



Shadowboxing in the Mangrove

Author(s): Richard Price and Sally Price

Source: *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Feb., 1997), pp. 3-36

Published by: Blackwell Publishing on behalf of the American Anthropological Association

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/656612>

Accessed: 23/08/2008 09:24

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=black>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1995 to build trusted digital archives for scholarship. We work with the scholarly community to preserve their work and the materials they rely upon, and to build a common research platform that promotes the discovery and use of these resources. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# Shadowboxing in the Mangrove

**Richard Price and Sally Price**

*Anse Chaudière, Martinique*

and

*College of William and Mary, Virginia*

Our space is the Caribbean . . . the estuary of the Americas.

—Édouard Glissant, *Le discours antillais*

During the past couple of decades, anthropologists have begun to understand the extent to which cultural criticism—particularly critiques that stress the constructedness of culture and tradition—runs political risks. As the title of a provocative essay by Jean Jackson asks, “Is there a way to talk about making culture without making enemies?” (1989). And an emerging literature makes patently clear that anthropological studies focused on nationalist ideologies face special challenges in this regard (see, for example, Handler 1993; Linnekin and Poyer 1990). The present essay, which is intended to complement other recent analyses of the reproduction of essentialist and masculinist notions in ostensibly antiracial and anticolonial discourse in the Caribbean (Segal 1994; Williams 1991; Yelvington 1995), offers a reading of some important recent texts from Martinique, which it attempts to historicize and contextualize ethnographically.

It may be useful for us to begin with a few words on our own subject position. As committed Caribbeanists, we share a vision of the region that was enunciated three centuries ago by Père Labat:

I have traveled everywhere in your sea of the Caribbean . . . from Haiti to Barbados, to Martinique and Guadeloupe, and I know what I am speaking about. . . . You are all together, in the same boat, sailing on the same uncertain sea . . . citizenship and race unimportant, feeble little labels compared to the message that my spirit brings to me: that of the position and predicament which History has imposed upon you. [Labat, cited in Lewis 1983:93]

The great Caribbeanist Gordon K. Lewis—who quoted this passage, not directly from Labat’s *Nouveau voyage aux isles de l’Amérique* (1722), but from a 1957 radio script written by George Lamming—commented that “the prophetic vision of that passage has never been far from the conscious surface of the Caribbean imagination” (Lewis 1983:338).

In addition to focusing our research interests on the region for 30-odd years, we have for the past decade made the Caribbean our home, living in a rural Martiniquan community we first knew through undergraduate fieldwork in the early 1960s. Like the Martiniquan writers whose ideas we consider in this article, we participate routinely in at least two realms of experience—that of the island’s day-to-day realities (from yam gardens and wakes to traffic jams and French TV) and that of a more internationally-oriented intellectual sphere, which operates through air travel, publishing, and far-flung academic networks. In short, we are not studying people out “there” from a home base back “here,” but rather engaging the intellectual agenda of people who are very much our peers in terms of their education, publishing involvements, and access to the media. Just as we comment on their work, they comment on ours (see, for example, Chamoiseau 1994c). The plea we make in these pages for a broadening of their vision, a fuller recognition of the region as an interconnected whole, does not advocate the replacement of one essentialism with another. Instead, we intend to be pointing toward conceptual openings that could, we believe, both complicate and enrich their acclaimed literary depictions of Martinique’s past, and its place within the wider Caribbean.

### **An Absence of Ruins**

In the post-Columbian Caribbean, history begins with rupture and pain. Violence, torture, and blood course through the works of the region’s great writers—from Carpentier, Césaire, and James to Lamming, Naipaul, Glissant, and Walcott. A character in one of Paule Marshall’s novels explains to visiting anthropologists, “Ah, well, ah, history. . . . Any of you ever study it? . . . Well, don’t if you haven’t. I did for a time—West Indian history it was and I tell you, it nearly, as we say in Bournehills, set out my head. I had to leave it off. It is a nightmare, as that Irishman said, and we haven’t awaked from it yet” (1969: 130).<sup>1</sup>

Colonized for more than five centuries, quintessentially Western, Caribbean peoples face the challenge of somehow recasting the modernist paradigm of progress, unashamedly triumphalist and Eurocentric. How at the same time to appropriate and subvert the central ideas associated with modernity? How to write in the colonizer’s language and assert one’s own vision of the world? How at once to represent and resist the March of History set in motion by Columbus? How to play off one part of oneself against another? Over the years, Caribbean intellectuals have rehearsed many of the difficulties, from the vitriolic queries of V. S. Naipaul:

How can the history of this West Indian futility be written? What tone shall the historian adopt? [1969:29]

or the pointed asides of Édouard Glissant about:

the loss of collective memory, the careful erasure of the past . . . the obscurity of this impossible memory. [1981:277; 1990:86]

to the stark assertions of Derek Walcott:

In time, the slave surrendered to amnesia [and] that amnesia is the true history of the New World. [1974:4]

or Orlando Patterson's conclusion:

The most critical feature of the West Indian consciousness is what Derek Walcott calls "an absence of ruins." The most important legacy of slavery is the total break, not with the past so much as with a consciousness of the past. To be a West Indian is to live in a state of utter pastlessness. [1982:258]

But these and other Caribbean writers have also pointed the way toward possible escapes. Carpentier, in the famous formulation emerging from his confrontation with the Haitian Revolution, proposed that the history of the Americas, "por los fecundos mestizajes que propició," is nothing "sino una crónica de lo real-maravilloso" [that fertile mixings have made the history of the Americas a chronicle of magic realism] (1964[1949]:12–13). In this same regard, Lamming reminds us of the redemptive potential of Caribbean folk wisdom: calypsonian Lord Kitchener, commenting on the Soviet triumph in space signaled by the launch of the sputnik, sang "Columbus didn't need no dog"—at once, Lamming hints, wryly acknowledging the hegemony of Western History (the definition of Columbus as a Great Man) and effectively subverting it (along with its triumphalist narrative of Western progress) through carnivalesque ridicule (1992[1960]:77; see also Gikandi 1992:58). Similarly, Wilson Harris has criticized the intellectual West Indian perspective that stresses an absence of ruins or a sense of pastlessness in the folk thought of the Caribbean, calling on historians to seek out "an inner time," to break out of the traditional "high-level psychological censorship of the creative imagination" that has hamstrung critical Caribbean scholarship: "I believe," he writes, that "a philosophy of history may well lie buried in the arts of the imagination" (1981:24–25, 28–29). Glissant, who conjures up the need for "a prophetic vision of the past," asserts that "the struggle against a single History, and for a cross-fertilization of histories, means at once repossessing one's true sense of time and one's identity. It also means posing in an entirely new way the question of power" (1981:132, 159). Walcott's advice is complementary: "History remains for the Caribbean the territory of the imagination and memory, and that imagination is not innocent but experienced" (1989:6); "The children of slaves must sear their memory with a torch" (1970:5); and "The truly tough aesthetic of the New World neither explains nor forgives history" (1974:2).<sup>2</sup>

### Contextualizing the *Créolistes*

The tiny island of Martinique—which one recent student has dubbed the “Isle of Intellectuals” (Taylor n.d.)—has already made a disproportionate contribution to these debates. Politically and economically, today’s Martinique, like its sister territories Guadeloupe and Guyane, stands out from its Caribbean neighbors by being part of Europe, lending its cultural politics a particular complexity. In the thirties, Aimé Césaire’s explosive *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* announced the birth of *négritude*, and a new poetics of resistance, written in what was at once extraordinarily powerful, masterful, and subversive French, began to spread its message wherever colonized peoples still suffered. One of Césaire’s students in Fort-de-France’s Lycée Schoelcher, although choosing prose rather than poetry, continued the literary assault in a yet more militant vein and was quickly heard round the world: Frantz Fanon.<sup>3</sup> And Édouard Glissant, a near contemporary of Fanon at the lycée, remains a major contributor to world literature and theory through his wide-ranging essays, poetry, and novels focused on neocolonial and postcolonial realities.

Nearly a decade has passed since a set of newcomers announced their arrival upon this scene. In 1986, Patrick Chamoiseau, a young Martiniquan writer, startled the French literary world with *Chronique des sept misères*, generally considered the first work of the *créolité* movement.<sup>4</sup> That novel was soon followed by a manifesto, *Éloge de la créolité* (1989), coauthored by Jean Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant, and then by a canon-fixing history of French Antillean literature (Chamoiseau and Confiant 1991) as well as a flood of prizewinning novels by Chamoiseau and Confiant.<sup>5</sup> Most recently, the world premiere of *L’Exil de Béhanzin* (1995), a film whose screenplay was written by Chamoiseau, elicited active local debate of the *créolistes*’ perspectives, continuing the heavy mediatization (television, radio, magazines, newspapers) that has come to accompany every new contribution to the movement; in May 1995, *L’Exil de Béhanzin* was crowned with a prize at the francophone film festival in Montréal.

Despite the widespread—and in our view well-deserved—praise for Chamoiseau’s and Confiant’s novels (see, for just one example, the articles collected in Arnold 1994a), little critical attention has been devoted to their ideas about the Caribbean and its past. Perhaps the time is ripe for a brief review of the *créoliste* agenda—particularly as it concerns the revisioning of history.

The *Éloge de la créolité* is a praise-song for a creole identity that is not defined by someone else, an embracing of all the strands that have contributed to the making of the Antillean. The past, it argues, requires radical re-visioning:

Our History, or more precisely our histories, are shipwrecked within Colonial History. Collective memory must be our priority. What we once believed to be Caribbean history is no more than the History of Colonization of the Caribbean. Beneath the shock waves of French history, beneath the Great Dates marking the arrival and departure of colonial governors, beneath the uncertainties of colonial struggles, beneath the standard white pages of the official Chronicle (where the torches of our revolts appear only as tiny blotches), there was our own obstinate

trudging-along. The opaque resistance of maroons united in their refusal. The new heroism of those who confronted the hell of slavery, using obscure codes of survival, indecipherable means of resistance, an impenetrable variety of compromises, unexpected syntheses for living. . . . Within this false consciousness we had but a bunch of obscurities for memory, a feeling of bodily discontinuity. Landscapes, Glissant reminds us, stand alone as inscriptions, in their non-anthropomorphic way, of at least some of our tragedy, of our will to exist. Which means that our history, or histories, are not totally accessible to historians. . . . It is no accident that, when it comes to Caribbean history, so many historians use literary citations to try to grasp principles that they can only graze with their usual methodology. . . . Only poetic knowledge, romantic knowledge, literary knowledge, in short, artistic knowledge can reveal us, perceive us, bring us back, evanescent, to a reborn consciousness. [Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant 1993[1989]:36–38]

When the créolistes acknowledge intellectual antecedents at all, their references are almost exclusively francophone. In this paper, we suggest that a consideration of their program within the context of a broader Caribbean historiography may be useful. At the time that the créoliste movement emerged, in the mid-1980s, related perspectives, many centered in the anglophone Caribbean just next door, had been widely discussed for at least two decades. As a metaphor or model for the development of Caribbean culture, “creolization” (a concept originally borrowed from historical linguistics) had long been debated and proclaimed by Caribbean writers and artists as well as Caribbeanist social scientists. (For a sampling of this extensive literature, see the essays, dating from the fifties onward, collected in Brathwaite 1993 and, for other British Caribbean references, Walmsley 1992; for the Hispanic Caribbean, see Fernández Retamar 1989 and González 1980; for diverse pan-Caribbean antecedents, including Martí and Toussaint, see Gikandi 1992:16–17, and of course Ortiz 1940, as well as Mintz and Price 1992[1976], which includes relevant social science bibliography.) Even within the bounds of the francophone world, a model stressing the “interpenetration of civilizations” had been used as early as the 1950s to interpret the cultural history of (Afro-)Brazil (see Bastide 1960), though the créolistes do not acknowledge it. Not to mention the competing metaphors of hybridity, *mestizaje*, et cetera, that were being so hotly debated by intellectuals from Ghana and Mexico to the Indian subcontinent, and even in metropolitan France (see, for example, the essays collected in Appiah 1992, Bhabha 1994, García Canclini 1990, Todorov 1993), at the very moment when the créolistes burst onto the scene. Setting their ideas within an insular intellectual history of Martinique, the créolistes have been able to underscore their difference from earlier generations. But in a more international Caribbean context, the major programmatic claims of the créolistes were already, when first stated, widely acknowledged.

While the predominantly adulatory reception by metropolitan French critics of créoliste novels has tended to focus on their stylistically innovative contributions to French language and literature,<sup>6</sup> the writers themselves tend to emphasize, rather, their special vision—political, historical, linguistic, and

cultural—of Martinique and its place in the world. In contrast to their collective father figure Aimé Césaire (whose *négritude* they criticize as an overprivileging of worldwide Africanity), or their elder brother figure Édouard Glissant (whose *antillanité* they characterize as focusing too exclusively on the mere adaptation of Old World peoples to a new Caribbean environment), the *créolistes* see themselves as stressing the historical interpenetration of peoples and cultures that produced the creation of a truly new, syncretic, creole culture. They argue, for example, that when the African migrants arrived, they were “naked” culturally, “with their only baggage nebulous traces lodged in the folds of their memory” (Chamoiseau and Confiant 1991:37). They write of

All these peoples precipitated into the crucible of the Caribbean archipelago . . . in which no synthesis occurred but rather a kind of hesitant *métissage*, always contested, always chaotic, carrying anthropological densities across vaporous borders, bathing in a creole space that was almost amniotic. . . . [After a certain time, these people had become] *créole*—that is, already multiple, already mosaic’d, already unpredictable. [Chamoiseau and Confiant 1991:51, 38]

And they proclaim themselves to be “[n]either Europeans nor Africans nor Asians . . . but Creoles . . . at once Europe and Africa, enriched by contributions from Asia, the Levant, and India, and including also survivals from Pre-Columbian America” (Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant 1993[1989]: 13, 27)<sup>7</sup>—thus disregarding Glissant’s stricture that “creolization as an idea is not primarily the glorification of the composite nature of a people,” but rather “a cross-cultural process . . . an unceasing process of transformation” (1981:25, 52).<sup>8</sup>

In the service of their identitarian quest, the *créolistes* rewrite central aspects of the Caribbean past. For example, in order to highlight the processual importance of the “crucible” of the plantation (where, they argue, their new culture was forged), they deny that “immigrants”—whether African slaves or African, Indian, or Chinese laborers—had experienced any sort of “diversity” in their own homelands; for each such immigrant “group,” their particular Old World is seen as a cultural monolith. Moreover, the French Antillean plantation is depicted as a relatively “gentle” institution in the broader Caribbean context: masters and slaves are said to have worked side by side, both suffering the deprivations of displacement, and engaging in frequent cultural interchange; truly “harsh” slavery is displaced onto other colonial powers, like the Spanish, English, or Dutch (see, for example, Chamoiseau and Confiant 1991:35–41).<sup>9</sup>

As for maroons (the rebel slaves who had been so heavily romanticized during the heyday of the *négritude* movement), the *créolistes* tend to view them as having in a sense taken the easy way out by abandoning the plantation hotbed of creolization and simply “americanizing,” adapting to a new environment rather than fully “creolizing” (Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant 1993[1989]:30; Chamoiseau and Confiant 1991:34, 39). Like the Anglo-Saxon colonists in North America, East Indian indentureds in Trinidad, or Italian immigrants in 19th-century Argentina, they assert, the Saramaka and “Boni” (Aluku) Maroons of the Guianas merely adapted to the new physical environ-

ment of the Americas without engaging, as their enslaved brethren did, in the much more complex cultural interaction with other parts of the population that constitutes, for the créolistes, the essence of the process of creolization (Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant 1993[1989]:30–32).<sup>10</sup> By understating the tremendous diversity of African cultures and languages represented in any early Caribbean colony—and in the communities of these very maroons at the outset—the créolistes obscure the ways in which these maroon communities were, in fact, the most thoroughly (and earliest fully) “creolized” of *all* New World communities. For the central creolization process in those maroon societies was inter-African syncretism (which is based on the multiplicity of African cultures/languages involved), combined with less substantial interactional contributions from Europeans, Amerindians, and others (see, for example, R. Price 1990; S. and R. Price 1980). The créolistes, however, depict maroons as somewhat uncultured isolationists “on the margins of general [historical] processes . . . spiritually mired in times past, with their loincloths, spears, and bows . . . their bamboo bracelets, eagle feathers, earrings, and designs traced in ashes on their faces” (Chamoiseau 1992:107, 142).

For the créolistes, the real heroes of the historical narrative are the plantation slaves who, “secure in their secret dignity, often laid the groundwork for what we are today, and did so more effectively than many a maroon” (Chamoiseau and Confiant 1991:61).<sup>11</sup> More specifically, it is the *conteur* (storyteller) who replaces the maroon as the heroic figure par excellence. The *conteur*, “among the most docile of slaves,” has “almost the quality of an Uncle Tom, whom the master doesn’t fear,” which allows him to spread a subversive message of day-to-day resistance through all manner of verbal ruse (Chamoiseau and Confiant 1991:56–64; see also Chamoiseau 1988a, 1988b; Confiant 1995a, 1995d). Here again, we miss a pan-Caribbean perspective, for the créolistes fail to acknowledge that the *conteur* whom they enshrine has long been a central figure in the landscape of critical thinking about the Caribbean, a well-documented subspecies of what Roger Abrahams calls the Man-of-Words (1983). It is perhaps no accident that the créolistes choose to portray their own literary activities as those of modern-day *marqueurs de paroles*, “markers of speech”) in much the same way that Césaire and his followers have viewed themselves as metaphorical maroons. If today’s Martinique, with its deep imbrication in France/Europe, can be conceptualized in an analogous mode to a slave community within an all-encompassing plantation system, then a self-proclaimed *marqueur de paroles*, the agent of a ruse-based subversiveness comparable to that of the slave-era *conteur*, becomes a more appropriate contemporary figure of resistance than the fiery rebel of yore.

J. Michael Dash’s recent study (1995) has helped to open our eyes to the very great extent to which the créoliste vision of the Caribbean past is directly indebted to ideas embedded in the novels of Glissant.<sup>12</sup> These include a privileging of the *conteur*, who resists imaginatively and from within the community, over the figure of the maroon, who tends to be inward-turning and isolationist; an identification between *conteur* and narrator; an insistence on the impossibil-

ity of *marronage* in the Martinique of tourism and shopping malls; and the need to develop more generalized, modest forms of resistance. Dash emphasizes that Glissant's narratives are not about "a glorification of those who resisted over those who collaborated . . . [but about] mutual interdependence and the emergence of a composite, creole culture" (1995:84) and he bluntly criticizes the *Éloge de la créolité* for its "tendency to turn Glissant's ideas into ideological dogma . . . in terms that are suggestively reductionist" (1995:23). He goes on to argue that this new dogma of *créolité*

is tempted to produce its own rhetoric, its own approved texts, its own hierarchy of intellectuals and a new heroics of *marronage*, orality and popular discourse. It lacks the ironic self-scrutiny, the insistence on process ("creolisation" and not "*créolité*") that is characteristic of Glissant's thought. Indeed, despite its avowed debt to Glissant, *Éloge de la créolité* risks undoing the epistemological break with essentialist thinking that he has always striven to conceptualise. [1995:23]

### *Diversalité*

The *créolistes*' ideological agenda encourages them to depict Martinique—in both the past and the present—as brimming with diversity (often referred to in their writing as *Diversalité* [e.g., Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant 1993(1989):54; Chamoiseau and Confiant 1991:204]). "*Créolité*," declares the *Éloge de la créolité*, "is the interactional or transactional aggregate of Carib, European, African, Asian, and Levantine cultural elements, which the yoke of history has harnessed together on the same soil. . . . We want, in the true spirit of *créolité*, to . . . explore our Amerindian, Indian, Chinese, and Levantine origins and find their rhythms in the beating of our hearts" (Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant 1993[1989]:26, 40). Various markers of (and discourses of) color, class, race, and ethnicity—but not gender, see below—are enlisted in the service of this celebration of diversity. During a public debate broadcast in part on television, for example, Confiant expressed pleasure at having grown up among "*békés* [white creoles of the planter class], *chabins* [people—like Confiant himself—whose physiognomy juxtaposes 'negroid' and 'European' features, such as kinky hair and a broad nose with light skin and green eyes], *milats* [mulattos, which is also a class designation], and *coulis* [descendants of Indians from the subcontinent]" (September 25, 1993). In their historical schema, Chamoiseau and Confiant essentialize Martiniquan maroons and slaves as two "ethnic groups" (1991:39), and trace social changes in mid-20th-century Martinique to the action of "everybody—white, black, mulatto, of Carib ancestry, *chabin*, or Indian" (1991:44). In other words, they foster an illusion of diversity by peopling the island with a reified set of categories drawn from crosscutting kinds of schemata (class, "race," national origin, et cetera).<sup>13</sup>

However, from a broader Caribbeanist perspective, the society of Martinique looks anything but diverse. Even people from smaller islands might well be inclined to share Walcott's gaze on the place: "I memorize the atmosphere in Martinique / as comfortable colonial—tobacco, awnings, Peugeotts, pink gendarmes . . . / their nauseous sense of heritage and order" (1987:75).

Anyone with comparative experience in the Americas (and especially in such Caribbean places as French Guiana, Belize, Trinidad, or Suriname) would be hard-pressed to see the Martinique in which *Confiant* grew up as especially differentiated internally—ethnically, racially, or culturally. In the context of other Caribbean settings—whether particular islands (even small ones like St. Croix or Sint Maarten/Saint Martin) or diasporic spaces like New York or Toronto, Miami, Paris, or London—Martinique emerges culturally, racially, ethnically, and economically, rather, as *relatively* homogeneous.

The créolistes' lack of a pan-Caribbean perspective, in any but a superficial programmatic sense, combined with a (French-inspired) notion that one nation normally equals one culture, leads them to be genuinely intrigued when they discover that, in the French Antilles, things are different. The idea of multiple identities then becomes, not the normal (human or Caribbean) state of affairs, but a phenomenon in need of explanation, and celebration.

Who could ever have imagined that the epic of the Ramayana, an ancient text thousands of years old, fixed forever in the canon of Indian literature, would be able to find an eagerly receptive audience among the young Creole-Indian storytellers of Martinique or Guadeloupe? Who would have thought that the mysteries of the long-gone [*sic*] Caribs would find a place in the words of the old Creole storytellers in Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Guyane? . . . Who?! [Chamoiseau and *Confiant* 1991:51]

Meanwhile, Cubans with Andalusian ancestry or “East Indian” Trinidadians have, in the créolistes' vision of the Caribbean, “simply adapted” to a new environment, “without really creolizing” (Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and *Confiant* 1993[1989]:32). In claiming that “as Creoles,” they are “closer, anthropologically speaking,” to the people of the Seychelles, Mauritius, or Réunion than, for example, to Puerto Ricans or Cubans (Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and *Confiant* 1993[1989]:32–33), they neglect to recognize the fundamentally creole and Caribbean nature of Puerto Rican and Cuban cultures. Moreover, their claim to “anthropological closeness” masks what might be more directly attributed to the workings of empire.

The créolistes' insularity—their willful nonengagement with both the non-French Caribbean and nonfrancophonic scholarship—colors their understandings of the Caribbean past in a number of domains.<sup>14</sup> The development of local language provides an apt illustration. (Given that one of the authors of the *Éloge de la créolité*, Bernabé, is not only a linguist but a specialist in creole languages, this aspect of their project is particularly noteworthy.) In *Lettres créoles*, Chamoiseau and *Confiant* offer a revisionist explanation of the development of Martiniquan Creole (1991:52–56). They posit that, in the “beginning” (which they locate between 1625 and 1675–80), colonists from the northwest of France, particularly Normandy and Anjou—at a time, they remind us, when the “French” language was still largely confined to the Ile-de-France and Racine had difficulty making himself understood beyond Lyon—confronted Africans who spoke different languages. They then “destroy the myth” that the

absence of r's in Creole stems from blacks not being able to pronounce that sound, asserting instead that "this phonetic trait [of Creole] stems from the Norman colonists—solely from them—and not from the Africans since, as everyone knows, whatever their native language, they roll their r's almost like Arabs"; to support this claim, they cite a 1908 dictionary of Anjou speech that gives *pourmener* for *promener*, *célébral* for *cérébral*, and *flamaçon* for *francmaçon* (Chamoiseau and Confiant 1991:54–55). Their explanation of why Antilleans allegedly cannot pronounce *s* when followed by a consonant again draws on the Anjou dictionary which, through examples such as *espirituel* for *spirituel*, allows them to derive the trait from that part of France. After further examples of this sort, they conclude that "Four-fifths of all so-called anomalies of Creole pronunciation, compared to French, are not due to the blacks but simply to the dialects of the first white colonists," and that the same holds for lexical contributions (1991:55). They argue that "The language of the Caribs, the languages of West Africa, and the Tamil of the Indians also contributed to Creole, particularly on the lexical plane," and cite a handful of Amerindian botanical lexemes, magico-religious African ones, and a few "from the cuisine transported from south India" (1991:55), concluding, "Thus, this language born on the plantations reflects in its phrases the diversity of the world" (1991:56).

Although creole linguistics is hardly devoid of controversy, there are certain basics that can be safely stated. One is that for scholars who, like the créolistes, adopt a historicist (rather than a bio-program) explanation, the role of African languages on both syntactic and phonological levels is fundamental. Furthermore, the very common substitution of l's for r's in a wide range of non-French-related creole languages (such as Ndyuka or Saramaccan) can in no way be explained by recourse to the pronunciation patterns of Normans. In their discussion of the development of Creole, the créolistes' insularity limits their ability to arrive at a persuasive narrative of the Caribbean past.<sup>15</sup>

The créoliste vision stresses, as part of its depiction of diversalité, that Martinique is neither monolingual nor diglossic, but rather truly "multilingual" (or "polyglot"): "*Créolité* itself is multilingual. . . . Its domain is Language. Its appetite: all the languages of the world" (Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant 1993[1989]:48). Building on this linguistic claim, and insisting that Martinique is "intrinsically multicultural," Confiant, for example, evokes

the illiterate cane cutter who, to cure a malady, goes to Catholic mass in the morning, participates in a Hindu ceremony in the afternoon, and consults a black *quimboiseur* in the evening . . . [as well as] the semi-literate fisherman who inscribes "Ecce homo," "Agnus Dei," or "Kyrie eleison" on his fishing craft, showing that he possesses the intuition of multilingualism. . . . All this amidst a population of fishermen who speak only Creole, in a [French] *département* where the official language is French! [1993a:61]

"The whole world," proclaims the *Éloge de la créolité*, "is evolving toward a condition of *créolité*," toward a "new dimension of man of which we are the

prefiguration in silhouette” (Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant 1993[1989]: 51, 27).<sup>16</sup>

### Modernization and “Pastifying” in Martinique

In contrast to most literary critics, who accept the créolistes’ self-definition as intellectual rebels (see, for example, Burton 1993; Scarboro 1992), we would argue that much of the ideology of the créolité movement, from its emphasis on the role of French (as opposed to African languages) in the development of Creole to its championing of ethnic diversity, fits comfortably within its historical moment. Indeed, we believe that, in terms of cultural politics, the kinds of specificities championed by the créolistes are in step with a rapidly modernizing Martinique in which people are, with considerable coaching from France, adjusting to their new place within a greater Europe.

Since the 1960s, the island world of Martinique has been undergoing a fundamental transformation, responding to French-mandated programs designed to bring it and its sister neocolonies into line with Europe in terms of roads, electricity, telephones, piped water, airports, hotels, golf courses, marinas, social programs (a panoply of welfare benefits, pensions, and unemployment insurance), residential construction (tripling the standard size of houses even as family size began to plummet), cars (bringing the per capita ownership to levels rivaling the United States), supermarkets, appliance stores, and other large-scale consumer offerings (INSEE 1995). Agriculture has atrophied while service industries and the civil service have mushroomed. As the landscape has been transformed, the environment has suffered fierce degradation. The media have been modernized, making the French language an omnipresent part of everyone’s daily life. Greater Fort-de-France has grown to represent nearly half the island’s population, and massive numbers of Antilleans have been lured to the metropole by official French programs designed to fill particular employment niches, with the result that some 40 percent of the “Antillean population” are now settled in the hexagon (Marie 1986).

This unusually rapid modernization, imposed from the metropole, is profoundly assimilationist in spirit. And it demands the concomitant rejection of much of Martiniquan culture as it had developed during the previous three centuries—at least as a viable way of life for today’s forward-looking generation. One television advertisement ridicules the country bumpkin, visiting his bourgeois cousins, who grates fruit to make juice rather than buying it readymade in a carton at the supermarket, and another ridicules the simpleton who hacks at trees with a machete when a gasoline-powered brushwacker could fell them at the touch of a button. Such promotional campaigns have successfully created a whole range of “needs,” such as electronic front gates, home security systems, travel agents, and canned dog food, that were virtually unknown just two decades ago. And, in terms of values and self-perception, Martiniquans have been encouraged to situate themselves as thoroughly modern, bourgeois members of the First World (and Europe), and to look with benevolent condescension upon,

say, Haitians, Saint Lucians, or Brazilians as their disadvantaged and backward Third World neighbors.

Despite all this, Martiniquans (most Martiniquans) do not feel fully French. Nor, of course, do most French people consider them to be. At best, they are French-with-a-difference, because of the racial discrimination they confront at every turn. In Paris, Antilleans are routinely confounded with, for example, illegal Malian immigrants in police sweeps of the subway. And at home, where white immigrants from metropolitan France now constitute more than 10 percent of the island's residents, the battle for who "owns" Martinique is played out through hundreds of minor confrontations each day: a retired metropolitan gendarme complains to the police about the loud music at a Martiniquan restaurant next door and a highly-politicized court case centered on charges of racism ensues; a Martiniquan protests that a tourist has blocked the entrance to his house with his rented car and a fistfight breaks out; and disputes flair up with regularity over the hiring of metropolitan workers for local construction projects or in civil service positions. For Martiniquans, these kinds of incidents are tremendously charged, and leave unresolved the personal tension inherent in being simultaneously Martiniquan and French.

France's modernization project has also created an avid thirst in Martinique for representations of "the traditional society we have forgotten in our rush to modernity . . . *la Martinique profonde*" (E. H-H. 1992:44-45), and attempts to quench it are visible everywhere. Two recently opened museums are devoted to depictions of life in the 1950s, thus "permitting the new generation to discover the scenes their ancestors knew"—one even brings the scenes to life through Sunday appearances by a folkloric dance group who play the part of traditional villagers from "that bygone era" (Staszewski 1993:48-50). Celebration of the *patrimoine* permeates the local press, radio, and television, animated by artists, musicians, dancers, tale-tellers, writers, theater groups, and cultural associations (see Cottias 1992). Mass-media publications, whether directed at Martiniquan households or at tourists to the island, promote a nostalgic image, in words and pictures, of a sterilized "traditional" way of life. The current telephone directory, for example, includes a heavily illustrated five-page section on "traditional housing" in Martinique (France Télécom 1994:55-59) that is very similar to the much more detailed folklorized depiction of the island in the lavish *Guide Gallimard* (Gallimard 1994). In the same spirit, commercialized folklore is available at every village fête and large hotel, and it floods the airwaves.

Two decades ago, Glissant argued that cultural symbols of Martiniquan identity—music and dance, the Creole language, local cuisine, carnival—take on remarkable power in such contexts by fostering in people the illusion that they are representing themselves, that they are choosing the terms of their "difference," while at the same time obscuring the rapidity and completeness of the assimilationist project. This focus on *le culturel* and *le folklore*, he wrote, serves both the assimilators and the assimilating by lulling the latter into complacency and helping to mask the crushing force of the *mission civilisatrice* (1981:213). Richard Burton, following Glissant (1981), describes how the agricultural (and

in some communes, fishing) base on which traditional creole culture was founded “has been eroded beyond all possibility of restoration, leaving that culture—where it survives at all—increasingly bereft of any anchorage in the actual lived experience of contemporary French West Indians and, as such, subject to a fatal combination of folklorization, exoticization, and commodification” (1993:7–8). The modern Martiniquan, he argues, is “as much a spectator of his or her ‘own’ culture as the average tourist: ‘culture,’ like everything else in Martinique today, is, it seems, something to be consumed rather than actively produced in a living human context” (1993:7–8).

In our view, there is a tendency for the literary works of the créolistes<sup>17</sup> to be complicitous with the celebration of a museumified Martinique, a diorama’d Martinique, a picturesque and “pastified” Martinique that promotes a “feel-good” nostalgia for people who are otherwise busy adjusting to the complexities of a rapidly modernizing lifestyle.<sup>18</sup> Confiant’s Creole-language novel “*Kòd Yanm*” (1986), recently translated into French as *Le gouverneur des dés* (1995c), may serve as illustration. The novel presents a virtual *tableau vivant* of a picturesque 1950s Martinique. All the cultural diacritics of a soon-to-disappear local culture are foregrounded, including (and this is a selective list) the *major* (“the braggart respected by every segment of this multi-ethnic island society—the great white planters, the petit bourgeois mulattos, the Black and Indian sugar-cane workers”) (Confiant 1995c: back cover) with his four women (a legal wife and three others) and countless children spread throughout the island; men’s ritual boasting/toasting (about a rival’s relatives, including his momma); cockfights; rumshops; men’s crapshooting at *fêtes patronales*; a wake, with its conteurs; snakebite and its non-Western cure; *séyansyé/séanciers* (specialists in *la magie antillaise*); Creole disease concepts (e.g., *blès*) that do not correspond to Western categories; charcoal making; *dôwlis* (a local incubus); the *koudmen* (communal work parties, with their call-and-response singing); a distinctive *couli* (East Indian) culture, with its rituals and especially its cuisine;<sup>19</sup> the characteristic behavior, dress, and speech of *bétjé/békés*, *milat/mulâtres*, *chaben/chabins*, white *jandanm-a-chouval/gendarmes-à-cheval*, and Chinese shopkeepers; martial arts combats (*danmyé* or *ladja*), with drumming;<sup>20</sup> as well as countless ethnographic details, duly explicated, such as the fact that traditionally, Martiniquan men and women do not kiss or hold hands in public.

In terms of “pastifying,” Confiant’s novel is a veritable tour de force,<sup>21</sup> an illustration of Burton’s comment that “Créolité is in practice often retrospective, even regressive, in character, falling back, in a last desperate recourse against decreolization, into the real or imagined plenitude of *an tan lontan* (olden times)” (1993:23). Indeed, Confiant himself openly acknowledges what he refers to as his “patrimonial duty,” his determination to preserve for posterity these disappearing or already-disappeared institutions that give Martinique its cultural specificity (Confiant in Taylor 1997).<sup>22</sup> But in this regard, the créoliste movement nonetheless seems ensnared in one of the traps of modernization, almost inevitably risking the kind of “patrimonialization” of which Walcott wrote: “Stamped on that image is the old colonial grimace of the laughing nig-

ger, steelbandsman, carnival masker, calypsonian and limbo dancer . . . trapped in the State's concept of the folk form . . . the symbol of a carefree, accommodating culture, an adjunct to tourism" (1970:7).<sup>23</sup>

There is reason to believe that the créolistes would concur with the main lines of our description and analysis of the changes taking place in Martinique. From Chamoiseau's *Chroniques des sept misères* (1986) to Confiant's *La savane des pétrifications* (1995e), and in countless public statements, they have underscored the ongoing process that might be glossed as the consensual rape of Martinique. All this does not leave today's *engagé* writers as much room for maneuver as they might wish. Gone is the righteous anger of Césaire's anticolonialism; gone is the scalpel with which Glissant dissected the heart of 1960s-style French neocolonialism. "Our present," said Confiant recently, "isn't tragic like Rwanda's or Haiti's—no one is dying of hunger in Martinique. Nor is our situation pathetic or dramatic. It is rather comic and absurd" (Confiant in Kwateh 1994). And part of this "absurdity" is that, despite their quasi-independentist rhetoric, the créolistes by and large benefit from the several kinds of mystifications described by Glissant. For they remain at one and the same time social critics railing against French domination *and* beneficiaries of lucrative literary prizes from Paris, both the champions of a fast-disappearing "traditional" Martinique *and* unchallenged masters of the modern media, expertly harnessing local television, radio, and newspapers for the promotion of their literary careers.

### Sexual Politics

The créolistes' "common sense" about gender strongly colors their representation of the island's past and present. In a recent set of reflections from the perspective of literary criticism, A. James Arnold takes the créolistes to task for their stance on gender and sexuality, arguing that their novels depict cultural production as an exclusively masculine activity, restricting the proper sphere of women to reproduction and venal sexual activity (1994b:16–17).<sup>24</sup> He goes on to argue that the créolistes have backed themselves into a corner, where the orthodoxy they preach leaves no room for the kind of creative freedom enjoyed by their less overdetermined sisters—writers like Maryse Condé or Simone Schwarz-Bart whose novels are "characterized by greater openness to the wider world and [are] less dependent on sexual stereotypes" (1994b:19). This forces the créolistes, Arnold asserts, to conform to a particular "teleological project: a certain locale is required, . . . a certain use of Creole is mandated, . . . a certain gendering of characters, narrators, and even the symbolic geography of their fiction is rigorously imposed—and then theorized" (1994b:19).

From our own ethnographic perspective, we would suggest that the créolistes' masculinist position emerges directly—and uncritically—from the routine sexism of Martiniquan daily life. Men, backed by a relatively complicitous silence from most female Martiniquans, regularly relegate women to a non-productive domestic sphere, as mothers and sexual partners, by denying them entry into such areas of authority as historical knowledge, political power, cultural interpretation, or public literary creativity. In the town where we live, at

virtually every official holiday gathering—whether for Cultural Week, Emancipation Day, or the festival of the patron saint—the invited speakers take care to formally express the community’s appreciation of local women, often by a hyperbolic poem especially composed for the occasion, and to ask rhetorically where “we” would all be if not for the love and care of the women who bore “us” and cared for “us” unselfishly in sickness and health, or those who raise “our” children with the same faithful devotion. A particularly pointed discussion along the same lines occurred at an evening roundtable on literature held a couple of years ago on the occasion of the community’s annual Cultural Week. The invited guests, three literary figures accompanied by their wives, responded to a question from the audience about the lack of women authors in Martinique by saying that it posed no problem because their own novels were filled with female characters who actively expressed the women’s point of view.

Periodically, this perspective, in which the presence of novelized female characters is used to excuse the absence of novelizing female writers, is given voice in the Martiniquan newspaper’s weekend supplement. As the title of one article declared with enthusiasm, “Women, The Writers Love You!” “Woman Is Half of Heaven,” it remarked. “Whether as mistress, mother, or motherland, the many-faceted image of the woman is . . . omnipresent in our literature, contrary to what certain well-intended people imagine. One has only to see the multitude of characters that they incarnate in the work of both contemporary and past writers” (Party 1993). To prove the point, the rest of the page was devoted to a selection of six Caribbean authors—all men, and including the European husband of the prolific Guadeloupean novelist Simone Schwarz-Bart, who herself received no mention in the article.<sup>25</sup>

Much the same dynamic characterizes television coverage of women’s issues, where, for example, highly publicized programs on lesbianism and battered women are hosted by men who interview male physicians, psychiatrists, and sexologists on these phenomena, and where women make an appearance largely in the role of victims, anonymized by computer-scrambled faces and electronically disguised voices. A May 1995 meeting in Fort-de-France called by the organization “Elles Aussi” to “educate women about the complexities of political life and increase their active participation in political struggles” consisted of three male speakers addressing an audience of female listeners (*Les femmes et les municipales* 1995). And media coverage of the 1995 International Week of the Woman ran features on fashion shows (including extravagant millinery) and workshops devoted to new trends in cosmetics.

If, as Arnold argues, the *créolistes* tend, in their depictions of the past, to erase women as active agents of cultural production, and if they tend to depict themselves as heirs to the (male) *conteur* of slave days, it should not be surprising that they tend to deal with living female writers and critics by simply silencing them. And here again, they are drawing on the familiar Martiniquan vision of gender roles in which women serve primarily as mothers and lovers, in which homosexuality is highly stigmatized or denied, and in which authorial authority is the exclusive prerogative of men. A recent literary encounter incited both

Chamoiseau and Confiant to put some of their convictions in these regards on record. In the process, they inadvertently exposed both their general defensiveness toward scholarship that fails to conform to the *créoliste* orthodoxy as they have defined it and their more specific discomfort at the idea of female colleagues who dare to challenge it.

The commotion began with the arrival in Martinique of a metropolitan French writer who came to promote her new book, an adulatory work on Aimé Césaire (Lebrun 1994). In a public lecture, Annie Lebrun, author of several books on psychoanalysis, feminism, and surrealism, spoke warmly about her appreciation of Césaire's work. Casting her net more widely over the Martiniquan literary scene, and criticizing Confiant's recent polemic about Césaire (Confiant 1993a), she then ventured that the *créolistes*' "exotic mediocrity" had turned their movement into "the Club Med of literature" (Lebrun in Kwateh 1995).

Every private club in Martinique has its hired bouncer at the door, and the *créolistes* are no exception. In normal times, this role seems to fall to Confiant, more visible in the media than Bernabé and more rarely caught smiling than Chamoiseau. Meanwhile Chamoiseau, still basking in the glory of his Prix Goncourt, plays a role more akin to the establishment's friendly owner. But when the rather prim-looking Ms. Lebrun appeared at the door, both of them sprang into action, donning brass knuckles (figuratively speaking), and leaving her for dead in the gutters of local newspapers. A grim Confiant addressed his "comrades" in the press, counseling "courage" in the face of "la dame Lebrun," a second-rate invader from Europe behind whose skirts the local sponsors, men too cowardly to speak for themselves, were said (perhaps correctly) to be hiding (Confiant 1995f). It was particularly painful, he admitted, to realize that some of these men, as teachers, exert influence over high school and college students in Martinique, and have responsibility for turning them into "des hommes. Des hommes debout dans leurs culottes. Des hommes debout derrière leurs idées" (real men, men standing tall in their britches, men standing up for their ideas) (1995f). In a separate attack, he berated "this third-rate scrivener, French to boot, and hence in a poor position, a very poor position," to participate in a discussion among Martiniquans: "While I could accept the arguments you have presented if they had come from an Antillean, an African, or a Black American, they are totally intolerable and unbearable coming from you, French woman, Westerner, overblown and wallowing in your colonial smugness. . . . You have no right—morally or historically—to enter into the debate about Martiniquan identity" (1995b). Chamoiseau also joined the fray, charging that Lebrun's "violent insults to the *créoliste* movement, her venomous insanities, stem more from a psychiatric disorder than from any literary analysis" (Chamoiseau 1995). He described her as "an obscure, failed poetess" and her audience as the "denigrating, envious, bitter enemies [of the *créolistes*]"—all that old *négriste* crowd that's now falling apart," viciously attacked the local bookstore owner who featured Lebrun's publication in his window (referring to him condescendingly as a "stationer"), and evoked with ridicule the "quivering of her ovaries" upon

reading Césaire (1995)—prompting one Martiniquan journalist to compare Chamoiseau to an Iranian Ayatollah, a Haitian Tonton-Macoute, or a Red Guard during the height of the Chinese Cultural Revolution (Laouchez 1995).

The créolistes' treatment of women writers from their own part of the world provides an even more interesting window on their vision of Antillean society. While Martinique boasts relatively few women writers (Ina Césaire may be the best-known exception), the literature of the French Antilles more generally has been enriched by such contemporary authors as Dany Bébel-Gisler, Maryse Condé, and Simone Schwarz-Bart. The comprehensive *Lettres créoles* makes no mention of Bébel-Gisler (whose strongly-expressed politics regarding the Creole language differs from theirs), mentions Ina Césaire just once and only to chastise her for writing about *contes* (folktales) without focusing—like them—on the figure of the male conteur (Chamoiseau and Confiant 1991:58–59), and dispenses in three paragraphs with Condé's substantial corpus (from *Hérémakhonon* [1976] and *Ségou* [1984] to *Moi, Tituba, sorcière . . . noire de Salem* [1986], and more), ending with a stunning appropriation of her work by depicting her 1988 “renunciation” of her concept of a “black world” as a sign that she was finally, in their words, “growing up” and seeing Antillean realities as they do (1991:150–152).<sup>26</sup> But it is the authors' longer, adulatory discussion of Schwarz-Bart that is most revealing in terms of their naked sexism:

A meeting with the Guadeloupean novelist Simone Schwarz-Bart is always a pleasure. Beautiful in her inalterable manner, the hair flowing free in the wake of former braids, the blasé look of her eyelids, the wide smile, a simultaneous seductiveness and simplicity. . . . To re-read, and re-read once more, her *Téluée Miracle* [1972] is to be enriched each time. Who can pretend to have plumbed all the understanding of creole life in Guadeloupe that this novel has developed? Who can have exhausted the complexity of *Téluée Miracle*? What sociological study of recent years can tell us about the mental universe of the Antillean Creole woman with as much force, depth, and acumen? [Chamoiseau and Confiant 1991:182]

Regardless of whether, as Arnold has suggested (1994b:16), the créolistes' brief acknowledgment of these several women writers in *Lettres créoles* represents merely “a tactical necessity on their part,” the radiant vignette of Schwarz-Bart is arresting in its choice of detail: her flowing hair, her eyelids, her smile, her inalterable beauty, her seductive allure.<sup>27</sup>

In sum, the way the créolistes theorize gender and deploy masculinist strategies in the practice of their profession erases and silences women. And this impoverishes their interpretations of both the Antillean past and present. Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Fido make a related argument for the Caribbean more generally:

The concept of voicelessness necessarily informs any discussion of Caribbean women and literature. . . . By voicelessness, we mean the historical absence of the woman writer's text: the absence of a specifically female position on major issues such as slavery, colonialism, decolonization, women's rights and more direct social and cultural issues. By voicelessness we also mean silence: the inability to express a position in the language of the “master” as well as the textual construc-

tion of woman as silent. Voicelessness also denotes articulation that goes unheard. [1990: 1]

Simon Gikandi, in a similar vein, demonstrates how two (very fine, but by no means unique) anglophone novels by women (Edgell 1982; Hodge 1981), share the premise that “the unveiling of the lives of Caribbean women not only recenters them in history as custodians of an oral tradition, but also functions as an indicator of sources of domination that might have been lost or repressed in both the colonial text and male-dominated nationalist discourse” (1992:201). Or, to return to the French Antilles, Maryse Condé has insisted, with characteristic directness, that “The central role of women in the liberation struggles both before and after the abolition of slavery has been largely obscured. Frequently living on the plantation as cook, nursemaid, or washerwoman, it was often she who was responsible for the mass poisonings of masters and their families, for the setting of terrifying fires, for frequent marronage” (Condé 1993[1979]:4). Indeed, Condé’s own *Traversée de la mangrove* (1989) provides a welcome complement to the créolistes’ masculinist vision by defining “a narrative center that would effectively subvert not only patriarchal discourse but also the colonial discourse within which it is inscribed” (Crosta 1992:147).

### A King among the Creoles

*L’Exil de Béhanzin* throws into relief many of the particularities of the créolistes’ historical agenda that we have already mentioned.<sup>28</sup> This 1995 film might be seen as a comprehensive allegory of the créolistes’ vision of the post-emancipation history of Martinique: immigrants arriving from backward, monolingual, monocultural lands to discover a sophisticated creole world-in-the-making that is bubbling with ethnic and linguistic diversity. Chamoiseau’s screenplay is hung on the scaffolding of historical event—the exile of King Béhanzin of Dahomey, whose empire was crushed by French armies in 1894 and who spent a dozen unhappy years in Martinique, living through the devastating eruption of the Mont Pelée volcano in 1902. But despite director Guy Deslauriers’s claim that “we tried to stick as close as possible to historical reality,” the main story line is invented from whole cloth and the depiction of central psychological and sociological realities is historically ungrounded (Deslauriers in Thomas 1994).

The lyrics of the theme song (written by Chamoiseau) express the heart of the plot, the redeeming power of créolité: “L’anmou rivé fè’y oubliyé péyi Dahomé . . . I fini pa enmen’y pasé tout péyi-a i té pèd la” (Love succeeded in making him forget the land of Dahomey . . . He came to love her even more than the country he lost). The *belle créole* who, according to the film’s fiction, instantly erases the African king’s love of his country is the green-eyed Régina (played by France Zobda), first seen in a group of comely laundresses disporting themselves among the boulders of a tropical river. Their melodic chatter and rippling laughter could have served as the sound track for a 19th-century operetta, and their ruffly, off-the-shoulder blouses could have come straight off the racks of



**Figure 1**

**France Zobda as Régina. Photo courtesy of France Zobda and Circuit Cinématographique Élizé S.A.**

an upscale Parisian boutique—though a few capricious tumbles in the clear, rushing water quickly make their wearers look more like college coeds in a spring-break wet T-shirt contest, revealing that Ms. Zobda’s physical charms consist of more than her sparkling eyes and radiant smile (see Figure 1). Régina is créolité incarnate: “Toutes les terres, toutes les traditions, toutes les cultures” (a composite of “all lands, all traditions, all cultures”).<sup>29</sup> And her house, a prototypical *case créole* (“traditional” creole house), is a little stage set with a decor of the sort that can be found in modern Martiniquan museum displays, the lobbies of hotels that host *ballets folkloriques*, and pricey gift shops at the airport—neat as a pin, with attractively arranged tropical fruits in “traditional” baskets, ample use of madras cloth, but none of the diacritics (e.g., walls covered with pages torn from old newspapers) of a lived-in creole house.

As depicted in the film, Béhanzin (played by the Jamaican-born Delroy Lindo, with a francophone dubber providing his voice) embodies Africanity. Set next to photographs of the historical Béhanzin, the actor's features are rougher and "blacker"—in short, more what a present-day Martiniquan would call *nèg-congo* ("African" or savage/primitive). And in virtually the only segment of the plot when he takes the initiative, the otherwise passive Béhanzin awakens from an oracular dream and succeeds in saving Régina from a deadly snake bite through mystical African lore. Early in the film, Béhanzin confronts the dilemma of modernity—via the anguishing question of whether he should permit his son to be sent to *lycée* to learn Western ways. His decision to permit the boy to attend school, in order to equip him for the coming struggle, is made in the context of his shock upon discovering cultural diversity. "In contrast to his African homeland, the island of Martinique is inhabited by a diversity of people, who came from Africa, Europe, and Asia—a melting-pot startling enough to impress the African king, no matter how god-like" (Chapelle 1995). In Chamoiseau's own words (at the film's premiere, March 28, 1995), it was a "tremendous mixture of peoples, of languages, of colors, that Béhanzin discovered in America—epitomized by *la belle créole*." Or, as the film's director put it, "Béhanzin arrived in a land in full effervescence, boasting Arab, Chinese, East Indian, and White peoples.<sup>30</sup> . . . He is faced with the difficult question—difficult because he has no ready answer for it—of why this part of the world has such a fantastic mix of peoples. And what could it all lead to? A hundred years ahead of his time, he was pondering the *problématique* of intercultural encounters" (Deslauriers in Thomas 1994:36).

Suffice it to say that, in contrast to his movie version, the historical Béhanzin was a sophisticated, highly cultured god-king who reigned over a large empire with numerous language and ethnic groups, a developed system of classes, and constant interactions with rival European—and African—powers (see for example Lombard 1967). The acceptance of Western education for his son was hardly innovative; Béhanzin's own father, the redoubtable King Glélé (Gléglé), was formally educated in Marseille. And as for choice of women, the Dahomean monarch probably had as wide a range as any man on earth. Historically, then, Béhanzin (like most of the Africans who arrived in the New World as slaves) was in fact far more cosmopolitan, in terms of linguistic and cultural diversalité, than the Creoles whom he encountered in Martinique.

The film's take on marronage is enunciated early on, after the horse-drawn carriage in which Béhanzin is being transported is accosted by a frenzied, nearly naked, spear-wielding black man. As our notes record the scene,

"It's a *nègre marron!*" exclaims the driver. And he tells the maroon (in Creole), "Leave us alone, this is the king of Dahomey." Immediately, the maroon prostrates himself, waving his arms up and down in movie-swami fashion and chanting "Béhanzin Ahydjéré, rwa Dahomé, rwa mwen, . . ." [Béhanzin Ahydjéré, King of Dahomey, my king]. B steps down from the carriage to raise up his subject, who runs off, shouting (presumably to his fellows in the forest): "The king has come! We'll kill the whites! We'll be free!" As the king's carriage continues, the driver

explains to Béhanzin with marked disdain, “Those maroons! It was easier to just run away from it all than to stand firm and confront the white man in the cane field.”

How wonderful to imagine, a half century after the abolition of slavery, a wild Martiniquan maroon—and a youngish one at that—who is up to date on current events in Africa! This same maroon returns at the very end of the film in a deranged state, wildly tossing volcanic ashes in the air so they fall onto his upturned face.

It is hardly surprising that Africans, including some of Béhanzin’s direct descendants, who saw previews of the film at a festival in Burkina Faso, reacted negatively. In those excerpts from their comments shown on Martiniquan television, the Dahomeans complained that Béhanzin, a powerful leader and national hero of resistance, was depicted in the film as a pitiable, broken man who lacked cultural credibility. “They’re presenting him as a king who can’t even speak his own language correctly,” objected one (in R.F.O. 1995).<sup>31</sup> They also complained about his patent passivity and undignified, instantaneous enthrallment to a creole woman. (Even the Martiniquan audience sitting around us in the theater found this dimension of Béhanzin’s filmic character ludicrous; when one of the four African wives who accompanied Béhanzin to Martinique sensuously unveils her spectacular body beside the king’s bed and he simply turns his back, dreaming of the belle créole whom he has at that point laid eyes on only once, and briefly, the audience erupted in guffaws of incredulity.) As if to emphasize this perspective, the film’s official poster miniaturized the whole African continent to fit into a small part of the map of Martinique. The créoliste image of the defeated African, whose humanity was redeemed by his encounter with creoleness, provides stark contrast with the postcolonial African vision of the last great Dahomean resistor to European empire.

### Crossing the Mangrove

During the development of their movement, the créolistes have called on various metaphors to describe creolité, from *migan* (a breadfruit dish used in a variety of linguistic contexts to connote mixedness—see R. and S. Price 1994b) to *mangrove*. The metaphor of the mangrove swamp has a long history in Antillean literature, from Césaire’s ambiguous, sometimes negative invocations, which focus on fetidness, brackishness, malodorousness, and pestilence (see, for example, Césaire 1990[1982]:116<sup>32</sup>), to its more recent adoption by the créolistes to emphasize recycling, regeneration, creation, fertility, and (following Glissant) the fundamentally rhizomic (rather than single-rooted) character of créolité—“submarine roots: that is, free-floating, not fixed in one position in some primordial spot, but extending in all directions of our world through its network of branches” (Glissant 1981:134, and 1990; see also Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant 1993[1989]:50, 28). Lately, the créolistes have sought to appropriate the metaphor for themselves: “This land is mangrove,

Aimé Césaire! The people are mangrove. The language is mangrove” (Confiant 1993a:299; see also Chamoiseau 1990c).<sup>33</sup>

This ecological model may indeed, as Burton has suggested (1993:24–25), contain the potential to help the créolistes transcend the “nostalgic essentialism” that their movement otherwise risks. But more important, we would point to the potential of their moving from lip service to practice in the recognition of Martinique’s fundamental Caribbeanness. The *poto-mitan* of our argument, its spiritual centerpost, has been that the créolistes’ vision of the past would look radically different if they were to adopt a genuine, as opposed to merely programmatic, opening to the whole of the Caribbean (from Cuba, down through Trinidad, to Suriname)—both to its thinkers/writers and to its political/historical/cultural realities. Glissant, quoting first Walcott, then Brathwaite, in the dual epigraphs to *Poétique de la relation*, has underlined that in the Caribbean, “Sea is History” and that “The unity is sub-marine” (1990). Venturing across apparent language/culture barriers to engage the region’s writers and intellectuals would encourage the créolistes to focus less on the fact that in Martinique modernity has been “imposed from without” (Confiant in Kwateh 1994:38) and turn more attention to the unique ways that Martiniquans are making it their own and continuing to produce “culture” in the process (see Miller 1994 for the example of Trinidad). It would also permit them to engage more fully the debates surrounding the global phenomenon of postcolonial literature (“The Empire Writes Back”—see, for example, Gyssels 1994).<sup>34</sup> This sort of opening could not but complicate and enrich the créolistes’ view of the respective roles of men and women as producers and transmitters of culture, of maroons and what they have accomplished, of the development of creole languages, and indeed of the whole process of creolization including the special Martiniquan variant. And such a shift in perspective might permit the créolistes to situate within a broader Caribbean/international environment—and thus to represent yet more effectively—the unique riches of their very particular mangrove.

### Notes

*Acknowledgments.* An earlier version of this paper was presented under the title “Repasando el pasado en las antillas francesas” at the conference “El malestar en la memoria: los usos de la historia,” Trujillo, Spain, June 1995. We wish to thank various participants, especially Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, Manuel Gutiérrez Estévez, and Jorge Klor de Alva, for stimulating discussion. While revising the paper, we read two just-published works that provide further support for many of our arguments—Dash 1995 and Condé and Cottenet-Hage 1995—and have added citations from these as appropriate. We are grateful to Édouard Glissant, Harry Hoetink, Peter Hulme, Leah Price, Peter Redfield, Daniel A. Segal, and the anonymous reviewers for *Cultural Anthropology* for their challenging and helpful comments. All translations are our own. This paper was accepted for publication in its final form in November 1995.

1. Significantly, Lamming and Walcott each use the same Joycean phrase, “History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake,” as epigraph for major texts—respectively *The Pleasures of Exile* (1992[1960]) and “The Muse of History” (1974).

2. In the present context, this minisampling from Caribbean writers is intended merely to set the stage. It may be worth stressing, however, that in the Caribbean, literature and history are singularly intertwined. Indeed, Lamming has claimed that after “the discovery” and “the abolition of slavery,” the third most important event in British Caribbean history was “the discovery of the novel by West Indians as a way of investigating and projecting the inner experiences of the West Indian community” (1992[1960]:36–37), and Césaire or Guillén or Walcott might well second his assertion for the poetry of the wider region. The broader historical-identitarian dilemmas faced by all these writers are finally beginning to get the attention they deserve—see, for example, Benítez-Rojo 1992, Gikandi 1992, and Webb 1992.

3. Walcott describes his own literary “discipleship” during this period to “the young Frantz Fanon and the already ripe and bitter Césaire [who] were manufacturing the home-made bombs of their prose poems, their drafts for revolution” (1970:12).

4. Raphaël Confiant (in Kwateh 1994:37) calls it more precisely “the first work of the movement written in French.” Between 1979 and 1987, Confiant published five créoliste novels in the Creole language; in 1994 and 1995, two of these were published in French translation (as *Mamzelle Libellule* [1994b] and *Le gouverneur des dés* [1995c]).

5. Chamoiseau’s books include, among others, *Chronique des sept misères* (1986, Prix Kléber Haedens, Prix de l’île Maurice), *Solibo magnifique* (1988), *Antan d’enfance* (1990a, Prix Carbet), *Texaco* (1992, Prix Goncourt), and *Chemin-d’école* (1994a). Confiant’s novels in French include, among others, *Le nègre et l’amiral* (1988, Prix Antigone), *Eau de café* (1991, Prix Novembre), *Ravines du devant-jour* (1993b, Premio Casa de las Americas), and *L’allée des soupirs* (1994a, Prix Carbet). For purposes of this paper, we restrict our discussion of the créolistes’ work largely to the movement’s two literary heavyweights, Chamoiseau and Confiant. In certain contexts, they now place the Guadeloupean writers Gisèle Pineau (whose *La grande drive des esprits* won the 1993 Prix Carbet) and Ernest Pépin (whose latest novel is *Coulée d’or* [1995]) in their corner.

6. The créolistes’ literary experimentation, using the French language with strongly Creole rhythms and mixing lexical creolisms into the stream of French prose, was foreshadowed in Martinique by Césaire’s call to reinvigorate the French language, which had, he said, become “burdensome, overused,” by creating “a new language . . . an Antillean French, a black French that, while still being French, had a black character” (1972:67). In the anglophone Caribbean, this sort of thing had long been part of the literary program (see, for example Brodber 1980, Mais 1966, Reid 1949, and, for general discussions, Brathwaite 1984, Cooper 1993). Walcott charted the territory in 1970:

What would deliver [the New World Negro] from servitude was the forging of a language that went beyond mimicry, a dialect which had the force of revelation as it invented names for things, one which finally settled on its own mode of inflection, and which began to create an oral culture of chants, jokes, folk-songs and fables; this, not merely the debt of history was his proper claim to the New World. For him metaphor was not a symbol but communication. . . . It did not matter how rhetorical, how dramatically heightened the language was if its tone was true, whether its subject was the rise and fall of a Haitian king or a small-island fisherman, and the only way to recreate this culture was to share in the torture of its articulation. This did not mean the jettisoning of “culture” but, by the writer’s creative use of his schizophrenia, an electric fusion of the old and the new. [Walcott 1970:17]

7. As Burton points out, these opening words of the *Éloge* were prefigured by René Ménéil’s 1964 statement, in *Action* (the journal of the Martiniquan Communist Party),

that French Antillean culture was “neither African, nor Chinese, nor Indian, nor even French, but ultimately Antillean. Our culture is Antillean since, in the course of history, it has brought together and combined in an original syncretism all these elements derived from the four corners of the earth, without being any one of those elements in particular” (Burton 1993:14). Madeleine Cottenet-Hage notes further, quoting Maryse Condé, that the *créolistes*’ proclamation of being “*neither Europeans, nor Africans, nor Asians*” remains entrenched in “the same old categories—race, nationality, territory—so dear to us but which are fast becoming obsolete” (1995:11).

8. Glissant’s original in fact uses *métissage* for what his friend/collaborator Michael Dash translates, like us, as “creolization” (see Glissant 1989:140). Later, Glissant writes more specifically that “la créolisation nous apparaît comme le métissage sans limites” (1990:46). Most recently, he has begun to criticize the metaphor of *métissage* for its scientific/biological implications, preferring the term *créolisation*, which adds, he argues, the key element of *imprévisibilité* (unpredictability) (1995:16–17 *et passim*).

9. A similar softpedaling of the brutality of French colonial slavery, compared to that in neighboring colonies, is found in the projected Musée Régional de Guyane (see R. and S. Price 1994a) as well as in the *Guide Gallimard* for Martinique (Gallimard 1994). This is a view of the past that seems to fit the rapidly Europeanizing, relatively nonconfrontational, nonanticolonial mood of the 1990s in the former French Caribbean colonies. Indeed, the *créolistes*’ revisioning of the Antillean past deserves detailed comparative analysis with other attempts, such as that of Gilberto Freyre in 1930s Brazil, to construct foundational mythologies.

10. Leaving aside questions of possible WASP creolization in New England, it may be worth recalling that one of the West Indian writers most interested in creolization, and who used Creole rhythms in many of his novels, was Sam Selvon, an “East Indian” Trinidadian writing precisely about the ambiguities of creolization among his people (see Lamming 1992[1960]:45, Gikandi 1992:111–113, 131–132), and that one of the few creole languages that developed in Hispanic America was Cocoliche, the language of precisely these 19th-century Italian immigrants to Argentina.

11. It is beyond the scope of this paper to engage Arnold’s provocative argument about the *créolistes*’ literary/logical necessity to construct an imaginary Maroon (the “Super-Male”) within a particular erotics of desire (see Arnold 1994b). But it may be worth pointing out—in contrast to the image in Martinique—that among Jamaican Maroons, Grandy Nanny is considered *primus inter pares* of their warrior ancestors and has been officially elevated to the status of Jamaican National Hero, and that among Suriname Maroons a number of female ancestors are individually remembered and honored as warriors and ritual leaders for their roles during the 17th- and 18th-century struggle for freedom (see R. Price 1983).

12. The *Éloge* includes repeated homages to Glissant (see Chamoiseau 1990b; Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant 1993[1989]:59–68). Note, however, that once Glissant made critical statements suggesting that the concept of *créolité* risks, “more or less innocently,” the same sort of essentialization as *négritude* (1990:103), the *créolistes* began distancing themselves from him (see, for example, Confiant 1993a:260).

13. The ways in which the *créolistes* construct *diversalité* might be seen as an extreme case of what Daniel A. Segal, in an essay on nationalism in contemporary Trinidad and Tobago, has called “imagined pluralism,” emerging from “a particular memorialization of the past, rather than . . . some unusual degree of social heterogeneity within contemporary society” (1994:224, 223).

14. In contrast, earlier generations of Martiniquan intellectuals have been profoundly internationalist—Césaire with his African ties, Fanon in Algeria, Glissant in the United States. And the same contrast holds for the cosmopolitan literary allusions of these earlier generations (which continue, for example, in the recent work of Glissant [1990] through its engagement with the work of Henry James, Whitman, Walcott, Faulkner, Brathwaite, Borges, Naipaul, Carpentier, Lezama Lima, Pound, Michael Smith, and many others).

15. Even Glissant, in a work that otherwise considerably transcends the insularity of the *Éloge* or of *Lettres créoles*, considers (French) Creole—as spoken in the French Caribbean and the French Indian Ocean territories—to be the *only* real creole language (except Papiamentu, which he acknowledges in a footnote), and dismisses others—such as Sranan, Palenquero, Jamaican, or Saramaccan—as mere “pidgins” or “derivative dialects” (1990:110–111). And more recently, he has developed this position in considerable detail (1995). It would be hard to overestimate the continuing hegemony of the imperial French perspective (*la francophonie*), even among Martiniquan intellectuals who do not consciously embrace it and sometimes even fulminate against it (see, for example, Glissant 1990:126–128).

As this paper went to press, we received Confiant’s most recent work, which may represent the most extreme statement yet of the créolistes’ effort to subsume much of Caribbean (and southern United States and northeastern Brazilian) culture into their Martiniquan model (1995a). “For three centuries several million men of every race (Amerindians, Blacks, Whites, Mulattos, Hindus, Chinese, and Syro-Lebanese) have spoken the same language, shared the same dreams, experienced the same fears, sung the same songs, and above all told the same tales . . . from the bayous of Louisiana to the Guyano-Brazilian Amazon . . . and encompassing a multitude of Caribbean islands. . . . That sole and identical language is French Creole” (1995a:9). This collection of tales joins Chamoiseau’s (1994b) in depicting *French* Creole culture as the undisputed culture of reference for Plantation America.

16. We would in no way deny that Caribbean people, no matter how apparently rural, as well as Caribbean societies themselves, have long been the vanguard of modernity; indeed, this argument was developed with considerable subtlety by Sidney Mintz as long as three decades ago (see, for example, 1966). But we would strongly contest the notion that Puerto Ricans or Trinidadians or Curaçaoans are any less part of these processes than are Martiniquans.

17. We would exempt from this generalization *Chronique des sept misères*, which, despite its loving evocation of a bygone Fort-de-France, also treats in considerable depth the processes of change involved in *départementalisation*.

18. We have made an analogous argument concerning the cultural politics of Martinique’s sister département, French Guiana (R. and S. Price 1994a). Our detailed critique there centers on the elimination by the state of ethnic diversity (through educational, cultural, and administrative programs designed to uniformize the population) and the simultaneous celebration of “traditional” cultures in selected, framed settings (particularly the proposed Musée Régional). More recently, Françoise Vergès has argued that métissage itself has been packaged as a consumable cultural product (along the lines of the United Colors of Benetton), that it can serve as “an ‘artifact’ in the Great French Museum of Human Diversity as long as the historical conditions that gave birth to this diversity—colonial wars, slavery, the construction of the French nation—are denied or swept under the rug” (1995:81). It is partly for these reasons that

the celebration of an “authentic” Martinique (or French Guiana) plays so well among readers in the metropole today.

19. Burton rightly notes, largely on the basis of reading current novels and more ephemeral print media, that “there is a certain vogue for ‘indianité’ in contemporary Martinique” (1993:29).

20. This kind of martial-arts dueling/dancing, with drummed accompaniment, is an icon of “traditional” Martinique. See, for example, Katherine Dunham’s 1938 ballet *L’Ag’Ya* (discussed in Clark 1994) and Zobel 1946.

21. This novel, like Confiant’s other early works written in Creole for an almost-absent audience, deserves to be analyzed seriously as a political project as well.

22. Beverley Ormerod notes that “the title of Patrick Chamoiseau’s first novel, *Chronique des sept misères* . . . signals the writer’s conscious use of fiction as historical record, stemming from Glissant’s position that the novelist is the archivist of the Caribbean past” (1994:446).

23. An interesting foil to the pastifying gaze of Confiant’s novel is found in the works of Tony Delsham, editor-in-chief of the créoliste magazine *Antilla* and author of a series of French-language paperbacks aimed largely at a popular Martiniquan audience. His latest, *Kout fè* (1994), depicts once-proud and successful men caught up in the modernization process, haunted by their resulting loss of masculinity, and reacting with either excessive passivity or violence. These troubled male characters are set off against modernizing women (of the sort who represent Delsham’s main readership), who seem far better adapted to changing Martiniquan realities. Unlike those of the créolistes, Delsham’s novels are squarely situated in the present.

24. Arnold contrasts the créolistes’ portrayal of Antillean oral literature as the exclusive prerogative of male conteurs with that expressed by other Caribbean writers (particularly, but not exclusively, women—and including Walcott), who acknowledge the many mothers, aunts, and grandmothers—“those repositories of oral history, folk medicine, and stories of all sorts”—who provided them with inspiring models in the art of narration (1994b:11,13). See now also Pineau 1995:290, as well as Edwidge Danticat’s *éloge* to “the extraordinary female story tellers I grew up with [in Haiti]” (cited in Casey 1995:525–26).

25. The practice of Martiniquan men routinely “speaking for” women is paralleled by a remarkable rhetorical device employed by the créolistes in *Lettres créoles*—speaking in the first person on behalf of immigrants from India, China, and the Levant (in stereotypic “if I were a . . .” style), and even allowing themselves to ventriloquize memories of childhood by the “white” Nobel prize-winning poet from Guadeloupe, Saint-John Perse (Chamoiseau and Confiant 1991:41–44, 47–48, 49–51, 157–159). It may be worth signaling the contrast between the créolistes’ somewhat grudging acceptance of Saint-John Perse into their literary canon (following the lead of Glissant [1969, 1976] and Yoyo [1971], motivated in part by the non-exclusionist logic of the theory of créolité), and the unembarrassed celebration of this poet and his work in a Caribbean context, two decades ago, by Derek Walcott reading across language barriers (Chamoiseau and Confiant 1991:160–161; Walcott 1974).

26. Given the créolistes’ agenda, it is not surprising that *Lettres créoles* makes no mention of Martiniquan writers such as Françoise Ega (whose *Lettres à une noire* [1978] has been described as “‘obsessed’—virtually in the psychoanalytic sense—with the question of maternity as it relates metaphorically to the questions of autobiography, the woman writer, and the writing of the female body” [Flannigan-Saint-Aubin 1992:49]) or the prolific Marie-Magdeleine Carbet (whose “response as a woman was inevitably

different from male writers” and whose work, e.g., *Rose de ta grâce* [1970], contains a “strong message of her appropriation of equality as a Martinican, as a *nègre*, and as a woman” [Hurley 1992:96]. And we would point out that among Ina Césaire’s most important works is *Mémoires d’isles* (1985), a dialogue between two elderly women about memory and history.

27. Given their readiness to comment on the state of Lebrun’s ovaries, we can only commend their restraint in sparing readers a vision of Schwarz-Bart’s nipples or pubic hair. Several characters in Confiant’s *Eau de café* adopt a masculinist gaze that celebrates essentialized racialist categories, extolling, for example, “les coucounes bombées et crépues des *négresses-bleues*, les plus sublimes qu’on pût imaginer, les plus affolantes aussi, . . . les coucounes hardies des *chabines* aux poils jaunes comme la mangue-zéphyrine, la fente mordorée et pudique des *mulâtresses* qui ne se déchaînaient qu’à l’instant de l’extase, la toison chatoyante des *câpresses* et . . . les poils [coupants] des *Indiennes*” (1991:85, see also 293). The poetic enthusiasm of this passage defies translation, but we might propose the following approximation: “the bulging, frizzy cunts of jet-black *négresses*, the most sublime imaginable and also the most terrifying, . . . the brazen cunts of *chabines* with hair as yellow as the *zéphyrine* mango, . . . the modest bronze slit of *mulâtresses* which explodes at the final moment of ecstasy, the glistening fleece of the *câpresses*, the razor-sharp bristles of the *Indiennes* . . .” As Thomas Spear aptly queried, specifically addressing the women in his multiethnic audience: “What do you make of Confiant’s descriptions of *coucounes*? Do you recognize your own racial place as easily as does the *connoisseur*?” (1995:147).

28. Our discussion here is based on a single viewing of the film, on April 6, 1995; we have not been able to double-check the details of our description.

29. This phrase is part of an *éloge* addressed near the end of the film either to Régina or to Martinique itself—we do not remember which. In a similar spirit, a coffee-table book on Martinique authored by Chamoiseau includes a full-page image of a handsome creole woman in “traditional dress,” captioned: “Le mélange de la diversité du monde confère ici aux métissages leurs audaces les plus exquisés” (1994d:10).

30. This statement of Guy Deslauriers betrays an implicit, unacknowledged subject position common to the great bulk of créoliste expression. Blacks can go unmentioned in the enumeration of Martiniquan diversity precisely because the speakers/writers are of predominantly African ancestry. For people who, a generation ago, might have been celebrating their *négritude*, the celebration of (for example) *indianité* is an add-on; the African heritage is so obvious that it can remain un(re)marked.

31. In the film, some of Béhanzin’s lines are in Fon. In a television interview, Chamoiseau excused the actor’s poor execution of them by remarking that “It’s a difficult language, with tones” (R.F.O. March 28, 1995).

32. Similarly, a character in Condé’s *Traversée de la mangrove* remarks, “On ne traverse pas la mangrove. On s’empale sur les racines des palétuviers. On s’enterre et on étouffe dans la boue saumâtre” (“You don’t cross a mangrove swamp. You get impaled on the palisade of its roots. You get buried and you suffocate in the brackish mud”) (1989:202).

33. Note that one of Martinique’s nonmetaphorical mangroves, not far from the international airport, remains today a central battleground between ecological conservation groups (notably the ASSAUPAMAR, which the créolistes support), desperately poor squatters (some of whom are illegal Haitian immigrants and many of whom are

involved in drug dealing), and the advocates of modernization who are inexorably expanding roads, shopping centers, and other infrastructure throughout the area.

34. Maryse Condé's muscular critique of the créoliste project, which we read while making final revisions on this paper, argues that despite the transnational, globalized nature of the world in which we all live, the créolistes continue to write and think in terms of old-fashioned, neatly separable categories based on race, nationality, and origin (1995:305). Or, as Hal Wylie has remarked about the authors of the *Éloge*, "One is tempted to ask the gang of three if, and where, the Diaspora fits into their conception of *créolité*" (1995:252). Condé laments that the French Caribbean literature of our time "fails to take into account these upheavals, these shifts, and these redefinitions of identity" (1995:308). "Savoring" the realization that the créolistes "have all spent years of their lives as 'négropolitains' or 'nèg'zagonaux' [i.e. in France]," she notes "how conveniently they forget those experiences and create a vision of Antillean life that would have fit right in with Jamaica in the time of Lady Nugent's [1801–1805] visit" (1995:308). Condé goes on to criticize their imprisonment in the binary opposition French/Creole which, she argues, is a legacy of the colonial obsession to separate conqueror and victim (1995:308–309). And she castigates them for repeatedly "decreeing" orthodoxies for Antillean literature (1995:309–310). She ends by asking rhetorically whether there are not (should not be) *multiple* versions of Antillean-ness, different ways to live and write *créolité* (1995:310).

### References Cited

Abrahams, Roger D.

1983 *The Man-of-Words in the West Indies: Performance and the Emergence of Creole Culture*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Appiah, Kwame Anthony

1992 *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*. London: Methuen.

Arnold, A. James

1994a *A History of Literature in the Caribbean, vol. 1: Hispanic and Francophone Regions*. A. James Arnold, ed. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

1994b *The Erotics of Colonialism in Contemporary French West Indian Literary Culture*. *New West Indian Guide* 68:5–22.

Bastide, Roger

1960 *Les religions afro-brésiliennes: contributions à une sociologie des interpénétrations de civilisations*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Benítez-Rojo, Antonio

1992 *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Bernabé, Jean, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant

1993[1989] *Éloge de la créolité*. Paris: Gallimard.

Bhabha, Homi K.

1994 *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge.

Brathwaite, [Edward] Kamau

1984 *History of the Voice*. London: New Beacon.

1993 *Roots*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Brodber, Erna

1980 *Jane and Louisa Will Soon Come Home*. London: New Beacon Books.

Burton, Richard

1993 *Ki Moun Nou Ye?* The Idea of Difference in Contemporary French West Indian Thought. *New West Indian Guide* 67:5–32.

Carbet, Marie-Magdeleine

1970 *Rose de ta grâce*. Paris: Le cerf-volant.

Carpentier, Alejo

1964[1949] *Prologo to El reino de este mundo*. Montevideo, Uruguay: ARCA.

Casey, Ethan

1995 Remembering Haiti. *Callaloo* 18:524–526.

Césaire, Aimé

1972 An Interview [by René Depestre] with. *In Discourse on Colonialism*. Pp. 65–79. New York: Monthly Review Press.

1990[1982] *moi, laminaire. . . . In Lyric and Dramatic Poetry 1946–82*. Pp. 76–197. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.

Césaire, Ina

1985 *Mémoires d'isles: Maman N. et Maman F.* Paris: Editions Caribéennes.

Chamoiseau, Patrick

1986 *Chronique des sept misères*. Paris: Gallimard.

1988a *Au temps de l'antan: Contes du pays Martinique*. Paris: Hatier.

1988b *Solibo magnifique*. Paris: Gallimard.

1990a *Antan d'enfance*. Paris: Hatier.

1990b *En témoignage d'une volupté*. *Carbet* 10:143–152.

1990c *Penser créole*. *Antilla* 408:32–34.

1992 *Texaco*. Paris: Gallimard.

1994a *Chemin-d'école*. Paris: Gallimard.

1994b *Creole Folktales*. New York: The New Press.

1994c *Les nègres marrons de Richard Price*. *Review of Les Premiers Temps*. *Antilla* 576 (March 18):4–5.

1994d *Martinique*. Photographs by Michel Renaudeau and Emmanuel Valentin. Paris: Richer-Hoa-Qui.

1995 *Une semaine en pays dominé*. *Antilla* 619 (10 February):4–6.

Chamoiseau, Patrick, and Raphaël Confiant

1991 *Lettres créoles: tracées antillaises et continentales de la littérature*. Paris: Hatier.

Chapelle, David

1995 *Dieu, l'exil, l'amour et la mort: Béhanzin*. *France-Antilles*, March 30: 7.

Clark, Vévé

1994 *Performing the Memory of Difference in Afro-Caribbean Dance: Katherine Dunham's Choreography, 1938–87*. *In History and Memory in African-American Culture*. Geneviève Fabre and Robert O'Meally, eds. Pp. 188–204. New York: Oxford University Press.

Condé, Maryse

1976 *Hérémakhonon*. Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions.

1993[1979] *La parole des femmes*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

1984 *Ségou: Les murailles de terre*. Paris: Robert Laffont.

1986 *Moi, Tituba, sorcière . . . noire de Salem*. Paris: Mercure de France.

1989 *Traversée de la mangrove*. Paris: Mercure de France.

1995 *Chercher nos vérités*. *In Penser la créolité*. Maryse Condé and Madeleine Cottenet-Hage, eds. Pp. 305–310. Paris: Karthala.

Confiant, Raphaël

- 1986 *Kòd yanm*. Fort-de-France, Martinique: Éditions K. D. P.
- 1988 *Le nègre et l'amiral*. Paris: Grasset.
- 1991 *Eau de café*. Paris: Grasset.
- 1993a *Aimé Césaire: Une traversée paradoxale du siècle*. Paris: Stock.
- 1993b *Ravines du devant-jour*. Paris: Gallimard.
- 1994a *L'allée des soupirs*. Paris: Grasset.
- 1994b *Mamzelle Libellule*. Paris: Le Serpent à Plumes.
- 1995a *Contes créoles des Amériques*. Paris: Stock.
- 1995b *Les élucubrations de Dame Lebrun*. *Antilla* 619 (10 February):33.
- 1995c *Le gouverneur des dés*. Paris: Stock.
- 1995d *Les maîtres de la parole créole*. Paris: Gallimard.
- 1995e *La savane des pétrifications*. Paris: Mille et Une Nuits.
- 1995f *Un peu de courage, camarades . . . France-Antilles*, February 4.

Cooper, Carolyn

- 1993 *Noises in the Blood: Orality, Gender and the 'Vulgar' Body of Jamaican Popular Culture*. London: Macmillan.

Cottenet-Hage, Madeleine

- 1995 Introduction. *In Penser la créolité*. Maryse Condé and Madeleine Cottenet-Hage, eds. Pp. 11–20. Paris: Karthala.

Cottias, Myriam

- 1992 *Société sans mémoire, société sans histoire: la patrimoine désincarné*. Pp. 263–265. *Encyclopaedia Universalis*. Paris: Encyclopaedia Universalis.

Crosta, Suzanne

- 1992 *Narrative and Discursive Strategies in Maryse Condé's Traversée de la mangrove*. *Callaloo* 15(1):147–155.

Dash, J. Michael

- 1995 *Édouard Glissant*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Davies, Carole Boyce, and Elaine Savory Fido, eds.

- 1990 *Out of the Kumbla: Caribbean Women and Literature*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.

Delsham, Tony

- 1994 *Kout fè*. Schoelcher, Martinique: Éditions M. G. G.

Edgell, Zee

- 1982 *Beka Lamb*. London: Heinemann.

E. H-H.

- 1992 *Le premier éco musée de Martinique*. *France-Antilles Magazine*, November 28–December 4: 44–45.

Ega, Françoise

- 1978 *Lettres à une noire*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Fernández Retamar, Roberto

- 1989 *Caliban and Other Essays*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Flannigan-Saint-Aubin, Arthur

- 1992 *Reading and Writing the Body of the négresse in Françoise Ega's Lettres à une noire*. *Callaloo* 15(1):49–65.

France Télécom

- 1994 *Les pages jaunes, les pages blanches*. Fort-de-France, Martinique: France Télécom.

- García Canclini, Néstor  
 1990 *Culturas híbridas: Estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad*. Mexico City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes.
- Gikandi, Simon  
 1992 *Writing in Limbo: Modernism and Caribbean Literature*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Glissant, Édouard  
 1969 *L'intention poétique*. Paris: Seuil.  
 1976 *Saint-John Perse et les Antillais*. *La nouvelle revue Française* 278 (February):68–74.  
 1981 *Le discours antillais*. Paris: Seuil.  
 1989 *Caribbean Discourse*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.  
 1990 *Poétique de la relation*. Paris: Gallimard.  
 1995 *Introduction à une poétique du divers*. Montreal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal.
- González, José Luis  
 1980 *El país de cuatro pisos y otros ensayos*. San Juan, PR: Huracán.
- Gallimard  
 1994 *Guide Gallimard, Martinique*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Gyssels, Kathleen  
 1994 *Littérature et critique post-coloniales: le marronage antillais*. In *The Empire Writes Back (Again): Vergelijkende literatuurwetenschap en post-koloniale literatuurstudie*. Luc Herman, ed. Pp. 91–106. Antwerp: ALW Cahier nr. 15.
- Handler, Richard  
 1993 *Fieldwork in Quebec, Scholarly Reviews, and Anthropological Dialogues*. In *When They Read What We Write: The Politics of Ethnography*. Caroline B. Brettell, ed. Pp. 67–74. Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey.
- Harris, Wilson  
 1981 *Explorations: A Selection of Talks and Articles 1966–1981*. Mandelstrup, Denmark: Dangaroo Press.
- Hodge, Merle  
 1981 *Crick Crack, Monkey*. London: Heinemann.
- Hurley, E. Anthony  
 1992 *A Woman's Voice: Perspectives on Marie-Magdeleine Carbet*. *Callaloo* 15(1): 90–97.
- INSEE (Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques)  
 1995 *Tableaux économiques régionaux Martinique 95*. Pointe-à-Pitre: INSEE.
- Jackson, Jean  
 1989 *Is There A Way To Talk About Making Culture Without Making Enemies?* *Dialectical Anthropology* 14:127–143.
- Kwateh, Adams  
 1994 *Raphaël Confiant: 'je ne suis pas un éternel révolté.'* *France-Antilles Magazine*, September 14–30: 37–38.  
 1995 *Pourquoi le cri d'Annie Lebrun dans 'Pour Césaire'?* *France-Antilles Magazine*, February 4–10: 40–41.
- Labat, Jean-Baptiste  
 1722 *Nouveau voyage aux isles de l'Amérique*. Paris: G. Cavelier.
- Lamming, George  
 1992[1960] *The Pleasures of Exile*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Laouchez, R.

1995 Patrick Chamoiseau est-il un ayatollah? *Question 56* (March):2.

Les femmes et les municipales

1995 *France-Antilles*, May 12: 5.

L'Exil de Béhanzin

1995 Guy Deslauriers, director; Patrick Chamoiseau, screen writer. Produced by Série-Limitée, France 2.

Lebrun, Annie

1994 *Pour Aimé Césaire*. Paris: Jean-Michel Place.

Lewis, Gordon K.

1983 *Main Currents in Caribbean Thought: The Historical Evolution of Caribbean Society in its Ideological Aspects, 1492–1900*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Linnekin, Jocelyn, and Lin Poyer

1990 *Cultural Identity and Ethnicity in the Pacific*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Lombard, J.

1967 *The Kingdom of Dahomey*. In *West African Kingdoms in the Nineteenth Century*. Daryll Forde and P.M. Kaberry, eds. Pp. 70–92. London: Oxford University Press.

Mais, Roger

1966 *The Three Novels of Roger Mais (The Hills Were Joyful Together, Brother Man, Black Lightning)*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Marie, Claude-Valentin

1986 *Les populations des Dom-Tom en France*. In *Ici Là-Bas*. Supplement to *Journal nationale pour l'insertion et la promotion des travailleurs d'outre-mer*, 7.

Marshall, Paule

1969 *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World.

Miller, Daniel

1994 *Modernity, an Ethnographic Approach: Dualism and Mass Consumption in Trinidad*. Oxford: Berg.

Mintz, Sidney W.

1966 *The Caribbean as a Socio-Cultural Area*. *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale* 9: 912–937.

Mintz, Sidney W., and Richard Price

1992[1976] *The Birth of African-American Culture*. Boston: Beacon.

Naipaul, V. S.

1969 *The Middle Passage*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin.

Ormerod, Beverley

1994 *Realism Redefined: The Subjective Vision*. In *A History of Literature in the Caribbean*, vol. 1: *Hispanic and Francophone Regions*. A. James Arnold, ed. Pp. 435–449. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Ortiz, Fernando

1940 *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar*. Havana: Consejo Nacional de Cultura.

Party, Jean-Marc

1993 *Femmes, les écrivains vous aiment*. *France-Antilles Magazine*, October 30–November 5: 53.

Patterson, Orlando

1982 Recent Studies on Caribbean Slavery and the Atlantic Slave Trade. *Latin American Research Review* 17:251–275.

Pépin, Ernest

1995 *Coulée d'or*. Paris: Gallimard.

Pineau, Gisèle

1993 *La grande drive des esprits*. Paris: Le Serpent à Plumes.

1995 *Écrire en tant que Noire*. In *Penser la créolité*. Maryse Condé and Madeleine Cottenet-Hage, eds. Pp. 289–295. Paris: Karthala.

Price, Richard

1983 *First-Time: The Historical Vision of an Afro-American People*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

1990 *Alabi's World*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Price, Richard, and Sally Price

1994a *Ethnicity in a Museum Case: France's Show-Window in the Americas*. *Museum Anthropology* 18:3–15.

1994b *Migan*. *New West Indian Guide* 68:81–91.

Price, Sally, and Richard Price

1980 *Afro-American Arts of the Suriname Rain Forest*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Reid, Vic

1949 *New Day*. New York: Knopf.

R.F.O. (Radio France Outre-mer)

1995 Interview with Patrick Chamoiseau. March 28.

Scarboro, Ann Armstrong

1992 *A Shift Toward the Inner Voice and Créolité*. *Callaloo* 15(1):12–29.

Schwarz-Bart, Simone

1972 *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle*. Paris: Seuil.

Segal, Daniel A.

1994 *Living Ancestors: Nationalism and the Past in Postcolonial Trinidad and Tobago*. In *Remapping Memory: The Politics of TimeSpace*. Jonathan Boyarin, ed. Pp. 221–239. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Spear, Thomas C.

1995 *Jouissances carnavalesques: représentations de la sexualité*. In *Penser la créolité*. Maryse Condé and Madeleine Cottenet-Hage, eds. Pp. 135–152. Paris: Karthala.

Staszewski, Gérard

1993 *Images et couleurs d'un village d'antan*. *France-Antilles Magazine*, March 6–12: 48–50.

Taylor, Lucien

1997 *Mediating Martinique: The 'Paradoxical Trajectory' of Raphaël Confiant*. In *Cultural Producers in Perilous States: Editing Events, Documenting Change*. George Marcus, ed. Pp. 259–330. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

n.d. *Isle of Intellectuals*. Doctoral dissertation in preparation, Department of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley.

Thomas, François

1994 *Guy Deslauriers . . . la passion du cinéma*. *France-Antilles Magazine*, October 22–28: 36–37.

Todorov, Tzvetan

1993 *On Human Diversity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Vergès, Françoise

1995 Métissage, discours masculin et déni de la mère. *In Penser la créolité*. Maryse Condé and Madeleine Cottenet-Hage, eds. Pp. 69–83. Paris: Karthala.

Walcott, Derek

1970 *What the Twilight Says: An Overture*. *In Dream on Monkey Mountain and Other Plays*. Pp. 3–40. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

1974 *The Muse of History*. *In Is Massa Day Dead?* Orde Coombs, ed. Pp. 1–27. New York: Anchor.

1987 *The Arkansas Testament*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

1989 *History in E.K. Brathwaite and Derek Walcott: Panel Discussion*. *The Common Wealth of Letters Newsletter* (Yale University) 1(1):3–14.

Walmsley, Anne

1992 *The Caribbean Artists Movement, 1966–1972*. London: New Beacon Books.

Webb, Barbara J.

1992 *Myth and History in Caribbean Fiction: Alejo Carpentier, Wilson Harris, and Edouard Glissant*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

Williams, Brackette F.

1991 *Stains on my Name, War in my Veins: Guyana and the Politics of Cultural Struggle*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Wylie, Hal

1995 *Métellus, Diasporism and Créolité*. *In Penser la créolité*. Maryse Condé and Madeleine Cottenet-Hage, eds. Pp. 251–262. Paris: Karthala.

Yelvington, Kevin A.

1995 *Producing Power: Ethnicity, Gender, and Class in a Caribbean Workplace*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Yoyo, Émile

1971 *Saint-John Perse et le conteur*. Paris: Bordas.

Zobel, Joseph

1946 *Laghia de la mort ou Qui fait pleurer le tam-tam*. Fort-de-France, Martinique: Imprimerie Bezaudin.