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Islands, Enclaves, Continua:

Notes Toward a Comparative History of Caribbean Creole Literatures

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Islands, enclaves, continua: these primary terms of Caribbean Creole topography are no mere metaphors. Creoles arise in milieux marked by the geographical discontinuity and by social schism and stratification. That Creoles are partially intelligible to speakers of some contiguous European languages, such is also part and parcel of their nature. Yet, as linguists have learned to their consternation, continua contain clusters hard to explain, islands and enclaves at the boundaries of which outside theory falters.

The cloud chamber in which creole genesis occurs is full of murk. Creoles are born out of catastrophe, circumstances under which the transmission of language from one generation to the next is thwarted and a makeshift ephemeral pidgin is forcibly transmuted into the mother tongue needed by an incipient peer group of speakers (Thomason and Kaufman [1989], 147–66). The Atlantic slave trade and the ensuing human calamity were thus most propitious to the creation of Creoles around the Caribbean—if one be allowed so to put it.

Language contact in the Caribbean in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was complex, though the Carib and Arawak languages that were present in pre-Columbian times can now only be surmised (Taylor [1977]). The number and the nature of the languages spoken in the African diaspora are also conjectural, though that they survived in some cases a generation or more is beyond dispute. What, in any event, did “Dutch” or “French” or “English” mean in the 1700s, at least in Caribbean mouths? In other words, the contemporary multilingual and multi-register Caribbean voice is an echo of a babel that reigned earlier, one travestied if the full complement of interlocutors is reduced to masters who spoke an early version of some European literary dialect and to slaves who imperfectly imitated them.

There are two polar theories about creole genesis, each with its own compelling logic. The “substratists,” well defended in the Caribbean, assert that the core of the Caribbean Creoles and the cultures they convey should be sought in the African languages of the slave populations (Alleyne [1980], Daphinis [1985]). Such explicit affinity with Africa is an article of faith among many Caribbean writers. “Universalists” argue that Creoles, the creation of a first generation of speakers who have no common tongue except a pidgin, are the product of an innate species-specific “bio-program” that kicks in to supplement insufficient native language input (Bickerton [1981]).

Universalists are by definition non-Afrocentrists, but they do not consequentially cast Eurocentric aspersions on Creole speakers, instead extolling the seminal powers of all humans, even in the most oppressive environments. Recent work in creole linguistics has suggested that neither the substratist

nor the universalist alternatives should be considered exclusive, that, instead, a kind of complementarity prevails between them, that the precise shape of any given creole should be related to the social and demographic conditions obtaining during the period of its genesis, against which restructuring of the “founding” language should be measured (Mufwene [1996]). Yet within all of these scenarios, Creole languages are sisters, step-sisters or cousins, each bearing inscribed within itself the principal fact of Caribbean history—the harsh crucible of slavery and forced cross-cultural contact and assimilation.

The pidginization and creolization associated with the Atlantic slave trade began on the African side of the Middle Passage around the forts the Portuguese established in the fifteenth century. It does thus make some sense to consider the Cape Verde Islands, a mere five hundred kilometers off the Senegalese coast, as the easternmost Caribbean islands, and the Portuguese Creole spoken there since the 1600s an honorary Caribbean one, this because slave compounding and forced linguistic inculcation were the foundations of its culture (Carreira [1983]). Likewise, the mutual relevance of Jamaican Creole English and Sierra Leone Krio is, while hotly disputed (Hancock [1986]), a further reflection of the bond between the Caribbean and Africa, one demographically reflected in the exchange of populations even after the slave trade and still propounded by many Caribbean intellectuals. Nonetheless it is in the Caribbean basin itself that the sense and sensibility of, the pride for, and the prejudice against its Creoles should be sought, and this from the late 1600s on. Standard sources cite over two dozen separate instances of creole genesis around the Caribbean, a selection of which is worth citing here: Haitian, Lesser Antillean, and Trinidadian Creole French; Palenquero Creole Spanish; Berbice Dutch Creole spoken in Guyana; Bahamian, Belizean, Miskito Coast, Barbadian, and Guyanese Creole Englishes (Holm [1988–89], I). By the broad definition of literature, one that includes proverb, song, lore, plus what Bakhtin called speech genres and which scholars of Caribbean culture have documented across the archipelago (Abrahams [1983]), each and every one of these Creoles possesses its own “literature.” Still, in what follows, only Creole literatures that function as systems in the reductive but critical sense of being in print will be taken into account. To palliate the inevitable patchiness of such a survey, focus will fall on literatures whose histories offer paradigmatic instances of processes common to all emergent literatures: exploitation of oral and folk sources, translation of canonical foreign works, especially religious ones, and use of regional or national identities as ideological focus in the “high” genres commonly known as belles-lettres; and the usually disregarded but crucial exploration of popular veins in the “low” or paraliterary genres. By way of introduction and somewhat elegiacally, there will be a brief discussion of Negerhollands, once prevalent on the U.S. Virgin Islands, the first Creole to enter print. The body of this study thereafter breaks into three parts: first, a synoptic account of Suriname Sranan as a literary language; second, an intermezzo turning around Haitian and Lesser Antillean French literatures and the particular problems raised by diglossia and bilingualism; finally, a survey of the most dynamic Creole literary system, Papiamentu.

The omission of Jamaican or Guyanese Creole English is not inadvertent, but a consequence of the strict definitions of literature and of Creole adopted above. As late as 1962, creolists argued that the varieties of English spoken in Jamaica, Guyana, and elsewhere in the West Indies should not even be considered Creoles. Unlike Sranan, an English Creole that was cut off from English after 1667, Jamaican and Guyanese remained in contact with English and drifted back toward it, increasingly in recent generations, concomitantly with the rise of English education and the literacy

rate in English to at least 75% in Jamaica, higher than in parts of many wealthier countries of the Commonwealth. Thus, in the eyes of some linguists, there formed a Creole continuum, a gamut of varieties running from basilect (the dialect closest to the early Creole) to acrolect (nearest to standard English) through intermediate mesolects (Rickford [1987], 15–39). Ninety-four percent of Jamaicans are Creole-dominant bilinguals; among the remaining six percent of monolingual Creole-speakers, half understand standard Jamaican newscaster English (Holm [1988], 471). In other words, 97% of the population has passive control of English, which in any event dominates the print and electronic media. Not surprisingly, Jamaican literature reflects this situation, and is almost exclusively in English, the language of literacy. There are exceptions, such as the poetry of Louise Bennett or the passages of one or another segment of the Jamaican Creole continuum to represent speech in fiction. The tradition of using West Indian dialects in English literature goes back to 1829, when the Scotsman Michael Scott inserted Jamaican Creole songs and conversation in his *Tom Cringle's Log*. This device is widespread in Jamaican and is a cultural reference point throughout anglophone Caribbean literature (Ramchand [1970], 77–114). To speak of Jamaican or Guyanese *Creole* literatures is therefore misleading, though recent archival and/or field work in Jamaican and Guyanese Creoles has provided some interesting insights on the early written history of each, usually excerpts drawn from diaries, travelogues, and similar accounts (D'Costa and Lalla [1989]; Rickford [1987]). Had Jamaican and Guyanese Creoles gone on to produce a contemporary corpus, these early texts would comprise their chrestomathies. The seeming harshness of this strict interpretation of “Creole literature” should not be taken to deny the interest of Jamaican, Guyanese or other West Indian creolized English, nor to undermine the use of the word itself as shorthand for “acculturation” and “interculturalization” in the Caribbean (Brathwaite [1974], 11), for which the reader is referred to numerous other articles in this *History*. In these volumes in fact, the distinction between Creole languages and creole cultures is marked by the presence or absence of the capital letter. Despite the wide use of the term *criollo* in Spanish (with reference to those born in the New World, as opposed to the population of peninsular origin), Hispanic Caribbean literatures, which constitute a relatively closed system in which little creolization has occurred, are out of bounds in this article, the exception being the fertile but special conditions obtaining between Papiamentu and neighboring Latin American literatures. In other words, in this study Caribbean Creole languages are not seen as regional varieties of English, French, Spanish or Dutch, but as vehicles of their own core texts.

A final cautionary word: there is no scientific consensus that Creoles derive in any but a purely contingent way from European languages. One must thus take “European” in a loose sense in order to include this article in a history of Caribbean literatures in *European* languages.

Negerhollands

Suggestive of how complex the patchwork of languages was in the Caribbean in the seventeenth century is the fact that the now extinct Dutch Creole known as Negerhollands arose in territories controlled by the Danish, who took possession of St. Thomas in 1671 and who, during the next half century, colonized St. John and St. Croix. Until these islands became the U.S. Virgin Islands, they were known as the Danish West Indies, and Danish was their official language. The predominant

European language was nonetheless Dutch, due to the influence of neighboring St. Martin, St. Eustatius, and Saba. The prevailing Creole was the Dutch-related Negerhollands.

Negerhollands occupies an habitually ignored position of honor in the history of Creoles. Not only was reference to it as *Carriols* among the first recorded references to Creole, but the first Creole grammar, which dates from 1770, is due to its native (white) speaker, Jochum Melchor Mogens, a Danish Lutheran missionary. Most ensuing study of Negerhollands was, however, carried out by German-speaking Moravian Brethren missionaries. Having no interest vested in Dutch, they recognized that Negerhollands was a distinct language. They thus felt free to compile, for reasons of their own, the first written texts in a Caribbean Creole, the 150 St. Thomas *Sklavenbriefen* or Slave Letters exchanged between 1737 and 1768 among slaves, the missionaries, and the sponsors at the home mission in Herrnhut, Germany. Of particular note is the “Abschied Schreiben” (Farewell) by Count Zinzendorf, patron of the mission, the first Creole text ever printed (Stein [1986]), and the transcribed Christmas carol performed in 1754 on St. Thomas and put to standard German hymnal melodies, the first recorded Caribbean song: “O Christ I give thee thanks / that you are a man like me. . . : (Stein [1982], 109).¹ These letters may today be largely of philological rather than literary interest. They are nonetheless of momentous historical import, given that they preserve the passage into writing of a Creole no more than a generation or two old. The recognition by the Moravian Brethren that Negerhollands was the mother tongue of the slaves and hence the most efficient means of touching their souls was far ahead of its time, and not without import in the contemporary Caribbean.

Suriname Sranan

The plaited connection between Negerhollands and Suriname Sranan is paradigmatic of the loops and intersections one encounters when mapping the Caribbean Creoles. Quilt is too flat a metaphor to convey these interrelations. Negerhollands was a Dutch-based Creole spoken in a Danish and then English environment. Sranan is an English-based Creole employed in a Dutch environment. Yet it was the same German missionaries, the Moravian Brethren, who first studied both and fostered literacy in them.

By all indication, several waves of pidginization preceded the birth of Sranan shortly after 1667, when possession of the colony of Suriname was transferred from England to Holland. This change of flag created a situation in which the slave population spoke an English plantation pidgin and the masters spoke Dutch (Goodman [1985]). The first attestation of the language dates from a 1718 travel text, the flavor of which is perhaps apparent in a literal English translation: “Howdy / How fashion you stand? / Me good / You good too? Aye” (Holm [1988], 17).² Typical of early texts in all Caribbean Creoles, this one was transcribed by a European who inadvertently corrupted proper Creole forms, in this case the “polite Creole usage” of personal pronouns (Voorhoeve and Lichtfeld [1975], 279). The less exacting reader will appreciate the collage effect of what seems simultaneous English, Portuguese or Spanish, French, and Dutch. As in St. Thomas, the arrival of the Moravian

¹ O Jesus Christ hab Danck voor di / dat ka wees en Mensch lyk mi (Stein [1982], 109).

² Oudy / Oe fasje joe tem? / My bon. / Jou bon toe? / ay (Holm [1988], 17).

Brethren in 1735 was accompanied by acknowledgment that Sranan (like Negerhollands but then called Negro-English) was not an ad hoc amalgam, but the de facto language of the slave population. The Dutch had even grown fond of using it themselves, as the Dutch-Scots soldier-artist John Gabriel Stedman attested. Stedman's perception of Sranan was affected by his relationship with the mulatto slave, Johanna, who bore him a son and whom he tried to buy out of slavery, persuaded that literacy would become her, though the polyglot Stedman remained unclear about the language in which she was to become literate. One suspects his mother's tongue, Dutch, might have had first call in a Dutch colony, though Stedman's English is better than fluent, and when he wrote English he was careful to express his allegiance to the British Navy, in the service of which his son died off the coast of Jamaica at an early age. Some indication of how large a role Sranan already played in Surinamese life by the end of the 1700s is the poem published in 1783 by the Dutchman Henrik Schouten, "Een huishoudelijke twist" (A domestic tiff), the first in Creole. In it an altercation between a European planter and his consort is humorously portrayed in alternating lines of Dutch and Sranan (Voorhoeve and Lichtveld [1975], 7).

The linguistic situation in Suriname was and remains complex, more so than on St. Thomas for example, because a second Creole was spoken by the Saramaccan maroon population who had fled the coastal plantations between 1675 and 1715. This Creole, known as Saramaccan, is considered to have more African features than any other in the New World. Saramaccan rather than Sranan in fact first occupied the attention of Creolists. The Moravian missionary C. L. Schumann compiled a Saramaccan-German dictionary in 1778, before turning to the study of Sranan, a dictionary of which he published in 1783. Schumann moved on to various translations of scripture, including a New Testament in Sranan (Voorhoeve [1952], 182). Though it was not until 1844 that permission came from the Dutch authorities to teach slave children to read in Sranan, the consequence of this regular supply of reading matter furnished by the Brethren for the ultimate development of literacy in Sranan should not be underestimated. The ecclesiastical production of this period of Sranan history has been documented at length by Voorhoeve and Donicie, 1963. Secular texts do not appear until the nineteenth century, the most noteworthy of which was the 1836 *Njoejaari-singi Cesaari* (Cesar's New Year's song), which adumbrated later Creole aesthetic strategies, in particular the use of proverbs. The Cesar/Cesaari in question probably was the pseudonym of the creole lawyer H. C. Focke, author of a *Neger-Engelsch woordenboek* (Negro-English dictionary) in 1855. Another hint of future literary roles for Creole was a short poem in anticipation of Suriname emancipation that appeared in 1862 in the single issue of an aborted weekly, *Krioro Koranti* (Creole newsletter). The triad proverb-pseudonym-protest, apparent in these foundational works of nineteenth-century Sranan, is still at the core of Creole aesthetics.

The subsequent two or three generations of Suriname Creole speakers had to confront the intensive assimilationist policies that followed on the heels of emancipation in 1863. Sranan was seen by the Dutch authorities, as Creoles have been and still are throughout the Caribbean, as interfering with the acquisition of the standard European language. The nature of Creoles made, however, for special patterns of diglossia and bilingualism during periods of attempted and often successful assimilation. After emancipation of the slaves in Suriname (and elsewhere throughout the Caribbean), the culture of the newly free survived orally with occasional attempts on the part of patriots like the aforementioned H. C. Focke to mine its proverbial and folkloric veins. Given the alienating norms imposed by the various colonial administrations and accepted by the local elite,

Creoles and the cultures they expressed were indelibly coded as inferior. Most upwardly-mobile individuals invested their creative energies in the prestigious tongues: Dutch in Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles, French throughout the territories under the control of France and in Haiti, English across the British West Indies and elsewhere as the power of the U.S. rose. In these circumstances, Creoles were confined to intimate situations. It is commonplace to lament the consequential waste of creative talents in this period. Verbal invention nonetheless found refuge in niches and habitats denied to the colonizers' languages: family, home, friendship, to some extent work, any and all relations among equals. Literary culture is hardly a zero sum game in which one sector's loss is another's gain. Nonetheless, the popularity of Caribbean proverbs, folktales, myths, and popular speech genres is *prima facie* evidence of a subterranean creativity only now being explored. The devices of literature are ubiquitous, an integral part of talk.

It is against such a background that the Church Creole dialect of Sranan came about. Dutch assimilationist policies ran counter to the actual experience of anyone resident in Suriname, since Negro-English was to all intents and purposes the only language understood by most of the population. In the ensuing conflict and given their disparate interests, both Moravian Brethren and Roman Catholic missionaries waged surreptitious war against the local Dutch authorities, the former in particular adopting an artificial "high" form of Sranan (one mediated through print), since the majority of missionaries learned it through a Dutch-oriented orthography. Sranan speakers accepted this distorted version of their colloquial tongue in the pulpit and on some podiums, since it had no other official status. The grip that the Church Creole dialect and its orthography held over Sranan required a particularly self-conscious effort to forge and promulgate a Sranan orthography free of imposed spellings that would be alien and confusing. The pivotal figure in this development was J. G. A. Koenders; he launched his own campaign of literacy in 1943 and devised an orthography to counter the traditional missionary one. His crusade was many-sided; it exemplified the literary activism, didacticism, and voluntarism of most Caribbean Creole writers in the formative stages of their literatures. Closely associated with an activist women's group, *Potie hanse makandra* (Put hands together), Koenders militated in favor of a new Creole grammar and spelling in his *Foe memre wi afo* (In the memory of our forefathers). He wrote Sranan primers on public health, and compiled a volume of sixty Sranan songs. His translation into Sranan of a famous Dutch-language sonnet by Willem Kloos, the Shelley of Holland, embodied the adversarial spirit that marks most translations into Caribbean Creoles. It, too, is a landmark in the literary culture of Sranan. Conflict is arguably the essence of all rhetoric. In any event, Caribbean discourse is imbued with conflict, as Roger Abrahams claimed in *The Man-of-Words in the West Indies*, 1983. It is also true that Abrahams left the Woman-of-Words out of consideration, thereby perpetuating still another conflict. Creole translation partakes of this agonistic vein. It has an ulterior, extra-literary motive: the need to prove the adequacy of Creoles as literary media by competing with texts in the normative colonial language. Translation and/or adaptation of European-language masterpieces are thus quintessential Creole strategies. Not only is the foreign tongue converted into and subsumed by the Creole, but the intrinsic differences between the Creole and its oppressive counterpart are laid bare. Koenders himself had no illusions about the relatively minor scope of his poetic talents, but he was an indefatigable teacher, social activist, and folklorist. He deserves special attention because, unlike other proponents of popular culture who attempted to transfer folk material into high European literary dialects, Koenders grasped that Creole was the most appropriate literary vehicle for a

creolophone culture. Otherwise Creole would be a fusty museum-piece, a token or amulet of antiquated ancestral wisdom, quaint in the ears of sophisticated europhone Caribbeans but of ancillary, at best complementary interest.

Koenders was seconded in this quest by Eddy Bruma, who transposed unwritten popular Paramaribo dramas into written and polished theater. Like many in his generation, Bruma confirmed the failure of assimilationist ideals during his studies in Holland, a phase of Sranan history that parallels the development of the negritude movement in Paris by Martinican and Guianese students. It was in fact in Amsterdam that Bruma helped found the nationalist *Wie Eegie Sanie* movement (Our own things), significant not only for its affirmation of things Surinamese, and hence Sranan, but also for its bonding of intellectuals and laborers in exile. Bruma was not successful as a politician, in part because his message was perceived as too strongly pro-Creole (i.e., supporting local blacks). In retrospect, the *Wie Eegie Sanie* manifesto was less racially oriented than what is often considered its prototype, *Légitime Défense*, more open even to colonial Dutch culture. As Voorhoeve and Lichtveld observe ([1975], 183), this manifesto was an anomaly among the anticolonial literary polemics of mid-century. Yet the mixed reaction to *Wie Eegie Sanie* was a harbinger of the conflict that arose in Suriname once independence came in 1975. Perhaps more than any other Creole, Sranan is perceived as the vehicle of a new ruling ethnic group, the coastal Creoles who to some extent replaced the Dutch as administrators and as persecutors of the Saramaccan and other descendents of the inland maroons. Eddy Bruma's contribution to Sranan culture was nonetheless considerable. His poems in Sranan expressed themes common to all Caribbean writers influenced by negritude, for example his frequently anthologized poem, "Mi braka mama" (My black mama). Of larger local consequence was his shouldering Koenders's former role of annually producing a Sranan play for Emancipation Day on 1 July, thereby setting the annual agenda for local Paramaribo theater, a task in which he intentionally drew upon traditional themes dating back to slavery and incorporated Sranan folk motifs. The only play in print, *Basja Pataka* (Pataka [a kind of fish], the overseer), premiered in Paramaribo in 1958. It demonstrates how charged the relationship between coastal Creoles and the maroon peoples has been. *Basja Pataka* focuses on the treaty that bound the maroons, in exchange for their own independence from Dutch control, to hand escaped slaves back to Dutch authorities. This play of conflicting loyalties and obligations, of betrayal and self-sacrifice, is a much overlooked Caribbean classic.

By finally shattering the hold that Church Creole held over writing in Sranan, Trefossa (pseudonym of Henry Frans. de Ziel) brought the process begun by Koenders to a head and forged a new poetic idiom, turning to the common language of the street. Written in 1949, his "Bro" (Breath) was striking not only because it used Sranan in the sonnet form, as Koenders had done, but because "Bro" departed radically from the formal Church Creole that had previously monopolized high or formal Sranan. H. F. de Ziel's pseudonym derives from Romans 16: 12, where Trefossa is one of Paul's converts to Christ. H. F. de Ziel came by his interest in popular speech honestly, having worked as librarian of the Suriname Cultural Center and having later edited under his own name the late nineteenth-century texts of Johannes King, a leader of the maroon Matuari tribe, who had written in Sranan his *Life at Maripaston*, 1973. Trefossa's output, though small, was intense. His poetry expresses the struggle to seize some kernel of truth (*wan koko soso*), one closely associated with the language itself, as in the following lines from the 1966 *Présence Africaine*

"New Sum of Poetry from the Negro World": "you blood forefathers / are baptized in dirt. / your sands are sucked, / drunk out by the drop, / Sranan." (New Sum of Poetry [1966], 548).³ It is not surprising that the Sranan language itself is thematized in these lines, since the decision to speak publicly, to read or to write a Creole was daunting, in Suriname and throughout the Caribbean. Trefossa's slender corpus has a lyric side as well. "Bro" and his other poems demonstrate that international modernist poetics passed directly into Sranan and, notwithstanding their Caribbean and Surinamese components, can be recognized in the deliberate experimenting with free forms, the sensitivity to shifting colloquial rhythms of speech, and for that matter in the assertion that any and all language constitutes an imaginative realm of spiritual substance.

Not that such attributes necessarily derive from contact with the larger non-Caribbean world. A case in point is the poet Johanna Schouten-Elsenhout, the so-called Grandma Moses of Sranan literature who had been jotting down short punctuationless phrases for years before discovering she was writing poetry. A more apt comparison might be Emily Dickinson, though the versification practiced by Schouten-Elsenhout reflects her acute sense of the proverbial background of Sranan speech. Skillful use of proverbs is typical of all Caribbean Creole literatures; it serves a dual role. On the one hand, proverbs point to an oral repertoire prior to and often excluded from printed discourse; they thus affirm the prior existence of creole culture and traditions. Less programmatically, proverbial allusion in a nascent literature creates a bond of intimacy between speakers, rendering the words more immediate and striking. Schouten-Elsenhout's 1974 collection of Sranan proverbs, *Sranen Pangi* (Sranan loincloths) thus represents a common characteristic of Caribbean Creoles, the collection and documentation of proverbs.

The foregoing account of apparent successes ought not to distract us from a fundamental fact of Caribbean Creole literatures: how inclement the conditions are in which a literature like Sranan must sink roots so as to survive. In the first place, given the tenuous financial underpinnings of Creole literatures and the relative lack of publication and distribution networks, the few anthologies that do make it into print and straggle out to the wider world play a preponderant role in determining the incipient canon. Voorhoeve and Lichtveld's *Creole Drum* (referred to repeatedly above), thus has exerted an overwhelming influence on outside perception of Sranan literature. Anthologies are by their very nature programmatic and reductive, but in the literary microclimates in which most Caribbean Creole literatures persevere they are a necessity and a fact of life.

The bilingual nature of Surinamese literature is evident in the 1970 anthology *Wortoe d'e tan abra: Bloemlezing uit de Surinaamse poezie vanaf 1957* (Words that remain [in Sranan]: Flowering of Surinamese poetry since 1957 [in Dutch]), edited by Asjantenu Shrinivâsi (pseudonym of Martinius Haridat Lutchman). Alongside Sranan poems are poems in Dutch by some of the same writers, including those by a poet represented at greater length in *Creole Drum*, Michaël Slory (who also writes under the pseudonym Asjantenu Sangodare). The bilingualism of virtually all Caribbean Creole writers inevitably makes for tangled and intrinsically comparative literary history, personal as well as national. The shifts of identity compatible with, indeed prerequisite to a multilingual literary voice are often conveyed by noms de plume. As elsewhere in the Caribbean, among Surinamese writers there is a manifest preference for pseudonyms of African derivation or flavor, though Asjantenu Shrinivâsi, above, typifies another common Creole naming device, the coupling

³ Brudu f'afo / ben dopu ju doti. / ju santi ben soidji, / ben dringi den dropu, / Sranan (New Sum of Poetry [1966], 548).

of culturally incongruent elements, in his case the African heritage with the Hindi in which he also wrote.

This raises a related issue, one that justifies the inclusion of this study of Creole literatures in a history of literatures in European languages. Creole literatures almost always overlap with one or another European one in the sense that most authors wear more than one cap and figure in two or more linguistic traditions. Though spoken by the vast majority of the population, “Sranan” must therefore be distinguished from “Surinamese,” which subsumes a number of other Creoles and dialects of other languages like Dutch, Hindi, and Javanese, the latter two stemming from nineteenth-century immigration that followed upon emancipation. Contemporary Suriname provides a classic case of multilingualism with Dutch, Sranan, and various other home languages sharing sectors of public and private life in compliance with an elaborate set of rules involving the formality of setting, the intimacy of the speakers, and their ethnic coding. Virtually the same thing can be said about all other Caribbean Creoles, since in only rare cases, such as Haitian Creole, is there a significant body of monolingual Creole speakers, and even in Haiti the range of registers and the predominance of French in official settings forces *Ayisyèn* (Haitian) into a diglossic relationship with it. The concept of diglossia has rarely been applied to literary history, and must needs be in the Caribbean; otherwise it is impossible to understand the continual shift of identities and hence of literary medium within the literatures. These shifts are not only played out in the lives of authors as they alternate between or among languages in their daily rounds or in their writing; they constitute the warp and woof of Creole textuality, the inherently connotative and metalinguistic web of allusion that marks Creole speech and, all the more pervasively, the heightened self-consciousness of literary Creole.

Among Caribbean Creoles, Sranan literature deserves a more prominent place than it generally enjoys, not only because of its intrinsic qualities and its prestige in national life, but because of how well it illustrates the rise and consolidation of a Creole literature as an instrument of national expression. These lines by R. Dobru (pseudonym of Robin Raveles) bear witness to this phenomenon: One tree / so many leaves / one tree / ...one Sranan / so many hair-types / one tongue / one people (Shrinivâsi [1970], 25).⁴ A more succinct statement of the conflation of language and nation has perhaps never been composed; the poem plays creatively on Sranan *wiwiri*, “leaves,” but also “hair,” “thread,” and “wire.” The Caribbean Creoles abound in racially descriptive terminology, for reasons one need not conjecture.

Haitian and Lesser Antillean Creole Literatures

There is a tendency among critics to lump Caribbean French Creoles together and, despite some substantial historical differences, there are good reasons to do so: their shared historical origins, their mutual intelligibility and, perhaps foremost, the affinity their speakers feel, including those on islands lost to the English after the Napoleonic wars (St. Lucia, Dominica, Grenada), plus Trinidad (a more complex case). The ties that bind Caribbean speakers of French Creole are suggested by the fact that it was a Trinidadian, John Jacob Thomas, who published the first Caribbean French Creole

⁴ Wan bon / someni wiwiri / wan bon...wan sranan / someni wiwiri / wan tongo / wan pipel (Shrinivâsi [1970], 25).

grammar in 1869. His own Trinidadian Creole French is now virtually extinct, however (Stein [1984], 24). Thomas, whose importance as a philologist Creolists recognize, has on the other hand been under-appreciated as an early defender of Caribbean culture. His polemic *Froudacity* was a lively repudiation of the jaundiced views of Caribbeans espoused by the English historian James Anthony Froude. The slim anthology of Creole proverbs, idioms, turns of phrase, plus translations of the Gospel of St. John and La Fontaine encompassed within his *Grammar* contains in capsule form the rudiments of the Caribbean French Creole canon.

French colonization in the Caribbean began on St. Christophe (now St. Kitts) in 1618, and thereafter spread to Martinique. Between 1664 and 1763, French colonists were obliged to import slaves through Martinique, and from a purely philological point of view Martinican Creole remains the point of reference for all others, now broken down into the *ka* Creoles of Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Guiana, on the one hand, and on the other Haitian, which marks the progressive aspect with *ap*, not *ka*, and lacks Lesser Antillean *ka* in other contexts as well (Holm [1988], 335, 383). Whatever their interconnection, these Creoles face sundry sociolinguistic situations in their respective corners of the Caribbean. The majority of Haitians are unilingual Creole speakers, some estimates ranging beyond 90%, whereas the figure falls to 40% for Guadeloupe, and 20% for Martinique (Chaudenson [1979], 17). Despite their long and persistent tradition of anticolonial activity, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and French Guiana therefore appear to some as rare examples of “successful colonization,” in Édouard Glissant’s words (Bader [1986], 182).⁵ Even in Haiti, the prestige of French has relegated Creole, the mother tongue of the majority, to the status of patois and insured that the bulk of Haitian literature is in French. In contrast, neither Sranan nor Papiamentu have to deal in the same way with the overbearing hegemonic presence of their colonial master’s voice, since their masters were neither English nor Spanish, but Dutch.

Volume one of this *History* documents the achievements of French-language literatures in territories that are, as the French have it, *créolophones*. A vital component of these literatures is the inner ear many francophone writers have for Creole and its echoes in their work. This is the general and habitual sense of “Creole” in europhone Caribbean writing. Emile Yoyo, for example, has argued that the proper study of French writings in the Caribbean requires seeking traces of Creole *signifying* practices, evidence of the syntactical, lexico-semantic, and rhetorical shift away from Gallic norms ([Yoyo] 1971). Subsequent studies show how pervasive this displacement is (Hazaël-Massieux [1988]; Pinalie-Dracius [1987]). The election of French by creolophones like Raphaël Confiant and Patrick Chamoiseau, predicated upon a hypothetical *mesolect* situated between French and Creole, as well as the not-unrelated publication of *Eloge de la créolité* (In praise of creoleness), 1989, by Jean Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant, reinforces the illusion that some halfway house between French and Creole might exist. Yet as the language of that *Eloge* itself demonstrates, these phenomena belong to French, not to Creole. Bernabé himself discussed this issue at length, and most lucidly (Bernabé [1983], I: 180–274).

Against the strong attraction that French exerts upon all of them, the Caribbean French Creoles have as a rallying point among themselves their tenuous affiliations, in shape closer to rhizomes than to roots, connections that do not lend themselves to the linear conventions of literary history. Haitian Creole will dominate in much of what follows, though the entwined nature of the French Creoles

⁵ Als weltgeschichtlich rares Beispiel einer “colonisation réussie...” (Bader [1986], 182).

allows for occasional supplementary references to events across the entire basin and its continental borders.

As in Suriname and elsewhere in the Caribbean where plantation slavery prevailed, the French Creoles that blossomed in the eighteenth century were multifaceted. From the colonizers' point of view, they were the language of work and command. They were also the instrument of resistance shared among the slaves: secret codes, fomented rebellions, escapes, etc. They were at once languages of refuge and intimacy and those in which the technology of large-scale sugar production was organized (Fleischmann [1984]). Such can be said of many languages, but the tension between the private and public faces of Creoles is acute. The documents regarding seventeenth-century French colonies suggest that a loose, unstable, and open-ended jargon was spoken among a population who shared a most adverse environment, despite its segregation into masters and slaves (Prudent [1986]). In other words, Creole was used by whites among themselves. The *békés* or Antillean-born whites to this day use it more than any other middle class in contact with a Creole (Bernabé [1983], I: 51). The issue of this *béké* or white Creole voice is a thorny one. In the late 1800s the battle over the legitimacy of Creole was waged within the white elite, some of whom had every reason to defend a language they themselves used. The first Haitian poem in print, "Lisette quitté la plaine," in modern orthography "Lizet kite laplenn" (Lisette, leave the lowlands), dates from 1757, but was not printed until 1797 by Moreau de Saint-Méry, who quite logically intended it to disprove allegations that Creole was incapable of nuance (Farquhar [1986], 1). The poem was composed by a white Haitian planter, Duvivier de la Mahautière. It is therefore the first of numerous *béké* Creole texts that continue through the nineteenth century. Not all of them are memorable, by any means, but collectively they form a generic continuum with later non-*béké* Creole writing. It is therefore difficult, given the pivotal role of "Lizet," to ascribe it to a "pre-literary" period, as do some contemporary critics (Bernabé [1983], I: 276). Such a periodization has an understandable ideological justification, the desire to relate Creole expression in its historical role as the language of the slaves and their descendants. Scholars like Bernabé would in this way inscribe Creole literature into an antimetropolitan social project. But try as one might to dissociate contemporary Creole literary output from the past, these early *béké* works were harbingers of practices that are considered acceptable by present-day proponents and practitioners of Creole literature: recourse to proverbs, the utilization of the oral *conte* or tale, and certain significant motifs such as the enchained lover. Though documentary confirmation is missing, there is a consensus that "Lizet" belonged to a so-called *cocotte* genre of lyric common at the time (Williams [1972], 29). The line of descent from "Lizet" to Oswald Durand's "Choucouné," 1884, is clearly direct. (The adaptation of "Choucouné" as the popular English-language calypso "Yellow Bird" in the 1950s is quite another story.) "Choucouné" is indisputably a masterpiece of Caribbean literature, a lyrical poem fraught with political implications, as its refrain demonstrates: "Choucouné has left me, and left my feet in chains"—itself an echo of the line from "Lizet": [she treats me] "as if I am a bird in a cage" (Fleischman [1987], 33).⁶ Rather than offhandedly dismissing *béké* texts, it might be more profitable to seek in the apparent affinity some whites had for Creole, ambiguous though it was, qualities that may still be present in transmuted form in contemporary Creole. Is it not in fact

⁶ Choucoun' quitté moin, dé pieds moin lan chaîne! (Fleischmann [1987], 34); mon tan com; zozo dans cage (Prudent [1988], 43).

revealing that “the white Creole community was able for so long (until at least the 1931 edition) to find itself and its own voice in [François Marbot, *Les bambous*, 1846], a slave text that targeted the lower classes and knew how to multiply the points of contact between the exploiters and the exploited” (Antoine [1978], 206)? Likewise, regionalist though they may seem today, the white Guadeloupean Paul Baudot’s *Oeuvres créoles* (Creole works), composed in the mid-1800s and comprising plays, poems, and fables, are of more than philological interest by virtue of the generic affiliations they manifest.

Insistence that early béké texts belong to the Creole literary system and indeed foreshadow many of its present-day features ought not to deflect attention from the core texts of written Creole: the ensemble of political speeches, edicts, decrees, and oaths surrounding the Haitian revolution, including a 1793 translated proclamation by Napoleon Bonaparte, and several similar speeches and edicts by figures such as Sonthonax, Dessalines, and Leclerc. The most compelling of these, due to its embrace of vaudou-inspired revolt and Afrocentric leanings, is the “Serment de Bois Caïman” (Oath of Bois Caïman), traditionally dated 14 August 1791 and attributed to the orator Boukman, but probably composed afterward by the mulatto poet Hérard Dumesle, who later became a minister in the Haitian government (Williams [1972], 43). “Afrocentric” here is an anachronism; the concept itself did not emerge until much later, but the tendency was present throughout the early history of French Creole writing, as François-Romain Lhérisson’s work demonstrates. His *Chansons créoles* (Creole songs), 1819, have not survived, but the poem beginning “Grand’ maman moin dit: Nans Guinée” (My Grandmother told me that once in Guinea), was fortunately recorded in several versions (e.g. Thomas [1969], 134). Its nostalgia for Africa, of course, but also its use of proverb and fable foreshadows later Caribbean works, not all of which were written in Creole. At the same time François-Romain Lhérisson’s orthography shows, first, that Creole was phonologically different from French; secondly, that its literate speakers were sufficiently aware of that autonomy to represent its regularity in contradistinction to French spelling rules. Though the corpus is not large, it is obvious that when Georges Sylvain composed his *Cric? Crac! Fables de La Fontaine racontées par un montagnard haïtien et transcrites en vers créoles* (Crick? Crack! La Fontaine fables told by a Haitian mountaineer and transcribed into Creole verse), 1901, he was consummating and blending three traditions that were well established in Creole letters: the citation of proverbs, as in J. J. Audain’s *Recueil de proverbes créoles* (Collection of Creole proverbs), 1877, and in Edmond Chenet’s *Proverbes créoles* (Creole proverbs), 1896; the imitation, parody, and even travesty of La Fontaine, as in the aforementioned *Les bambous*; and finally the lyrical impulse begun with “Lizet” but which had taken wing with Oswald Durand’s “Choucouné.” None of the versified tales in *Cric? Crac!* is as lyrical as “Choucouné,” but the poetry of the former has a music of its own that is founded upon the rhythms of the Haitian proverb and the density of assonance found in the tongue itself (Lang [1990-a]). Still, for reasons some impute to extrinsic economic and political events, to wit the 1915 U.S. invasion and occupation of Haiti, the thread of Creole literary expression frayed during the next two generations. Georges Sylvain himself entered national politics and ceased writing in Creole. The nationalist response to the U.S. occupation is usually thought to be exemplified by the lectures given in French by Jean Price-Mars—published in *Ainsi parla l’oncle* (So spoke the uncle), 1928—where he argued in favor of the Haitian vernacular and directed attention to both “Lizet” and the “Serment de Bois Caïman,” which he quoted in full. Such professions of faith in Creole were sometimes factitious, however, since Creole remained a

tangential reference in French works, not an actual medium of literary expression. The Creole sonnet Duraciné Vaval included in his *Histoire de la littérature haïtienne* (History of Haitian literature), 1933, is a set piece cut from the cloth of “Lizet” and “Choucounè,” but in the final analysis it is a mere footnote in a French-language work.

The seeming lacunae in Haitian Creole literary history during the 1930s are imposed by a narrative logic that sometimes skips over developments. Literary developments cannot always be easily separated from philological ones, such as conflict over the status of Creole and an appropriate orthography for the language. These principles will not surprise those familiar with the rise of Western European literatures—often taken as quintessentially representative—wherein philological definitions of a nascent literary tongue, their defence and illustration in the words of Du Bellay’s famous title, were of great consequence. During the 1930s, the terms of the debate over the nature of Haitian Creole were laid out by Suzanne Comhaire-Sylvain, a folklorist, and Jules Faine, an amateur philologist. Comhaire-Sylvain, Georges Sylvain’s daughter, undertook transcriptions of Creole tales and sketched out a Creole grammar in 1936. Her work was printed abroad and consequently had little impact within Haiti; but it can be usefully contrasted with Faine’s collection of tales. Faine’s orthography is easy to ridicule, but it had the advantage of consistency. Faine understood Haitian Creole to be a development of maritime French, at least initially; he therefore argued, also in 1936, that French models had a particular relevance to the nascent Creole literature, much as Latin models inspired Renaissance vernacular literatures in Western Europe. This position is still held by francophiles in Haiti, and for that matter elsewhere in the Caribbean by those who feel that basilectal Creole is limited in resources. Comhaire-Sylvain embodied the opposite stance, arguing that the roots of Creole should be sought in Africa. The Comhaire-Sylvain thesis holds that Creole folk culture provides material that most francophones discount or willfully ignore; in short, it is a trove of non-European themes and devices that remains to be explored. It took another generation to address directly and sometimes abrasively the problem of how Haitian Creole ought to be written, and to grapple with the orientation its literature should take. Despite Abbé Goux’s *Catéchisme en langue créole* (Creole catechism), 1842, biblical translations had not been prominent in Haitian letters, in no small measure for the reasons discussed by the renowned biblical translator Eugene Nida, who understood the difficulties in persuading Haitians about the validity of a Creole-language New Testament (Nida [1967]; Lang [1990-b]). The most significant cultural development in contemporary Haiti can nonetheless be attributed to a missionary initiative, one that was badly received by the Haitian elite. The attempt by anglophone Protestant missionaries to impose a standardized orthography of their devising, the McConnell-Laubach system, spawned the first regular weekly journalism in Haitian Creole, *Limière-Fos-Progrès* (Light-force-progress), 1944–1946. Quite as important from our present standpoint, this non-etymological (i.e. non-French) orthography incited Charles-Fernand Pressoir in particular to propose an alternative in his *Débats sur le Créole* (Debates over Creole), 1947, and to his orthography in *Sèt poèm ki sòt nan mòn-n* (Seven poems from the mountain), 1953. The national standard adopted by the Haitian government in 1979, the so-called IPN system, eventually issued from this controversy. The IPN represents a compromise that is closer to etymological or French norms than McConnell-Laubach, but it has decidedly less flavor of its own. The new official orthography did not, however, resolve another fundamental question: whether literacy in Creole is a goal in its own right, or whether it was best thought of as a convenient *passage au français* (bridge to literacy in French). In the 1940s and 1950s, the

francophone and largely francophile Haitian elite did not easily countenance language policies that would have made Creole a self-sufficient national language. They were suspicious of an orthography that subtly undermined the prestige of French and was furthermore fostered by anglophone Protestant missionaries who conceived of English as the natural language of the U.S. Caribbean backyard. In this context it is ironic that the large number of Haitians forced into exile throughout North America in subsequent decades has promoted the use of English among Haitians at home and abroad.

The foregoing discussion has, with some exceptions, concentrated on Haiti alone. This focus has the advantage of delineating the primary features of the early periods of French Creole literature, the relationship between proverbs, fables, and/or folktales, on the one hand, and the lyrical voice initiated in "Lizet." The Haitian pattern holds for the most part in the Lesser Antilles and in Guiana; we find it confirmed by such works as the Guianese Alfred de Saint-Quentin's *Contes, fables et chansons en créole* (Stories, fables, and songs in Creole), 1872, the Martinican Gilbert Gratiant's *Fab' Compè Zicaque* (Tales of bro' monkey), 1958. From the 1960s on, however, a different paradigm begins to emerge, one whose roots can be traced to a Guianese novel published in 1885 by Alfred Parépou, *Atipa: Premier roman en créole* (Atipa [proper noun, also name of a fish], first novel in Creole). The originality of this landmark text, an anomaly in its time because of its metaliterary reference to the various Creole genres it encompassed and its explicit reference to the Creole-French duel, is readily perceptible. If we read *Atipa* alongside the relatively transparent transcription of tales, fables, and songs compiled in 1872 by Alfred de Saint-Quentin, *Atipa* is a veritable transmogrification and remodeling of oral Creole culture. The Saint-Quentin anthology and grammar belong to the pre-modernist and essentially conservative mold of Creole defence and illustration. The elaborate game of hide-and-seek the pseudonymous author by the name of Parépou played with his readers (Fauquenoy [1989], 17–53) is noteworthy given the weakness Creole writers have for noms de plume. Indeed, Alfred de Saint-Quentin and his nephew Auguste, who added a grammar of Guianese Creole to *Contes, fables et chansons...*, were both thought at one time or another to be the real Alfred Parépou. Parépou seems to have intuited the dialogic nature of the novel in Bakhtin's sense well before the concept was invented. His incorporation of Creole folktales and *dolos* (proverbs, riddles, maxims, sayings, etc.) into a genre that had hitherto been conceived of as a mirror of social life marked an expansion of the formal bag of Creole literary tricks. For decades this dialogic genre was ignored; it has now become the model against which innovative Creole texts, such as those by the Haitian Frankétienne or the Martinican Raphaël Confiant, are best read.

Sranan literature was cast into the role of foundational model for a Surinamese national literature conscious of its center and the implications of its linguistic and cultural autonomy. Likewise the history of Haitian literature up to the 1960s can be read as the continual elaboration of a self-centered aesthetic tradition that eventually, if history so allows, will overthrow and expel the alien other language. Such literary and linguistic sovereignty is at least one possible postulate upon which such a Creole aesthetics can be based. Thus, Bernabé can qualify the Martinican Georges Mauvois's 1966 *Agénour Cacoul* as establishing "the theoretical possibility of an authentic Creole literature, one whose destiny is sovereignty" (Bernabé [1983], I: 277).⁷ It is a measure of the extent to which

⁷ La possibilité théorique d'une littérature créole authentique, c'est-à-dire à vocation de souveraineté (Bernabé [1983], I: 277).

Creole in the Lesser Antilles is entangled with French that this play is bilingual, albeit brilliantly so. Bilingualism is nonetheless only one of the interfaces along which exchange and sustenance with other literatures is possible. Creole literatures worldwide are marked by a manifest tendency toward translation and adaptation of canonic work from other literatures. This is the most neutral and therefore best context in which to consider the biblical translations so crucial to early and perhaps even contemporary Creole since the Bible is, after all, the core work of many already firmly established canons. Religious translation was not until recently crucial in the development of literacy in either Haiti or the Lesser Antilles. There are various reasons for this situation: Latin was the language of liturgy in Roman Catholic cultures, and the social acrolect of standard French was thought to be the only appropriate language of the pulpit. Furthermore, genuine religious life in the Caribbean differs greatly from surface appearances. In Haiti, but also in Guiana, Guadeloupe, and Martinique, Creole was the effective vehicle of syncretic religious belief alongside the official Catholic church. There was, in other words, no situation analogous to that in Suriname, where the Church Creole dialect reigned temporarily as the high register, and modernist poets could target its replacement with a more colloquial idiom.

The recent growth of Protestantism in Haiti and elsewhere in the Caribbean has been spurred by the missionary strategy of speaking Creole and translating the Bible and other proselytizing texts into it. Roman Catholic educators have had to follow suit, and the result is the slow growth of Creole literacy in some sectors, not exactly according to the script the Creole literary elite had imagined. To be sure, the translation and/or adaptation of non-biblical foreign works still has the greatest consequences for the high literary system in Creole. Above and beyond the repeated recourse to La Fontaine as a model in Creole cultures, other translations began to play a role in Haitian Creole. Franck Fouché's *Oedipe-roi* (Oedipus the king) and Félix Morisseau-Leroy's *Médée* (Medea) and *Antigone* all date from the 1950s; only *Antigone* reached print. A generation later Nono Numa adapted Corneille's *Le Cid* under the title *Jénéral Rodrig* (General Rodrigue), 1975. This "adversarial translation," which characterized the Sranan works by Koenders and at which Papiamentu writers have also excelled, springs both from the need to demonstrate the high literary capacities of Creole and the desire to make available vernacular versions of internationally prestigious texts. This same process occurred in Western Europe when the canonical Latin and Greek masterpieces were converted into French or English. Not quite so adversarial, but decidedly interested in using the foreign text for Haitian purposes, are the translations by Carrié Paultre (pseud. of Eulalia Cook), who adapted a Tolstoy short story and John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* in the 1960s. Some of these same authors were simultaneously engaged in producing works of their own in Creole. For instance, Félix Morisseau-Leroy (Moriso-Lewa in Creole) extended the range of genres practiced in Creole to *écits* (literary narratives as opposed to tales), poetry of a modernist bent, though based on popular stories (*Vilbonè*), and to theater (Laroche [1987-a], 166–70). Such expansion of Creole into new genres is formal confirmation that the primary grounds of textual transmission have been met: writers choose to write in Creole; a body of readers accepts a common orthography; editors, publishers, and distributors ply their trade and survive economically while doing so.

As Maximilien Laroche has remarked, "writing in Creole still entails a didactic effort like that

of teacher and pupil" (Laroche [1987-a], 20).⁸ In such a context, a special rapport springs up between the writer and the reader. The writer assumes the role of cultural spokesperson who actively embraces a genre, a style, and a particular subject matter. Readers, still few in number, are highly conscious of their option to read something different, since by definition both writers and readers of Creole are bilingual in French and Creole. This "voluntarist" aspect of Creole literatures—as it was called above in the discussion of Sranan—often passes unnoticed, perhaps because it is ubiquitous. Voluntarism and didacticism nonetheless have the effect of generating innovation; in this respect they resemble the European avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century.

A Creole literature does not just happen; it is willed into existence. Under these circumstances the role played by anthologies, such as Christophe Charles's *Anthologie de la poésie haïtienne d'expression créole* (Anthology of Haitian poetry in Creole), 1979, or surveys composed by sympathetic academics like Laroche, are of great consequence. Debates between rival schools and movements are intensified by the close confines in small societies. Without such collections and critical syntheses, the scattered works of the younger generation of Creole writers such as Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Georges Castera, Pierre Richard Narcisse would be even more inaccessible. Though poetry is the easiest and most portable genre for young writers to practice, the magna opera of recent Creole writers are without a doubt the experimental novels by Frankétienne in Haïti and Raphaël Confiant in Martinique. Frankétienne's 1975 *Dézafi*, organized according to the "spiralist" principles he espoused in the early 1970s, attempted to forge a quintessentially Creole literary language around Haitian folk motifs. *Dézafi* means cockfight, a nationally popular spectator sport. How well Frankétienne succeeded can be judged by reading the novel against its French transposition *Les affres d'un défi* (Defiance and dread), published a few years later in 1979. Their author may be the same man, but these works are not two sides of the same coin, the relationship being profoundly ironic at almost every point of intersection. Similarly, the Martinican Confiant, in his Creole works of the late 1970s and 1980s, seems to have conceived of writing as a "laboratory exercise in search of a 'nuclear' Creole" (Bernabé [1983], I: 281).⁹ Like Frankétienne, Confiant has been criticized for his artificiality and the comparative opacity of his writing to basilectal Creole speakers. There is no doubt about the opacity of Confiant's Creole, but in a world that includes *Finnegan's Wake*, the repudiation of *Dézafi* or Confiant's *Jik dèyè do Bondyé* (Behind God's back; figuratively, As far as you must go), 1978, and *Kòd yanm* (Yam stem), 1986, is a little fastidious.

The break with basilectal realism that these experimental texts represent is inevitable in any modern literary system, one that must be in some sense competitive with world literature as a whole. Inevitably, these works reflect a genuine frustration with the role of Creole *in situ*: its gamut of *-lects* running from a populist basilectism, its mesolect (often a mask for decreolization), and ultimately the disinclination of the Creole-speaking public to read difficult, or even simple, texts in orthographies still in flux. At the same time, and perhaps more relevantly in Haiti where a large population of unilingual Creole speakers exists, it is equally possible that the future of Creole literature will be found not in these brilliant innovations, but in paraliterary and popular modes of writing. Like any language, Creole will engender its own special instances and modes of communication, and the wily writer will pursue them. Frankétienne's *Pèlin-tèt* (Head traps), 1975,

⁸ Écrire en créole relève encore du travail didactique de la relation du maître et de l'élève (Laroche [1987-a], 20).

⁹ L'écriture comme laboratoire du "créole nucléaire" (Bernabé [1983], I: 281).

first performed in 1978 at the Théâtre National d'Haïti, was so subversively popular that it was quietly suppressed. Or will the way forward be found in the translation of a French text like Jacques Roumain's *Gouverneurs de la rosée* into FanFan's Creole comic book version, *Mèt Larouzé* (Masters of the dew), 1980? Or again, in a different vein, in the device illustrated in *Esperans dezire* (Hope desired), 1989, by Deyati (pseud. of Mercedes F. Guignard)? *Esperans dezire* is a bilingual but largely Creole and proverb-studded fantasy about *Premye Famn Prezidan Dayiti*—the first woman President of Haiti. The future of French Creole poetics is still up for grabs.

Papiamentu

There are various ways of confirming the proposition that Papiamentu is the most successful Creole literature in the Caribbean. In purely demographic terms, the population of native Papiamentu speakers is small, probably no more than 200,000. It is instead the prestige of the language, its use among all classes and in all settings, that has established the essential social base upon which the literature has developed.

Given its relatively short life, Papiamentu is impressive for its range and the gamut of genres it has deployed. In the words of Luis H. Daal: "Papiament[u] arose, developed and arrived at its present point and stature in the short span of time of barely 200 years. The development came in some sort of whirlpool as a consequence whereof matters got an added momentum and events followed one another in an accelerated tempo: early publications, religious instructions in Papiament[u], non-fiction and gradually a flourishing literature that has such feathers in its cap as books of poetry, novels, short stories, plays, essays on different subjects, magazines, translations from French, Dutch, English, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian, newspapers, radio and since the last twenty years, television" (Daal [1983], 57). Even this positive account needs amendment, since it neglects the paraliterary genres: political polemic, sex manuals, pedagogical and didactic texts often intended for use outside the classroom, and local histories. Accompanying this gamut of genres is an equally impressive variety of styles and registers—oral, literary, and journalistic—in Papiamentu (Anderson [1983], 82–83), by far the broadest of any Caribbean Creole, including prescriptive handbooks on radio and TV broadcast styles. Though no single factor underlies this diversity, the power and prestige of Papiamentu make it a prime reference point for other aspiring Creole literatures.

Now strongly influenced by Spanish, Papiamentu stems historically more from Portuguese (Goodman [1987]). Iberian, therefore, but spoken in a Dutch environment, it stabilized around 1700 and spread shortly thereafter from Curaçao to Aruba and Bonaire (Holm [1988], 314). The earliest document dates from 1776, a love letter from a man to his pregnant mistress (Salomon [1982]). It is typical of Caribbean displacement that the first literary text in Papiamentu was recorded in 1830 among the exile Curaçaoan community in Puerto Rico: "Comparsa di Julandés" (Dutch Masquerade) (Reinecke et al., [1975], 150). In ensuing years there were numerous biblical and catechetical translations, largely produced by the Roman Catholic church and not always lacking in literary intention, such as Thomas à Kempis's *Cuater boeki di Imitacion di Cristoe* (Four books on the Imitation of Christ), 1882. Although Dutch remains official, Papiamentu has long been used by the colonial government, beginning with the Emancipation Proclamation of July 1863. The first

newspaper in Papiamentu was *Civilisadó*, 1871–1875. They still flourish: there being two dailies in Willemstad alone; at least one, *Extra*, has a circulation in excess of 25,000 copies. It follows that there is an increasingly sophisticated rhetoric of advertising in Papiamentu.

Many factors have contributed to the success of Papiamentu, the first and foremost being the high literacy rates. In 1915 Shell Petroli marked the inception of the petroleum industry in Curaçao. The industry required a literate working class to operate refineries fueled by Venezuelan oil. This new class in turn provided a readership for popular print and media, a copious pulp literature, and the more elaborate literary forms that they engender. In this light, it is interesting to observe how many periodicals since the 1930s have enjoyed multinational corporate links—often with Shell—or, alternatively, institutional settings such as credit unions, Catholic worker organizations, and so forth. Such promotion of literacy by multinational corporations is an oddity in the Creole world, since it flies in the face of conventional notions about language and economic development. In any event, since the appearance of *Civilisadó* there have been well over a hundred periodicals published partially or completely in Papiamentu (Reinecke et al. [1975, 204–09]). As a literary language Papiamentu has had to prove itself against both the official Dutch and the Spanish traditions of the neighboring continent. Latin-American literature tended to impose its nineteenth-century romantic and twentieth-century folk and realistic phases. The literary material in *Civilisadó* in the 1870s was in Spanish, whereas political writing was in Papiamentu. This type of bilingualism suggests the extent to which civic life in Curaçao was and is dominated by Papiamentu, the vehicle of collective experience, whereas literary and commercial discourse has been multilingual, in Dutch, Spanish, and Papiamentu.

Papiamentu literary production was slim before the 1940s, with the exception of *feuilleton* novels published in the Catholic press during the 1930s (Broek [1988]), in particular the oeuvres of Willem Eligio Kroon, Manuel Antonio Fray or Fraai, and Simon Miguel Suriel, all of whom were published in *La Union*, a weekly founded by the Roman Catholic church in 1919 and still printed. Pulp writing in Papiamentu in the 1950s and 1960s featured romantic and detective novelettes, sometimes printed in *La Union* but often only mimeographed. A few titles are suggestive: *Rumbo di destino* (Rumblings of fate), 1960; *Lagrima di un mujer* (Woman's tears), 1965; *Orguljo ta amigo di diabel* (Pride is the devil's friend), 1960s, all by Wilfrido Ortega; or *Felipe y Margaritha: Novela original y amoroso* (Philip and Margarita, an original and amorous novel), 1950s, *E triunfo di un reinado* (The triumph of a reign), 1961, or *Relampago científico* (Scientific lightening), 1963, by Cornelis Raphaëla (pseud. of Victor P. Hernandez) (Reinecke et al. [1975], 184–89).

The literacy of Papiamentu writers in Dutch and Spanish as well as English makes for fascinating interculturalization. Jozef Sickman Corsen's Papiamentu poem "Atardi," a classic memorized by many speakers, is, for example, a translation of a Spanish version of Heinrich Heine's poem "Ich weiß nicht was soll es bedeuten": *Ta pakiko, mi no sa...* (Why it is I do not know) (Herdeck [1979], 552). Papiamentu theater bears the imprint not only of Spanish theater—e.g. Lorca's *E kas di Bernardo Alba* (The house of Bernardo Alba)—but also translations/adaptations of Molière—*Sjon Pichiri* (The Miser) and *Skool di amor* (School for love); of Shakespeare—*Kani mi pa mi kani bo* (The taming of the shrew) and *Ilushon di anochi* (A midsummer night's dream); of Goldoni's *Posada di amor* (Inn of love); and of several Chekhov plays. The comedy *Laiza porko sushi* (Liza dirty pig) was based on G. B. Shaw's *Pygmalion*. Its title is a bilingual pun on Shaw's title; the text played on Papiamentu dialects rather than Cockney. The same author-translator, May Henriquez, also

adapted Sartre's *Huis clos* (No exit) into Papiamentu in 1972 under the title *Porta será*. The vitality of theater life in Curaçao began in the 1950s with the foundation of numerous theater groups and clubs: *Sociedad Pro Arte Escénico* (Society for theater arts), *Ilushon Kósmiko* (Cosmic illusion), *Foro* (Forum), *Kuenta Krioyo* (Creole story), *Komedia di Eligio Melfor* (Eligio Melfor comic theater) among them (Römer [1989]). Such eclecticism extends outside the theater and is demonstrated by the number of popular U.S. prose writers translated despite widespread knowledge of English: for example Richard Bach's *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, 1970. At the same time, the postmodernist Italo Calvino has been translated into *Tres kuenta italiano* (Three Italian tales), 1986, by Nydia Ecury. Dutch, of course, exerts considerable influence. Frank Martinus Arion published his most important novel *Dubbelspel* (Double-play dominoes), 1973, in Dutch, and literary Papiamentu is tinged with Dutch turns of phrase. The cross-cultural process works in the other direction as well, Antillean Dutch having been affected by contact with Papiamentu. Even in committed nationalist works like Edward A. de Jongh's novel *30 di mei 1969: E dia di mas históriko* (The most historic day), 1970, which deals with an anti-government revolt in Willemstad, the Papiamentu is "not free of Dutch influences" (Reinecke et al. [1975], 162). Moreover, Papiamentu writers often publish political essays and folklore, as well as belles-lettres in Dutch or Spanish. In 1971, for instance, Frank Martinus Arion published "Gedichten" (Poems) in Spanish, Papiamentu, Dutch, and English in the magazine *Ruku*.

Such cosmopolitanism does not mean that Papiamentu has abandoned the Caribbean Creole penchant for proverbial and folkloric inspiration. The proverbial layer of the language was catalogued in an accessible edition as early as 1946 by the editors of the newspaper *La Cruz* in their *Proverbionan Papiamento* (Papiamentu proverbs). Ardent defenders of the language like Antoine J. Maduro continued this effort in such anthologies as *Un coto di dicho, refran, proverbio i expresionnan papiamentu* (Pocketful of Papiamentu sayings, refrains, proverbs, and expressions), 1959. Maduro later distinguished himself as a pamphleteer in the cause of the Papiamentu language.

Bookstores in Willemstad carry works like Hoefnagels and Hoogenbergen's *Buki di proverbionan antiano* (Book of Antillean proverbs), 1985. The Anansy stories familiar throughout the Caribbean have been recorded and expanded into more literary art, and sometimes into children's literature. Nilda Geerdink-Jesurun Pinto used the traditional orthography in her *Cuentanan di Nanzi* (Anancy stories), 1952, but a later edition shifted it into the contemporary orthography in *Kuenta di Nanzi*, 1983. These elaborations on the Anancy corpus all derive from a pioneering study to which subsequent editors, members of the Jesurun family, have appended contributions and additions (Jesurun [1899]). Some titles evoke specific local traditions, such as P. Brenekker's *Benta: Dos cien cantica dje dushi tempu bieuw* (Benta [a drum]: Two hundred songs from the good old days), 1959. Others suggest how important the lifeline to Dutch may be; for instance, the anonymous *Curaçaoensia: folkloristische aantekeningen over curaçao* (Folklore Notes on Curaçao), 1977. There exist La Fontaine versions in Papiamentu, as in other Caribbean Creoles (La Fontaine [1984]). Some of those who have worked this vein, such as the ethnographer Elis Juliana (pseud. of Micha Rofalda), realized that children's literature is an integral component of a mature literary system, and thus wrote for children (Juliana [1964]).

Typical of the nourishment proverbs provide at the early stages of a literature was Willem Kroon's novel *Giambo bieuw ta bolbe na wea* (Old soup back in the bowl won't go), 1928, which is considered the first notable work of fiction in Papiamentu. The Catholic monthly *La Union*, which

published *Giambo*...serially during 1924–25, aimed at retaining the allegiance of the nascent Curaçaoan working class. The title echoed a Papiamentu adage that translates as “gumbo, once eaten, cannot return to the bowl”—you can’t have your cake and eat it too.

As is the case throughout the Caribbean, affirmations of folk and proverbial traditions flow easily into both Afrocentric and nationalist thematics. The prolific writer Guillermo Rosario composed a series of historical romances on the life of the maroon leader Tula, most successfully in *E raís ku no ke muri* (Roots that do not die), 1969. Tula was the hero of a 1795 revolt; a mainstay of Papiamentu literature, he is also the subject of a tragedy (Domacassé [1971]). Rosario won various literary prizes, a feature of Papiamentu literary life relatively unknown elsewhere among Caribbean Creoles. He was singled out for his consistent orthography as well. It is not surprising that a Papiamentu author of such renown should have written a poem celebrating the centenary of emancipation: *1863 1 Juli 1963. E rosa di mas bunita* (The most precious rose), 1963. In a similar vein, Pierre A. Lauffer’s *Patria* (Fatherland), 1947, was on the surface a statement of Papiamentu poetic patriotism; but it also emulated the Afro-Cuban poets Nicolás Guillén or Luis Palés Matos: “Chant! Tropical chant / Over cactus lobes / Beat the drum / Triumphant melody...” (Lauffer [1985], 11).¹⁰ The analogies between Lauffer’s work and other Afro-Caribbean writers are numerous (van Putte-de Windt [1989]), but the reissue of *Patria*, 1985, is significant in another way, since the text has been retranscribed into the current orthography, adopted in 1983. As in Suriname and Haiti, adopting a spelling system has not gone without controversy. In the Netherlands Antilles the conflict between Aruba and the other islands dominated by Curaçao has aggravated the problem. Aruba has chosen an etymologically based system, one that reflects the Iberian vocabulary, whereas Curaçao has adopted a phonemic system (Devonish [1986], 65–69) in keeping with Curaçao’s closer identification with the Venezuelan mainland. The retranscription of earlier pivotal works like *Patria* fosters association among: 1) the literary history of Papiamentu, which is at least three self-conscious generations long; 2) Curaçaoan political nationalism, given the Eurocentric connotations of the etymological orthography; and 3) pan-Caribbean Afrocentric ideology. The paradox between intense local nationalism and pan-Caribbeanism is only apparent, since the affirmation of Papiamentu in its own sphere is tantamount to advocating Creole languages across the Caribbean. This does not necessarily imply a babel of mutually unintelligible Creoles, but rather recognition of the grounds Creoles share: 1) intrinsically as languages with much common vocabulary; 2) sociolinguistically, as heretofore marginalized languages; and, of course, 3) as quintessentially Caribbean vehicles of cultural expression.

Activism and didacticism are ever-present impulses in Papiamentu literary life, as has been noted earlier. Lauffer, for example, was the editor of the most accessible anthology of Papiamentu literature, *Di nos: Antologia di nos literatura* (From us: Anthology of our literature), 1971, a work that set out to establish a Papiamentu canon. Luis H. Daal, cited at the beginning of this section, is a scholar of Papiamentu and its early literature. He also wrote *Sinfonia di speranza* (Symphony of hope), 1975, poems composed in his own orthography during years of self-exile in Madrid and The Hague. Frank Martinus Arion is known not only for his poetry—his negritude poetry was anthologized in the 1966 *Présence Africaine New Sum of Poetry from the Black World*—but for his role as a proponent of Papiamentu in general and for his directorship of the Instituto Lingwístiko

¹⁰ Kanta! Kanta trupial / Riba kabes di un datu. / Basha, benta / Melodia triunfante (Lauffer [1985], 11).

Antiano in particular. He has also contributed an article on language and literature to volume two of this *History*. Indeed, most writers and intellectuals of the older generation and many of the younger have sought to forge and codify the literary registers of Papiamentu. Many were associated with the Komishon Standarisashon di Papiamentu (Commission to standardize Papiamentu), or have published pedagogical works (e.g. Nydia Ecury, Jenny Fraai, Mario Dijkhoff).

To understand Caribbean Creole literatures, but particularly Papiamentu, one must be of many minds (sometimes all at once). Let us take the example of the “Tony Richardson” series of detective novels translated from the Dutch and popular in Willemstad in the 1950s. Their author, Tuyuchi, was in fact one Arturo Eduardo Leito, born in 1907 (or 1910, depending on the source), who also wrote under the pseudonym Chobil. “Chobil” launched the Tony Richardson series in 1940 with *Un hecho di desesperacion* (Act of desperation), and then disappeared from the scene. Leito reserved his actual name for a single earlier work in a genuine literary vein, *Hacibo ciegoe pa bo por biba riba mundoe*, 1935, based, as is often the case in Caribbean literature, upon a proverb. The significance of the title is transparent for Papiamentu speakers: you must be blind to live on this earth. In other words, one face of the writer Arturo Eduardo Leito opens onto Caribbean folk traditions in Papiamentu; another turns pseudonymously toward the European world of the detective novel. By the 1950s, many Papiamentu speakers were living in The Netherlands. The detective character Tony Richardson, whose anglicized name is as much a feature of Dutch as of general Caribbean *série noire* or crime story nomenclature, haunts Dutch locales their readers either inhabited or might some day inhabit—a clear instance of Caribbean literature wearing its European mask. As for its local Caribbean visage, Papiamentu is the very incarnation of a Creole. It interacts intimately and constantly with three of the four environing international vehicular languages, Spanish, Dutch, and English. Frank Martinus Arion coordinates a Curaçao-based project devoted to the removal of language barriers in the Caribbean, the goal of which is not to impose any particular language, but to seek the common ground the creole cultures of the Caribbean share and to spread knowledge of the quintessential Caribbean languages, the Creoles. Such far-sighted Pan-Caribbeanism doubtless stems from the self-confidence Papiamentu confers and its appeal beyond the Netherlands Antilles, one echo of which is that the Surinamese poet, Shrinivâsi, also tried his hand at Papiamentu verse in his *Om de son* (Uncle sun), 1972. As his Hindi pseudonym suggests, literary communication in the Caribbean is and will remain multilingual, multifaceted, compound, and composite.

What one sees best in Papiamentu, then, is a glimpse of the rhizomatic Caribbean culture some have advocated (Glissant [1981]), as well as the conditions under which one rootstalk of that growth can thrive. Relative economic prosperity and literacy are but prerequisites, to be sure, and they must be abetted by some form of official status and a widely disseminated orthography. Yet such sociolinguistic grounds are only the soil in which a literature grows. The bounty of Papiamentu indicates that literatures prosper not in isolation, but when they absorb influences, through translation (adversarial or not), but also from the full compass of the cultural environment. Oral and folk traditions may be the nutriment in which seedlings first sprout. Maturity comes when the nascent literature competes successfully with canonical works of foreign literatures. At this stage one can say that readers’ literary experience is transplanted into a new medium. The already dynamic literary life in Papiamentu demonstrates how such a process may draw upon its multiple rootedness. Sranan and Haitian, and even that extinct shoot Negerhollands, fill in further details about how a Creole strives to supplant alien texts, after having defined them as foreign.

Conclusion

Caribbean Creoles are as “Caribbean” as they are “creole.” These tongues belong to the subset of non-Caribbean languages with which they share historical fates and some linguistic traits: Cape Verdean Crioulu, Sierra Leonean Krio, Mauritian Kreol, Papua New Guinea Tok Pisin. They also belong to a second subset, that of all languages spoken in the Caribbean, upon which they have in addition imposed a strong dialectal presence. English especially bears their trace, perhaps by way of compensation for the demise of English Creoles in the former British West Indies. As Creoles per se Sranan, Haitian, and Papiamentu partake of both advantages and disadvantages. Among the former is their elegant syntactic economy. One need not be a Creole universalist to find their grammars accessible, an attribute that has induced some linguists to suggest that they are not minimal, but “optimal arrangements of syntax” (Hjelmslev [1939], 373).¹¹ Nor need one espouse the sub-stratist point of view to acknowledge that Creoles open up both toward their European lexical bases and the cultures those convey—a significant gain for their technological lexicons—but also toward the African cultures that contributed so fundamentally to Caribbean society. On the other hand, this polysemic convertibility, a potential asset, easily turns into a handicap if the exchange is one-sided. From their inception, Caribbean Creoles have been flexible, adaptive, and assimilative, to a greater degree, certainly, than the New World cultures based in English, Spanish, or French. Cynics will attribute this to weakness. Close examination of the Creole literatures outlined above shows instead that once a certain autonomy is won, exchange, borrowing, adaptation, and experimentation are the norm for Creoles.

In Haiti, which has the highest concentration of unilingual creolophones in the world, the “bridge to French” that Creole represents evokes negative reactions not because French is relatively accessible to anyone who speaks French Creole—or could be, given sufficient education—but because the passageway is a one-way street. Were French to feed into Creole, the situation would be radically different. This was the point of Jean Bernabé’s distinction, alluded to above, between diglossia, the schizoid division of the One, and “biglossia,” which “achieves duality by multiplying the One” (Bernabé in Mauvois [1988], 13).¹² The former is predicated upon disjunction, the displacement or expulsion of a language; the latter seeks the conjunction and coexistence of languages. Time alone will tell if such coexistence is a Caribbean illusion.

On the other hand, the broad similarity among all Caribbean cultures, be they Creole or not, guarantees that Sranan, Haitian, and Papiamentu have much in common not only among themselves, but also with Jamaican English, Haitian French, Puerto Rican Spanish, and Surinamese Dutch. Such multiplexity sometimes falls beyond the ken of traditional cultural historians, who tend toward the linear, monolithic, and either/or models of national development. In one sense, of course, “Western European literature,” itself fragmented along linguistic lines, offers a canonical example of a plural system with homogeneous development. It would be asinine to deny Caribbean Creole literatures a comparable framework, the recognition of the unity underlying their diversity. Yet an even more multifarious paradigm is indispensable to grasp the complexity of Caribbean cultural and literary

¹¹ L’expression des formes grammaticales est dans les langues créoles à l’optimum (Hjelmslev [1939], 373).

¹² Je distingue ce terme néologique de celui de *diglossie* en ce que la diglossie obtient la dualité par la division schizoïde de l’Un, tandis que la biglossie, elle, débouche sur la dualité par la multiplication de l’Un. Non plus disjonction, mais conjonction (Bernabé in Mauvois [1988], 13).

relations, especially as they pertain to Creoles. What is often criticized as Eurocentric is first and foremost just plain centripetal. Such conventional models must, if not yield to, at least blend with peripheric ones. What looms on the periphery, visible there solely because discursive gravitation, so to speak, has not swallowed up all its light, are the obscure outlines of these new paradigms (Lang [1987]). In recent Caribbean thought, one similiar model can be found in *Eloge de la créolité*, whose authors propose a pluridimensional continuum linking Creole-speaking Caribbeans with creolophones around the world on anthropological grounds, and with all Antilleans on geopolitical ones (Bernabé et al. [1989], 33). Implied by this argument, though at odds with the polemic intent of the French-language manifesto, are the threads connecting Caribbean people, creolophone or not, who speak French, Dutch, Spanish, and English, with all others who speak those languages. There are no longer any Caribbean literatures in languages other than European ones, with the exception of Creoles (and the marginal Arawak and Carib oratures in Suriname, Guiana, and Guyana). Creoles themselves, moreover, are full of sliding doors that suddenly open onto English, French, Spanish or Dutch. As seen above, the principal topoi of Sranan, Haitian, and Papiamentu cluster around the triangular figure bounded by proverbs, protest, and pseudonymity.

Proverbs are universal features of literature, both as a rhetorical device and as cultural content. Yet they are concretely particular in the mouth of a native speaker, a virtual warranty that the roots and specificity of a language are being respected. Each Creole is an *island* apart unto itself, and proverbs are passwords to its bays and inlets. Protest, an inherent reaction against the subversion of a language, posits an *enclave* every language must possess for its center to hold, a bastion of sovereignty, be it the grammatical core that defines a language, its corps of faithful speakers, or more tangibly and territorially the realms and spheres in which it prevails as primary vehicle. Pseudonymity, symbol of the multiple identities of Caribbean (Creole) writers (and readers), is on the other hand a function of the *continua* that traverse the Caribbean, not only separating but joining its figurative Creole islands and enclaves.

Of course before there can be a continuum, specific points must first be connected. The nascent canons, experiments, the growing body of texts and criticism, and the enthusiastic activism chronicled above notwithstanding, there will be no full flourishing of Creole literatures unless they are identified one by one and then, paradoxically, recognized as some kind of one, not a plurality, but rather as prismatic refractions of a single set.

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