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Further Travels

Richard Price

There is a force of exultation, a celebration of luck, when a writer finds himself a witness to the early morning of a culture that is defining itself, branch by branch, leaf by leaf, in that self-defining dawn.

—Derek Walcott, “The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory” (Nobel lecture)

If there is any way to counter the conception of ethnography as an iniquitous act or an unplayable game, it would seem to involve owning up to the fact that, like quantum mechanics or the Italian opera, it is a work of the imagination.

—Clifford Geertz, *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*

It is a rare pleasure to be able to read and respond to commentaries on my work from leading Caribbeanists, and I am very grateful to David Scott for having organized the event and to Kenneth Bilby, Aisha Khan, and Deborah Thomas for having taken the time to contribute. The three commentators are scholars whose work I esteem, and I know each of them well enough, I think, to refer to them by first name in what follows.

Each of the stimulating commentaries focuses in large part on its author’s own expertise and interests: Ken’s in music, Aisha’s in creolization, and Deb’s in the development and future directions of Caribbean studies. None really engages the central narrative of *Travels with Tooy*, which (for those of you not yet familiar with it) begins in Martinique, where a local businessman requests my help in obtaining Saramaka ritual assistance to solve his money (and related) problems, in a Caribbean set-piece that uncovers European Medieval magical charms operating in a twenty-first-century island environment, and then meanders back and forth between the rainforest of Suriname and the slums of French Guiana, with occasional excursions to

seventeenth-century Africa.¹ Ken, who is himself an ethnographer's ethnographer, does call *Travels* a "remarkable ethnographic feast" and mentions "the themes of clashing cultural worlds, differential power, or intercultural negotiation that form important subtexts." And he at least alludes to "the 'meat' of this book—its first 286 pages, supplemented by extensive notes, as well as an 80-page coda holding the largest corpus of Guianese Maroon esoteric language yet published." But Ken, like Deb and Aisha, chooses here to engage *Travels* largely through its final chapter, the ironically titled "Reflections from the Verandah," where Deb says (with a sense of relief?) that my "analytic voice truly enters the story."

Authors are notoriously poor commentators on their own work and I do not claim to be an exception.² But from where I sit, that final chapter could easily have been left out of the book. For its contents are, as Ken notes, consonant with the theoretical and methodological ("analytic") message (about Afro-American creolization, cultural creativity, and so forth) that I have been rehearsing for more than four decades. For me at least, it is the rest of the book that is new and exciting: tracing the development of a special friendship between an anthropologist from the United States and a Saramaka immigrant in a Cayenne shantytown; the ways that understandings (and misunderstandings!) about magic/causality operate transnationally in the Caribbean; the discovery in Guyane of the force of French (neo)colonialism and the creative adaptations made by the territory's multiethnic residents, legal and illegal; the continuing role of the African heritage in the lives of Tooy and his friends; the remarkable and ongoing creativity of Saramakas in remaking their social and spiritual lives in new transnational contexts; and much else.

There are more general questions that the "meat" of the book is intended to raise: What is the place of long-term ethnography of the sort represented by *Travels* in Caribbeanist research? How do we best think about ways of knowing (including subject positions, relationships, disciplines) in the Caribbean? How do we best think about ways of writing Caribbean culture (literary modes, social science modes), the languages needed to express what Ken calls the "ineffable"? To what extent and in what ways are apparently exotic or marginal peoples, such as Saramakas, truly part of the Caribbean world? (In what ways are they relevant to—and what do they share with—say, urban Jamaicans or Cubans? What are the implications of Saramaka ritual and belief for an understanding of the development and practice of "religion" and "magic" elsewhere in the Caribbean? Can our detailed knowledge of the history and development of Saramaka society and culture teach us lessons relevant to the rest of the Caribbean or Afro-America more broadly?)

1 Richard Price, *Travels with Tooy: History, Memory, and the African American Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); hereafter cited in text.

2 Novelist Margaret Atwood got it right (though she was speaking of fiction writers) when she wrote: "About all they really know anything about is the writing of their latest book, and they're usually not even sure how they managed that, having done it in a sort of stupor; and if they do know, they aren't about to tell, any more than a magician will hasten to reveal exactly how he made the pigeon come out of your ear." Margaret Atwood, "In Search of *Alien Grace*: On Writing Canadian Historical Fiction," *American Historical Review* 103, no. 5 (1998): 1503.

And there are a host of more specific questions that readers of *Travels* might wonder about as well: What are the implications of the palpable discomforts of writing and reading about a rape trial involving people one has come to care about? Are there potential political solutions or ameliorations to the status of immigrants such as Saramakas (and Haitians and Guyanese and Brazilians) in French Guiana (which is part of Europe) such that prison inmates who do not speak French will no longer make up 80 percent of incarcerated men as they do today? Once Tooy and his generation have passed into the realm of the ancestors, how much of their knowledge will be maintained and what will be its (multiple) role(s) in the postcolonial world?

In his elegantly phrased commentary, Ken focuses on the final chapter of *Travels*. Reviewing the hoary debates about African continuities versus New World creativity and noting the delicate balance that the book strikes, he provides a most telling example from his own work: the development of Aluku Maroon *aleke* music. Though it sounds, to Ken's musician and musicological colleagues, like the "most African" of Afro-American musics, *aleke* was first played in the 1980s, more than two centuries after the ancestors arrived in Suriname. Even its name is new: *aleke*, he tells us, is the standard nickname of Alexander, the (non-Aluku) creole man from coastal Suriname/Guyane who is credited with introducing the sound—though Ken shows that the music in fact developed, in part, from the earlier Aluku drumming tradition of *loonse* plus various cosmopolitan influences and was then reindigenized. How could a music that sounds so African (but is unlike any *particular* African music) have found form in the interior of French Guiana/Suriname near the end of the twentieth century, after an absence of two and a half centuries?

We are already deep into what Michel-Rolph Trouillot calls the "miracle of creolization,"³ and it is the *problématique* that has driven much of Sally's and my work for the past forty years. As Trouillot phrased it:

From the family plots of the Jamaican hinterland, the Afro-religions of Brazil and Cuba, or the jazz music of Louisiana to the vitality of Haitian painting and music and the historical awareness of Suriname's maroons, the cultural practices that typify various African American populations appear to us as the product of a repeated miracle. For those of us who keep in mind the conditions of emergence and growth of ideals, patterns, and practices associated with African slaves and their descendants in the Americas, their very existence is a continuing puzzle. For they were born against all odds.⁴

Our own best parallel with Ken's *aleke* case might be the Saramaka *aseesente*, the narrow-strip capes worn by all men in the middle of twentieth century that so resemble Mande (and other West African) textiles. Continuity advocates, such as Robert Farris Thompson,

3 Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Culture on the Edges: Creolization in the Plantation Context," *Plantation Society in the Americas* 5, no. 1 (1998): 8–28.

4 Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Culture on the Edges: Caribbean Creolization in Historical Context," in Brian Keith Axel, ed., *From the Margins: Historical Anthropology and Its Futures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 191.

immediately saw these capes as African to the core.⁵ But Sally and I have been able to demonstrate that the Saramakas' practice of multicolored patchwork and their ideas about patchwork developed through an intricate, nonlinear set of historical trajectories and that it was only well into the twentieth century that they began producing the cloths that look so "African."⁶ This example of textile history precisely matches Ken's musical example, showing how the history of Afro-American aesthetic preferences and practices can, with sufficient patience and careful ethnographic and historical research, be traced through time. And that the pathways are tortuous, complex, and often unexpected.

Of course, none of this should come as a surprise. Ken alludes to that very special moment (in the 1970s and 1980s) when the Johns Hopkins Program in Atlantic History and Culture, which I helped found, was "still robust." Our Caribbeanist doctoral students included, among many others, Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Brackette Williams, Val Carnegie, Ira Lowenthal, Trevor Purcell, Gertrude Fraser, and of course Sally Price and Ken himself—and it was a signal privilege for me to exchange views with this group, as well as with colleagues such as Sidney Mintz and (Africanist historian) David Cohen, over a period of years. Many of my own ideas were honed through these dialogues.

Ken also comments helpfully on the avoidance of essentialism, African or otherwise, in *Travels*. A year or two ago I was quite taken aback by a Nigerian (Yoruba) professor (teaching in the United States) who casually commented to me, upon the publication of the book that Sally and I wrote on the Caribbean art of Romare Bearden, that it was hardly a surprise that I quoted Derek Walcott so frequently in my work. The "controversial" essay that I wrote with Mintz, the professor explained, placed me squarely in the camp of both Walcott and Bearden—people who were somehow unable to comprehend, or unwilling to recognize, what he saw as the true impact of Africa on Afro-American culture. As Ken makes clear, those particular culture wars are far from finished.⁷

Ken ends by describing how, at the conclusion of *Travels*, I defer to Walcott in order to speak about the unspeakable, in what Ken calls "a stirring finale, a meditation on the 'frightening duty' owed by those who would try to capture something of this [Afro-American] historical experience in writing."⁸ I had previously called on that same poet, but using *Omeros* rather than the Nobel lecture, to discuss some of our shared nostalgias, on the final page of *The*

5 Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy* (New York: Random House, 1983), 208.

6 See, in particular, Sally Price and Richard Price, *Maroon Arts* (Boston: Beacon, 1999); and Sally Price, "Seaming Connections," in Kevin A. Yelvington, ed., *Afro-Atlantic Dialogues: Anthropology in the Diaspora* (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research, 2006), 81–112.

7 See Sally Price and Richard Price, *Romare Bearden: The Caribbean Dimension* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); and Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective* (Boston: Beacon, 1994); originally published as *An Anthropological Approach to the Afro-American Past* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1976). I'm struck that, while Caribbeanist historians tend to be a clubby bunch (maintaining a sort of senior common room atmosphere among themselves), Caribbeanist anthropologists and sociologists have long been more inclined to duke it out—Melville Herskovits versus E. Franklin Frazier (on the role of Africa), Mintz versus R. T. Smith (on the role of history), R. T. Smith versus M. G. Smith (on plural societies), Mintz and Richard Price (or Price alone) versus a slew of critics (on creolization). Different academic cultures?

8 Ken is referring to Derek Walcott's "The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory" (Nobel lecture, 7 December 1992).

Convict and the Colonel, my most fully “Caribbean” book, which quotes liberally from other literary figures as well (notably Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Joseph Zobel, Edouard Glissant, Patrick Chamoiseau, Alejo Carpentier, Earl Lovelace, and George Lamming). More generally, I would argue that literature, *Caribbean* literature, is often better at expressing local realities than the most gifted social scientist and that we should never fear mixing genres whenever appropriate to our artistic ends.

Aisha’s views on creolization, firmly anchored in her Trinidadian milieu, seem to me one useful way of thinking through problems of interculturality in parts of the contemporary Caribbean. My own views as expressed in *Travels* and elsewhere place me in the camp of those (such as Mintz and Trouillot) who would, rather, restrict the use of this metaphor to the initial stages of Caribbean colonization (answering, in this somewhat vague way, Aisha’s question, When does creolization stop?).⁹ As I put it in *Travels*:

Bombarded by the recent explosion in cultural studies and postcolonial studies of “loose” uses of the creolization metaphor to cover all sorts of contemporary phenomena, I would now opt for limiting its application to a strictly historicized process, one that took place in the earliest decades of each New World settlement. Although in exuberant moments I have occasionally described contemporary culture change in Caribbean societies as “continuous creolization, the ongoing invention and reinvention of unique Atlantic worlds,”¹⁰ it now seems to me more prudent to conceptualize, for example, Saramakas’ “discovery” of Wéntis [sea-gods] and Dúnguláli-Óbia (and so much else documented in this book) not as “continuing creolization” but rather as the subsequent unfolding of “creolization-like processes.” This retains “creolization” as a strictly historicized set of processes. But it does not deny that societies born through creolization may have distinctive characteristics, especially in terms of cultural dynamism. Indeed, one might even suggest that societies born of creolization—creole societies—are not, as some would have it, unusually poor but unusually rich in cultural resources, in their cultural “building blocks” and “grammar,” and, especially, in the processes by which they play with, transform, and remodel these resources into something fresh. (299)

In any case, it seems clear that during the past two decades *creolization* (like a good bit else in anthropology, including *ethnography*) has been appropriated pretty much wholesale by other disciplines, particularly cultural studies, postcolonial studies, and the like. (This, several decades after anthropology had borrowed the concept from linguistics.) In the process, the concept has lost much of its vigor and analytical specificity, coming to stand for almost any kind of cultural blending or hybridity.

In *Consuming the Caribbean*, Mimi Sheller lays out one strong, Caribbean-centric case against scholars’ globalizing or generalizing creolization, protesting that the concept “is not simply about moving and mixing elements, but is more precisely about processes of cultural

9 See Richard Price, “On the Miracle of Creolization,” in Yelvington, *Afro-Atlantic Dialogues*, 113–45; “Some Anthropological Musings on Creolization,” *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* 22, no. 1 (2007): 17–36; and “The Concept of Creolization,” in David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman, eds., *World History of Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

10 Richard Price, “Afterword/Echoes,” in John W. Pulis, ed., *Religion, Diaspora and Cultural Identity* (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1999), 405.

‘regrounding’ following experiences of violent uprooting from one’s culture of origin. It is deeply embedded in situations of coerced transport, racial terror, and subaltern survival. . . . Creolization is a process of *contention*.¹¹ She writes further of the “theoretical piracy on the high seas of global culture,” where “the creolization paradigm” is now used to describe “the ways in which cultural consumers throughout the world creatively adapt in-flowing goods, thereby localising the global and indigenising the universal.” In other words, she argues, “creolization has transmogrified from a politically engaged term used by Caribbean theorists located in the Caribbean in the 1970s [she’s thinking primarily of Kamau Brathwaite and Rex Nettleford but also mentions Mintz and Price], to one used by Caribbean diaspora theorists located outside of the Caribbean in the 1980s [she’s thinking of Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy], and finally to non-Caribbean ‘global’ theorists in the 1990s [she’s thinking of Ulf Hannerz and Jim Clifford].” And she urges a return “to the Caribbean roots of the concept of creolization, regrounding it in its specific social and cultural itineraries” in order to “recover the political meanings and subaltern agency that have been barred entry by the free-floating gatekeepers of ‘global’ culture.”¹²

I know of several books on creolization currently being completed by younger scholars with differing theoretical agendas. The spring/summer Duke University Press catalogue that just arrived on my desk announces yet another, this one by Michaeline Crichlow (with Patricia Northover) titled *Globalization and the Post-Creole Imagination*, that argues (according to the catalogue) that the creolization concept “must be liberated from and expanded beyond plantations, and even beyond the black Atlantic, to include . . . any place where vulnerable populations live in situations of modern power inequalities.” And in a recent e-mail, Sidney Mintz told me that he had just finished his “final” book—and that it was on “creolization.” The debates about creolization are not about to go away (though for my own part I have about had my fill).

I would be remiss, much as I wish to avoid sounding defensive, not to mention a few disagreements with Aisha’s commentary. Orlando Patterson did not originate the title of his 1967 novel *An Absence of Ruins*, but borrowed it from Walcott’s “The Royal Palms . . . an absence of ruins”:

Here there are no heroic palaces
 Netted in sea-green vines . . .
 If art is where the greatest ruins are,
 Our art is in those ruins we became.¹³

And it seems a bit ahistorical (or backward) to depict me as “valorizing” Trouillot’s call to avoid constructivism (and so forth) when this was part of what I believe that I and others taught him when he was our student in the 1970s. Finally, *additivity*, as I use it in *Travels*, is not, as Aisha seems to think, a synonym for creolization but a quality that is highly desired and celebrated

11 Mimi Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* (London: Routledge, 2003), 189 (italics in original).

12 *Ibid.*, 188, 193, 194, 196.

13 Derek Walcott, “The Royal Palms . . . an absence of ruins,” *London Magazine* 1, no. 11 (1962): 12–13.

in some societies (such as the Kingdom of Dahomey, as depicted by Suzanne Blier and discussed in *Travels*, or among the Saramakas themselves)—and it positively encouraged or fostered creolization among early Saramakas—yet it is firmly rejected in the ideologies of many other cultures (such as that of practitioners of Candomblé in Bahia). We hark back here to the old debate that Roger Bastide phrased in terms of Afro-American cultures that were *en conserve* (canned, or preserved), such as, he claimed, Brazilian Candomblé and Cuban Santería, versus those that were *vivantes* (living), such as, he claimed, Haitian Vodou. For all of what we can now see as the historical inaccuracies of such a conceptualization in terms of these three religious formations, Bastide's dichotomy does have the virtue of pointing to the ways that participants' different ideas about the past matter—whether it has been and needs to continue to be handed down and preserved with fidelity to some imagined African original or can be continuously (and joyfully) changed and adapted to new needs as they arise. My argument in *Travels* is simply that Saramakas have always appreciated change and additivity (much as Blier claims that Dahomeans do and did) and that this encouraged the remarkable processes of inter-African syncretism and creolization that their ancestors produced in the Suriname rainforest.

Twice, I apparently (and inadvertently) surprised Aisha in her reading:

Price asks rhetorically, and parenthetically, in his description of visiting Tooy in prison: “Who needs Foucault or Goffman to understand what total institutions look like from the inside?” . . . I found this parenthetical sentence as surprising (even if logically emerging from Price's recognition of the institutional indignities of prison and emphasis on emic, idiosyncratic ways of knowing) in much the same way as I found Price's own surprise at finding an intellectual, Tooy, in the Cayenne shantytowns.

But my ironic comment refers directly to an observation made by Tooy's nonliterate Ndyuka Maroon wife, who remarked at the end of her first-ever visit to a penitentiary that being in prison is just like being in the hospital. Which was simply my way of saying that neither Goffman nor Foucault has a copyright on smart theoretical ideas. And when I wrote in the prelude to *Travels* that “at first glance, the rough shantytowns that ring Cayenne, where Haitian, Brazilian, Guyanese, and Suriname migrants live cheek by jowl, might seem the least likely of places to meet a fellow intellectual,” I think I was less expressing my surprise at finding a fellow intellectual in such circumstances than my wonderment at and appreciation for that privilege:

And yet . . . the poverty that threatens to crush the spirit of both the hard-working and the unemployed can leave largely untouched the richness of the imagination. Amidst the mud and stench and random violence, Tooy—captain of the Saramakas of Cayenne—runs a household in which spiritual and rhetorical gifts abound. I've felt privileged to play a part in it during the past seven years. (vii)

But in any case, I am grateful to Aisha for her generous overall reading of *Travels*, which I hope stands as a complement to her own work on creolization and related matters.

Deb begins her commentary with a recap of the development of Caribbean studies, particularly since World War II. Each of us might tell that story with different emphasis, but on the whole I find her account stimulating and useful, especially in her emphasis on the shifting politics of scholarship and her insistence on diverse forms of nation building.

Her stress on the importance of generational concerns also rings true: as she suggests, both Tooy and I clearly recognize that radical changes are taking place in the uses of the past by Saramakas today, and that this goes quite beyond the old yet ongoing anthropological trope of *disappearing worlds*. As part of this generational concern, she exclaims (speaking of Tooy's "helper" Ben, who is closer to her age than to mine):

How I would love to know more about Ben's understanding of the past in the present, about his vision for the future and his understanding of what it means to be modern, about his objectives to engaging the French state! To what extent does his perspective represent a more general generational one, and what might this say about Saramaka cultural politics today?

Some day, perhaps, I'll write more about Ben and his generation. But it will present special challenges—Ben's generation, compared to Tooy's, is in many ways without firm moorings, living in a foreign city as part of an urban underclass and unsure of their identities and their future in ways that Tooy's generation (and those of his ancestors) have never been.

The "traditional Saramaka" part of Ben's concerns—learning the First-Time history of his clan (and maybe even writing about it)—remains a strong goal for him. So too does finding a permanent well-paying job for himself in Cayenne, which presents even greater difficulties. And so too does an attempt to mobilize the immigrant Saramaka community to come together in celebration and defense of its identity, which has been fraught with all the expectable problems of rivalries, jealousy, and other political hurdles.

Recently, Ben sent me a Saramaka-made DVD of the large 2008 council meeting in a Saramaka village in Suriname where, in the presence of the paramount chief of the Saramakas, a human rights lawyer explained to the Saramakas the legal implications of the recent victory of the Association of Saramaka Authorities against the government of Suriname in its landmark human rights (and land rights) case before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. (At the May 2007 trial in Costa Rica, I had served as expert witness on behalf of the Saramakas; Sally had served as their translator to the court.) What surprised me in the video was a few minutes during which a group of young women, speaking Saramaccan with some awkwardness and an accent, staged a kind of celebratory five-minute drama in which each took on the identity of several Saramaka clans and declaimed, for example, "I am of the X clan, my ancestors Y and Z ran away from Q plantation and founded our clan—Great thanks to them! I am of the A clan, my ancestors B and C ran away from D plantation and founded our clan . . ." and then another young woman spoke similar words. At first, I was amazed. Here, in a public gathering, women who were (or were they?) Saramakas were declaring their clan identities out loud and mentioning the names of ancestors that I had long claimed could never be spoken in public.

(During this performance, the elderly leaders of the Saramakas looked on stony-faced, almost uncomprehending.)

I called Ben (on his cell phone in Cayenne) and asked him about this moment in the video. He told me sheepishly but also with pride that it was he who had written the script and that the leading actress was his own wife (whom I had never met but who, he boasts, won the “Miss Maroon” beauty pageant in Paramaribo a couple of years ago). Like the other young women in the performance, she is city-born and currently a student at the University of Suriname, and normally speaks Dutch and Sranan-tongo (the language of coastal Suriname), rarely speaking Saramacaan (her parents’, and husband’s, native language). In other words, Ben—who has almost memorized the stories in *First-Time* from the English and French editions—wrote a script based on *First-Time*, which this urban Saramaka theater group then presented before the tribal elders. Who’d a thought it?

So, I very much second Deb’s idea that it would be great to know more about Ben and his generation, who are, after all, the future of their people. (More generally, it’s worth noting that 60 percent of the population of Guyane is currently under twenty-five, making Ben, who is thirty-nine, rather less of a youth than I depict him—and don’t even ask where that situates Tooy, or me, in the local population pyramid.)

Deb’s call for “an exploration of the various kinds of fissures that are reproduced within communities that share similar experiences . . . the ways a certain prejudicial commentary is reserved for Haitians in Guyane by Tooy and others in the text, commentary that would be familiar to anyone working elsewhere in the Atlantic world,” reminded me of an experience in Martinique. In the 1970s, on his way to begin dissertation fieldwork in Dominica, Michel-Rolph Trouillot (highly educated, urbane, cosmopolitan, and Creole-speaking) visited Martinique and used our telephoned introduction to stay overnight with our fishermen friends in the south of the island. When we next saw these friends, they asked us, with incredulity, how we could have sent “a Haitian” to sleep in their house. Though of course they treated him with respect, they didn’t sleep one wink the whole night—who knew what nefarious (voodoo) acts a Haitian might commit? As Deb suggests, “parsing this sort of commentary could tell us volumes about the different ways pasts are processed in the present, how particular pasts come to be associated with specific groups of people, and what this means in terms of the sorts of hegemonies that influence the shaping of diasporic communities.”

I would like to clear up two small misunderstandings in Deb’s commentary. She remarks, in arguing for greater attention to the present moment, that “it must be true, after all, that not only Saramaka First-Time stories are ‘concrete evidence of their people’s collective contribution to France.’” But I never suggested that Saramaka First-Time stories have anything whatsoever to do with France, and the story I was referring to with those words (“concrete evidence”) was a twentieth-century story, that of Kuset Albina, the young Saramaka who enlisted in the French army in 1939, was captured at the front as the Germans were about to take Paris, spent a couple of years in the stalags, and eventually made it home. This (very

much non-First-Time) story means even more to Ben, because he cares so much about validating Saramakas' contribution to France, than it does to Tooy, who actually knew Kuset upon his return from the war and told me much of the story. Deb also makes the observation, based on Saramaka men's comments about the loss of manliness since leaving Africa, that for Saramakas creolization may imply feminization. I suspect this does not hold, in that what is at stake here for Saramakas is not creolization but (polluting) contact with whitefolks. Saramaka men are unanimous that it was such acts as shaking a white man's hand or eating (white men's) salt that diminished their "fierceness" and ritual powers such as the ability to fly. So, that loss involved (feminizing? or was it just emasculating?) contact with whites rather than the very positive and creative acts that took place once they arrived in the Suriname forests and began the nation-building process that I gloss as creolization.

Deb suggests that *Travels* (and/or its author's sensibility) is modernist rather than post-modernist. Yet others have often labeled my books *postmodernist* (sometimes clearly meant as a pejorative). For example, Eric Hobsbawm, who called me by that word (as well as *post-colonial* and *fashionable*) in his review of *Alabi's World*, sarcastically congratulated me for nevertheless "deliberately avoiding references to Barthes, Bakhtin, Derrida, Foucault, et al."¹⁴ The late Greg Dening, an avatar of responsible postmodern writing in history if ever there was one, characterized my books as "powerful, sensual statements, exemplars of how to proceed when true stories in a postmodern world are such a complex web of past and present, I and Thou, person and object, science and art."¹⁵ And cultural critic Lucy Lippard wrote that *The Convict and the Colonel* "practices what a lot of postmodernists preach, [with] the book's graceful writing and innovative form tossing the reader back and forth in time and space."¹⁶ In my own view, *Travels* takes these experiments in ethnographic and historical writing a step beyond these earlier books. As Ken notes in his commentary, *Travels* is "a kind of multitextured narrative patchwork, a loosely stitched crazy quilt of time-coded stories and 'teachings' that jump across eras and locations, both imagined and literal." Might Deb's pushing me back into the previous century simply be her discreet way of alluding to the fact that I'm over sixty and she's not?

Throughout her commentary, Deb takes the admirable position that to continue to legitimately defend the contributions of anthropology to Caribbean studies it is imperative that "we ask some new questions." Good point—and I wish she had spelled out more of these questions for us to get working on. But it is also worth noting that many of the old questions—from Aisha's continuing concerns with the boundaries and utility of the creolization concept to Ken's renewed interest in ways of thinking about African versus New World contributions to black music—simply refuse to go away. One thing is certain: unless we follow Deb's lead in

14 Eric Hobsbawm, "Escaped Slaves of the Forest," *New York Review of Books*, 6 December 1990, 46–48.

15 Greg Dening, review of *The Convict and the Colonel*, by Richard Price, *Rethinking History* 4, no. 2 (2000): 221.

16 Lucy Lippard, back cover blurb for Richard Price, *The Convict and the Colonel* (Boston: Beacon, 1998).

stressing the politics of scholarship (and the ways that ongoing politics outside of the academy influences the questions we seek to answer within it) we're going to remain mired in the past.

Maroons, both in Suriname and Jamaica, understand something of what Deb is getting at. In the language of the Saramakas, *kióo* today means “young fellow” and carries implications of inventiveness and outrageous behavior—*kióos* are expected to do things differently from their parents' generation (whether in styles of speech, woodcarving, or dress). So it has always been—during the first couple of decades of Suriname's settlement, in the new language being created by plantation slaves, the equivalent term (*krioro*) meant “born here” (i.e., not in Africa)—and so, they believe, it should always be. And today in Moore Town, “capital of the earth” for Jamaican Maroons, a venerable proverb says, “New creole, new god,” meaning that with the younger generation comes new ways. Ken, who collected this proverb in Jamaica, reports that its implication today is bittersweet—on the one hand, a sense of the inevitable loss of the older ways of doing things and, on the other, all the hope wrapped up in the creation of new ones.¹⁷ I join Deb and Aisha and Ken in the hope that all the Caribbeanist *kióos* (youngsters and young-at-hearts) among us can continue to build new and intellectually interesting understandings out of the seeds of wisdom that our elders, including Tooy, have so generously sown.

17 See his masterful *True-Born Maroons* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005).