Continents and Archipelagoes: From *E Pluribus Unum* to Creolized Solidarities

FRANÇOISE LIONNET

ARCHIPELAGOES, COSMOPOLITANISM, CREOLIZATION: FROM ANtiquity to the present, from early Greek colonial settlements to twentieth-century postcolonial sites, these terms capture an idea of diversity linked to fluidity and mobility, exchange and transformation. Early modern European colonial expansions intensified processes that have continued to affect populations and landscapes, languages and worldviews. Today, postmodern global cities are the setting for new forms of creolized identities that are altering understandings of ethnic and national belonging across the world, even if established political and educational institutions do not always follow suit and adjust to this changing human landscape.

France and the United States are two cosmopolitan nations that struggle with similar ideologies of assimilation and myths of the melting pot (Noiriel). Contested definitions of universalism and patriotism, as well as debates over democratic forms of rationality and subjectivity, mark the politics of contemporary identities in both nations. Conceptions of national unity, "oneness," and civic "being" generate heated arguments in both, but the United States' approach to putatively normative definitions of race and ethnicity generally figures as negative counterexample for France (Bonnafous; Ullmo). In this essay, I briefly discuss the French model of ideal civic identity and contrast it to transcultural Creole modes of being and forms of linguistic and social agency. I argue that the Creole modes provide tactical means of bypassing the French republican prohibition on race-based discourse in public life. The history of this prohibition and the transformation it is currently undergoing shed light on processes of racialization specific to France and the larger francophone Creole world that are intertwined with notions of anonymity, obscurity, and opacity, notions

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https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2008.123.5.1503 Published online by Cambridge University Press

that I discuss below in terms of the epistemological gaps that linguistic choices reveal.

Unum, or the "One," as State Ideology in French and United States Contexts

E pluribus unum, the original motto of the United States adopted by an act of Congress in 1782, has echoes in the French constitution of 1793, which states that "[t]he Republic is one and indivisible."[1] France and the United States share myths of political exceptionalism that are characterized by centripetal ideologies of assimilation, even if these take different forms on either side of the Atlantic.[2] The revised constitution of 1958, on which the French Fifth (and current) Republic was founded, restates article 1 as follows: "France is an indivisible republic, secular, democratic, and social. It guarantees equality before the law to all citizens, regardless of origin, race, or religion. It respects all beliefs."[3] Note that race is mentioned but not gender (more on this in a moment). In 1992 the following statement was added to article 2: "The language of the Republic is French."[4] Even in our era of increasing decentralization; outsourcing, or *délocalisation*; and globalization, these republican ideals remain for the most part the bedrock of political legitimacy, the ground for *solidarité* among France's diverse regions and citizens, and the only putative and theoretical guarantee of equality for all. But France faces enormous challenges with regard to racial and economic issues, and these ideals have been tested. Violent forms of urban unrest date back to the early 1980s, which marks the beginning of the gradual ghettoization of (im)migrant populations in housing projects erected in the peripheries of France's large cities.[5] The events of November 2005 in the *banlieues* of Paris demonstrated that the traditional model of democratic belonging and the exceptionalism of French cultural and linguistic universalism continue to be in crisis, as indeed they have been for more than twenty-five years (Lionnet, "Immigration"; Rosello; Stovall and Abbeele). The government is trying to adjust to the growing public awareness of this model's shortcomings. President Nicolas Sarkozy's cabinet appointments of 2007 mark important symbolic changes, due in part to the quiet, if limited, revolution brought about by the *parité* law of 6 June 2000, which requires greater gender balance in public life. These appointments include a number of minority women, such as Rachida Dati (minister of justice), Fadela Amara (secretary of state for urban policies), and Rama Yade (secretary of state for human rights).[6]

France's original model of political integration imagines an abstract individual citizen who relates directly to an ideal, unified nation-state without either a purportedly natural and biological community (race or gender) or a chosen and cultural one (regional, religious, or political) that might intercede on behalf of the individual and thus ease his or her transition toward democratic agency by being an advocate for the group's equal rights. American communal, or "communitarian," society is perceived by many French historians and political theorists to be problematic and dangerously divisive because it is *différentialiste* and thus validates "une sorte de biologisation inédite du social" (Rosanvallon, *Peuple* 352). This "biologizing of the social sphere" is seen as undermining republican neutrality and underwriting symbolic differences, whereas public discourses, in an effort to avoid social segregation and political recuperation by interest groups, are supposed to invoke atemporal universal ideals of belonging.[7] Such groups, especially racially based associations, are part of the ordinary fabric of democratic practice in the Anglo-Saxon world, but they are generally seen in France as engaging in forms of identity politics that go against the most fundamental ideals of the nation. The Conseil Représentatif des Associations Noires ("Representative Council of Black Associations," or CRAN) and the Mouvement

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2008.123.5.1503 Published online by Cambridge University Press

contre le Racisme et pour l'Amitié entre les Peuples ("Movement against Racism and for Friendship among All Peoples," or MRAP) are two examples of powerful French associations whose lobbying efforts are noteworthy but controversial and whose respective positions on issues are often at odds with each other.[8]

Telling debates about race, representation, minority status, and identitarian struggles have regularly appeared since 2005 in the online journal *L'observatoire du communautarisme*, which supports traditional republican ideals; in 2006, CRAN's spokesperson, Louis-Georges Tin, a Martinican scholar, gay activist, and professor at the University of Orléans, gave the journal a lucid interview in which he dissects the intellectual presuppositions of French universalism and eloquently critiques its blindspots. Vigorous debates such as this are a healthy development in a nation that values above all theoretical and juridical (rather than pragmatic) understandings of identity and participation and that has always prided itself on its enlightened rationalist approach to justice and equality for all within a democratically constituted public sphere. But, as the sociologist Michel Wieviorka has pointed out, if during colonial times processes of racialization emphasized a vertical logic of "inferiorization" of the "Other" to justify exploitation, today racism tends to exist along a horizontal axis that stresses cultural differences and the "irreducible alterity" of those who must be kept at a distance or expelled from the body of a nation that cannot assimilate them (49). Twentieth-century differentialist discourses of race have been associated since the Holocaust with anti-Semitism, and today they are increasingly associated with anti-immigrant rhetoric. Because of that history, and because of the Dreyfus affair of the 1890s and its aftermath, many French intellectuals have a difficult time accepting the idea that the affirmation of a racial identity can exist in terms of a horizontal logic of difference *and* equality. Since the idea of race as a "natural" category has been thoroughly undermined by twentieth-century science, and since it can prove dangerous to use the notion of racial difference to promote any one group, avoiding the concept altogether is the preferred, "rational" choice for these intellectuals. However, as Colette Guillaumin, one of the few French feminists to have written extensively about both gender and race, asserts, "Race is one of our times' most contradictory and violent ideas" (207). In a 1981 essay that takes into account both material and ideological realities, Guillaumin articulates the problem clearly and succinctly, stressing the performative effects of the notion of race, and she concludes, simply, "No, race does not exist. Yes, of course race exists. No, the notion of race is certainly *not* what it is usually understood to be, *but* it is nonetheless the most tangible, real, and brutal of realities" (217).[9]

Breaking with two centuries of constitutional precepts grounded first and foremost in the ideology of universal rights and in assimilationist policies, the French National Assembly voted for the Taubira law in May 2001 (named after Christiane Taubira, the deputy who proposed it and who represents the overseas department of French Guiana in the assembly). This law recognizes that slavery is a crime against humanity. It implicitly acknowledges that French colonialism rested on a historically specific form of racism. But it downplays the *racial* dimension of the problem. Article 1 of the Taubira law is careful to state that the enslaved populations included persons of African, Amerindian, Malagasy, and Indian origin, thus emphasizing the crime of slavery rather than the underlying racial and ethnic issues it denotes. The law invokes the question of a common humanity endowed with the same rights, not the racialization of the colonized populations. The law also states that all school curricula must include the history of the triangular trade and of the cultures created by enslaved and displaced populations since the fifteenth century, that a date for

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annual public commemoration must be set, and that a special committee must be entrusted with the task of establishing appropriate ways of memorializing this crime for the benefit of future generations. Thus was created the Comité pour la Mémoire de l'Esclavage ("Committee for the Memory of Slavery"). Maryse Condé presided over the committee, which in 2005 was instrumental in having 10 May designated as the official date for this commemoration. And Condé insisted that "[t]his date is a symbol of the universal" (qtd. in Mirthil). On 10 May 2007, CRAN organized an important colloquium, the first of its kind, on black historiography, Ecrire l'histoire, l'histoire des noirs ("Writing History, Black History"), which featured the participation of eminent sociologists and historians such as Eric Fassin, Pap Ndiaye, and Benjamin Stora.[10]

This juridical recognition is of great symbolic importance. By contrast, in the United States there is neither an official commemoration nor any law condemning slavery on universal grounds. But although the law has a laudable pedagogical imperative, it does not have an immediate or direct impact on racially based inequality, the unemployment rate of minorities, and discrimination suffered in the present by the descendants of slaves and by other immigrants, since racial identity cannot be used as a category on official census documents in France. There are no legal provisions for any kind of ethnic affirmative-action policy, or *discrimination positive* (as the phrase is tendentiously mistranslated into French), although other forms of preferential treatment to redress social inequality do exist. Indeed, considerations of disability and class form part of what Tin calls an affirmative "politique de rattrapage" ("policy of remedial action" ["Entretiens"]) that is applied—in theory—to other areas of public life in order to equalize opportunities for economically disadvantaged students or disabled workers. In fact, the law of 10 July 1987 on disability states that public institutions must reserve up to six percent of their jobs for prospective employees with disabilities (even though few provisions exist for disability access); in addition, the Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris has had a special program in place since 2001 to enroll (with mixed results) students from underprivileged backgrounds that graduate from high schools located in the *zones d'éducation prioritaire* ("priority zones of education," or ZEPs). Given these existing exceptions, and viewed from the perspective of several decades of United States race and gender theorizing, the French color-blind approach appears naive at best, willfully exclusionary at worst, despite efforts to provide the remedial incentives that the ZEPs exemplify.

If great strides have been made in the area of gender equality thanks to the *parité* movement (even though a garden-variety misogyny is alive and well, made clear by the treatment of Segolène Royal during the 2007 French presidential campaign and its aftermath), much remains to be done when it comes to racial issues.[11] British and American race theorists and empirical social scientists have demonstrated that color-blind policies, like gender-neutral ones, actually work in favor of the status quo, of a singular universalism that barely hides its own centralizing and (neo)colonialist roots.[12] As the British Marxist sociologist Stuart Hall has put it, echoing Marx's definition of ideology: the universal or the global is in fact the "self-representation of the dominant particular" ("Old and New Identities" 67). In France, as in the United States, political exceptionalism does not equate in practice with equality of opportunity for all, and *E pluribus unum* often translates into hegemonic particularisms that rely on a sovereign and sacred notion of the "one" that has historically encouraged hierarchical dynamics. This is especially true with regard to the notions of person and nonperson, as defined by law and citizenship; these notions have acquired new and problematic meaning in the wake of twenty-first-century clandestine migrations of African

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2008.123.5.1503 Published online by Cambridge University Press

refugees and *sans-papiers* throughout the affluent North (Balibar; Dal Lago).[13] For to exist at all, to be in civil society, is to be a citizen. As David Beriss has put it, "To be French is to be the member of . . . a particular nation *and* a representative of a universal ideal" (106 [my emphasis]; Lionnet, "Performative Universalism" 119)—namely, the ideal of unmarked democratic citizenship.

In Praise of Obscurity

To understand some of the conceptual barriers against the use of race as an analytic category, it may be useful to go back to a dichotomy between the sacred and the secular that is at the heart of social formations and that takes on a paradoxical meaning in France. According to the historian Jacques Juillard, "one of the functions of history is to locate . . . the proper domain of the sacred: for England, it is the monarchy; for Germany, language; for the U. S., the Constitution. Finally, in the case of France, it is the State" (Introduction 2). This constitutionally indivisible unity of the state specifies the oneness of the "one" and is part of an implicit and contemporary understanding of the sacred as a fundamentally secular notion, born of the Revolution of 1789. This "oneness" is *incontournable*, or inescapable, since it is what determines the legitimacy of the state, and any perceived threat to this unity, whether regional or ethnic, is cause for serious concern because it might fragment and endanger the sacredness of the secular state and its ideological goal of complete, total, and equal integration of all citizens.

But this sacred universalism, which flattens the representable into its most basic unit, the singular unmarked individual, was nonetheless reinterpreted in the twentieth century to allow for gender *parité* and proportional or "mirroring" representation (Achin), just as it had been reinterpreted in the nineteenth century to allow workers to be more equitably represented as candidates for political office. On 17 February 1864, a group of sixty Paris-area workers signed a manifesto, "Le manifeste des soixante," written by one of them, Henri Tolain. It proclaimed that even though equality had been a matter of law since the Revolution, it was still not part of ordinary custom and had yet to be implemented ("l'égalité inscrite dans la loi n'est pas dans les mœurs et . . . elle est encore à réaliser dans les faits"). They argued that workers formed a special class of citizens, and as such needed to represent themselves on electoral tickets. This argument, which went against basic republican ideology, was an important step in the articulation of concrete needs for a specific category of subjects—those in the emerging labor movement. The historian Pierre Rosanvallon has shown that the republican debate around that manifesto, and about the constitutional feasibility of such a marked representation, turned on the following central questions: "Quel est le sens de la représentation? Est-ce que la représentation doit saisir le social à partir de l'individu ou est-ce que la représentation doit saisir le social dans ses différences de qualités?" 'What is the meaning and goal of social representation? Must it be conceived on the basis of individual identity or are the qualitative differences among groups the criteria to be used?' ("Parité" 96). In other words, is the best candidate the one who stands out as significantly different because more visibly eminent or distinguished than others in the same social group, or is it the one who is most like the others, most indistinguishable from them? Rosanvallon explains that for the workers, the answer was the latter: the best or most representative candidate is the most ordinary and most obscure one, a worker who cannot explicitly be chosen because he is a worker but whose anonymity becomes the index of his representativity. Rosanvallon calls this "l'éloge de l'obscurité" 'in praise of obscurity,' in which an individual does not emerge as representative because he embodies certain ideal qualities of modernity (whatever these

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may be) but because the individual is a singular example of the obscure, diverse masses that his own obscurity best allegorizes. Here, in contrast to existing conceptions of an idealized and glorified democratic identity, to "be" is to be anonymous, ordinary, and common.

These examples show that theoretical debates about differential class and gender representation and concrete challenges to constitutional principles have a long history in France.[14] That history is bound to have a continued impact on political understandings of rights and privileges and on the discussion about contemporary forms of racialization; this discussion is only just beginning in earnest, but it is rooted in France's colonial past, as recent books by Paul Silverstein and Dominic Thomas stress. Part of the reason for the continued invisibility of race as an analytic political category is that the sacred as a paradoxically secular notion grounded in an authoritative and authoritarian republican universalism has been used, or rather misused, to conceptualize national cohesion in terms of "pure" categories of language and culture. These are viewed as closed and bounded systems supported by normative political and cultural institutions.

When imagined as a closed system that needs to protect itself from exogenous influences and infiltrations (be it immigrants or *franglais*), the "one" is analogous to a continental landmass with well-defined borders and territorial waters to keep out undesirables and intruders, a model that is acquiring greater literal meaning in the early twenty-first century with the building of walls in the Middle East or on the United States–Mexico border (Brown). This continental juridical model of the nation-state was, however, successfully opposed by the Philippines and Indonesia, after the African-Asian Bandung Conference of 1955, when they declared themselves archipelagic nations and began to articulate what Mohamed Munavvar has termed "an archipelagic concept . . . [that] is more than just a legal concept or a legal regime. . . . It is the legal and territorial manifestation of the *philosophical* outlook of archipelagic states" (185; my emphasis). With these declarations, it became possible to reimagine, in a global context, the twentieth-century nation not as fortress and landmass (the borders of which must be protected at all costs to maintain homogeneity within) but as a fluid and open "one" that is receptive to change and exchange, as an entity that connects disparate islands. Instead of being kept apart by the waters that surround them, the islands form a network of solidarity in which land and sea, the fluid and the solid, are both part of the hybrid legacy of decolonization as initially formalized after Bandung.

That legal and political moment has parallels in the postmodern aesthetic of the fragment, and in the archipelagic poetics of Caribbean writers whose histories have been marked by temporal and spatial discontinuity.[15] Édouard Glissant has developed a broad-ranging theory of "relation" indebted to the Deleuzian rhizome that foregrounds the internal political or social complexity of the nation and its official language, which in France, despite the historical efforts toward unicity led by the Académie Française for over two centuries, remains a "composite" and porous vehicular language present on all continents (Glissant, *Poetics* 118). Glissant envisages the "one" as a globe, a "tout-monde" or nonsystematic totality, a "world in which there is total on-going creolization without exception" (Prabhu 122), that is, without residual categories, without excluded and abjected individuals. He uses the concepts of "relation" and "tout-monde," or "totality," to emphasize patterns of inclusiveness within structures of modernity linked to forms of mobility made much more apparent by the material culture of the early colonial and creolized New World and by the globalization of the planet today. As Glissant explains in the chapter "Transparency and Opacity" in his *Poetics of Relation*, "There still exist centers

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of domination, but it is generally acknowledged that there are no exclusive, lofty realms of learning or metropolises of knowledge left standing" (111). Epistemologies too have been creolized, and the conceptual clarity favored by Cartesian or Enlightenment philosophy has long given way to the increasing *opacity* of the world. Opacity is the rule within the world of "relation," because it signals that differences cannot easily be domesticated or naturalized, cannot be contained "within the limits of a well-phrased classicism, thereby perpetuating a lukewarm humanism, both colorless and reassuring" (111). In addition, opacity is one of the concepts that allows Glissant to think of the world as "whole" and "global" but not as a univocal system, not as rationalized universalism; it is, as Peter Hallward puts it, that which can help "regulate the idea of Totality and prevent it from collapsing inward towards the universal sameness it evokes" (459). In short, opacity is a creolized totality that contains difference without subsuming it to the same; it is a becoming that always exceeds formal categorization while pointing to new forms of racialization and new solidarities that underscore a powerful "alternative to fragmentation" (Broadbelt), a transcolonial or minor form of transnationalism (Lionnet, "Transnationalism").

Can we relate Glissant's opacity to Rosanvallon's obscurity? On the one hand, they appear to be opposed, because the ordinariness and anonymity of the common worker might seem to evoke the form of representation that Glissant disparages as "both colorless and reassuring." But, on the other hand, when obscurity is synonymous with representativity, it signifies as a negation of (the illusion of) presence, of a knowable presence laced with the heroic affirmation of a transparent, neutral, and exemplary identity. In this second case, I would argue that it is both logical and illuminating to link obscurity and opacity in an interpretive move that associates obscurity with iterability and collectivity. Anonymous singularity is repeatable, reproducible, but differently so every time. Obscurity, like opacity, thus always evokes becoming rather than being, and repetition with a difference. It evokes the kind of repetition that Antonio Benitez-Rojo associates with the Caribbean islands and the Creole world generally—namely, with archipelagoes—and that Epeli Hau'ofa values in the culture of the "ordinary people, peasants and proletarians" that form the collectivities of Oceania, his "sea of islands" (148). The archipelago as a site of repetition takes us back to a revised concept of oneness as an open structure and fluid totality, as signified by the etymology of the term itself and as used by Caribbean theorists of creolization and racialization who articulate the forms of emergence of such collectivities. By focusing on the oceans and what they connect, as some theorists have done, we get a more complex sense of Creole collectivities and of the lingua franca they developed.[16]

Creolized Solidarities

Creole languages and cultures developed simultaneously in different parts of the world as a result of violent colonial encounters. The language at each site evolved in ways that reflected the uniqueness of its historical and cultural situation. Linguists and cultural theorists have, however, noted important commonalities that set all Creole speakers apart from and in opposition to certain dominant and abstract Western understandings of identity and being, rooted in Cartesian rationality and monotheism. Charles Baissac, a noted nineteenth-century linguist from the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius, writes in 1880:

> Thrown suddenly by slavery into a world of new ideas presented in the French language, our blacks steadfastly covered their eyes and ears. . . . Abstraction in particular found them invincibly rebellious, to the point that the abstract verb par excellence, the verb *être*, to be, does not exist in Creole, so that

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> it is impossible to say *Dieu est*—God exists. Descartes was lucky to have another language at his service—*je pense, donc je suis*, I think therefore I am, becomes *mo maziné* . . . methinks. He would have been stuck and we would not have the *Discourse on Method*.[17]

A century later, two Caribbean scholars echo Baissac's findings. In 1981, Glissant explains that "[c]e que le créole transmettait, dans l'univers des Plantations, c'était avant tout *un refus* . . . [le créole] n'est pas une langue de l'Être, c'est une langue du Relaté" 'The role of Creole in the world of the plantations was that of defiance . . . [Creole] is not the language of Being, it is the language of contact and active Relation.'[18] In a short provocative essay published in *Transition* in 1995, Rhonda Cobham-Sander concurs: "There is no 'I' in Jamaican Creole. . . . One of the key ways in which Caribbean Creoles mark their difference from the standard language is that their personal pronouns seldom differentiate between subject and object—and sometimes not even between genders" (18).

All three scholars dwell on the absence of the *I* or *je*, which is replaced by the objective form of the personal pronoun *me* or *mo* that functions as both subject and object of the verb. The lack of the pronoun *I* might first suggest dependence, lack of agency, and a marked deficiency in identity and individualism for all Creole speakers.[19] Baissac's allusion to the cogito implies as much; but the linguist is also careful to use a rhetoric that reveals the deliberate nature of the slaves' choices: with adverbs such as "résolument" and "invinciblement" and the adjective "rebelles," Baissac's words add up to an ambiguous statement that stresses both individual agency and the headstrong, obstinate nature of the slaves' "rebellious" attitudes. Baissac's language oscillates between patronizing commentary on the blacks' presumed inability to understand conceptual language and judgmental statements about their stubbornness. In other words, he exhibits the typical mixture of contempt and fear that underwrites many racialization processes and the hierarchies they uphold.

The historian Megan Vaughan, writing about the Creole culture of Mauritius in the eighteenth century, interprets Baissac's statements in terms of a theory of loss and trauma (209–13) and relates them to Cobham-Sander's essay and to poststructuralist understandings of identity, language, and absence. As a racial category, Vaughan argues, "The Creoles . . . are those who are *not*: they are neither Hindus nor Muslims nor Tamils nor Chinese nor 'whites' of either the Franco or Anglo variety" (3). Their identity is not static and bounded; it is open and in flux, in a process of becoming that is a negation of the transcendent notion of "Being." This negation or lack suggests openness and can also primarily denote, as it does for Glissant, a defiant resistance to linguistic abstraction. It marks the transmission of "un refus," a refusal to conform to modes of being valued by the dominant individualistic culture and to binary definitions of race promoted by that culture. To be Creole is thus emphatically not to be an abstraction, not to aspire to become an ideal and coherent individual subject. It is to be grounded in the concrete material realities of daily life on the plantation and to develop appropriate coping tactics (Certeau). It is to value networks of solidarity in which the collectivity is more precious than the heroic and the singular "one." It is, finally, to echo Munavvar, the ability to articulate a political philosophy that emerges directly from one's lifeworld instead of imposing a set of arbitrary concepts on one's particular experience of reality.

Cultural historians have shown that social processes of creolization in the archipelagoes of the East and West Indies, though perhaps initially grounded in colonial assimilationist tendencies, reveal strong patterns of human agency that correspond, in Edward Kamau Brathwaite's formulation, to "the creation of attitudes which in their evolution alter the very nature of colonial depen-

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dence" (101). Glissant, for his part, insists on the need to return not to an origin but to the "point d'intrication" 'point of entanglement' of colonial relations (*Discours* 36), or, put another way, to the site at which the forced cohabitation of different peoples and cultures produced this process of entanglement and its inventive and unforeseen modes of survival. George Lamming notes the "premature *global* character" of these transformations of cultures in the New World (124; my emphasis), whereas Hall ("Créolité"; "Creolization") and Françoise Vergès stress the need to be historically and geographically specific to do justice to the distinctiveness of racial dynamics in each colonial society. Elizabeth DeLoughrey suggests that transoceanic "routes" and island "roots" together can provide new models of governance for the continental metropoles that historically marginalized them, while Dev Virahsawmy's Creole theater performs an original deconstruction of centralized political power (Lionnet, "Creole").

What emerges from this brief overview of creole subjectivity and agency as a complex, improvisational, and unscripted linguistic and cultural dynamic is the significance that scholars in different disciplines have given to the diverse origins and forms of development of Creole speech as an index of both flexibility and resistance to dominant epistemologies. The common denominators of all Creole languages are cross-cultural openness to the importation of words, images, and syntactic structures from several other languages and the tactical use of syntax and semantics as a screen that allowed the subaltern speakers to perform "ruses of camouflage" (Vaughan 211) and to hide in plain sight within the complex structures of domination that governed their lives. These languages, and the cultures that produced them while being themselves produced through these performances, displayed a strong sense of concrete and thriving multiplicities that preexisted the development of modern European nation-states, with their increasingly formalized philosophies of space, time, and identity. Standard categories of classification and formal vocabularies dating back to Enlightenment paradigms have been inadequate to describe creolized formations precisely because these presented a strong empirical refutation against the emerging (reactive and reactionary) ideologies of racial purity that were being formulated by Europeans. As these racialist ideologies ossified during colonial expansion, they instilled fears of degeneration and decadence, thus supporting the assimilationist notion of the "one" that would become central to the constitutions of both France and the United States and that has continued to interfere with the full integration of new migrants.

Can a renewed understanding of the internal—creolized—multiplicity of language, culture, and identity help transform twenty-first-century civic culture? That is indeed the vital question for both France and the United States. But in the United States, the "one," according to Glissant, "naturally breaks up into many archipelagoes" since the fifty states already form a system of autonomous regions that corresponds to "a movement of centrifugal diversification" (*Faulkner* 21), thus making it easier to conceptualize diversity in relation to "unity" (as does Putnam in a different register). In France, by contrast, and in Europe generally (Glissant, "L'Europe"; Cacciari), civic frameworks are not (yet) equipped to facilitate a fully shared identification of citizens of all races with the primary symbols of the nation (Lionnet, "Immigration" 104). As transcultural "islands" of identity increasingly take shape beyond and within the borders of the French nation, thus undermining the centripetal ideology of assimilation that the state was first founded on, the challenge will be to find new ways of reconciling the "one" and the "many" outside an oppositional or binary logic and in terms of creolized solidarities and the archipelagic epistemology that underwrites them. This might be an important step

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2008.123.5.1503 Published online by Cambridge University Press

toward more truly democratic and ethical understandings of global relations of proximity and contiguity that do not presuppose hierarchies of either filiation and admiration or subordination and dependence.[20]

Notes

This paper was delivered at the MLA convention in Chicago in 2007. It was also presented in April 2008 at the University of California, Los Angeles, Senior Feminist Research Seminar, led by Kathleen McHugh, and at the University of Maryland Ethics and Minority Discourse Colloquium, led by Kandice Chuh and Sangeeta Ray. I thank organizers and participants for their comments. I am especially indebted to my colleagues Laure Murat and Shu-mei Shih for their useful critiques.

1. "[L]a République française est une et indivisible" (*Constitution*). Translations are mine unless otherwise noted. In France, this "oneness" had to be politically constructed after the Revolution from a geographically, ethnically, and linguistically diverse population (Weber; Robb). Hence the fundamentally centralizing principles of the French constitution and the legislation of an artificial national unity that is now undergoing serious questionings or "remises en cause" (*France*). In the United States, by contrast, the constitutional principle of checks and balances means that political power is always "*conflicting, conflicted*, ad hoc, *and temporary*," with different branches or levels of government often operating against one another, a fact that can be exploited in order to facilitate "*effective resistance to* [Hardt and Negri's concept of] *Empire*" (McCumber 220–31).

2. For a political scientist's view of the way diversity affects community in the United States, see Putnam.

3. "La France est une République indivisible, laïque, démocratique et sociale. Elle assure légalité devant la loi de tous les citoyens sans distinction d'origine, de race ou de religion. Elle respecte toutes les croyances" (*Conseil*).

4. "La langue de la République est le français" (*Conseil*).

5. "(Im)migrant" because these populations consist of both racially diverse French citizens or migrants from the overseas departments and immigrants from former colonies of Africa and Asia.

6. Despite such highly visible appointments, the situation for women in politics remains difficult, as demonstrated in the study published by the Parisian daily *Libération* in March 2008 (Rotman).

7. Kymlicka and Mesure provide a comprehensive look at the political questions raised by this debate in different parts of world.

8. CRAN and MRAP differ especially in their understandings of universalism (Aounit).

9. Scott takes up some of these issues in *Politics of the Veil*, but in her section on racism she does not discuss the work of French feminist scholars of race such as Guillaumin, whose position predates but is analogous to that of Omi and Winant.

10. The program copy stated, "The topic of this colloquium is rather new in France: black historiography. As the title indicates, the goal is to reflect not so much on black history per se, but rather on the way that history has been treated or mistreated since slavery. This is of course a historical topic, but we will be debating the broad philosophical, political, and social stakes of the problem. In addition, black historiography will be compared to that of other social formations, such as Arabs, Jews, women, since the goal is to consider the overall question of social domination, the way it is experienced, and the way it gets written about. . . . By raising questions about the way black history has been treated in France, the colloquium will enable CRAN to produce a document to be presented to the new minister of education in order to request, among other things, that school curricula be revised and enriched so as to make sure that the awareness of an equitable, plural, and shared national history can begin to emerge in France" 'Le sujet abordé dans ce colloque est assez inédit en France: l'historiographie des noirs. Comme l'indique ce titre, il s'agit moins de réfléchir à l'histoire des noirs en tant que telle, que de réfléchir à la manière dont leur histoire à été traitée, ou maltraitée, depuis l'époque de l'esclavage. Il s'agit là d'un sujet historique, bien sûr, mais les enjeux philosophiques, politiques et sociaux de cette question seront largement débattus. Par ailleurs, l'historiographie des noirs sera comparée à celle d'autres groupes sociaux, notamment les Arabes, les Juifs, les femmes, car il s'agit de réfléchir d'une manière générale à l'histoire de la domination sociale, telle qu'elle se vit, telle qu'elle s'écrit. . . . Remettant en cause la façon dont l'histoire noire a été traitée en France, il permettra au CRAN de remettre au nouveau ministre de l'Education nationale un memorandum pour demander, entre autres choses, que les programmes scolaires soient révisés et enrichis, de manière à faire émerger en France la conscience d'un récit national équitable, pluriel et partagé' (Tin, "Le 10 mai").

The French scholar Erick Noël is one of the few to focus exclusively on the historiography of race. In the United States, by contrast, several major historians of modern France (such as Peabody and Stovall) have long been engaged in the study of race.

11. Scott (*Parité!*) gives a complete history and thorough analysis of the *parité* movement and the contradictions it denotes with regard to understandings of universalism; see also Schor ("French Feminism"; "Crisis"; "Universalism"); Delphy. The *parité* law stipulates that half of all *candidates* for office must be women. On the presidential campaign, see Bacqué and Chemin;

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2008.123.5.1503 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Blanchard and Varenne; Lambron; Mantoux and Simmat. During and after the 2007 presidential campaign, there was an avalanche of hastily published books intent on demonizing the female candidate.

12. For a critique of United States constitutional issues regarding color-blind policies and instrumental (ir)rationality, see Gotanda; Siegel. On race and privilege, see Wilson. On race versus racial formation, see Omi and Winant.

13. Balibar points out that "global inequality combines two antagonistic forms of coercion: coerced mobility, involving the risk of life and death at some borderlines or on some terrestrial and oceanic routes . . . but also coerced immobility for such categories as unemployed youngsters of the deindustrialized suburban areas. . . . [The] increasing consequences [of this inequality] are not only socially and humanly destructive, they create problems of insecurity, social conflicts and ethnic hatreds."

14. Marie-Blanche Tahon offers a trenchant critique of Rosanvallon's petty hostility toward *parité* in his final pages of *Le peuple introuvable*. In her overview of the parliamentary debates that led to the adoption of the law on *parité,* Achin, on the other hand, refers both to Rosanvallon's short-sighted polemical views on gender and to his nonetheless useful comparative approach to political representation, which has the merit of clarifying the stakes in a long-standing crisis of representativity that led to the successful challenge to French constitutional principles enacted by the *parité* law (243–47).

15. A substantial literature on political and metaphoric approaches to the idea of the archipelago emphasizes its hybrid topos (Voisset). Seen as the fragmentary remnants of empire, islands and archipelagoes such as the Republic of Venice emerge, from Machiavelli to Maurice Barrès, as feminized and decadent sites that continue to figure as "a counter to triumphalist narratives of modernity" (Scappettone 107).

16. For the etymology of the term, see Joubert. Oceanic studies are becoming increasingly important among literary scholars: DeLoughrey ("Tidalectics"); Murdoch and De Souza.

17. "Brusquement placés par l'esclavage en présence du monde d'idées nouvelles pour eux que portait en elle la langue française, nos noirs se bouchèrent résolument les yeux et les oreilles. . . . L'abstraction surtout les trouva invinciblement rebelles, à ce point que le verbe abstrait par excellence, le verbe essentiel *être* n'existe pas en créole, où il est impossible de dire Dieu est. Descartes fut heureux d'avoir une autre langue à son service. Je pense, donc je suis, *mo maziné*. . . . Il eut été arrêté court et nous n'aurions pas le *Discours de la méthode*" (vii–ix).

18. *Discours* 241; my emphasis. I use my own translation in the second part of this quotation. Dash's formulation "Creole . . . is not a language of a single origin, it is a cross-cultural language (*Caribbean Discourse* 127) eliminates the philosophical meanings that I am interested in focusing on here: "l'Être" and "le Relaté."

19. Some languages other than Creoles have no first person singular. It is this lack in combination with the absence of the verb *to be* that Baissac stresses here.

20. Filiation and admiration would correspond here to what Shih describes as "self-racialization," whereas dependence and subordination are constructed through a process of "triangulation" (Introduction 1354, 1350–51). In Louisiana and the Caribbean, as in the Mascarene archipelago, locally specific forms of racialization have undermined rigid Enlightenment taxonomies, since Creole refers to an identity that compels the deconstruction of those categories, as Vaughan demonstrates for Mauritius, and Hirsch and Logsdon for New Orleans. For Hirsch, the twentieth-century "Americanization of New Orleans include[d] the imposition of an unwavering racial dualism" (318).

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