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Éloge de la Créolité

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GALLIMARD

Pour
AIMÉ CÉSAIRE
Pour
ÉDOUARD GLISSANT
ba
FRANKÉTYÈN

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C'est par la différence et dans le divers que s'exalte l'Existence.

Le Divers décroît.
C'est là le grand danger.

V. SEGALEN

La sommer libre enfin
de produire de son intimité close
la succulence des fruits.

A. CÉSAIRE

Ne soyez pas les mendiants de l'Univers
quand les tambours établissent le dénouement

E. GLISSANT

Une tâche colossale que l'inventaire du réel!

F. FANON

For

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

For

ÉDOUARD GLISSANT

ba

FRANKÉTYÈN

" It is through difference and in diversity that Existence is elated.

Diversity decreases.
That is the great danger. "

Victor SEGALEN

" Dub it free in order
to produce from its closed intimacy
the succulence of fruit. "

Aimé CÉSAIRE

" Don't be the beggers of the Universe
when the drums establish the outcome. "

Édouard GLISSANT

" What a colossal task is the inventory of reality! "

Franz FANON

réjouissons-nous de ne le pouvoir jamais; nous réservant ainsi la perdurabilité du plaisir de sentir le Divers.» V. Segalen, *op. cit.*

«[...] la translittération des œuvres s'opère selon des règles si capricieuses qu'on ne voit pas trop comment les formuler. Des auteurs que l'on jugerait à première vue peu exportables à cause du fort accent étranger qu'ils gardent jusque dans les meilleures traductions, ou parce qu'ils doivent leur singularité à des conditions de vie et de création étroitement locales, passent les frontières sans encombre et se répandent avec succès dans le vaste monde – parfois d'emblée, parfois au contraire bien avant qu'ils n'aient été reconnus et compris dans leur domaine national (c'est le cas de Kafka [...]). D'autres en revanche, qui semblent devoir parler aux hommes de partout, grâce à une œuvre exempte de couleur locale et d'idiotismes par trop alambiqués, piétinent indéfiniment aux portes de la bibliothèque universelle et ne trouvent pas accueil même chez leurs plus proches voisins.» Marthe Robert, *Livre de lectures*, Grasset, 1977.

46. «L'unité ne se représente à elle-même que dans la diversité.» V. Segalen, *op. cit.*

In praise of Creoleness

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PROLOGUE

Neither Europeans, nor Africans, nor Asians, we proclaim ourselves Creoles. This will be for us an interior attitude – better, a vigilance, or even better, a sort of mental envelope in the middle of which our world will be built in full consciousness of the outer world. These words we are communicating to you here do not stem from theory, nor do they stem from any learned principles. They are, rather, akin to testimony. They proceed from a sterile experience which we have known before committing ourselves to reactivate our creative potential, and to set in motion the expression of what we are. They are not merely addressed to writers, but to any person of ideas who conceives our space (the archipelago and its foothills of firm land, the continental immensities), in any discipline whatsoever, who is in the painful quest for a more fertile thought, for a more precise expression, for a truer art. May this positioning serve them as it serves us. Let it take part of the emergence, here and there, of verticalities which would maintain their Creole identity and elucidate it at the same time, opening thus for us the routes of the world and of freedom.

Caribbean literature does not yet exist. We are still in a state of preliterature : that of a written production without a home audience, ignorant of the authors/ readers interaction which is the primary condition of the development of a literature. This situation is not imputable to the mere political domination, it can also be explained by the fact that our truth found itself behind bars, in the deep bottom of ourselves, unknown to our consciousness and to the artistically free reading of the world in which we live. We are fundamentally stricken with exteriority. This from a long time ago to the present day. We have seen the world through the filter of western values, and our foundation was " exoticized " by the French vision we had to adopt. It is a terrible condition to perceive one's interior architecture, one's world, the instants of one's days, one's own values, with the eyes of the other. All along overdetermined, in history, in thoughts, in daily life, in ideals (even the ideals of progress), caught in the trick of cultural dependence, of political dependence, of economic dependence, we were deported out of ourselves at every moment of our scriptural history. This determined a writing for the Other, a borrowed writing, steeped in French values, or at least unrelated to this land, and which, in spite of a few positive aspects, did nothing else but maintain in our minds the domination of an elsewhere.... A perfectly noble elsewhere, of course, ideal ore to look forward to, in the name of which we were supposed to break the gangue of what we were. Against a controversial, partisan, and anachronistic appreciation of history, however, we want to reexamine

the terms of this indictment and to promote of the people and facts of our scriptural continuum, a true idea. Neither obliging, nor conniving, but supportive.

TOWARD INTERIOR VISION AND SELF-ACCEPTANCE

During the first periods of our writing, this exteriority provoked a mimetic expression, both in the French language and in the Creole language. We unquestionably had our clock-makers of the sonnet and the alexandrine. We had our fabulists, our romantics, our parnassians, our neoparnassians, not to mention the symbolists. Our poets used to indulge in bucolic drifts, enraptured by Greek muses, polishing up the ink tears of a love not shared by the olympian Venus. This was, said the critics and they had a point, more than secondhand cultural dealing : it was the quasi-complete acquisition of another identity. These zombies were ousted by those who wanted to be part of their native biotope – those who planted their eyes on themselves and our environment, but with a strong exteriority as well, with the eyes of the Other. They saw of their being what France saw through its preachers-travellers, its chroniclers, its visiting painters and poets, or its great tourists. Between the blue sky and the coconut trees blossomed a heavenly writing, first naive and then critical, after the fashion of the indigenists of Haiti. The local cultural coloration was sung in a scription which deserted totality, the truths then depreciated of what we were. It was desperately perceived in subsequent

militant criticism as a regional writing, so-called doudouist, and therefore thin : another way of being exterior. However, if, like Jack Corzani in his *Histoire de la littérature des Antilles-Guyane* (Éditions Désormaux 1978), we were to examine this writing *(from René Bonneville to Daniel Thaly, from Victor Duquesnay to Salavina, from Gilbert de Chambertrand to Jean Galmot, from Léon Belmont to Xavier Eyma, from Emmanuel Flavia-Léopold to André Thomarel, from Auguste Joyau to Paul Baudot, from Clément Richer to Raphaël Tardon, from Mayotte Capécia to Marie-Magdeleine Carbet...)*, it would appear that it actually kept a reserve of wicks capable of bringing sparks to our obscurities. The best evidence is that given us by the Martinican writer Gilbert Gratiant throughout his monumental Creole work : *Fab Compè Zicaque* (Éditions Horizons Caraïbes 1958). A visionary of our authenticity, Gratiant soon placed his scriptural expression on the poles of both languages, both cultures, French and Creole, which magnetized from opposite directions the compasses of our consciousness. And though he was in many respects a victim of the unavoidable exteriority, *Fab Compè Zicaque* remains nonetheless an extraordinary investigation of the vocabulary, the forms, the proverbs, the mentality, the sensibility, in a word, of the intelligence of this cultural entity in which we are attempting, today, a salutary submersion. We call Gilbert Gratiant and many other writers of this period the precious keepers (often without their knowing) of the stones, of the broken statues, of the disarranged pieces of pottery, of the lost drawings, of the distorted shapes : of this ruined city which is our foundation. Without all these writers,

we would have had to achieve this return " *to the native land* " with no signs of support of any kind, not even that of scattered fireflies which in bluish nights guide the grim hope of the lost traveller. And we believe that all these writers, especially Gilbert Gratiant, understood enough of our reality to create the conditions of the emergence of a multidimensional phenomenon which (totally, therefore unfairly, threatening but necessary, and spreading over several generations) was to overshadow them : *Negritude.*

To a totally racist world, self-mutilated by its own colonial surgeries, Aimé Césaire restored mother Africa, matrix Africa, the black civilization. He denounced all sorts of dominations in the country, and his writing, which is committed and which derives its energy from the modes of war, gave severe blows to postslavery sluggishness. Césaire's Negritude gave Creole society its African dimension, and put an end to the amputation which generated some of the superficiality of the so called doudouist writing.

This brings us to free Aimé Césaire of the accusation – with Oedipal overtones – of hostility to the Creole language. We have committed ourselves to understand why, despite an advocated return " *to the deserted hideousness of our wounds* " Césaire did not seriously associate Creole to a scriptural practice forged on the anvils of the French language. There is no need to stir up this crucial question, and to quote the contrapuntal approach of Gilbert Gratiant who tried to invest both languages

of our ecosystem. It is important, however, that our reflection becomes phenomenological and considers the very roots of the Césairian phenomenon. A man of both " *initiation* " and " *ending* ", Aimé Césaire had exclusively the formidable privilege of symbolically reopening and closing again the circle in which are clasped two incumbent monsters : Europeanness and Africanness, two forms of exteriority which proceed from two opposed logics – one monopolizing our minds submitted to its torture, the other living in our flesh ridden by its scars, each inscribing in us after its own way its keys, its codes, its numbers. No, these two forms of exteriority could not be brought to the same level. Assimilation, through its pomps and works of Europe, tried unrelentingly to portray our lives with the colors of Elsewhere. Negritude imposed itself then as a stubborn will of resistance trying quite plainly to embed our identity in a denied, repudiated, and renounced culture. Césaire, an anti-Creole? Indeed not, but rather an *ante-Creole,* if we could venture such a paradox. It was Césaire's Negritude that opened to us the path for the actuality of a Caribbeanness which from then on could be postulated, and which itself is leading to another yet unlabelled degree of authenticity. Césairian Negritude is a baptism, the primal act of our restored dignity. We are forever Césaire's sons.

We had adopted Parnassus. With Césaire and Negritude we were steeped in Surrealism [1] *. It was obviously

* See notes on page 119.

unfair to consider Césaire's handling of the " Miraculous Weapons " of Surrealism as a resurgence of literary bovarism. Indeed, Surrealism blew to pieces ethnocentrist cocoons, and was in its very foundations the first reevaluation of Africa by Western consciousness. But, that the eyes of Europe should in the final analysis serve as a means for the rising of the buried continent of Africa, such was the reason for fearing risks of reinforced alienation which left few chances to escape from it except by a miracle : Césaire, thanks to his immense genius, soaked in the fire of a volcanic idiom, never paid tribute to Surrealism. On the contrary, he became one of the most burning figures of this movement, one of these figures we cannot understand without referring to the African substrate resuscitated by the operating powers of the verb. Yet African tropism did not prevent Césaire from very deeply embedding himself in the Caribbean ecology and referential space. And if he did not sing in Creole, the language he uses remains, as revealed namely by a recent reading of *Et les chiens se taisaient* [2], nonetheless more open than generally thought to the Creole emanations of these native depths.

Apart from the prophetic blaze of speech, Negritude did not set out any pedagogy of the Sublime. In fact, it never had any intention of doing so. Indeed, the prodigious power of Negritude was such that it could do without a poetics. Its brilliance shone, marking out with blinding signs the space of our blinkings, and it defused every thaumaturgic repetition much to the dismay of epigones. So that, even if it stimulated our ener-

to decompose what we are while purifying what we are by fully exhibiting to the *sun of consciousness* the hidden mechanisms of our alienation; to plunge in our singularity, to explore it in a projective way, to reach out for what we are... these are Edouard Glissant's words. The objective was prominent; if we wanted to apprehend this Caribbean civilization in its American space, we had to abandon screams, symbols, sensational comminations, and turn away from the fetishist claim of a universality ruled by Western values in order to begin the minute exploration of ourselves, made of patiences, accumulations, repetitions, stagnations, obstinacies, where all literary genres (separately or in the negation of their limits) as well as the transversal (and not just pedantic) use of all human sciences would take their share. Somewhat like with the process of archeological excavations : when the field was covered, we had to progress with light strokes of the brush so as not to alter or lose any part of ourselves hidden behind French ways.

This was easier to say than to do, because the paths of penetration in Caribbeanness were not marked out. We went around them for a long time with the helplessness of dogs on board a skiff. Glissant himself did not really help us, being taken by his own work, by his own rythm, and persuaded that he is writing for future generations. We received his texts like hieroglyphics in which we were able somehow to perceive the quivering of a voice, the oxygen of a perspective. In his novel *Malemort* (Seuil 1975), however (through the alchemy

of the language, the structure, the humor, the themes, the choice of characters, the preciseness) he suddenly and singularly revealed Caribbean reality. On the other hand, Haitian writer Frankétienne, taking part in the first buddings of a Creoleness centered around its native depths, proved, in his work *Dézafi* (Port-au-Prince 1975), to be both the blacksmith and the alchemist of the central nervure of our authenticity : Creole re-created by and for writing. So that *Malemort* and *Dézafi* – strangely published in the same year, 1975 – were the works which, in their deflagrating interaction, released for new generations the basic tool of this approach of self-knowledge : interior vision.

To create the conditions of authentic expression amounted also to exorcising the old fatality of exteriority. Having only the Other's pupils under one's eyelids invalidated the fairest approaches, processes, and procedures. Opening one's eyes on oneself, like the regionalists, was not enough. Neither was scrutinizing this *"fondal-natal"* culture, as did the Haitian indigenists, in order to keep the essence of our creativity. We had yet to wash our eyes, to turn over the vision we had of our reality in order to grasp its truth : a new look capable of taking away our nature from the secondary or peripheral edge so as to place it again in the center of ourselves, somewhat like the child's look, questioning in front of everything, having yet no postulates of its own, and putting into question even the most obvious facts. This is the kind of free look which, having no outside spectators, can do without self-explanations or

comments. It emerges from the projection of our being and considers each part of our reality as an event in order to break the way it is traditionally viewed, in this case the exterior vision submitted to the enchantment of alienation... This is why interior vision is revealing, therefore revolutionary [8]. To learn again how to visualize our depths. To learn again how to look positively at what revolves around us. Interior vision defeats, first of all, the old French imagery we are covered with, and restores us to ourselves in a mosaic renewed by the autonomy of its components, their unpredictability, their now mysterious resonances. It is an inner disruption, and, like Joyce's, a sacred one. That is to say : a freedom. But, having tried to enjoy it with no success, we realized that there could be no interior vision without a preliminary self-acceptance. We could even go so far as to say that interior vision is a result of self-acceptance.

French ways forced us to denigrate ourselves : the common condition of colonized people. It is often difficult for us to discern what, in us, might be the object of an aesthetic approach. What we accept in us as aesthetic is the little declared by the Other as aesthetic. The noble is generally elsewhere. So is the universal. And our artistic expression has always taken its sources from the far open sea. And it was always what it brought from the far open sea that was kept, accepted, studied; for our idea of aesthetics was elsewhere. What good is the creation of an artist who totally refuses his unexplored being? Who does not know who he is? Or who barely accepts it? And what good is the view of a critic

who is trapped in the same conditions? We had to bring an exterior look to our reality which was refused more or less consciously. Our ways of laughing, singing, walking, living death, judging life, considering bad luck, loving and expressing love, were only badly considered in literature, or in the other forms of artistic expression. Our imaginary was forgotten, leaving behind this large desert where the fairy Carabossa dried Manman Dlo. Our refused bilingual richness remained a diglossic pain. Some of our traditions disappeared without being questioned by any inquiring mind [9], and even though we were nationalists, progressivists, independentists, we tried to beg for the universal in the most colorless and scentless way, i.e. refusing the very foundation of our being, a foundation which, today, we declare solemnly as the major aesthetic vector of our knowledge of ourselves and the world : Creoleness.

CREOLENESS

We cannot reach Caribbeanness without interior vision. And interior vision is nothing without the unconditional acceptance of our Creoleness. We declare ourselves Creoles. We declare that Creoleness is the cement of our culture and that it ought to rule the foundations of our Caribbeanness [10]. Creoleness is the *interactional or transactionnal aggregate* of Caribbean, European, African, Asian, and Levantine cultural elements, united on the same soil by the yoke of history. For three centuries the islands and parts of continents affected by this phe-

nomenon proved to be the real forges of a new humanity, where languages, races, religions, customs, ways of being from all over the world were brutally uprooted and transplanted in an environment where they had to reinvent life. Our Creoleness was, therefore, born from this extraordinary " migan ", wrongly and hastily reduced to its mere linguistic aspects [11], or to one single element of its composition. Our cultural character bears both the marks of this world and elements of its negation. We conceived our cultural character as a function of acceptance and denial, therefore permanently questioning, always familiar with the most complex ambiguities, outside all forms of reduction, all forms of purity, all forms of impoverishment. Our history is a braid of histories. We had a taste of all kinds of languages, all kinds of idioms. Afraid of this uncomfortable muddle, we tried in vain to anchor it in mythical shores (exterior vision, Africa, Europe, and still today, India or America), to find shelter in the closed normality of millennial cultures, ignoring that we were the anticipation of the relations of cultures, of the future world whose signs are already showing. We are at once Europe, Africa, and enriched by Asian contributions, we are also Levantine, Indians, as well as pre-Columbian Americans in some respects. Creoleness is *" the world diffracted but recomposed "*, a maelstrom of signifieds in a single signifier : a Totality. And we think that it is not time to give a definition of it. To define would be here a matter of taxidermy. This new dimension of man, whose prefigured shadow we are, requires notions which undoubtedly we still don't know. So that, concerning Creoleness,

of which we have only the deep intuition or the poetic knowledge, and so as not to neglect any one of its many possible ways, we say that it ought to be approached as *a question to be lived*, to be lived obstinately in each light, in each shadow of our mind. To live a question is already to enrich oneself of elements besides the answer. To live the question of Creoleness, at once freely and prudently, is finally to penetrate insensibly the immense unknown vastitudes of its answer. *Let live (and let us live!) the red glow of this magma.*

Because of its constituent mosaic, Creoleness is an open specificity. It escapes, therefore, perceptions which are not themselves open. Expressing it is not expressing a synthesis, not just expressing a crossing or any other unicity. It is expressing a kaleidoscopic totality [12], that is to say : *the nontotalitarian consciousness of a preserved diversity.* We decided not to resist its multiplicity just as the Creole garden does not resist the different forms of yam which inhabit it. We shall live its discomfort as a mystery to be accepted and elucidated, a task to be accomplished and an edifice to be inhabited, a ferment for the imagination and a challenge for the imagination. We shall conceive it as a central reference and as a suggestive explosion demanding to be aesthetically organized. For it has no value in itself; in order to be pertinent, its expression must be the result of a serious aesthetic approach. Our aesthetics cannot exist (cannot be authentic) without Creoleness.

Creoleness is an annihilation of false universality, of monolingualism, and of purity. It is in harmony with the *Diversity* which inspired the extraordinary momentum of Victor Segalen. Creoleness is our primitive soup and our continuation, our primeval chaos and our mangrove swamp of virtualities. We bend toward it, enriched by all kinds of mistakes and confident of the necessity of accepting ourselves as complex. For complexity is the very principle of our identity. Exploring our Creoleness must be done in a thought as complex as Creoleness itself. The need for clarification based on two or three laws of normality, made us consider ourselves as abnormal beings. But what seemed to be a defect may turn out to be the indeterminacy of the new, the richness of the unknown. That is why it seems that, for the moment, *full knowledge of Creoleness will be reserved for Art,* for Art absolutely. Such will be the precondition of our identity's strengthening. But it goes without saying that Creoleness is inclined to irrigate all the nervures of our reality in order to become gradually its main principle. In multiracial societies, such as ours, it seems urgent to quit using the traditional raciological distinctions and to start again designating the people of our countries, regardless of their complexion, by the only suitable word : *Creole.* Socioethnic relations in our society ought to take place from now on under the seal of a common creoleness, without, not in the least, obliterating class relations or conflicts. In literature, the now unanimous recognition of the poet Saint-John Perse by our people as one of the most prestigious sons of Guadeloupe – in spite of his belonging to the Béké ethnoclass – is indeed

an advance of Creoleness in Caribbean consciousness. It is delighting. Accordingly, in architecture, in culinary art, in painting [13], in economics (as proven by the example of the Seychelles), in the art of clothing, etc., the dynamics of an accepted, questioned, elated Creoleness seem to us to be the best way toward self-acceptance.

It is necessary, however, to make a distinction between Americanness, Caribbeanness, and Creoleness, all concepts which might at first seem to cover the same realities. First, the sociohistorical processes which produced Americanization are different in nature from those which were at work in Creolization. Indeed, Americanization and its corollary, the feeling of Americanness, describes the progressive adaptation, and with no real interaction with other cultures, of Western populations in a world they baptized new. Thus, the Anglo-Saxons who formed the thirteen colonies, embryo of the future American state, displayed their culture in a new environment, almost barren, if we consider the fact that the native Indians, who were imprisoned in reservations or massacred, did not virtually influence their initial culture. In the same way, the Boni and Saramak blacks of Guyana, who remained yet relatively closed to the tribes of the Amazonian forest, were Americanized through their interaction with the forest environment. Just as the Italians who emigrated massively to Argentina during the nineteenth century, or the Hindus who replaced the black slaves in the plantations of Trinidad, adapted their original culture to new realities without com-

pletely modifying them. *Americanness is, therefore, in many respects, a migrant culture,* in a splendid isolation.

Altogether different is the process of Creolization, which is not limited to the American continent (therefore, it is not a geographic concept) and which refers to the brutal interaction, on either insular or landlocked territories – be it immense territories such as Guyana or Brazil – of culturally different populations : Europeans and Africans in the small Caribbean islands; Europeans, Africans, and Indians in the Mascarene islands; Europeans and Asians in certain areas of the Philippines or in Hawaii; Arabs and black Africans in Zanzibar, etc. Generally resting upon a plantation economy, *these populations are called to invent the new cultural designs allowing for a relative cohabitation between them.* These designs are the result of a nonharmonious (and unfinished therefore nonreductionist) mix of linguistic, religious, cultural, culinary, architectural, medical, etc. practices of the different people in question. Of course there are more or less intense Creolizations depending on whether the peoples in question are exogenous as is the case in the Caribbeans of the Mascarene islands, or whether one of these people is autochthonous as in the island of Cape Verde or in Hawaii. So, Creoleness is the fact of belonging to an original human entity which comes out of these processes in due time. There are a Caribbean Creoleness, a Guyanese Creoleness, a Brazilian Creoleness, an African Creoleness, an Asian Creoleness and a Polynesian Creoleness, which are all very different from one another but which all result from the matrix

of the same historical maelstrom. Creoleness encompasses and perfects Americanness because it involves a double process :

– the adaption of Europeans, Africans, and Asians to the New World; and

– the cultural confrontation of these peoples within the same space, resulting in a mixed culture called Creole.

There are obviously no strict frontiers separating zones of Creoleness from zones of Americanness. We might find them juxtaposed or interpenetrated within the same country : thus in the U.S.A., Louisiana and Mississippi are predominantly Creole, whereas New England, which was initially inhabited by Anglo-Saxons only, is just American. After the abolition of slavery, however, and the rise of black people in the North, and during the twentieth century arrival of Italians, Greeks, Chinese, and Puerto-Ricans, one might rightly think that the conditions are ripe for a process of Creolization to start presently in New England.

After this distinction between Creoleness and Americanness, what can we say of the relations between Caribbeanness and Creoleness? We consider Caribbeanness to be the only process of Americanization of Europeans, Africans, and Asians in the Caribbean Archipelago. Thus, it is, so to speak, a province of Americanness like Canadianness or Argentineness. Indeed, it leaves out the fact that in certain islands there was, more than mere Americanization, a phenomenon of Creolization (and therefore Creoleness). For example, entire regions in the north of Cuba were affected only by an Americanization of Andalusian colonists, Canarians or Gali-

cians, and knew no Creolization whatsoever. In certain sugar cane areas of Trinidad, Hindu culture adapted itself to the new environment without getting involved in a process of Creolization as opposed to the *bondyékouli* of the small Caribbean islands, which is a Creole cult based in Hinduism. Thus, we believe that Caribbeanness is first of all a geopolitical concept. The word " Caribbean " says nothing of the human situation of Martinicans, Guadeloupeans, or Haitians. As Creoles, we are as close, if not closer, anthropologically speaking, to the people of the Seychelles, of Mauritius, or the Reunion, than we are to the Puerto Ricans or the Cubans. On the contrary there are little things in common between someone from the Seychelles and a Cuban. We, the Caribbean Creoles, enjoy, therefore, a double solidarity :

– a Caribbean solidarity (geopolitical) with all the peoples of our Archipelago regardless of our cultural differences – our Caribbeanness; and

– a Creole solidarity with all African, Mascarin, Asian, and Polynesian peoples who share the same anthropological affinities as we do – our Creoleness.

Interior vision at the service of the unconditional acceptance of our Creoleness (as the very vitality of our creativity) must feed and reinforce, in a completely new way, the temporary conditions of the literary expression of Caribbeanness defined by Glissant.

1. Fundamental orality

Our Creole culture was created in the plantation system through questioning dynamics made of acceptances and denials, resignations and assertions. A real galaxy with the Creole language as its core, Creoleness [14], has, still today, its privileged mode : orality. Provider of tales, proverbs, " titim ", nursery rhymes, songs, etc., orality is our intelligence; it is our reading of this world, the experimentation, still blind, of our complexity. Creole orality, even repressed in its aesthetic expression, contains a whole system of countervalues, a counterculture [15]; it witnesses ordinary genius applied to resistance, devoted to survival. After the failure of the plantation system (sugar crises, abolitions of slavery, etc.), after the destructurings, the restructurings, the consequent conversions and reconversions of all kinds (assimilation, departmentalization), there was no use for this oral force; it was useless to the citizens' lives. Only Frenchness (the adoption of both French language and French values) expressed Man in a society totally alienated. Orality began then to be buried in our collective unconscious (as if in some subterranean transhumance) but not without leaving here and there the scattered fragments of its discontinuous contours.

The difficult deciphering of its disconcerting scenery gave birth to a system of values which was at the same time compensating and averting : folklorism and doudouism became the main charges of the new prosecutors

of authentic Culture. Ordinary terrorism sided then with distinguished theory, and both were incapable of saving from forgetfulness any simple song. Thus went our world, steeped in intellectualist piety, completely cut off from the roots of our orality. So that, as indicated by Glissant [16], none of our writers took over Creoleness from the abyss of our ancestral speech, all of them caught, each in his or her own way, in the expression of a metaphorical transfiguration of the real, the Great Time of Culture, dressed in the colors of progress, of civilization, of development. After our traditional tale tellers, there was some kind of silence: the dead end. Elsewhere bards, griots, minstrels and troubadours passed on their trade to writers *(markers of speech)* who took gradually their literary autonomy. Here, there was a break, a gap, a deep ravine between a written expression pretending to be universalo-modern and traditional Creole orality enclosing a great part of our being. This nonintegration of oral tradition was one of the forms and one of the dimensions of our alienation. Without the rich compost which could have contributed to a finally sovereign literature and brought it closer to potential readers, our writing (contrary to the theatre of Henri Melon, Arthur Lérus, Joby Bernabé, Elie Stephenson, Roland Brival, Roger Robinal, José Alpha, Vincent Placoly... who knew in many respects how to use the richness of orality) remained suspended. Hence the denominative instability of the written production of our countries: *Afro-Caribbean, Negro-Caribbean, Franco-Caribbean, French Speaking Caribbean, Franco-*

phone Caribbean Literature, etc., all qualifiers which from now on are, in our eyes, ineffective.

Fortunately, there were some insignificant reproducers of misunderstood gestures, some modest collectors of useless memories; there were some obscure directors of commercialized culture for tourists more curious about us than we were; there were some dull epigones of a hackneyed speech, some naive promoters of a trite carnival, some industrious profiteers of a strident, loud *zouk*. They rarely escaped the assertion – shouted or whispered – of doudouism and folklorism. But in the final analysis they were the indispensable links that contributed to save Creoleness from the glorious yet definitive fate of Atlantis. We learned from them that culture is a daily lift and thrust, that ancestors are born everyday and are not fixed in an immemorial past; that tradition takes shape everyday, and that culture is also the link we ought to keep alive between past and present; that taking over oral tradition should not be considered in a backward mode of nostalgic stagnation, through backward leaps. To return to it, yes, first in order to restore this cultural continuity (that we associate with restored historical continuity) without which it is difficult for collective identity to take shape. To return to it, yes, in order to enrich our enunciation [17], to integrate it, and go beyond it. To return to it, so as simply to invest the primordial expression of our common genius. Knowing this, we may then collect a new harvest of first-hand seeds. We may then, through the marriage of our trained senses, inseminate Creole in the new writing. In short, *we shall create a literature*, which will

obey all the demands of modern writing while taking roots in the traditional configurations of our orality.

2. *Updating true memory*

Our history (or more precisely our histories) [18] is shipwrecked in colonial history. Collective memory is the first thing on our agenda. What we believe to be Caribbean history is just the history of the colonization of the Caribbeans. Between the currents of the history of France, between the great dates of the governors' arrivals and departures, between the beautiful white pages of the chronicle (where the bursts of our rebellions appear only as small spots), there was the obstinate progress of ourselves. The opaque resistance of Maroons allied in their disobedience. The new heroism of those who stood up against the hell of slavery, displaying some obscure codes of survival, some indecipherable qualities of resistance, the incomprehensible variety of compromises, the unexpected syntheses of life. They left the fields for the towns, and spread among the colonial community to the point of giving it its strength in all respects, and giving it what we are today. This happened with no witnesses, or rather with no testimonies, leaving us somehow in the same situation as the flower unable to see its stem, unable to feel it. And the history of colonization which we took as ours aggravated our loss, our self-defamation; it favored exteriority and fed the estrangement of the present. Within this false memory we had but a pile of obscurities as our memory. A feeling

of flesh discontinued. Sceneries, said Glissant [19], are the only things to convey, in their own nonanthropomorphic way, some of our tragedy, some of our will to exist. So that our history (or our histories) is not totally accessible to historians. Their methodology restricts them to the sole colonial chronicle. Our chronicle is behind the dates, behind the known facts : *we are Words behind writing.* Only poetic knowledge, fictional knowledge, literary knowledge, in short, artistic knowledge can discover us, understand us and bring us, evanescent, back to the resuscitation of consciousness [20]. When applied to our histories (to this sand-memory fluttering about the scenery, the land, in the fragments of old black people's heads, made of emotional richness, of sensations, of intuitions) interior vision and the acceptance of our Creoleness will allow us to invest *these impenetrable areas of silence where screams were lost* [21]. Only then will our literature restore us to duration [22], to the continuum of time and space; only then will it be moved by its past and become historical.

3. *The thematics of existence*

Here, we do not think that we are outside the world, in the suburb of the universe. Our anchorage in this land is not a dive in a bottomless pit. Once our interior vision is applied, once our Creoleness is placed at the center of our creativity, we will be able to re-examine our existence, to perceive in it the mechanisms of alienation, and, above all, to grasp its beauty. The writer is

a detector of existence [23]. More than anyone else, the writer's vocation is to identify what, in our daily lives, determines the patterns and structure of the imaginary. To perceive our existence is to perceive us in the context of our history, of our daily lives, of our reality. It is also to perceive our virtualities. By taking us away from the comfortable gaze of the Other, interior vision compels us to solicit our original chaos. It brings us then to permanent questioning, doubt, and ambiguity. Through this kind of vision, we return to the magma that characterizes us. It also frees us of anticolonialist literary militantism so that we will not examine ourselves in order to find a singular ideology [24], an apodictic truth, or the ten commandments of a table of laws, or because we want to reject doudouism, regionalism, and Negritude (a rejection which served for many as the basis of their literary existence) but rather because we want to know ourselves, bare in our flaws, in our barks and pulps. Thanks to this freedom we can revisit and re-evaluate our whole literary production. Not so much because we want to be the voice of those who have no voice, but because we want to perfect the collective voice which has no audience yet roars in our being, because we want to take part of it and listen to it until the inevitable crystallization of a common consciousness. Our writing has for a long time neglected this fundamental task or dealt with it in the alienating mode of exteriority. The Creole literature we are elaborating takes it as a principle that there is nothing petty, poor, useless, vulgar, or unworthy of a literary project in our world. *We are part and parcel of our world.* We want,

thanks to Creoleness, to name each thing in it, and to declare it beautiful. To perceive the human grandeur of the *djobeurs.* To grasp the depth of life in Morne Pichevin. To understand the vegetable markets. To elucidate the functioning of the tale tellers. To accept again without any judgment our " *dorlis* ", our " *zombis* ", our " *chouval-twa-pat* ", " *soukliyan* ". To adopt the language of our towns, of our cities. To explore our American Indian, Indian, Chinese, and Levantine origins, and find their poundings in our heartbeats. To enter in our " pitts ", in our games of " grennde ", and in all this old blacks' business viewed a priori as vulgar. It is only through this kind of systematism that we will strengthen the freedom of our gaze.

Our writing must unreservedly accept our popular beliefs, our magico-religious practices, our magic realism, the " *milan* ", " *majò* " " *ladja* " and " *koudmen* " rituals. Its must listen to our music and taste our cooking. It must investigate how we live love, hate, die, the spirit we have in melancholy, how we live in happiness and sadness, anxiety and courage. It must look for our truths, and affirm that one of its missions is to present insignifiant heroes, anonymous heroes, those who are forgotten by the colonial chronicle, those who resisted indirectly and patiently and who have nothing in common with the Western or French heroes. These realities ought not to be described ethnographically, nor ought there to be a census-taking of Creole practices after the fashion of the Haitian indigenists, instead we ought *to show what, in these practices, bears witness to both Creoleness and the human condition.* We ought to live, relive, and

make live all this intensively, shivering at shivers, quivering where it quivers, and measuring our internal geography in order to perceive it and understand it better. And we object to the parochialism and self-centeredness that some people find in it. There can be no real opening to the world without a prerequisite and absolute apprehension of what we are. Our world, however small it might be, is large in our minds, boundless in our hearts, and for us, will always reflect the human being. The old shell of self-defamation will break : *Oh, jailer of our creativiy, the new eyes are looking at you!* It is a question of descending in ourselves, but without the Other, without the alienating logic of his prism. And we must admit that here, we have no indicators, no certainties, no aesthetic criteria, we have nothing but the youth of our eyes, the intuition of our Creoleness which is supposed at every moment to invent every move. Our literature must progress by itself and come across no one during this period of development : we mean *no cultural deviation.*

4. The burst in modernity

Despite our youth, we do not have time to live the volutes of a quiet evolution. We now have to live in a contemporary world which is fast. We have to assume order and adventure, as Apollinaire would have put it. Order might be, in this context, that which contributes to the consciousness of our identity, to the development of our nation, to the emergence of our arts and literature : all problems with which we are compelled to deal. As for adventure, it might be the symbol of the modern world and its contemporary progress, which we must no exclude just because we have to put some order in our interior being. Underdeveloped countries today are compelled to this gymnastics. How can we consider the Creole language without touching upon the present problems of linguistics? How can we think of the Caribbean novel without being enriched with all approaches to the novel of all the peoples of the world? How can we consider an artistic expression which, efficient inside the nation, might turn out anachronistic or out-of-date outside the nation? We have, therefore, to do everything at the same time : to place our writing within the progressive forces working at our liberation, and to keep looking for a new aesthetics without which there is no art, much less a literature. We have to be lucid about our neocolonized flaws, and at the same time we have to work at oxygenating our suffocations by a positive vision of our being. We must accept ourselves as we are, completely, and mistrust this uncertain identity still moved by unconscious alienations. We must take root in our country, in its difficulties, in its problems, in its pettiest realities, and yet consider the bubblings where literary modernity is leading the world. It is in a way what Glissant calls " being in a situation of irruption " [25]. An uncomfortable situation, no doubt, draconian demands, but it is already clear that we do have to write the difficult way [26], to express ourselves against the current of usuries, clichés, and deformations, and

that it is only through the difficult way that we might trail deeply within our authenticity.

5. The choice of one's speech

Our primary richness, we the Creole writers, is to be able to speak several languages : Creole, French, English, Portuguese, Spanish, etc. Now we must accept this perpetual bilingualism and abandon the old attitude we had toward it. Out of this compost, we must grow our speech. Out of these languages, we must build our own language [27]. Creole, our first language, we the Caribbeans, the Guyanese, the Mascarins, is the initial means of communication of our deep self, or our collective unconscious, of our common genius, and it remains the river of our alluvial Creoleness. We dream in it. In it we resist and accept ourselves. It is our cries, our screams, our excitements. It irrigates each one of our gestures. Its decline was not just a mere linguistic loss, the mere fall of a branch, but the total fast of a foliage, the kneeling of a cathedral [28]. The absence of interest in the Creole language was not a mere mouth silence but a cultural amputation. The Creole tale tellers who no longer exist could have put it better than us. Every time a mother, thinking she is favoring the learning of the French language, represses Creole in a child's throat, she is in fact bearing a blow to the latter's imagination, repressing his creativity. School teachers of the great period of French assimilation were the slave traders of our artistic impulse [29]. So that today, it would be an

impoverishment not to reinvest this language. Its usage is one of the ways of the submersion in our Creoleness.

No Creole creator, in any field, can ever succeed without an intuitive knowledge of the poetics of the Creole language [30]. Artistic education (the reeducation of a vision, the activating of Creole sensibility) cannot go without a prerequisite learning of the Creole language, its syntax, its grammar, its most basic vocabulary, its most appropriate writing (should it have nothing to do with French habits), its intonations, its rhythms, its spirit... its poetics [31]. The quest for real Creole, proudly led in a spirit of genuineness, surprise and originality, while feeding our revolutionary fervors, will undoubtedly polarize our most extreme and most solitary energies. On the other hand, the tragedy lived by many of our writers comes from the castration which, linguistically, they were victims of during their childhood. The Creole language is, thus, one of the forces of our expressiveness as proven (in case there is a need to prove it) by Guadeloupean writer Sonny Rupaire who, working in the Creole language, was able to initiate an unprecedented poetry, allying the most extreme political claims to the assertion of a singular poetics.

The Creole language is not a dying language, it changes continuously, loosing, at times, a few secret variegations only to find at other times unheard of accents (as we can tell from the poetry of Monchoachi, Joby Bernabé, Daniel Boukman, Thérèse Léotin, Hector Poullet, Felix Morisseau-Leroy, Serge Restog, Max Rippon, Georges Castera...). It is comparable to this snake which, though it has been chased around the hills,

reappears in our huts without warning, because Creole is linked to our very existence, and because, in the final analysis, it is as Vincent Placoly put it : " *The language which more than any other language belongs to us* " [32]. Hence the need to reinforce its oral density with the contemporary power of writing. And those of our writers who tried to kill it in themselves, or in their writing, lost without their knowing, the best chance for their repressed authenticity : Creoleness. What an aesthetic suicide! Creole literature written in Creole must, before all, build this written language and make it known. Yet, most Creolophone writers, who wanted to keep up with the language they used, did nothing to meet the primary demands of literary creation which is producing a language within the language. The Creole poet writing in Creole, the Creole novelist writing in Creole, will have to be at once the collectors of ancestral speech, the gatherers of new words, and the discoverers of the Creoleness of Creole. They will mistrust this language while accepting it totally. They will keep a distance from it while plunging into it desperately – and, mistrusting the forms of defense-illustration, they will overwhelm this language with the eccentricities of their own chosen languages [33].

But our histories, for once generous, gave us a second language [34]. At first, it was not shared by everyone. It was for a long time the language of the oppressors – founders. *We did conquer it, this French language.* If Creole is our legitimate language, we gradually (or at once) were given and captured, legitimated and adopted the

French language (the language of the Creole white class). Creoleness left its indelible mark on the French language, as did other cultural entities elsewhere [35]. We made the French language ours. We extended the meaning of some of its words, deviated others. And changed many. We enriched the French language, its vocabulary as well as its syntax. We preserved many of its words which were no longer used. In short, *we inhabited it.* It was alive in us. In it we built our own language [36], this language which was chased by cultural kapos and viewed as a profanation of the idolized French language. *Our literature must bear witness of this conquest.* We are obviously against the religion of the French language which had spread in our countries since the abolition of slavery, and we completely agree with the Haitian proverb that goes : " *Palé fransé pa vlé di lespri* " (speaking French is no proof of intelligence). Repressing this language amounted, as is the case for Creole, to discouraging our expressiveness, our creative impulse, for creativity is necessarily a function of a subjective reading of the world. It also amounted to frustrating our artistic expression for many generations. Creole literature written in French must, therefore, soon invest and rehabilitate the aesthetics of our language. Such is how it will be able to abandon the unnatural use of French which we had often adopted in writing.

Outside all kinds of fetishism, Language will be, therefore, for us, the free, responsible, and creative use of languages [37]. It won't be necessarily a Creolized or reinvented French, nor a Frenchized or reinvented Cre-

ole, but our own finally recovered and decisive language. Our singularity exposed-exploded in language until it takes shape into Being. Our consciousness in psychic verticality. The antidote against the ancestral domination we are suffering from. Beyond language the possible expression of who we are, our presence in the world, our roots... For the dominant idolized language ignores the personality of the colonized speaker [38], falsifies his history, denies his freedom, and deports him out of himself. Accordingly, the colonized's idolizing of the dominated language, even though it might be beneficial in the early years of the cultural revolution, should absolutely not become the primary or unique objective of Creole writers writing in Creole. Idolized languages function like Nô theatre masks; these masks which endow actors with feelings, with faces, but also with alien personalities. For a Creole poet or novelist, writing in an idolized French or Creole is like remaining motionless in a place of action, not taking a decision in a field of possibilities, being pointless in a place of potentialities, voiceless in the midst of the echoes of a mountain. Having no language within the language, therefore having no identity. This in the field of writing, is being unable to achieve writing [39]. Aesthetically, it is dying.

Creoleness is not monolingual. Nor is its multilingualism divided into isolated compartments. Its field is language. Its appetite : all the languages of the world. The interaction of many languages (the points where they meet and relate) is a polysonic vertigo. There, a single word is worth many. There, one finds the canvas

of an allusive tissuse, of a suggestive force, of a commerce between two intelligences. Living at once the poetics of all languages is not just enriching each of them, but also, and above all, breaking the customary order of these languages, reversing their established meanings. It is this breech that is going to increase the audience of a literary knowledge of ourselves.

Being completely open to the whole linguistic spectrum offered by society, such is the state of mind with which we approached the issue of interlanguage, pedantically called " interlect ". But praising its fecundity does not occult our mistrust of its perils. Indeed, its fascinating appearance of transmutation, is in fact, the transgression, steeped in its ontological status, of the dividing line. Also provider of illusion, the interlectal material may seem to present genuineness when in fact there is nothing but the lascivious indulgence in clichés and stereotypes. In other words, being the agent of a multiple genius, the interlect might as well, if one looks close enough, be simply and purely the destroyer of genius. Every time that the interlect (thoughtful and omnipresent servant) helps prevent us from doing the critical job of writing, it constitutes the danger of a surreptitious but extremely efficient alienation. The French, so called " *Français-banane* ", which is to standard French what vulgar Latin is to classical Latin, constitutes undoubtedly what is most stereotypical in interlanguage, and that by which it irresistibly conveys ridicule. His instinctive fear of illegitimacy often dictated to Césaire the use of the most pure and measured

French idiom, enhanced by an impossible Creole, impossible because its literary status demanded yet to be invented. Glissant, for his part, never compromised with cliché interlect. Both of them taught us fair patience and the obstinate – though convulsive – quest for words. As for us, our defense of Creoleness will never be that of an idle and parasitic crouching. Now, a whole series of verbal productions can easily, if not carefully watched, turn successfully into epiphytic plants which, moreover, are prone to divert the river-language from its Creole mouth. We do keep in mind that the terms of exchange still remain unequal between French and Creole, both being exposed to different risks in case of an irresponsible management of the linguistic space. Our aim here is certainly not to prevent writers from exploring the interstices of French and Creole. Better, we believe that creative use of interlect might lead to an order of reality capable of preserving for our Creoleness its fundamental complexity, its diffracted referential space.

We realize, however, that there was a great risk of incommunicability involved in this issue. Indeed, many people have referred to our submersion in Creoleness, not to say in the Creole language, as a kind of burial in ourselves, in a too narrow specificity. They obviously forgot that to live a complex Creoleness is to live the world, or (to use one of Glissant's phrases) *the Whole-world.*

One of the hindrances to our creativity has been the obsessional concern with the Universal. Old syndrome of the colonized : afraid of being merely his depreciated self and ashamed of wanting to be what his master is, the colonized accepts therefore – supreme subtlety – the values of his masters as the ideal in the world. Hence exteriority vis-à-vis ourselves. Hence the defamation of the Creole language and the deep mangrove swamp of Creoleness. Hence – except for unique miracles – our aesthetic shipwreck. Creole literature will have nothing to do with the Universal, or this disguised adherence to Western values, it will have nothing to do with this concern with exhibiting the transparency of oneself, exhibiting oneself to the attractiveness of the obvious. We want to deepen our Creoleness in full consciousness of the world. *It is through Creoleness that we will be Martinicans. Becoming Martinicans, we will be Caribbeans, therefore Americans, in our own way.* It is through Creoleness that we will crystallize Caribbeanness, the ferment of a Caribbean civilization. We want to think the world as a polyphonic harmony : rational/irrational, finished/complex, united/diffracted... The complex thought of a Creoleness, itself complex, can and should help us in so doing. The Whole-world's life quivers with expressed Creoleness. It is the Whole-world in a particular dimension, and a particular form of the Whole-world.

The world is evolving into a state of Creoleness. The old national immovable organizations are being replaced by federations which in turn might not survive for long. Under the totalitarian universal crust, Diversity maintained itself in small peoples, small languages, small cultures [40]. The world standardized bristles, paradoxically, with Diversity. Everything being in relation with everything, visions embrace more, provoking the paradox of a general consensus around and a celebration of differences. And we believe that Babel is unlivable only for narrow spaces. That it won't bother the great voice of Europe if Breton is spoken in Britanny and Corsican in Corsica, that it won't be a concern for the unified Maghreb if Berber is spoken in Kabylia, if the Touaregs assert their ways. The capacity to incorporate Diversity has always been the privilege of great powers. Cultures melt and spread into subcultures which in turn generate other aggregates. To perceive the world today, a man or a woman's identity, the principle of a people or a culture, with the values of the eighteenth century or those of the nineteenth century would be an impoverishment. A new humanity will gradually emerge which will have the same characteristics as our Creole humanity : all the complexity of Creoleness. The son or daughter of a German and a Haitian, born and living in Peking, will be torn between several languages, several histories, caught in the torrential ambiguity of a mosaic identity. To present creative depth, one must perceive that identity in all its complexity. *He or she will be in the situation of a Creole.* That is what we have prefigured. Our submersion into our Creoleness, by means of Art,

is one of the most extraordinary and fairest ways of entering in relation with the world. Expressing Creoleness will be expressing the very *beings* of the world [41]. What we felt, our emotional experience, our pains, our uncertainties, the strange curiosity of what was thought to be our defects, will help in our achieved expression to build in diversity the harmonious Being of the world.

Creoleness liberates us from the ancient world. But, in this new turn, we will look for the maximum of communicability compatible with the extreme expression of a singularity. We call Creole the work of art which, celebrating within its coherence the diversity of meanings, will preserve the mark which justifies its pertinence regardless of how it is understood [42], where it is culturally perceived, or to what issues it is associated. Our submersion into Creoleness will not be incommunicable, but neither will it be completely communicable. It will not go without its opaqueness, the opaqueness we restore to the processes of communication between men [43]. Shutting ourselves in Creoleness would have contradicted its constitutive principle, and denied it. It would have transformed the initial emotion into some kind of hollow machinery, working uselessly, and in doing so getting poorer and poorer like those dominating civilizations, nowadays shattered. One of the conditions of our survival as Creoles (open-complex) is to maintain a consciousness of the world while constructively exploring our initial cultural complexity, and to insure that such a consciousness celebrates and enriches this exploration. Our primary diversity will be part of

an integrating process of world diversity, recognized and accepted as permanent our Creoleness will have to recover itself, structure itself, and preserve itself, while changing and absorbing. *It will have to survive in Diversity*[44]. Applying this double move will automatically favor our creative vitality. It will also prevent us from returning to the totalitarian order of the old world, fixed by the temptation of the unified and definitive. At the heart of our Creoleness, we will maintain the modulation of new laws, of illicit blendings. For we know that each culture is never a finished product but rather the constant dynamics on the lookout for genuine issues, new possibilities, and interested in relating rather than dominating, in exchanging rather than looting. Respectful. Cultures would have continued living such a dynamics if it wasn't for Western madness. Clinical sign : colonizations. A living culture, and especially Creoleness, is a permanent stimulation of convivial desire. And if we recommend to our artists this exploration of our singularities, that is because it brings back to what is natural in the world, outside the *Same* and the *One*, and because it opposes to Universality the great opportunity of a world diffracted but recomposed, the conscious harmonization of preserved diversities : DIVERSALITY.

APPENDIX

Creoleness and Politics

The claims of Creoleness are not just aesthetic in nature, as we saw, they also have important ramifications touching on all fields of activity in our societies, and especially the most fundamental ones : politics and economics. Indeed, Creoleness claims a full and entire sovereignty of our peoples without, however, identifying with the different ideologies which have supported this claim to date. This means that it distrusts, in the first place, some sort of primary Marxism which has it that cultural and therefore identity-related issues will find a solution once the revolution is achieved. Thus expressed, often in good faith, this theory, we must insist, has often prevented our political leaders and organizations from thinking seriously about the contents of a true Martinican, Guadeloupean, or Guyanese culture. We also want to distance ourselves from this somewhat narrow nationalism that perceives the Martinican as a stranger to the Guadeloupean, and vice versa. Without denying the differences between our peoples, we would like to say that what unites them is vaster than what opposes them, and that the task of a

defender of the Martinican people's sovereignty is also to reconcile his struggle as much as possible with that of the Guadeloupean or Guyanese peoples, and vice versa.

Creoleness sketches the hope for the first possible grouping within the Caribbean Archipelago : that of the Creolophone peoples of Haiti, Martinique, Saint Lucia, Dominica, Guadeloupe, and Guyana, a grouping which is only the prelude of a larger union of our Anglophone and Hispanophone neighbors. This is to say that, for us, the acquisition of an eventual monoinsulary sovereignty will be but a stage (a very brief one, we hope) in the process toward a Caribbean federation or confederation, the only way to stand up efficiently to the different hegemonic blocks that share the planet among themselves. In this perspective, we maintain our opposition to the present process of integration without popular consultation of the people of the so-called " départements français d'Amérique " to the European community. Our solidarity is first with our brothers of the neighboring islands and secondly with the nations of South America.

We remain persuaded that, having failed to incorporate in their strategy the reinstallation of our peoples within this Creole culture, miraculously forged during three centuries of humiliation and exploitation, our political leaders are preparing us for a grim future – states devoid of the most basic democratic principles, the only guarantee of economic development. This allows us to say that our preference is for a multipartisan, multiunionist, and pluralist regime, which breaks radically with the fantasies that are the providential man or the nation's father who did so much harm in many countries of the Third World and Eastern Europe. By this we are not adhering to the Western political models, we are simply recognizing that equality between people cannot be obtained in a durable fashion without the freedom of thinking, of writing, and of travelling that goes with it. For us, there are no *formal freedoms.* All liberties, provided they do not stand in the way of the functioning of society, are good.

Translated by M.B. Taleb-Khyar.

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for lack of readers : why in such conditions doesn't a writer modify the scope of his text, or simply abandon his means of expression? Only a single answer comes to mind : the writer had met the demands of the foreign literary world by choosing to adopt recognized forms of expression. He had also met the demands of a public who wanted him to deal with their problems. He fails on both sides for he is neither recognized nor read by his people... » (U. Fleishmann, *Écrivain et société en Haïti*, Centre de Recherches Caraïbes, 1976).

5. The revolt probably went along with the following type of argumentation of the colonialists : Before we arrived here, there was just an island and a few savages. We were the ones who brought you here. Here, there were no people, no culture, no civilization for us to colonize. You exist only by colonization, so where is colonization?

6. « Generally speaking the literature of a society spreads the models according to which the society perceives and evaluates itself. These models, at least in principle, support the actions of individuals and groups, and push them to espouse the images they draw. But for this to happen, a coherence between the ideal models and reality is necessary ; in other words these models must, at least partially, actualize in accessible time and space. The emergence of a committed literature is in relation with a society's refusal of its current reality : solicited by the public, the writer expresses models capable of guiding the audience toward the apprehension of a new reality. As for the Haitian writer (...) he shapes his ideal on that of the ex-metropole or another society, to the point of completely identifying with it. If Haitian reality is to become accessible to him, it must transform itself until it resembles this other reality. This divorce between daily life and the dreamed ideal prevents consequently the models from having any impact on reality. » (Fleishmann)

7. « It was, explains Glissant, during a lecture by Daniel Guérin read for the students of the Association générale des étudiants martiniquais in 1957 or 1958. Daniel Guérin who had just pleaded for a federation of the Caribbeans in his book *Les Antilles décolonisées*, was nonetheless surprised by this neologism which alluded to more than just a political agreement between Caribbean countries. »

« Reality is irrefutable : cultures springing up from the system of plantations, insulary civilization (where the Caribbean sea defracts, when, for example, it may be believed that a sea, also civilizing, such as the Mediterranean sea had, before all, powers of attraction and concentration) ; pyramidal population with African or Hindu origins

at the base, European ones at the summit ; languages of compromise ; general cultural phenomenon of creolization ; a vocation for reunion and synthesis ; persistence of African facts ; sugar cane, corn, and spice agriculture ; place of the combination of rhythms ; people of orality. This reality is virtual. Caribbeanness needs : to achieve the passage from the common lived experiences to the expressed consciousness ; to go beyond the intellectual postulation of the elites and to go along with the collective assertion supported by the actions of peoples. » (Glissant)

8. « The first ones who will rise and take off from your mouths the gag of a meaningless inquisition described as knowledge – and an exhausted sensibility, sign of our times, who will take all the room to the benefit of the sole poetic truth which is constantly fighting against imposture and permanently revolutionary, to you. » (René Char, *Recherche de la base et du sommet. Bandeau des matinaux*, Gallimard, 1950.)

9. The work of folklorists is absolutely necessary for the simple conservation of the elements of national heritage. People like Loulou Boislaville and others did a wonderful job in that respect.

10. The word "creole" seems to come from the Spanish word " crillo ", itself deriving from the Latin verb " criare " which means " to raise, to educate ". The Creole is the person who was born and raised in the Americas and who is not a native like American Indians. Very soon this term was applied to all the human races, all the animals and plants transported to America from 1492 on. There was, therefore, a mistake in French dictionaries which from the beginning of the nineteenth century reserved the word " Creole " for the white Creoles (or Béké) only. Anyway, etymology is, as everyone knows, a dangerous and uncertain field. There is, therefore, no need to refer to it in order to approach the idea of Creoleness.

11. « Creole appears as the best data allowing, in a dynamic and progressive way, *to frame* the identity of the Caribbean people and the Guyanese. Indeed, there is, beyond Creole languages and cultures, a Creole *matrix* (bway) which, on the universal level, transcends their diversity. » See GEREC, *Charte culturelle créole*, 1982.

12. The approach of the GEREC is, in this respect, interesting : « Creoleness dismisses all the " back-worlds " without pronouncing in favour of either one in order to construct the future on *transracial and transcultural bases* (...). Not just a network of cultures, Creoleness is the concrete expression of a civilization in the making. Its rough

and harsh genesis is at work in each of us (...) Creoleness is a magnetic pole to the attraction of which we – unless we want to lose our souls – are called to align our reflection and our sensibility. Its deepening at all levels of individual and social commitment might allow our societies to accomplish their *third great breech*, and this time not just on the mode of exclusion, but also on the community mode... » *(Ibid.)*

13. Martinican painter José Clavot demonstrated during a symposium devoted to Lafcadio Hearn (in 1987) that there could be a Creole perception of the chromatic range, which could be the foundation of a Creole pictorial aesthetics.

14. Creoleness should not be reduced to the mere Creole culture. It is Creole culture in its human and historical situation, but it is also an immediate *state* of humanity.

15. See Ina Césaire, *Contes de vie et de mort* (Nubia, 1976); Roland Suvélor (*Acoma* 3, Maspero, 1972); René Ménil and Aimé Césaire, *Tropiques* 4 (2nd ed. 1978); Glissant, *Le Discours Antillais*.

16. « As the system of plantations decomposes, popular culture disappears. Yet the production of tales, songs, sayings and proverbs does not disappear at once; it is replaced for some time by a beatific and somewhat self-satisfied consumption (...) Liberal and prestigious professions will be massively invested between 1946 and 1960 and soon saturated. During this long period when first towns are juxtaposed to the plantations (1850-1940) (...) literary texts are produced in the field of writing and thanks to this middle class. The orality of traditional literature is repressed by this wave of writing which *breaks from it.* The gap is enormous between, for example, the characteristics of the tale and the volutes of the neo-Parnassian poem. » (Glissant.)

17. « Its characteristics are given in such approach. The sudden changes of tone, the continuous breaking of the narration and its " slidings ", the accumulation of which gives the unequivocal measure of the whole. Psychological suddenness, or in fact the absence of any psychological description given as such. Psychology is the measure of those who have time. » (Glissant.)

« The economy of morality : the extreme finesse which consists in taking again and every time the same type of situation without ever proposing exemplary resolutions to it. The art of meandering. »

« Excessiveness, meaning first the absolute freedom of any paralysing fear of the practice of tautology. The art of repetition is new and rich. To keep rehearsing the text is a pleasure. Onomatopoeia or, more deeply, threnody, turn in the drunkenness of reality. The

relativity of the " victimary " which is not solem (...) The tale gave us the Us by expressing implicitly that we have to conquer it. »

18. « The historical situation here, is not a background, a decor before which human situations happen, it is in itself a human situation, an existential situation in the foreground. » (Milan Kundera, *L'Art du roman*, Gallimard, 1986.)

« Because historical memory is often erased, the Caribbean writer must search for this memory, from traces, sometimes hidden, that he had noticed in the real. Because Caribbean memory was marked with impoverishing barriers, the writer must be able to express all the opportunities when these barriers were partially broken. Because Caribbean time was stabilized in the nothingness of an imposed non-history, the writer must contribute to re-establishing its tormented chronology, or to reveal the rich vividness of a resumed dialectic between Caribbean nature and culture. » (Glissant.)

« As far as we are concerned, history as an active consciousness and history as a lived experience are not matters for historians only. Literature for us will not be divided in genres but it will involve all the approaches of the human sciences. »

19. « Our landscape is its own monument : its trace is visible from below. It's all history » (Glissant).

20. We do not mean to say that, armed with interior vision, fictional or poetic knowledge might be superior to scientific, historical, or transdisciplinary knowledge; we just want to emphasize the extent to which it, first, imposes itself, and then the intensity with which it can explore what the scientists cannot explore. It is not by chance that, in the case of Caribbean history, so many historians use literary quotes to convey principles they can only flirt with because of the very method they use. Artistic knowledge is a supplement to scientific knowledge when it comes to reaching the complexities of reality.

21. Glissant.

22. « For history is not just for us an absence, it is a vertigo. This time we never had, we must conquer. We do not see it withdrawing in our past and carrying us quietly toward the future, but suddenly springing in us by blocks, and we, transported in zones of absence, must with difficulty and pain recompose everything. » (Glissant.)

23. « The novel does not examine reality, it examines existence. And existence is not what happened, existence is the field of human possibilities, everything man might become, everything he is capable of. Fiction writers draw *the map of existence*, by discovering such and

such human possibility. But, again : to exist means : " to be in the world ". » (Kundera.)

24. Literature does not necessarily transform the world, at the most it helps understand some of its hidden deepness, thus contributing, like music and painting, at making it more livable, and at knowing it better. The writer, when writing, cannot be a militant, unionist, or a revolutionary if he does not want to be both a bad writer and a mediocre militant. We believe that a literature concerned with deciphering carefully our reality holds a strength of truth (and therefore of questioning) which is one hundred times more efficient than any act of denunciation or demonstration of axioms, however generous they might be. The valorization of our Creole daily experience should not be done through slogans but rather through an effort of poetization, for reality is in itself revolutionary when reviewed through the prism of a writing concerned with revealing its bases. That is why we believe that the best way of taking part in the old struggle our peoples are leading against the colonial or imperial constraints, is to consolidate in our writings this Creole culture that our oppressors have always tried to belittle.

25. « These literatures do not have time to evolve harmoniously, from the collective lyricism of Homer to the harsh dissections of Beckett. They must encompass everything at the same time, struggles, militantism, authenticity, lucidity, self-distrust, the absolute character of love, forms of the landscape, the bareness of cities, progresses, and obstinacies. It is what I call our burst into modernity (...) We do not have a mature literary tradition : we are born suddenly, I think that is an advantage and not an inconvenience. Cultural patina exasperates me when it is not founded in a slow flow of time. Cultural patina, when it is not the result of a tradition, turns into empty parochialism. We do not have time, we must bear everywhere the audacity of modernity. Parochialism is comfortable for he who does not establish his capital in himself, and it seems to me that we ought to erect our metropoles in ourselves. The burst into modernity, outside tradition, outside literary " continuity ", seems to me the specific characteristic of the American writer who wants to express the reality around him. » (Glissant.)

26. « Modernity begins with the search for an impossible literature. » (Roland Barthes, *Le Degré Zéro de l'écriture*, Seuil, 1972.)

« Some days one must not be afraid to name things impossible to

describe. » (Char.) « Only the edge of knowledge is moving. (A too persistent intimacy with the star, commodities are mortal.) » « We don't reach the impossible but it serves us as a lamp light. To be part of the leap. Not to be part of the feast, its epilogue. » (Char, *Fureur et Mystère*, Gallimard, 1962.)

27. « I mean by language here a structured and conscious series of attitudes toward (of relation or complicity with, of reactions against) the Language used by a community, regardless of whether this language is native, in the sense I mentioned, or threatened, or shared, or optative, or imposed. Languages creates relation, Language creates difference, both are precious. (Glissant.) You will build your language in all authorized languages. (E. Glissant, *L'Intention poétique*, Seuil, 1969.) I address you in your language and it is in my language that I understand you. »

28. A serious case of negative interaction : Creole language, Creole culture, Creoleness. Each, defamated, pulls the others in the defamation, some sort of infernal and mad machine : which was first affected and had to pull the others?

29. The period of the great hunt of Creole and Creolisms, it is still going on today but in a more sly form.

30. We must add the knowledge of Spanish and English, keys to our space.

31. We can only deplore the absence of a follow up on the call of the GEREC : « We strongly wish for the prompt establishment of a permanent structure capable of grouping and coordinating the work of researchers, teachers, artists, writers, organizers and administrators who would be willing to work together for the consolidation of our endangered culture. The creation of an Institute of Human Sciences and Creoleness (Gran Kaz pou wouchach Kréyol) is undoubtedly necessary. »

32. Vincent Placoly, *Les Antilles dans l'impasse. Des intellectuels antillais s'expliquent* (Ed. Caribéennes et l'Harmattan, 1976).

33. « Language is indeed the very foundation of culture. Beside languages all other systems are secondary and derivative. » (J. Jakobson, quoted by Umberto Eco, *L'œuvre ouverte*, Seuil, 1965.)

34. « Creole and French cannot be opposed on the generic mode of national language/colonizers' language; which does not mean that this precise relation is not a colonial relation. But precisely, all colonial relations are not identical. In spite of its dominant characteristic (on the social level), French has acquired a certain *legitimacy* in our

countries. If, in many respects, it is *a second language*, French cannot be considered, in Guadeloupe, Guyane, and Martinique, as a foreign language, with all the psychological implications of this notion. » (GEREC.)

35. Acadia, Quebec, Louisiana, the Maghreb, Francophone black Africa... Now autonomous, common languages cover today completely different problematics, indeed contrary : dominated language in Acadia, French is a dominant language in Martinique. If they were to sign this text, the Acadians would have begun by : " *we have decided not to be English...* ".

36. Here, it was called *fransé-bannann*. In this Martinican or Guadeloupean French, there is a dimension of misuse (bad knowledge of the language) and a dimension of appropriation (incorrectly called Creolism). Teachers and parents, mixing everything together, assassinated the responsible (and creative) use of the language, believing they were just reducing the misuse dimension. Besides, no one was interested in a creative use of the French language : keep your hands off the idol...

37. « It is not a question of creolizing French but of exploring the possible use (the creative practice) that the Martinicans might have of it. » (Glissant.) Neither is it a question of what the GEREC denounced : Attracted by « the French linguistic world, Caribbean and Guyanese intellectuals – writers in particular – develop an attitude either of reverence, or on the contrary, less frequently, of subversion toward the French language. In either case, their relation to this language remains eminently fetishist, sacred, religious (even when it is blasphemous). Maroonist ideology in literature is an attempt at justifying the breech with the Creole world and the establishment – often lucrative – in the Francophone linguistic system. It becomes then important to wrap oneself in the compensating prestige of the guerilla working in the heart of the enemy's citadel in order to design a so-called strategy of abduction (bawouf, Kouljanm), or misappropriation, of the master's language. »

38. Caribbean writers' use of French slang, slang which is already in itself an identity established in the language, is, it seems to us, a powerful cultural alienation. With the use of slang one goes outside the neutral field of the language and enters a particular dimension : one adopts both a vision of the world and a vision of the language itself.

39. « Language is below literature (...) Thus, under the name of

style, an autarkical language takes shape and immerses into the personal and secret mythology of the author, in this hypophysics of speech, where the first couple of words and things are formed, where the great verbal themes of existence take root once and for all (...). It is the Authority of style, or *the absolute link of language and its flesh double*, that imposes the writer as a freshness beyond history (...). The formal identity of the writer is finally established only outside the setting of the norms of grammar and the constants of style, where written continuity, first gathered and enclosed in a perfectly innocent linguistic nature, is finally going to become a total sign, the choice of a human behavior... » (Barthes.)

40. « I find it convenient to call "Diversity' all that which until today, was called strange, unusual, unexpected surprising, mysterious, amorous, superhuman, heroic, and even divine. All that which is Other. » (Victor Segalen, *Essai sur l'exotisme*, livre de poche, 1986.)

« Diversity which is not chaos or sterility, is the effort of the human mind toward a transversal relation, without any universalist transcendence. Diversity needs the presence of peoples, not as an object to sublimate, but as a project to relate. As Sameness began with the expansionist plundering in the West, Diversity saw the light of day with the armed political violence of peoples. As sameness reaches a peak *in* the ecstasy of individuals, Diversity is spread by the momentum of communities. As Otherness is the temptation of Sameness, Wholeness is the demand of Diversity. » (Glissant.)

41. « Even as a hypothesis, totality becomes easily totalitarian when it doesn't take *beings* into account. » (Glissant.)

42. « In fact, a form is esthetically valid precisely when it is considered from and understood according to many perspectives, when it manifests a great variety of aspects and resonances and still remains itself. » (Eco.)

43. « Let us begin with admitting this impenetrability. Let us not flatter ourselves for assimilating customs, races, nations, others; but on the contrary let us take pleasure in never being able to assimilate them; for then we will eternally secure the pleasure of feeling Diversity. » (Segalen.)

« The transliteration of works of arts operates according to rules which change so much that one does not really know how to express them. Some writers who might appear as hardly exportable because of the heavy foreign accent they keep even in the best translations, or because they owe their singularity to their narrowly local condi-

tions of life and creation, end up crossing the borders easily, and spreading in the vast world – sometimes at once, sometimes, on the contrary, well before they were recognized and understood in their national boundaries (as was the case for Kafka...). Other writers, on the other hand, who appear to be addressing men everywhere, thanks to a work devoid of local coloring and subtle idiotisms, stall indefinitely at the gates of the Universal Library and find no reception, not even from their nearest neighbors.» (Marthe Robert, *Livre de lectures*, Grasset, 1977.)

44. « Unity represents itself to itself only in diversity. » (Segalen.)

NOTES

1. « Surrealism appeared " positively " as bringing a questioning of the Western Society, a verbal liberation, a power for scandal; " negatively " it appeared as a factor of passivity (André Breton as master), a place of uncertain references (life, fire, the poet), the absence of critical thought in social issues, the belief in elect men. The relation was noted between the powers of the imaginary, the irrational, of madness and the blacks' power of the " elementary " *(Tropiques)*. It was also pointed out that Surrealism tends to reduce " particularities " and specificity, that it tends to erase, by simply negating them, the racial issues, that it maintains, therefore, paradoxically (and by a generous but abusive generalization) a tendency for Europeocentrism. » See E. Glissant, *Le Discours Antillais* (Éditions du Seuil, 1981).

2. Vernacular in *Et les chiens se taisaient* by Aimé Césaire; cf. the work in progress of Annie Dyck, Ph. D. diss., L'Université des Antilles et de la Guyane.

3. Which, in fact, amounted to placing oneself outside the black dimension of our Creole being. But what a chance it was at the time to find a soul better suited to the dominants of our topology! ... It was the time when many of our writers and artists flew to Africa thinking they were going to meet their selves.

4. Commitment which, in the final analysis, was one of the manifestations of exteriority: « The majority of the people questioned about literature in Haiti demand a commitment from the Haitian writer; very few of them had actually read be it a single book of this literature. And despite the writers' efforts, they had changed very little things in Haiti. The communication is constantly interrupted