

“The World Diffracted but Recomposed”: Writing the Creole Identity in Patrick Chamoiseau’s *Texaco*

KATHARINA R. MENDOZA

The exigencies of globalization compel us to consider the question of national identity in relation to issues like flexible citizenship and communities in the diaspora; for many, national languages and literatures are the most embattled sites of struggle. On the Caribbean island of Martinique, French is heard in the schools and offices, French stamps are found on circulating mail, and the French flag is seen flying over official edifices. This island, best known for bananas, rum, and tourism, became a French colony in 1635, a department in 1946, and then was declared a region of France in 1974. Underneath this veneer of Francophone assimilation, however, churns a mixed, Creole identity, the result of centuries of (mostly forced) interaction between the many ethnic groups that have over the centuries been pressed into slavery on the island’s sugarcane plantations. The term “Creole” is used most commonly to refer to the basilectal language spoken in the Caribbean—a matrix of Carib, Old French, African, East Indian, and other linguistic influences—that is the most audible proof of France’s failure to fully assimilate this region despite hundreds of years of occupation.

In the last century, several significant literary movements have emerged in the Caribbean that push against the cultural dominance of the West and seek to define what constitutes a unique Caribbean identity. The most recent of these is the Martinican political and linguistic *Créolité* movement that—unlike its popular predecessor *Négritude*, which sought to recover an essential Africanness thought to have been lost to colonization—locates the “authentic” Caribbean identity precisely in the rich cultural diversity

brought about by centuries of slave importation and labor immigration. Though not limited to literature, *Créolité's* primary expression is found in the incorporation of Creole language, orality, and themes into what has long been a primarily Francophone literary tradition.

One example of this blending is Martinican writer Patrick Chamoiseau's 1992 novel *Texaco*; despite its having been written in a combination of French and Creole, the novel won France's prestigious *Prix Goncourt*, marking Creole's entry into "high" literature. Declared by critics to be an untranslatable novel, *Texaco* was nevertheless translated into fourteen languages—one of them English—by 1997. Though this heteroglossic venture appears to concern only a small squatter district's struggle to avoid destruction, it is actually Chamoiseau's ambitious rendering of a purposefully Creole history of Martinique, a history that looks for milestones not in the movements of conquerors and the citified lives of the rich, but rather in plantations and shantytown hutches.

My interest in *Texaco* is not limited to its power as a work of fiction, which is considerable; the political allegiances of its author—Chamoiseau co-authored the 1989 manifesto *Éloge de la Créolité (In Praise of Creoleness)* that launched the movement—make it impossible for me to ignore its larger political environs. The struggle for a Creole identity and literature becomes even more urgent amidst fears of the purported cultural homogenization being brought about by globalization. In "Nations and Literatures in the Age of Globalization," Paik Nak-chung says that

the more urgent task, if we are serious in speaking about the challenges of the global age and alive to the real dangers to human civilization inherent in that process, would be the production and the sorting out of those texts most relevant to these challenges. . . Literatures as actual works, and "literature" as a guiding notion rather than a mystic entity, seem to me indispensable for this purpose. (220-1)

How, then, is a literary movement seemingly Babelian in intent relevant to that challenge? "The world is evolving into a state of Creoleness," Chamoiseau and his cronies declare (Bernabé et al 112). If we take them at their word then *Texaco* is indeed a text relevant to the challenges of the global age, and we might do well to study and learn from this attempt to

define and write a Creole identity that previously had no textual existence. Given the great ambitions of this movement that spans languages, ethnicities, and centuries, my own goal is a modest one: to arrive at a better understanding of *Créolité* and the literary expression of Caribbean modernism through an examination of the novel *Texaco*.

I begin with the section "We are forever Césaire's sons" (Bernabé et al 80), in which I list briefly the various ethnic migrations to Martinique that have resulted in such diversity on such a small island, a diversity that led first to *Négritude* and then to *Créolité*. In this same section I enumerate some of the basic tenets of *Créolité* as expressed in its manifesto, and from there I discuss *Créolité's* orientation in the larger sea of Caribbean discourse. The next section, "We are Words behind writing" (99), deals with the novel itself, and attempts to interrogate some of the ways in which *Texaco* embodies the process of being vigilantly, intentionally Creole. The final section, "The world is evolving into a state of Creoleness" (112) is a return to the larger literary and political context surrounding the novel that sees the world as Creole.

"We are forever Césaire's sons"

Though Christopher Columbus first "discovered" the island of Martinique in the year 1502 (Galibs, Arawaks, and Caribs had occupied the area since 3000 B.C.E.), France did not officially take possession of the island until 1635. The year 1680 saw the mass importation into Martinique of black African slaves, brought to the Caribbean to work on sugarcane plantations. Slavery was abolished in the French colonies in 1848, and because the former slaves refused to work in the plantations, other workers were needed to take their place. The first East Indian coolies landed in 1853, followed by Africans, Chinese, and then, in 1875, by Syrio-Lebanese. The next century saw the quickening collapse of the island's sugar economy and several mass exoduses of former plantation slaves moving from countryside to City, where they formed squatter districts, the *Texaco* Quarter among them.

The term "*Négritude*," coined by Martinican poet (and later on, politician) Aimé Césaire in 1935, made its first appearance in the journal *L'Étudiant Noir* (*The Black Student*), in Césaire's impassioned tract against French assimilation. *Négritude* quickly became the name for the first

diasporic Pan-African movement that considered a return to an essential Africanness the only way for Caribbean peoples to push against French cultural domination (Kelley 2). The *Négritude* movement, which espoused a total rejection of the cultural, moral, and social domination of the West, enjoyed its heyday from the 1930s to the 1960s, and remains influential in the Caribbean today, despite the fact that the movement's progenitor was the same man responsible for Martinique's departmentalization. It was Césaire who in 1946 convinced the National Assembly to make Martinique, Réunion, Guiana, and Guadeloupe overseas departments of France, elevating them from their previous status as mere colonies (Kelley 3). However, the equal rights and self-government that Césaire had hoped would come with departmentalization never materialized. Instead, the French government sent over even more officials. Today, despite its exportation of bananas and sugarcane, Martinique's income comes mostly from the tourism industry and subsidies from France. In an interview with James Ferguson, Chamoiseau declared:

Martinique's experience as a department has been a catastrophe. Yes, there have been undeniable economic advantages, but at what cost? Dependency, a lack of positive vision, the creation of an artificial consumer society that lives from hand-outs [sic]. That is not an achievement. (4)

Despite his strong words, Chamoiseau does not necessarily advocate an immediate break with France, but rather seeks "a way to fit into the global economy... more sovereignty, a new relationship with Paris that would let us enter into closer collaboration with other Caribbean states" (5).

In keeping with the felt need to find an identity that would give Martinicans a foundation from which to push for more sovereignty, Chamoiseau, along with writer Raphaël Confiant and linguist Jean Bernabé, published a manifesto entitled *In Praise of Creoleness* (1989). *Créolité* is at once critical of and inextricably linked to Césaire and *Négritude*. Where *Négritude* advocates completely embracing an essentialized African culture, *Créolité's* authors take the view that Africanness, while an important part of Creoleness, is an insufficient response to French cultural domination. Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant pay homage to *Négritude*, acknowledging that

[t]o a totally racist world, self-mutilated by its own colonial surgeries, Aimé Césaire restored mother Africa.... He denounced all sorts of dominations in the country, and his writing, which is committed and which derives its energy from the modes of war, gave severe blows to postslavery sluggishness. Césaire's *Négritude* gave Creole society its African dimension. (79)

This Africanness Césaire espoused apparently did not extend to language. The two works for which he is best known—the poem “Notebook of a Return to My Native Land” and the scathing critique *Discourse on Colonialism*—are both brilliant and provocative. Both were originally written in flawless French.

The three authors of *Créolité* acknowledge their connection to *Négritude*, and call themselves “sons” of Césaire. These inheritors, however, are critical of what they call *Négritude's* exteriority—in a curious twist, *Négritude* is comparable to French domination in that both modes of thinking locate Caribbean identity “Elsewhere;” the former in Africanness and the latter in Europeaness (Bernabé et al 80). And so, while they owe a debt to the *Négritude* movement, the *Créolité* triumvirate looks to interior vision for its identity, defining Creoleness as “the *interactional or transactional aggregate* of Caribbean, European, African, Asian, and Levantine cultural elements, united on the same soil by the yoke of history” (87, italics in original). Lest the reader mistake *Créolité* to a melting-pot model of culture that renders its various influences one indistinguishable from the other, the authors are careful to clarify that *Créolité* is “the *nontotalitarian consciousness of a preserved diversity*” (89, italics in original).

It is in light of the transactional, interior nature of Creoleness that we can best understand their inflammatory statement that Caribbean literature does not yet exist (76). What they mean by this is that what has to date been labeled “Caribbean literature” but written in colonial languages and narrative structures in fact has no home audience; it is exterior rather than interior. But even with these accusations, it is difficult to see where, beyond its deliberate use of Creole language, *Créolité* differs from other Caribbean literary developments. In *Writing in Limbo*, Simon Gikandi argues that what identifies this body of literature¹ as “Caribbean” is its expression of an alternative modernity that has evolved out of “an anxiety toward the colonizing structure in general and its history, language, and ideology in

particular" (5). Caribbean culture, Gikandi realizes, is haunted by the moment of Columbus's "discovery," that same moment that launched modernity and the European narrative of history. The quarrel with History is perhaps most succinctly described by Martinican writer-philosopher Édouard Glissant,² who makes the accusation that "the official history of Martinique (totally fashioned according to Western ideology, naturally) has been conceived in terms of the list of discoverers and governors of this country" (72-3). Caribbean literary modernism, then, is an intensely revisionist project that shares with *Créolité* the desire to exorcise the specter of discovery that haunts its history.

In the following section I engage *Créolité* at the level of its practice: the Creole identity as it is cast into literature, specifically, Chamoiseau's novel *Texaco*. The lens through which I examine *Texaco*—the filter through which I hear its multivocality—is Chamoiseau's own description of Creoleness, years after the manifesto, and expressed in an interview with Rose-Myriam Réjouis (who, together with Val Vinokurov, translated the untranslatable into English). Attempting to explain what makes a Creole text Creole, Chamoiseau says:

[Some writers attempt to] make a Creole text merely by Creolizing certain words and phrases; whereas a real Creolization involves expressing a vision of the world such as mine, like the one [Martinicans] use here to describe a character, a situation. I am always asking myself how my mother would have told this story or how my dad would have seen this, how we here would have seen that. Why? Because insidiously our spirit is completely dominated by French values, that is, *when I write I am, spontaneously, a Frenchman*. To be Creole, to be closer to my truth, I have to try to be vigilant with myself. (347-8, italics mine)

Language may be the most audible and readily identifiable marker of Creoleness, but this identity extends beyond vocabulary. What is also essential to the Creole is an awareness that one's vision of the world has been colonized and therefore must be constantly questioned. Living with Creoleness, as explained by Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant, is living with "*the nontotalitarian consciousness of a preserved diversity*" (89, italics in original). The challenge, then, is to imagine some way in which diverse ethnic influences can be brought into dialogue with each other and not

merely grouped together beneath some vaguely defined umbrella of "diversity." *Texaco* saves itself from this pluralist limbo by affirming the power of historicity in the slave community, anchoring its exploration of the Creole history that seeks a contrapuntal simultaneity with, rather than an erasure of, Martinique's colonial history.

"We are Words behind writing"

It occurs to me that perhaps I ought to begin examining *Texaco's* challenge for the imagination by offering the reader a synopsis of the novel. The hesitation I express in doing so comes from the fact that although there is obviously some sort of overall structure that, however loosely, holds the novel together, a synopsis would imply a higher level of linearity than is present in the actual text. Nevertheless, in the interests of comprehensibility (which places me in opposition to the opacity called for by Caribbean philosophers), I submit the following: The *Texaco* Quarter is a Martinican shantytown that in the 1950s began to accrete around the petroleum depot (established on the island of Martinique in 1938) after which it is named. When the Quarter is threatened with destruction thirty years later (the well-to-do of the Martinican capital of Fort-de-France consider it an "insalubrious" eyesore), its founder, Marie-Sophie Laborieux, uses words to fight for the Quarter's survival. Over some dark rum, she tells the Urban Planner (the Scourge sent to raze *Texaco* to the ground) "the story of our Quarter and of our conquest of City... pleading our cause, telling my life" (27).

Listening to Marie-Sophie's stories, the Urban Planner comes to realize that Martinique needs the countercity of *Texaco*, that without it the island will become absorbed by the "mechanical joy of neon and the reign of automobiles" (361). The Scourge of *Texaco* then becomes its Christ, though not even the Christ can save *Texaco* from becoming part of City. Hovering in the margins is the Word Scratcher, one Oiseau de Cham, who records the words of the Source, hoping to preserve for future generations (of Christs? of Word Scratchers?) some knowledge of the *Texaco* that was.

Texaco can be seen as embodying the process of *Créolité* in several ways. The first rupture is that of language; much has been made of Chamoiseau's blending of acrolectal French and basilectal Creole, and that *Texaco* is the so-called "untranslatable novel" that I read and reread in

English is another curious aspect of this work worth some attention. The return to previously buried oral traditions is of great importance to the *Créolité* movement, and the transactions between orality and textuality manifest most visibly in *Texaco's* three narrators: Marie-Sophie, the Urban Planner, and the Word Scratcher. There is also the matter of *Texaco* itself—not the novel, but the squatter district named after the petroleum depot it surrounds—and its charged relationship with City.

The little that has been written on Chamoiseau (besides book reviews and interviews) is mostly concerned with his blending of French and Creole languages. Critic Richard Burton writes that

Chamoiseau is the first writer fully to exploit the heteroglossic potential of the French West Indies, the first to write fiction in which language, as the substrate and vehicle of the region's complex and divisive history, is in itself a major novelistic theme, in which each individual paragraph... is compacted of all the linguistic and other tensions that make up that many-faced totality, at once fissile and fusile... call[ed] *Créolité*. (2)

While I do not deny the observation that language itself is a major character in Chamoiseau's work, I would question the extent to which the writer actually *does* exploit Caribbean heteroglossia—that such an “untranslatable novel”³ could, five years after its initial publication, appear on the market in fourteen different languages makes such mythic claims suspect. In her “Afterword: A Word about Bringing Chamoiseau's Word into English” translator Rose-Myriam Réjouis addresses the question of whether, by making *Texaco* readable in English, she had in fact *overtranslated* it. No, she answers, and insists that for all his “Babelian ambitions,” Chamoiseau's intention was to be readable, as can be seen from his providing “contexts, explanations, definitions, and translations (especially of any passage... in Creole) in his chronology, text, and footnotes” (394). A reader such as I, encountering *Texaco* only in its English translation, cannot directly access the ways in which Chamoiseau's Creole stretches and pushes the French language, but perhaps that is part of the point. A text encountered in translation is already processed, and there seems to be no end to the negotiations, ergo, heteroglossic potential, of a literary venture such as *Texaco*: spoken Creole is a compromise between several linguistic influences; writing the reality of Francophone Martinique involves further

navigation between Creole and French; add to that the layer(s) of a translator's mediation, and one finds a text that has no single linguistic core—one finds a text that is Creole.

The multivoiced Creoleness of *Texaco* gets played out not only in its use of language but also in its narrators. There is not one narrator, but three, and their narratives nest one within the other. There is Marie-Sophie Laborieux: the Source, *matadora*⁴, daughter of freed slaves, founder of *Texaco*. There is the Urban Planner, initially sent by city officials to raze the *Texaco* Quarter to the ground; we witness his conversion (effected by the stories of Marie-Sophie) from the Scourge into the Messiah, the Christ. Third is the Word Scratcher, also called Oiseau de Cham⁵ who, in his search for a *mentoh*⁶ had stumbled into *Texaco* and found instead his Source. If we listen carefully, we can decipher these nesting multiplicities: *Texaco* is Oiseau de Cham telling us what Marie-Sophie told him about her telling the Urban Planner (and the Urban Planner telling the Word Scratcher about Marie-Sophie telling him) about founding the *Texaco* Quarter upon the stories of plantation and City told to her by her papa Esternome...

The Storyteller is a figure of great importance in Creole culture. Under colonization, Martinicans relied upon an oral tradition in order to preserve their tales and historicis; in the Introduction to his collection of folktales, Chamoiseau points out that

the Creole Storyteller is the spokesman [sic] of a fettered, famished people, living in fear and in the various postures of survival.... Creole stories as a whole constitute a dynamic pedagogy, a form of apprenticeship in living, or more precisely in surviving, in a colonized land. (xii)

Marie-Sophie as the Source is clearly representative of that oral tradition that threatened to disappear in Martinique with the failure of the sugar plantations. "After our traditional tale-tellers," say the authors of *Creoleness*, "there was some kind of silence: the dead end" (96). Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant describe a gap between the modernity and linearity of a written text and Creole orality—"[t]his nonintegration of oral tradition was one of the forms and one of the dimensions of our alienation" (96).

The strength of her *matadora's* voice is *Texaco's* reclamation of orality—but Marie-Sophie troubles me. It seems as if she *is* the embodiment of the Creole identity to which Martinique needs to cling; she represents the multivocality that pushes against assimilation, departmentalization, homogenization. She tells the stories, she founds the Texaco Quarter, she fights for it. It is the power of her words that creates that space the Christ later calls “countercity,” that anti-assimilationist other space essential to the survival of the nation and its Creole identity. I think, she’ll keep Texaco alive, she’ll stop the bulldozers with her words. Then it happens: Marie-Sophie picks up a pen and starts *writing* down, in French, the stories of her father. Even a Source like Marie-Sophie must be ever watchful of the Frenchwoman inside of her, because as she empties her own memories and her papa Esternome’s stories into her “immobile notebooks,” she feels him—and herself—begin to die (Chamoiseau 322).

Even a *matadora* like Marie-Sophie cannot save herself in the end. Having dropped that necessary vigilance against the self that is spontaneously French, her orality succumbs to textuality; when she dies, Texaco dies as well. Don’t be mistaken; Texaco is not razed to the ground—rather, it becomes assimilated, part of City now, rather than its counterpoint. This is a cautionary tale.

But all is not lost—the Urban Planner, who at first represented that writer described in *Creoleness* as “steeped in intellectualist piety, and cut off from the roots of our orality,” hears Marie-Sophie’s tales and reconnects with his lost orality (96). At first there seems to be no way to reconcile Source and Scourge, but Marie-Sophie awakens the Poet within the Planner, transforming him from Scourge to Messiah. Another caveat, however: for all his new understandings of Texaco, City, and the relationship between both spaces, he is still unable to save the shantytown; Texaco takes on the concrete nature of City.

A third intervention: I have not forgotten the Word Scratcher, who finally emerges as the intermediary between orality and textuality. I hold this book in my hands because after the death of Marie-Sophie and the assimilation of Texaco, the Word Scratcher did his best “to write down this mythic Texaco” and to write it in its own language. Oiseau de Cham’s words end the novel, telling us,

I wanted it to be sung somewhere, in the ears of future generations, that we had fought with City, not to conquer it... but to conquer ourselves in the Creole unsaid which we had to name—in ourselves and for ourselves—until we came into our own. (390)

Ultimately, Oiseau de Cham learns that the way to conquer the spontaneously French self is by saying aloud—writing in Words—the unsaid Creole. In *Texaco* we find the Word Scratcher's efforts (remember that he is also Oiseau de Cham, Chamoiseau himself) to achieve a confluence between Marie-Sophie's orality and the written word that swallowed her; but to understand this more clearly, we must also comprehend the battling natures of *Texaco* and City.

What is it that Marie-Sophie struggled so hard to save? In the Urban Planner's Notes to the Word Scratcher (File no. 17 Sheet XXV. 1987. Schoelcher Library⁷), he describes City and *Texaco* thus:

In the center, an occidental urban logic, all lined up, ordered, strong like the French language. On the other side, Creole's open profusion according to *Texaco*'s logic. Mingling these two tongues, the Creole city speaks a new language in secret and no longer fears Babel. Here the well-learned, domineering, geometrical grid of an urban grammar; over there the crown of a mosaic culture to be unveiled, caught in the hieroglyphics of cement, crate wood, asbestos. The Creole city returns to the urban planner, who would like to ignore it, the roots of a new identity: multilingual, multiracial, multihistorical, open, sensible to the world's diversity. Everything has changed. (220)

Resistance to City and all it represents—colonization, departmentalization, assimilation—can no longer be found in the countryside. In the early days, the plantation days, the *mentobs* had the power to fight slavery: "The men of strength would say *No children born in chains*, and the women would only open withered wombs to the suns of life" (35). The *mentobs* could dry up a harvest, rot the liver of an ox, or kill a horse. In later years, however, with the growth of City and the *beke*⁸ who traffics in oil rather than sugar, such strength was no longer strength—killing an ox is not power in City that runs on petrol. Thus the desperate tenacity with which the *Texaco*

Quarter put down its roots in defiance of neat urban spaces, thus the *matadora's* voice with which Marie-Sophie told its stories.

"The world is evolving into a state of Creoleness"

Créolité is a movement that is Babelian neither in intent nor in practice; to save *Texaco*, Marie-Sophie needed to be understood, just as the struggle for Creoleness is the struggle to be understood as other than assimilated Europeanness or essentialized Africanness. Reclaiming an orality suppressed by colonial past and devalued by assimilationist present is the first step towards establishing a Creole identity and, as those who praise Creoleness remind me, reclaiming an oral tradition is not a step backwards, but a necessary restoration of "cultural continuity (that we associate with restored historical continuity) without which it is difficult for collective identity to take shape" (97). Simultaneous with this restoration is the push forward into an alternative Caribbean modernism by creating literature different (but not separate) from the more conventional modes of representation and narrative strategy imposed by colonial domination.

Créolité's—and *Texaco's*—ambitions are grand, and its authors see Creoleness as a way in which to create a federation within the Caribbean Archipelago. This confederation, they maintain, is "the only way to stand up efficiently to the different hegemonic blocks that share the planet among themselves" (Bernabé et al 116). Even as they turn towards literature as the primary expression of a truly Creole identity, they also have in mind a political end, "recognizing that equality between people cannot be obtained in a durable fashion without the freedom of thinking, of writing, and of traveling that goes with it" (117).

Does the question of a national identity diffracted and recomposed through literature stand up to the test of relevance? Discussing his own Korean national literature, Paik Nak-chung expresses fears that national and world literatures will somehow disappear as a consequence of capitalist globalization, and asks the question, "How much can globalizing humanity afford to lose of the literary (and other cultural) inheritance behind that project for a world literature?" (225). A movement such as *Créolité* and a novel such as *Texaco* offer an interesting answer to Nak-chung's query: here, at least, the diverseness of globalized humanity is the literary and cultural inheritance with which Creole writers are infusing world literature:

A new humanity will gradually emerge which will have the same characteristics as our Creole humanity.... The son or daughter of a German and a Haitian, born and living in Peking, will be torn between several languages, several histories, caught in the torrential ambiguity of a mosaic identity. To present creative depth, one must perceive that identity in all its complexity. *He or she will be in the situation of a Creole.* (112)

Many pages ago I talked about the sea of Caribbean discourse. In our present moment, *Texaco* and all it strives to represent and accomplish is but a small ripple. But ripples spread outward and sometimes gain the force of waves; *the world is evolving into Creoleness.*

Notes

- ¹ This body of literature includes authors such as Dominique Aurélia, Jamaica Kincaid, Jean Rhys, M. Nourbese Philip, Elizabeth Jolley, René Depestre, Kamau Brathwaite, Pedro Mir, etcetera.
- ² Having mentioned Glissant, I must also mention that the advocates of *Créolité*, and Chamoiseau in particular, also draw upon Glissant's theories of Caribbean discourse. Glissant is the proponent of yet another literary movement, called *Antillanité*, or Caribbeanness. *Antillanité* and *Créolité* have a striking resemblance to each other, and the main disagreement between the two movements is a geographical one—*Antillanité* includes all the Caribbean islands in its search for a Creole cultural identity, while *Créolité* grants membership according to ethnic population and status in relation to France³.
- ⁴ Ferguson mentions a friend and scholar of Martinican literature who "turned down an offer to translate [*Texaco*] as a recipe for madness" (2).
- ⁵ Translators Réjouis's and Vinokurov's rendering of Chamoiseau's invention *femme-matador*, *matadora* means "a strong, respected, authoritative woman" (*Texaco* 400).
- ⁶ "(lit., Bird of Shem; phon., Bird of the Field) the shadowy (and unacknowledged) figure of the author. Appearing in previous works of Chamoiseau, he is always cast as a marginal character struggling with a study of Martinican life. *Oiseau de Cham* is a word play on Chamoiseau, the author's name. The storyteller's play on his own name is a traditional motif" (400).
- ⁷ "Forgive me for the detail, but to understand anything you must know that with the men of strength (History calls them necromancers, conjurers, sorcerers) sometimes Strength *itself* would show, and its name was The Mentoh" (51, italics in original).
- ⁸ Is this why the Christ fails to save *Texaco*? Because having understood it once, he thought to file this knowledge away?
- ⁹ "white Creoles of Martinique, descendants of old established colonial planter families. Fluent in Creole, they speak accented French" (*Texaco* 397).

Works Cited

- Bernabé, Jean, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant. *Éloge de la Créolité (In Praise of Creoleness)*. Bilingual edition, English trans. by M.B. Talcb-Khyar. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990.
- Burton, Richard D.E. "Debrouya pa peche, or il y a toujours moyen de moyenner: Patterns of opposition in the fiction of Patrick Chamoiseau." *Callaloo* 16,2 (1993). 466-81.
- Césaire, Aimé. *Discourse on Colonialism*. Trans. Joan Pinkham. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972.
- Chamoiseau, Patrick. *Creole Folktales*. Trans. Linda Coverdale. New York: The New Press, 1994.
- _____. *Texaco*. Trans. Rose-Myriam Réjouis and Val Vinokurov. New York: Vintage International, 1998.
- Ferguson, James. "Return of the Creole." 6 December 2001 <<http://www.patrickchamoiseau.cwc.net/interview.html>>.
- Gikandi, Simon. *Writing in Limbo: Modernism and Caribbean Literature*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992.
- Glissant, Édouard. *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*. Trans. J. Michael Dash. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989.
- Kelley, Robin D.G. "Poetry and the Political Imagination: Aimé Césaire, Négritude, and the Applications of Surrealism." 6 December 2001 <http://www.lipmagazine.org/articles/featkelley_116.shtm>.
- Nak-chung, Paik. "Nations and Literatures in the Age of Globalization." In *The Cultures of Globalization*. Eds. Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi. London: Duke University Press, 1998. 218-29.
- Réjouis, Rose-Myriam. "A Reader in the Room: Rose-Myriam Réjouis Meets Patrick Chamoiseau." *Callaloo* 22, 2 (1999). 346-50.
- Watts, Richard. "Creolite, (Creoleness)." 7 December 2001 <http://www.Africana.com/Articles/tt_009.htm>.