

CRÉOLITÉ NINETEENTH CENTURY STYLE:

LAFCADIO HEARN'S VISION

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"I am going to run away to...the West Indies, for a romantic trip—a small literary bee in search of inspiring honey" (*Life and Letters* 3), wrote Greek-Irish traveler Lafcadio Hearn to his friend W.D. O'Connor before departing on his Caribbean journey. Hearn will build his beehive in the city of Saint-Pierre in Martinique, where, for two years (1887-1889), he will gather images, ingest Creole food and language, and turn mixed-race bodies into sweet aesthetic objects of consumption.

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This essay proposes to examine the influence of nineteenth century journalist, writer, and traveler Lafcadio Hearn on Jean Bernabé's, Raphaël Confiant's, and Patrick Chamoiseau's manifesto *Éloge de la Créolité*. This comparison reveals that the characteristics of *Créolité*—a praise for the culturally and racially mixed, a defiance of the pure, and a suspicious racialism under the cover of an embracing of diversity—are already contained in Hearn's Martinican writings.¹ In short, the novelty of *Créolité* is unmasked as the repetition of a nineteenth century exotic fantasy. Additionally, and in relation to its first goal, the essay will situate the racial perception and construction at work in Hearn's Martinican writings within its immediate contemporary context. Counter-current to dominant late nineteenth century constructions of race privileging "pure" categories, Hearn's vision clearly opts for the racially mixed.² I intend the word vision both as anticipation and as hallucination.

In spite of having one blind eye and the other severely myopic, Hearn gives an extremely precise visual image of Martinican people. This paradox could be explained by the fact that these images are greatly enhanced by Hearn's imagination and by his memory of readings of travelogues, essays, and poems written on the Antilles.³ The emphasis on the visual invites the reader to join Hearn in the erotic and exotic contemplation of the superficial bodies offered to the eye of the traveler and the reader. Through his scopophilia cataloguing of Martinican "phenotypes," which he consid-

ers the ultimate model of beauty because of their extreme *métissage*, Hearn creates a racial philosophy privileging “mixed race,” and dismissing both black and white “races” as inferior and sickly respectively. Hearn fears not the disappearance of the pure but the disappearance of the mixed in an all-encompassing blackness.

This racist theory, which clashes with most nineteenth century theories privileging a pure “white race,” such as Gobineau’s, announces the model of diversity presented in *L’Éloge de la Créolité* or *In Praise of Creoleness*. Like the nineteenth century traveler, the three Martinican proponents of *Créolité* fall into the trap of turning diversity into essentialism. In spite of their best efforts to promote a plural Martinican identity that would escape the yoke of a universalizing Frenchness through the total embracing of Creole language, culture, and identity, Bernabé, Confiant, and Chamoiseau reproduce an identitarian model grounded in ostracism. As the now famous first sentence of the manifesto indicates: “Neither European, nor African, nor Asian, we proclaim ourselves Creoles” (75).⁴

58 The three authors of *Créolité* explicitly acknowledge Hearn as one of their putative literary ancestors. Chamoiseau attributes the source of his *Creole Folktales* to Hearn. Confiant, in unabashed praise of *Two Years in the French West Indies*, claims that Hearn “invented what today we might call ‘multiple identity’ or ‘creoleness’” (“Lafcadio Hearn” xii). Our main aim is not to demonstrate how the trio of *Créolité* borrowed from the Irish traveler’s ideas on race, but rather to show that the 1989 Creole manifesto, published a century after Hearn’s notes, offers little in terms of novelty. Chris Bongie notes that the word “creolization” appeared for the first time in the English language in Hearn’s novel *Youma*.⁵ The absolute desire for the mixed, which dismisses the “pure,” was nothing new in 1989, whereas it was quite revolutionary in 1889. More importantly, the *Créolistes* claim to bring to the Caribbean a revolutionary discourse, a political movement gesturing towards the future, which, in fact, loops back to the vision of a passing nineteenth century traveler.⁶

Not surprisingly, the pioneering reflection on creolization emerges from a man who himself resists categorization. Hearn, far from being an unproblematic “white” and “colonial” traveler, suffers and benefits from hybridization.⁷ Hearn never fit into his monolithic paternal Irish family because of his Greek mother, and his strange name “Lafcadio.” The paternal branch of the family, as Simon Bronner explains, “irishized” the name Patricio Lafcadio Tessima Carlos Hearn by substituting it with the name Patrick or “Paddy” (Bronner 147-48).⁸ In spite of the renaming, Hearn’s physical appearance, his dark hair and complexion, still positioned him as a ‘strange-looking child’ (Bronner 148). Hearn’s accidental partial loss of an eye, from which oozed a milky liquid, further marginalized him. Bronner argues that Hearn’s ethnic hybridity—being half-Greek and half-Irish—comes with a series of traits that privilege in-betweenness and reject pure categories. For instance, Hearn rejects Catholicism for pantheism. He describes his myopia and near-blindness as a privileged way to look at the world in a blurry way, resisting clear definitions. Bronner evokes Hearn’s essay on “The Artistic Value of Myopia,” an altered sense of sight that “blurs bound-

aries, natural and cultural” (155).

In his later Japanese life, Lafcadio Hearn marries a Japanese woman with whom he has four children, and renames himself “Koizumi Yakumo.” In an 1895 letter to his friend Ellwood Hendrick, Hearn explains the meaning of the name: “‘Eight clouds’ is the meaning of ‘Yakumo,’ and is the first part of the most ancient poem extant in the Japanese language” (*Life and Letters* 384-85). The choice of the name and its explanation epitomize Hearn’s grounding in blurriness that forms the basis of his *Créolité avant la lettre*. The name grounds its bearer in an atavistic beginning: the first line of the first surviving Japanese poem. Yet the link to an atavistic beginning is grounded in multiplicity and vagueness. The eight clouds represent the blurry diverse ideal, or yet again the hallucination, in which Hearn projects his hopes and desires. This choice could be seen as what we might call a vague certainty or a certainty of the vague, which would best define his vision of race.

In his reflection on race, this certainty of the vague can be interpreted in at least two ways. First, it refers to the unlimited number of categories of “phenotypes” that challenge any limited and stable racial classification, where each individual constitutes its own category: “every individual of mixed race appears to have a particular color of its own” (107). Secondly, the vagueness resides in the dynamic nature of racial mixing: “There is a sort of race-fermentation going on, which gives no fixed result of a positive sort for any great length of time” (107). Hearn’s constant fermentation is close to Édouard Glissant’s model of creolization, which refuses any stable categories or results to focus instead on dynamic movements and processes.⁹ Paradoxically, however, Hearn turns instability and dynamism into a new form of fixed essentialism, which brings Hearn’s vision of race closer to Bernabé’s, Confiant’s and Chamoiseau’s *créolité*,¹⁰ and further from Glissant’s creolization. In other words, the more mixed, the more fleeting, and the more unclassifiable become the desirable modes of being racially, which at best, exclude, and, at worst, demonize categories that can be more easily classified. To borrow Kwame Anthony Appiah’s criticism on multiculturalism: “‘Multiculturalism,’ another shape shifter...so often designates the disease it purports to cure” (xiii). Similarly, Hearn’s celebratory model of diversity built on his romantic vision of Martinique, I argue, carries a surprising essentialism. In Hearn’s texts, the categories of the “pure” are exemplified by the three undesirable racial states of “Whiteness,” “Blackness,” and “Indianness.”

In his “Midsummer trip to the Tropics” and “Martinique Sketches,” the city of Saint-Pierre, at the foothill of Martinican volcano Mont Pelé, offers the most successful mixing that Hearn has experienced in his multiple travels to date, including that to the creolized city of New Orleans. In hindsight, the choice of Saint-Pierre is particularly significant since the city with its 29,000 inhabitants was almost completely wiped out in 1902, thirteen years after Hearn’s departure. Hearn’s writings on Saint-Pierre are thus doubly significant. Firstly, his detailed description of its flora, its architecture, and particularly its population constitutes an invaluable document, a reliquary of sorts. Secondly, the disappearance of the most extraordinary form of

racial mixing, according to Hearn, gives it an even more remote position of a fantasy irredeemably locked in the past:

A population fantastic, astonishing,—a population of the Arabian Nights. It is many colored; but the general dominant tint is yellow, like that of the town itself—yellow in the interblending of all the hues characterizing *mulâtresse*, *câpresse*, *griffe*, *quarteronne*, *métisse*, *chabine*... You are among... the finest mixed race of the West Indies. (20)

In this hallucinatory evocation, we recognize the rampant amalgam between all exotic places. A town in the West Indies becomes equivalent to a fantasmatic Arabia. Saint-Pierre and its population are highly feminized. Note that all the phenotype categories are in the feminine form. Like the “oriental woman,” as Malek Alloula compellingly demonstrated, the exotic object is not only feminized and eroticized, but also multiple, to give the illusion of a bounty of countless bodies (cf. Alloula 7-13). Finally, place and people blend through a common color, a unifying yellow that establishes a link, a relation, between the plural categories. There is thus a unity, a synthesis, within this seeming diversity.

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Hearn’s mixed race ideal is also clearly inflected by gender. He explicitly builds a hierarchy between male and female mulattoes. Male mulattoes seem to be flawed whereas women (and especially girls) tend to perfection:

Indeed, [the] natural kindness [of the *fille de couleur*] is so strikingly in contrast with the harder and subtler character of the man of color that one might almost feel tempted to doubt if she belong to the same race. Said a creole once, in my hearing:—“The *gens-de-couleur* are just like the *tourlouroux*: one must pick out the females and leave the males alone.” (259)

Hearn further elaborates on the culinary metaphor. The female *tourlouroux*, a sort of land-crab, “is selected for food, and properly cooked, makes a delicious dish;—the male is almost worthless” (265, fn 12). Gender here precisely affects the construction of race, creating a hierarchy between the highly-priced *filles de couleur* and the devalued “mixed-race” males. The culinary metaphor present the *filles de couleurs* as commodities ready to be eaten, possessed, and assimilated. It is worth noting that Hearn adopts the vision of the gendering of the *gens de couleur* from a white Creole. Hearn embraces local white racial perceptions and presents them as truth, as he embraces Rufz’s and Daney’s descriptions.

The previous description offers an unabashed portrayal of the rampant stereotype of the submissive native woman in the colonial discourse. However, the text itself contains the hint of the unequal nature of the transaction: unconditional giving of the material (body) in exchange for only the promise of spiritual (love). Even though the text does not explicitly mention a monetary transaction, it is clear that the relationship between the *fille de couleur* and the white man is not as naïve as it seems, and that it is driven by material necessities (“to care for a mother or a younger brother”). The reader is given to see beyond the apparent childishness of the woman, making us realize the economic motivation of her innocence in disguise, and thus exposing

Hearn's own naiveté.¹¹

The highly mixed "filles" are particularly attractive to the traveler. Within this category, lighter skinned "octoroons" and women who present the most astonishing colors, such as the *câpresse*, become even more highly fetishized:¹² "Here, under the tropic sun, [the *câpresse*] has a beauty only possible to imitate in metal... And because photography cannot convey any idea of this singular color, the *câpresse* hates a photograph—'Moin pas nouè,' she says;—'Moin ouòuge: ou fai moin nouè nans pòtrait-à' ['I am not black,' 'I am red: you made me black in your portrait'] (181). The resistance of the color of the *câpresse* to a photographic stabilizing once again emphasizes race as a dynamic and unfixable process. The photograph, which turns the particularity of the *câpresse* into an essence, repeats Hearn's gesture of reducing a complex reality to still visual representation.

The preference for highly-mixed or singular categories comes logically with a rejection, contempt or outright hatred for "pure" categories such as [East] "Indianness," "Blackness," or "Whiteness." Bernabé's, Confiant's, and Chamoiseau's *In Praise of Creoleness* shares the tendency of privileging the mixed over the pure. "Europeanness" and "Africanness" are described as "two incumbent monsters," "two forms of exteriority which proceed from two opposed logics" (80). These "pure" categories are similarly expelled from Hearn's whimsical erotic Eden. However, we should note that Hearn and the *Créolistes* expel blackness and whiteness for different purposes: Hearn for their lack of health, strength, beauty and eroticism; the *Créolistes* because of their stubborn resistance to cultural and political *Créolité*.

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Particularly notable in Hearn's reflection on the poles of racial purity is the presence of Indianness, which defies a binary vision of the world divided between black and white. In Hearn's Caribbean writings, Indians, particularly those living in Trinidad, represent a threat. Hearn's description of a very young "Hindoo girl" offers a stark contrast with the naiveté of the "filles de couleur": "a little darling, just able to walk...the child keeps her wonderful gaze fixed on my face...these eyes are not soft like the mother's, after all; they are ungentle, beautiful as they are; they have the dark and splendid flame of the eyes of a great bird—a bird of prey" (63). As opposed to the infantilized grown "mixed" women, the Indian toddler represents a great threat, and fixes the traveler in her all-powerful gaze. Through the agency of this hard gaze emanating from a "pure race," Hearn becomes the powerless prey of the exotic other's gaze, reminiscent of the "traîtres yeux" of the beautiful, mysterious, and threatening exotic woman of Baudelaire's "Invitation au voyage" (69).

"Indianness," in Hearn's travelogues, represents the inassimilable, the indigestible subject that resists both the process of creolization and the traveler's seizing gaze, by its very looking back and opacity. A hundred years later, East Indians still occupy the same position of the threatening inassimilable. In *Éloge de la Créolité*, for instance, Indianness constitutes the inassimilable which resists total submission to *créolité*: "the Hindus who replaced the black slaves in the plantations of Trinidad, adapted their original culture to new realities without completely modifying them" (91-92).¹³

However, Indianness remains relatively marginal within Hearn's racial model. Whiteness and blackness appear as the two dominant undesirable poles of the racial continuum. In Hearn's travel accounts, whiteness (including the author's own) is associated with disease and physical weakness. The best example is that of his friend Félicien, who arrived in Martinique "fresh from the region of the Vosges, with the muscles and energies of a mountaineer, and cheeks pink as a French country-girl's" (309). A few weeks into his sojourn, the rough mountaineer becomes the shadow of himself, reclining on a berceuse: "How wan he was, and how spectral his smile of welcome,—as he held out to me a hand that seemed all bone!" (309). Aside from the feminization of the mountaineer both in his original and altered state (cheeks red as a mountain-girl's, reclining on a berceuse), what is interesting is the degradation of the "white race" in the tropical environment.¹⁴ Félicien, spectral and all bones, becomes zombified.¹⁵ Race for Hearn is as much a matter of environment as of inherited genetic features.¹⁶ In Hearn's Martinique, the whites' destiny is either to perish, or to adapt in a process of creolization, and hence to dissolve and disappear.

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A contrasting example with that of unfortunate Félicien's is the account of two sisters sharing the same white father: one being the white official child, the other the very light skinned mulatto. The two half-sisters resemble each other as "one fleur-d'amour blossom resembles another...the finest microscopist in the world could not detect any imaginable race difference between those delicate satin skins" (158). The white child, born on the island and thus etymologically creole, *criolla*, "born of the earth," escapes her doomed and debilitating whiteness to become flower and satin, an eroticized and natural being. Even the statue of Joséphine, the Empress of France and a child of Martinique, becomes creolized through the same process. Her statue, transformed and darkened by the environment, gains strength and erotic appeal by shedding her whiteness: "Sea winds have bitten it...some microscopic growth has darkened the exquisite hollow of the throat...all the wonderful West Indian charm of the woman is there" (43).

Fear of the weakening whiteness under the Tropics parallels the fear of an all-engulfing blackness: "And while the white element is disappearing, the dark races are multiplying as never before...the general belief among the creole whites of the lesser Antilles would seem to confirm the old prediction that the slave races of the past must become the masters of the future" (73). This fear of a totalizing blackness and nostalgia for whiteness seem to contradict Hearn's model of creolization. However, we must understand that Hearn's Creole is of a very specific type: very light with a hint of blackness or what he calls "savagery," just enough to trouble the definition of the self, but not enough to threaten the disappearance of that self; a femininity just a tidbit virile, a masculinity ever so languorous and ambiguous, but never hard enough to overpower white masculinity. Within this model, the pole of white purity still acts as a beacon of pride in the idealized image of a "kind old planter" (109) or in that of a white face in a crowd: "When a white face does appear...[a]gainst the fantastic background of all this colonial life; the bearded...visage takes something

of a heroic relief;—one feels, in a totally novel way, the dignity of a white skin” (60). Between scorn and admiration, between sickness and majesty, whiteness acts as both an object of fear and awe. In contrast, blackness takes the shape of an unequivocally threatening uniform mass.

Significantly, Hearn evacuates the threat of an overwhelming blackness to the island of Barbados, thus keeping the Martinican utopian paradise intact: “Compare [the population of Martinique] with the population of black Barbadoes, where the apish grossness of African coast types has been perpetuated unchanged;—and the contrast may well astonish!” (78). In Hearn’s contrasted portrait of Martinique and Barbados, it appears that French colonialism has succeeded in improving the race through *métissage*, whereas the British have failed to do so. In the absence of the acknowledgement of *métissage* in British colonialism—the English language does not even have a word for it—the Africans remain apart, pure, and savage. To pick up on the culinary metaphor highlighted above, and to use Levi-Straussian categories, the Barbadian “African coast types” correspond to the “uncooked,” the “raw,” as opposed to the cooked and therefore palatable mixed *filles de couleur*.¹⁷ *Métissage*, therefore, acts as a cooking of sorts, and hence, for Hearn, as a civilizing process, which leads to possible, and desirable consumption.

This violent and animalizing description of “African coast types” is not limited to physical characteristics. Hearn animalizes their language as much as he does their physiognomy. The savagery of the “skin” is linked to that of the tongue. The inferiority and savagery of the superficial appearance contaminate the entire “African” being, body and speech rendered equally inassimilable.

If Hearn avidly learned New Orleans Creole and Martinican Creole, which he described as sophisticated languages, quite an innovative feat in the 1880s,¹⁸ the English of Black Barbadians rings in Hearn’s ear as an inarticulate collection of sounds: “[Black Barbadian is] a negro-English that sounds like some African tongue,—a rolling current of vowels and consonants, pouring so rapidly that the inexperienced ear cannot detach one intelligible word” (9). Blackness is thus linked to a natural state of being (“a rolling current”) untamed by rationality: the universal threat that will assimilate, and therefore annihilate more desirable “racial types”:

And the true black element, more numerically powerful, more cunning, better adapted to pyrogenic climate and tropical environment, would surely win. All these mixed races, all these beautiful fruit-colored populations, seem doomed to extinction: the future tendency must be to universal blackness...perhaps to universal savagery. (73-74)

What is surprising, however, in Hearn’s vision is that blackness does not constitute a direct threat to whiteness, but to the “beautiful” shades of racial mixing. In contrast with a majority of late nineteenth century racialist thinkers, it is not the disappearance of the pure but the disappearance of the mixed that Hearn fears.¹⁹ His vision of race is based on a strange tension between desire and fear, innovative multiculturalism and backward racism. As Bronner points out, Hearn’s embracing

of creolization, *métissage*, or racial mixing, both in theory and in practice, was quite ahead of his time. His essays on the benefits of cultural miscegenation published in Cincinnati, as well as Hearn's statement "in popular magazines that 'the creolization common in Louisiana could...be a metaphor for America's future'" (Bronner 144-45), caused scandal. In his private life, the Irish journalist broke the miscegenation laws by marrying—albeit briefly—his mulatto cook, Alethea ("Mattie") Foley. This vision of race was particularly dissonant in the nineteenth century discourse on racial purity. Bronner asserts that the dominant vision at the time was that "racial mixing produces a harmful 'mongrel' effect. Biologically, the hybrid appeared aberrant to Victorians because it brought together 'unlike' individuals and cultures" (Bronner 142). However, it is paradoxically Hearn's desire for racial mixing that leads to racism, since it rejects the so-called pure categories of whiteness, blackness, or Indianness. The *Créolité* manifesto falls into the same trap of excluding categories that are more culturally traceable, to profit an overblown desire for *créolité*.²⁰ In that,

64 Bronner lucidly argues that Hearn's writings can serve "as a foundation for theorizing about creolization in folkloristics and multicultural America into the twenty-first century" (147). Hearn's model already contains all the threats that multiculturalism and *Créolité* carry: the very ill they propose to eradicate.²¹ The overblown praise of diversity turns into a new form of exclusive essentialism: a beast that consumes itself as it grows.

Hearn's essentialist model creates a being, the mostly feminine person of color, which is not just defined by skin or phenotype, but which exists only in symbiosis with its natural element, and which has a radical effect on the mixed "being" who becomes, I argue, an absolute *métis*. In a chain of influence, the Creole environment affects the physicality of the Creole being, which in turn affects this individual's moral traits.

As Bongie astutely argues, in Hearn's writings, Creole peoples' identities are "not dependent upon race but upon location" (157). However, we should add that even though this identity is not influenced by biology, but by the environment, it creates new forms of racial categories, which establishes in turn a new racial hierarchy. We could call this an environmental racism, whereby peoples born of certain "Creole places" are superior to others.²² In the following passage, the natural environment clearly appears as the maker of the Creole race, effacing and altering original biological types:

Today, however, the traveler would look in vain for a livid tint among the descendants of those thus described: in less than two centuries and a half the physical characteristics of the race have been totally changed...Nature has begun to remodel the white, the black, and the half-breed according to environment and climate...the creole negro improved upon his progenitors, the mulatto began to give evidence of those qualities of physical and mental power which were afterward to render him dangerous to the integrity of the colony itself. (249-50)

This environmentally shaped categorization troubles the divisions between blackness and whiteness, in a color blind way. However, this color blindness leads to an amalgam that ignores social and political hierarchies and differences, thereby erasing the violence dividing the two classes. The black and white Creoles' past and genealogy are also erased in the following image that Hearn borrows from a certain Dr. Rufz, a Martinican white Creole medical practitioner turned historian: "Under the sun of the tropics...the Creole African came into existence as did the Creole white" (250). By embracing Rufz's vision, Hearn erases the shared distinct histories of the two groups, by reassigning them the sun of the Tropics.

The racial transformation prompted by the weather and other environmental factors leads to a complete reshaping of the Creole being, not limited to a superficial change in skin color, but fully altering their physical, mental, and moral characteristics.²³ In *Colonial Desire*, Robert Young lists five historical positions towards hybridity.²⁴ One is the "amalgamation thesis, [which is] the claim that all humans can interbreed prolifically and in an unlimited way; sometimes accompanied by the 'melting-pot' notion that the mixing of people produces a new mixed-race, with merged, but distinct physical and moral characteristics" (18). Hearn gives us a textbook example of this amalgamation, with the difference that the environment is its main engine:

[T]his tropical climate...remodels the characters of races within a couple of generations,—changing the shape of the skeleton,—deepening the cavities of the orbits to protect the eye from the flood of light,—transforming the blood,—darkening the skin...With the loss of bodily energy ensues a more than corresponding loss of mental activity and strength...the mind operates faintly, slowly, incoherently,—almost as in dreams. Serious reading, vigorous thinking, become impossible. (305)

Even the voice becomes altered by the environmental conditions: "One finds a strange charm even in...these half-breed voices, always with a tendency to contralto, and vibrant as ringing silver" (299). With the adjective "half-breed," the voice itself becomes racialized. Like in the *Créolité* model, *métissage* is strongly linked to language, which becomes a stamp of authenticity. In his *American Miscellani*, Hearn characterized Creole language as the "offspring of linguistic miscegenation, an offspring which exhibits but a very faint shade of African color, and nevertheless possesses a strangely supple comeliness by virtue of the very intercrossing which created it, like a beautiful octoroon" (Hearn, qtd. in Bronner 164). This "language as a beautiful octoroon" is eroticized, feminized, and racialized in one stroke.

For the proponents of *Créolité*, Creole language is also highly feminized. The trio considers it as a matrix that needs to be fertilized by the male writers that frequent it. As James Arnold has convincingly shown, the *Créolistes* exclude female writers from their model of *Créolité* (Arnold 21-40). However, language is highly feminized in frequent sexual metaphors present in the manifesto. In these images, the highly masculine "Creole" writer is put in the position to penetrate and fertilize Creole language: "[L'écrivain] se méfiera de cette langue tout en l'acceptant totalement. Il

prendra ses distances par rapport à elle tout en y plongeant désespérément...il écla-boussera cette langue des folies du langage” (45). Whereas for Bernabé, Confiant, and Chamoiseau, Creole language is a womb fertilized by male writers’ ink, for Hearn it is a potential passing lover—a beautiful octoroon—not a potential mother. If for the *créolistes*, Creole language is a womb, matrix of a political, racial, cultural identity, for Hearn, it is a commodity destined for visual or sexual consumption. Herein lies a major difference between Hearn and the trio. When, for the trio, language is the matrix that will lead to future realizations, for Hearn, it is the image of a nostalgic past, a fleeting object of desire.

Hearn’s ideal racial model is concretized in the city of Saint-Pierre. Even though nothing predicted its imminent destruction, the city was already, in Hearn’s eyes, a thing of the past. The present vision of Saint-Pierre is blocked by the screen images of visual nostalgia. The streets look like scenes from “ever so long ago,” “something that was and is not” (77). Bongie reads this temporal nostalgia as a desire to retrieve

66 a mixed racial state that is no longer:

[For Hearn], discussion of “creolization” and things “creole” is inseparable from his nostalgia for a less culturally homogenized time than the colonial present...the ambivalent way that the word “creole” functions in Hearn’s text, serving partially to erase and displace the issue of ‘race’ while at the same time compelling the reader to remember it. (156)

Hearn’s Creole nostalgia stands in stark contrast with Confiant, Bernabé and Chamoiseau’s prophetic tone, for which an ideal state of *créolité* serves as a basis for a future utopia. In spite of the trio’s claim that *créolité* will have immediate political and economic ramifications in Creole societies (115-117), nothing indicates a concrete political plan through Creoleness. Its only sign of future accomplishment is in the form of a wish: “Creoleness sketches the hope for the first possible grouping within the Caribbean Archipelago: that of the Creolophone peoples of Haiti, Martinique, Saint Lucia, Dominica, Guadeloupe, and Guyana, a grouping which is only the prelude of a larger union of our Anglophone and Hispanophone neighbors” (116). How this utopian union is supposed to find concrete political and economic manifestations, the reader is left only to imagine.

In spite of their pointing towards two opposed temporal poles, we could ask whether Hearn’s and the trio’s visions do not in fact amount to the same thing. Hearn’s nostalgia and the trio’s utopia equally settle and fix a dynamic presence into a fantasmatic past and future, thus stabilizing and killing the very diversity that they praise: colonial desire and postcolonial dream.

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1. This essay focuses specifically on Hearn's Martinican writings: "A Midsummer Trip to the Tropics" and "Martinique Sketches." Both texts are anthologized in *Two Years in the French West Indies*.
 2. Gobineau's *On the Inequality of Races* (1853-55) provides the most famous theory of the association between racial mixing and degeneration. On the widespread association between perversity and demonization and racial mixing in the nineteenth century, see Young 180-82.
 3. The influence of the two white Martinican Creoles Etienne Rufz de Lavison and Sidney Daney de Marcillac are particularly significant for this essay. See Daney's *Histoire de la Martinique depuis la colonisation jusqu'en 1815* and Rufz' *Études historiques et statistiques sur la population de la Martinique*, originally published in Saint-Pierre, Martinique. More specifically, see the section "Des Blancs" (109-21), "Des femmes" (121-24), "Des Nègres" (130-61), and "Des Mulâtres" (161-68).
 4. I am in no way claiming that this tendency towards essentialism is representative of other works by Bernabé, Confiant, and Chamoiseau, who have all succeeded in presenting the complexities and ambivalences of Martinican identity in their works of fiction and in their other essays. This shortcoming is due in great part to the very nature of the text: a vivid and pugnacious manifesto written in the urgency of a Martinican identity crisis.
 5. "What I propose to do here is look at two opposed but nonetheless genealogically-related visions of the creolization process, one 'colonial,' the other 'postcolonial.' I will begin by examining the varying uses of the word 'creole' in Lafcadio Hearn's novel *Youma*, where (if we are to believe the OED) the word 'creolization' makes its first appearance in an English-language text" (Bongie 154).
 6. See the appendix to *In Praise of Creoleness*, "Creoleness and Politics" (115-17), in which the *Créolistes* highlight their hope for a future political Caribbean entity based on the "acquisition of a mono-insular sovereignty...in the process toward a Caribbean federation or confederation" (116).
 7. The term *hybridization* is to be understood here in its primary meaning, i.e. the product of the crossing between different "races."
 8. Simon Bronner's 2005 essay "'Gombo' Folkloristics" provides a fascinating discussion of Hearn's vision of creolization informed by crucial biographical details.
 9. Glissant develops his notion of creolization, the dynamic mixing or relation between discrete and distinct cultural elements, in his *Discours antillais*. Creolization, in contrast with Créolité, refers to the process of mixing and not to a stabilized end result: "Creolization, one of the ways of forming a complex mix... is only exemplified by its processes and certainly not by the 'contents' on which these operate. This is where we depart from the concept of creoleness" (*Poetics of Relation* 89).
 10. On the fossilizing nature of Créolité, see, for instance, *In Praise of Creoleness* 87-89: "We declare ourselves Creoles. We declare that Creoleness is the cement of our culture and that it ought to rule the foundations of our Caribbeanness" (87).
 11. In later chapters of *Two Years in the French West Indies*, such as "La Fille de couleur," Hearn gives a more nuanced analysis of Martinican women, explicitly acknowledging, for instance, the monetary dimension of sexual transactions between white men and *filles de couleur* (336).
 12. In her fascinating analysis of feminine erotic types in the *Créoliste* discourse, Jacqueline Couti highlights the apparent paradox inscribed in Confiant's works. While his theory of Créolité promotes racial mixing, Confiant's fictional texts, according to Couti, seem to privilege dark-skinned women not only as erotic objects, but also as vehicles of Créolité. The *câpresse*, whom he calls "chocolatée"—reminiscent of Hearn's culinary metaphors—stands on a pedestal. See Couti 296.
 13. East Indian characters in Martinican or Guadeloupean novels are often portrayed with an irreducible difference that hinders the process of creolization. See for instance the glossary in Confiant's *Ravines du devant-jour* repeating rampant violent stereotypes: "Coolie: Dog-eater, urine-smelling,

- gutter-cleaner, street-beggar, negro-heckler” (211). However, we should note that Confiant recently rehabilitated East Indians in his construction of Creole Martinican identity in his novel, *La Panse du chacal*.
14. In *Histoire de la Martinique*, Daney offers a similar description: “Les Français, transportés subitement sous le climat de la zone torride, s’aperçurent bientôt qu’ils ne pouvaient se livrer au travail des champs, sans être victimes de fatigues et de maladies inconnues à leur pays et qu’engendrait pour eux un soleil trop ardent” (vol. 1. 79-80). Significantly, Daney justifies the use of African slaves by the very fact that the French are unfit to work in the Tropics.
 15. Félicien needs to be replaced in a lineage of ill, weakened, and languished white travelers who become “zombified” in their Caribbean sojourn. See for instance Jacques Tourneur’s 1943 film *I Walked With a Zombie*.
 16. The influence of the environment on race is also a prevalent argument in Rufz’ book: “Sous le ciel des tropiques, la race africaine, comme l’européenne, se modifia sensiblement” (139).
 17. Levi-Strauss assimilates the raw with the natural, the savage, whereas the cooked belongs to the cultural or the tamed (335).
 18. For instance, contrast Hearn’s description of Louisianan and Martinican Creoles with that of his contemporary Alcée Fortier, Professor of Romance Languages at Tulane University and collector of Louisiana Creole folktales: “While singing, [the Creole storyteller] writhes in a horrible manner and gesticulates wildly...to the tune of the primitive music” (x).
 19. According to Robert Young, a prevalent fear of the late nineteenth century was the disappearance of “pure” racial categories by a generalized racial mixing which would lead to a “raceless chaos” (18). However, Hearn was not isolated in his praise for racial mixing. For instance, in 1864, D.G. Croly and G. Wakeman, published (originally anonymously) a pamphlet in which “the authors advance[d] the proposition that miscegenation, far from producing degeneration as Gobineau and his American sympathizers had claimed, would have altogether beneficial effects” (Young 144). They proclaim: “We must become a yellow-skinned, black-haired people—in fine we must become Miscegens—if we would attain the fullest results of civilization,” (Croly and Wakeman, qtd. in Young 144).
 20. See for instance their dismissal of Africa: “A violent and paradoxical therapy, Negritude replaced the illusion of Europe by an African illusion” (82).
 21. The goal of the *Créolité* manifesto, which is “an annihilation of false universality, of monolingualism, and of purity” (90) seems to be constantly undermined by its vocabulary, which insists on stabilization and fixity (“unconditional,” “cement,” “foundations,” 87).
 22. Bronner indicates that Franz Boas constituted another nineteenth century exception to thinkers favoring mixed forms over purity: “Of the voices offering an alternative approach to race—one emphasizing a heterogeneous rather than unilinear model—that of Franz Boas is undoubtedly the most prominent and best chronicled” (143). However, in contrast with Hearn, Boas focuses on cultural rather than racial mixing.
 23. Rufz develops a similar definition of race, not limited to the surface of the skin, but permeating all elements of physiology: “lorsque l’on pratique une saignée à un nègre bien portant, il se fait au fait au fond du vase de la saignée un dépôt de matière noire...La couleur noire est donc un caractère *totius substantiae* et ne tient pas de l’action du soleil sur la peau” (140-41, n. 1).
 24. Others include the “polygenist species” argument, which denies the idea that different races can mix at all; the “decomposition thesis,” which asserts that the characteristics produced with racial mixing are bound to dissolve; the “argument that hybridity varies between proximate and distant species;” and the “negative amalgamation” thesis, which claims that racial-mixing will lead to a “raceless chaos” threatening “pure” racial categories” (Young 18).