for Haiti's ailments. On the other hand, Blacks who maintain or believe in African customs are considered representing the true interests of the majority.

The *mulâtriste* ideology also develops from Senghorian theories. However, while the *noiristes* consider the specificities of the Black person, the mulâtristes utilize Senghor's concept of the Civilization de l'universel (Civilization of the Universal). Understanding culture as the echo of race, Senghor views, cultural (and ideal) *métissage* as a natural extension of a racial métissage as explained in the *Négritude* chapter. Dupuy explains that Senghor's mulâtriste ideology has

legitimized the sense of Mulatto superiority: the mulâtre ideology “claimed that all advanced civilizations, most notably European, were the product of racial miscegenation,” and that Africa remains “backward because it has always been outside the great currents of immigration” (123). Mulattoes, who are the product of miscegenation, are considered “closer” to Europe, thus are “most capable to rule the black majority who did not benefit from “White blood” and remained “primitive” (123).

Both Black and Mulatto leaders have used both noiriste and mulâtre ideologies to gain and maintain political powers. However, by resorting to racial and biological differences between Black and White, both ideologies fall short and trap themselves into racist positions, and reveal their power-laden agenda. Both Black and Mulatto leaders failed to locate Haiti’s real problems. The debate is not over ethnicity and race, but rather over the social and economic structure of Haiti, which reveals itself in the stark exploitation of Haitian masses. According to Nicholls, the situation in Haiti has not changed for “No Haitian government in living memory has done anything substantial for the peasants” (33). Therefore, noiristes leaders and bourgeois mulâtreistes have reduced all socio-political issues to the color question, but only as a strategy to manipulate and control Haitian masses. Thus, the ruling class in Haiti includes both Mulattoes and Black elements that have fought each other to secure state power, but nevertheless, they were identical in all other respects. The racial theory is simply an ideological occultation of the class system of exploitation in Haiti. In the following quote, Nicholls observes more intricate class divisions hidden beneath the “racial axis” created and propagated in Haitian political paradigms.

[The] fortunate and the powerful who constitute the ruling class and which included blacks as well as mulattoes, and on the other hand, the immense majority of jobbing laborers, the workers, the non-specialized, the unemployed of all colors, and especially the mass of rural laborers, the mass of peasants constituted the *social question* from 1804 to 1915. For a long time, blacks and mulattoes killed one another to conquer power without success of one or the other fraction having changed in any way the living standard of the unfortunate more or less black, or more or less light skin (126).

What has happened to the first Black republic of modern days? Here is Jean Michel Djian’s reply, echoing Girard: “Haiti had everything to become a paradise on earth. But the country knows only extreme poverty, endemic violence, AIDS explosion, dictatorship and corruption.” To the many coups, one can add the natural disasters, which always reveal the country’s dire misery always hidden by the government. Since the proclamation of the Republic in 1804, greedy and unscrupulous politicians succeeding each other have been manipulating the country’s fate. As for the color and class issues, they are found in other Caribbean and South American countries, and fall in our understanding of ideology.

That Haiti is a breadbasket for the West is no doubt. But as with all developing countries that have what the West needs, destabilization and re-colonization in the form of aid are the orders of the day. Thus, if internally the class/color issues are the main causes of Haitian underdevelopment, the neo-colonization of the country by the West provides the external causes. In Haiti, the educated Mulattos, “so used to lording over the peasants” (64) in Deibert’s words, and the Black masses joined forces to get rid of the French only to replace them on the back of Haitian peasants. In Leon D. Pamphile’s (2001) words, “Elitism has transformed the dream of a heaven for blacks into an oligarchy of a few thousand families who continue to embrace a sort of feudal life that is hard to believe exists at the end of the twentieth-century” (193).

Haiti may have also “invited the devil into its house.” The noiriste political ideology claims to be “revolutionary” and populist, but also anti-communist. From that moment, the United States’ military aid takes *its meaning* and revealed its full spectrum as we are witnessing it since the invasion. But then Eric Love’s (2004) *Race Over Empire: Racism and U.S. Imperialism, 1865-1900* reveals that the attaching of non-contiguous lands—islands in the “tropical” zone inhabited by inferior, uncivilized, dark-skinned races” (29)—to the United States has always been an object of debate between the governments and its businessmen. Love provides a great insight into the debates and shows that all decisions in terms of expansion, made, passed or voted down, were based on race and racism: “Expansion to the South, into the Caribbean and beyond, was another matter entirely, complicated by history, traditions, ancient beliefs about European ‘Blood’ withering in hot climates, and the presence there of millions of nonwhite people” (33). Race and racism thus, are the ideological battle horse for both pro and con expansionism. In 1912, President Taft said: “The whole hemisphere will be ours in fact as, by virtue of our superiority of race, it already is ours morally” (*Monde Diplomatique*, May 2003) It appears that for Haiti, it was a question of time and opportunity for the United States to invade the country. After twenty years of U.S. military government and a heightened social racism practiced by U.S. Marines, Haiti’s problems are not solved. Deibert explains: “The fact remained that however well- or ill-intentioned the American administration had been, Haiti’s conflicts—mulatto versus noir, city dweller versus peasant, educated versus excluded—remained as pronounced as ever” (64).

The ideology of color thus, is a sub-product of the racist imperialism proper to expanding capitalism as we have said earlier, and reveals Haiti’s economic and political dependency. Haitian social classes simply articulate “locally” that racist ideology of the time, which Labelle summarizes: “Haitian Negroes are incapable of governing themselves because they are barbaric and inferior” (18). This according to Labelle is accompanied with an abundant literature denigrating Haiti. Hence a sense of “rehabilitation” of the Black race that adds to the justification of Africanizing the population. Eugenio Matibag (2003) explains that the movement of Haitian *Négritude* strategy was to widen the circle of po-

itical participation. Thus, Africanization was Jean-Jacques Dessalines policy right after the declaration Haiti's independence in 1804. It constituted "a vindication of blackness in a dual sense: as a broadening of political inclusion to empower this privileged sector of the population, and as a program of cultural, though not political, democratization" (5).

In an interview with Najman in his film, the Haitian writer Gary Victor shows how Haitians are victim of a big myth, which makes them believe that the 1804 Revolution saw a victory for slaves freeing themselves. From a dialectic point of view, he explains that Haiti's present problems were already contained in 1804, which is a bourgeois revolution: "In fact, 1804 was a victory for the owner class. Affranchised slaves allied themselves to the old generals, who were officers in the French Army. So, the majority of Black slaves ended up in the same situation, if not worse: in a state of apartheid where political and economic power belonged to former owners, mostly mulattos and a few Black people."

For Victor, Haitians are still slaves. The Black masses' whole history has been a quest for freedom. Now, they have finally realized that they have been robbed of power, a country, and a state. For him, the bottom line is "The Black masses have constantly been pressured by an elite, which has never done the masses one favor, and a predatory, elite-backed state that has always refused the existence of the Black masses."

My position is that the history of the intellectual and political leaders who control, produce, and diffuse culture in Haiti, is the history of their submission to all powers. They limit themselves to exalting their alienation or elaborating them artistically and intellectually, without questioning their neo-colonial situation or fighting against the totality of those alienations. The Haitian dominant intelligentsia and the dominant racial culture they diffuse are easily understood when one recognizes their class situation. The nationalists (Blacks) or the liberals (Mulattos) use the color card at the expense of the poor. As we have already explained, the intelligentsia, its ideas and dominant culture are the intelligentsia, the ideas, and culture of the dominant class. The struggle of the dominant classes to stay dominant is lived under the cover of color.

Haiti has been great for having accomplished the human right revolution on its soil. The France-Haiti commissioner Regis Debray, in an interview with Najman, explains how the French Revolution of 1789 has been part of Haiti's history and how the Haitian Revolution of 1804, with Toussaint L'Overture, has been part of France's. The French wanted the "Rights of Man," which is just the rights of White people. Haitians have made it the "Rights of Men," meaning that it is in Haiti that the ideals of 1789 has become universal. But Haiti is also a sad place, as Romane St Louis says: "It has organized more than thirty coups d'état after two centuries of 'Independence'" (48) and having been "the piñata of Western journalists" (61).

Dupuy's (2007) new study is about the rise and fall of former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. He also continues to analyze the social, political,

and economical relations in Haiti. The new lenses show that Haiti is a poor country in a process of democratization, "an underdeveloped peripheral society with a long history of prebendary rule by dictators and a tiny ruling class dependent on economic ties with political support from various capitalist classes and governments in the advance or core capitalist countries" (2). For now, I share W.E.B. Du Bois's (2004) advice on Haiti: "There is the need of getting rid of that fatalistic attitude toward Haiti which says that nothing can become of this entrancingly beautiful island rich in material resources and culture because its people are predominantly of Negro descent" (97).

Notes

1. Aimé Césaire, Senghor, and Léon Damas are credited for being the pioneers of the *Négritude* movement. As for the term *Négritude*, Albert Berrian affirms that the Cuban concept of *literatura negriza* and the Brazilian *negrídia*, were already in existence when the concept of *Négritude* was coined. Brenda Berrian, *Harlem, Africa, Haiti: The great Black Culture Revolution*. New York: Nuclassics, 1978.

2. *La Revue du Monde Noir* was more literary oriented. Marxism and surrealism influenced *Légitime Défense* and *L'Etudiant Noir* was more interested in African poetry and offered a more Diasporan coverage of Black culture.

3. Léopold Sédar Senghor (1906-2001) was a Senegalese poet, politician, and cultural theorist who served as the first President of Senegal (1960-1980). Senghor was the first Black scholar to sit as a member of the prestigious Académie Française. He is regarded by many as one of the most important African intellectuals of the twentieth century. Senghor was one of the originators of the concept of *Négritude* and remained its theorist until his death.

4. Arthur Gobineau, or Le Comte de Gobineau, is considered a precursor of Nazism. He advocated the supremacy of the White race and the Aryan family and sees *malissage* in general as a degeneracy of the superior race.

5. Western preoccupations with the apparent disintegration of their societies found confirmation in works such as Arnaud Dandieu et Raymond Aron, *La révolution négre-saire* (Paris: Grasset, 1933); Daniel Halevy, *Décadence et liberté* (Paris: Grasset, 1931); André Malraux, *La tentation de l'occident* (Paris: Livre de poche, 1926); Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928).

6. According to Auguste Comte, the first stage of human development is theological all thought tends to be animistic and anthropomorphic; the second stage of intellectual progress is "metaphysical"; nature is no longer the divine creation of a providential god, but of a first cause which it is necessary to assume in order to account for the order of the universe; and the third stage or "positive" stage is finally reached when all such problems are considered futile and positive science alone is accepted.

7. The Negro does not follow a linear flux: "s/he is marked by jolts," meaning determined by an emotive power. Quoting Jung, Senghor says: "The fluctuant thinks, feels, acts in a way which neatly shows that the subject first determines all his/her attitude, while only a secondary importance is attached to the object."

8. Gustave Le Bon. *Les lois psychologiques de l'évolution des peuples* [Psychological Laws of the Evolution of Peoples] (1896). His works differentiate between Blacks and Whites, laying emphasis on the artistic endowment of the Negroes he considers to be at the very bottom of the ladder of the human race.

9. Immanuel Kant believed there are two universes: one of experience, the "phenomenal" world, and one of reason the "noumenal" world. Reason can go beyond what we know and conceive of a world, of which we can have no actual experience, thus transcends, and rises above experience.

10. Senghor defends himself from the young African intellectuals who, according to him, have read Marx carelessly. First, he refers them to a letter from Marx to Arnold Ruge (September, 1843): "reason has always existed but not always under the rational form." Second, he quotes Engels from his *Anti-Dühring*: "Two kinds of experience . . . thinking are also partly transmitted by heredity. A mathematical axiom is self-evident to a European, but not to a Bushman or an Australian aboriginal." Thus, for Senghor, "the modes of knowledge . . . 'form of thought' . . . are different and linked to the psycho-physiology of each race."

Chapter Four

Dialectic and African Specificities

One explanation can be found in the concern about an "overemphasis on culture" that may be a result in a "love affair with indigenous culture." "African cultural essentialism can lead to problematic oversimplification."

T. Len Holdstock (2000)

The obsession with uniqueness and difference must be opposed by a thematics of sameness. In order to move away from *ressentiment* and lamentation over the loss of a nom proper, we must clear an intellectual space for rethinking those temporalities that are always simultaneously branching out toward several different futures and, in so doing, open the way for the possibility of multiple ancestries

Achille Mbembe (2002)

In the Black Diaspora, racism, social injustice, the denigration and permanent abuse of Black cultures lead to the elaboration of an Afrocentrist discourse. Just like Africanism, Afrocentrism is initially justified. In their struggle for cultural recognition and affirmation, Blacks in the Diaspora need to prove to the arrogant Western world that non-European cultures, particularly African ones, are part of the repertoire of cultures the world offers. Their value and dignity are equal if not superior to the Western ones. Theoretically, thus, Afrocentrism rests on the affirmation and claim of a pre-colonial existence of an authentically African history and culture, but above all, on a glorious and golden Africa that produced cultures and traditions purely African. This form of cultural relativism aims at showing that Africa is different from the White world at all levels. I am providing a critique of these theories of Black specificities, and just to make sure I reveal as many insufficiencies as possible, I refute Afrocentrism as expressed in Errol Henderson (1995), Nah Dove's (1995) works and more precisely, in their reiteration of Afrocentrist criticisms of Marx and Marxism.

The thesis of cultural specificity holds that there are unique traits common to all Africans. But it is difficult to adopt such a thesis without adopting relativ-