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Toward a global theory of creolization as an emergent process by opposition to multiculturalism as a configuration of identities

There cannot be any conclusive discussion about creolization without an agreement on terms and methodological perspectives. The seminar on 'Creolization vs multiculturalism' organized by Shu-Mei Shih, Maya Boutaghou and Françoise Lionnet from UCLA, and other panels in the American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA) 2010 conference in New Orleans, show a general slippage of terms about creolization and a wide array of problematic approaches to linguistic and cultural contacts in postcolonial world literature. Considering also the variety of situations labeled as being creole in the thesaurus of the *International Dictionary of Literary Terms* (www.ditl.info), if we mean to arrive at a set of coherent definitions of creolization, we should naturally take into account the polysemic, sometimes contradictory, uses made of the root word *creole* (in English, 1604 from the French, and after Spanish or Portuguese). Linguists and anthropologists sometimes have been terming as creoles hybrid languages, pidgins, and cultures lacking coherence with the phenomena characterizing the creolosphere. If we are to approach a global but specific theory of creolization, a distinction has to be made between contact languages used in multicultural situations with little cultural base, and creoles *stricto sensu* as integrative processes.

Creolization as a general emergence process derives from an original paradigm based on the model of the creole languages in the sugar islands in the 18th century which can be declined in a variety of historical and geographical situations. On the syntagmatic axis, it develops four sub-paradigms : 1. in a /colonial/ context 2. involving imported /slave/ labor 3. the

acquisition of a way of communicating within the /masters' cultural system/ 4. results in the creation of a new /language/. The /colonial/ element in the sugar islands has been extended, among other qualifications, to being 'postcolonial', 'postmodern', or 'global'; /imported slave labor/ to 'dominant-dominated situations', 'migrant culture', 'marginality', 'subaltern', etc.; /master's system/ to 'hegemonies', 'exploitation', 'oppression', 'sexism', 'logocentrism', 'presentism', etc. As to /language/, the concept includes naturally the grammatical communication systems (*langues*) such as creole, but also cultural or social codes (*langages*) and what is called 'language-game' (*Sprachspiel*).

Definitions become more elusive when we consider the relation of 'creole', as a definite linguistic phenomenon, to 'creolization', as a cultural in-becoming result. When preparing the article on creolization for the *Dictionnaire International des Termes Littéraires*, the editor had to list all acceptations of the term in the section called 'Semantical study' recorded in the lexical surveys on international literary criticism. They had to be sorted from the most specific to the more complex or extensive. It was particularly difficult to condense into one formula the various recent statements of Carribean writers about creolization because it is to them 'unknowable', 'still to come', 'unforeseeable', etc. For them, it is not a 'concept', nor an 'idea', a 'school', a 'movement', etc., but an '*imaginary*'. In an attempt to understand what such a global imaginary might be, this non-definition of creolization could be formulated in one questionable paradigm:

Creolization is 1. a novel /dynamics/ (tentatively termed an 'imaginary'), 2. manifested in the language and the discourse of /'creolized'/ peoples, 3. acting as a ferment in the /postcolonial/ world out of conflicting tensions 4. to facilitate the unforeseeable emergence of a still-to-be-known /relationship of men/ to their neighbors and to the universe.

For practical purposes, we could distinguish seven successive and overlapping stages or aspects in its extension from the colonial experience to the postmodern process of *creolization*.

(1) It was used first to name the **hybrid languages emerging in the tropical islands**, 'the Isles', from the relationship of European planters and their African slaves in the 17th and 18th centuries;

(2) then the **persons and products originating from those islands**;

(3) *creolization* describes the original **constitution of a cultural and linguistic space** in the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean, in the 18th and 19th centuries (the 'creolosphere' properly said);

(4) then, by comparison, the emergence of **other hybrid languages in other times and spaces** (have been notably termed creoles German based Unserdeutsch, English based Bichelamar, Gullah, Ndjuka, various pidgins, Pitcairnian, Sarramaccan, Sranan, etc., Spanish based Chavacano, Palenquero,

Papiamentu, Chamorro, Malay based in Indonesia Peranakan, Betawi, Kupanguese, Bandan, Ambones, in Singapour Baba, in Sri Lanka, etc.).

(5) More generally and not always in accordance with the historical acceptance of the term, the **contamination of a given language under the influence of another** was sometimes included in the category of creolization.

(6) Still more extensively, and sometimes surprisingly some papers in the 2010 ACLA conference on the general theme presented representations of **hybrid speech, cross- or transcultural phenomena** in Korean, Japanese, Chinese literatures as cases of creolization.

(7) After 1981, Édouard Glissant and other Caribbean writers have been referring to *créolisation* as the difficult to define **'imaginary' that imbues the literature and culture not only of the creole islands but also of the postcolonial, postmodern world** at large, as opposed to the leveling effects of globalization, beyond the concepts of hybridization and acculturation. Creolization appears as a matrix for the emergence of identities into the global landscape. Creolized peoples appropriate preexisting concepts, reformulate them and send them back to the world which produced them with diffracted meanings.

The extraordinary 'productivity of the signifier' raises questions : is it possible to theorize creolization as a coherent all-encompassing category, a specific global paradigm? Are the constitution of any mixed language, all major interbreeding between languages, every trans- and crosscultural experience cases of creolization? What is the rationale of the 'contradistinction' between creolization and multiculturalism posited by the ACLA seminar? How this opposition lead to a general theory of creolization? There is no answer to that without examining how the concept of creolization relates to connected or opposite notions, such as interculturalism, transculturalism, interethnicity, hybridization, *métissage*, diaspora, assimilation, acculturation, *créolité* (Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphaël Confiant, Jean Bernabé), *antillanité* (Édouard Glissant), *négritude* (Aimé Césaire), *tout-monde* (Édouard Glissant), etc., all terms belonging either to the general nomenclature of languages and cultures in contact, or more specifically to the Caribbean and postcolonial discourse. The possible resulting definition of creolization as an emergent process raises epistemological and methodological issues in comparative literature and culture.

In lexicography, a standard procedure to define an object is to bring it to par with a congruent term to mark the difference. There is no productive comparison without parity and divergences. Given the close relationship between language and culture, creolization and multiculturalism constitute a pertinent oppositional pair. The one – creolization – is a linguistic phenomenon, the other – multiculturalism – is, just as the word itself spells, a cultural one. One is a dynamic process, the other a configuration, a state of

affairs. One is a syndrome in emergence, the other an polyphonic situation. One is a fusion of heterogeneous elements into something having no precedent, the other a juxtaposition of distinctive entities inside a given super-system. Opposed as they may be in nature, the two phenomena do not exclude one another, one possibly leading to the other. Creolization, as a novel linguistic phenomenon, is triggered by a traumatic type of cultural contacts, and multiculturalism in certain conflicting conditions may bring a new form of creolization about.

Linguistic creolization cannot be separated from its cultural aspects. Robert Chaudenson, in what remains a reference work on creolization, *Des Îles, des hommes, des langues. Essai sur la créolisation linguistique et culturelle* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992), shows convincingly that the creole linguistic process can be extrapolated to the general dynamics of cultural creole systems including music, cooking, popular medicine, religion, magic, *oraliture*. Jazz in New Orleans, neither European nor African, but an emerging music, is as much a phenomenon of creolization as the creole language itself in some parts of Louisiana.

The trauma theory remains at the foundation of an understanding of creolization.

Creolization seems like an ever open wound. The radical difference opposing heterogeneous elements in the emergence of a creole syndrome should be spelled with an *a*, according to Jacques Derrida's concept of *differance*. The progressive form of the term being derived from a present participle and the suggestion that this 'differance' is ever differed aptly characterizes the dynamic vibration of the constitutive elements. The creole language, as an emergent process, is kept in cultural *differance*, forever remembering the drama of its origins: slavery. Creole is consubstantially based on an original '*différend*' (being at odds) as François Lyotard defines the inequality characterizing the relationship between master and the slaves. Such a *differend* is an undecidable dispute resulting from the fact that one party cannot voice a wrong (*tort*) because the other speaks within a different 'language-game' (Wittgenstein's *Sprachspiel*) or 'genre of discourse'. Creolization remains a lingering 'trace' of the attempt made by the slaves to voice their own codes of discourse.

Another lingering trace of the origin of creolization in the plantation society is a principle of tropicity; it would still be exceptional to have a situation be termed as creole in cold or temperate climates. Although the Roman colonization of Europe giving rise to the romance languages in the high Middle Ages or the Norman conquest of England in 1066 to Middle English meet other criteria, they are not usually described as creolizations. Even now with the extension of creolization to the *tout-monde* of Édouard Glissant, creolization ever connotes the tropics. Economic conditions in the

tropical areas colonized by other European nations gave rise to a variety of creole languages, whether an English based one in Jamaica, a French one in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean islands, several Portuguese ones in Brasil, Cabo Verde, etc., possibly a Dutch creole in Saint Martin. A basic definition of the word 'creole' refers to someone who was born in the plantation islands, either a European or an African, in some places both, and something specific to tropics by opposition to an outsider or as a tradition, an artifact, a dish, an import from Europe or Africa. The core definition of creoleness remains the origin in the tropical islands. Outside of the creolosphere, the imaginary of creoleness is imbued with an exotic myth tinged by eroticism. Being creole is restricted to being from the tropical islands, but creolization as process has been extrapolated to comparable phenomena around the world and some hybrid languages in America, Africa and Asia have been termed as creoles.

Creolization as a term seems to have appeared in the *Discours antillais* (Paris: Le Seuil) of the Carribean author and philosopher Édouard Glissant as early as 1981 and it soon came to describe a Carribean entity beyond the language-based barriers to include into *antillanité* and *créolité* (creoleness) such areas as Puerto Rico or Jamaica. Sociocultural traits common to the tropical area became to be more determinant than the language itself to determine a creolization space; they allowed the inclusion into the same cultural area authors such as Edward Kamau Brathwaite from Jamaica, Wilson Harris from Guyana or Alejo Carpentier from Cuba.

In the jungle of formulations he proposed, Édouard Glissant¹ stresses that creolization is beyond the logics of the interbreeding of cultures as it belongs to the realm of 'world imaginary', making it in some way a postmodern notion by its malleability and indetermination: 'Creolization is unforeseeable: one cannot calculate its outcome. This is all the difference, according to me, between creolization and, on one part métissage, on the other part transculture. One cannot approach transculturation by the concept; but one can only approach creolization by the imaginary.' (1966, p.126) ; Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant confirmed in 1991² that 'the point of departure is an abyss and the evolution remains unforeseeable'.

However, creolization is knowable, not by what it is, but by whatever unique the 'combustion' of cultures may engender; it should be considered not

1

Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of relation*, transl. by Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press), 1997. For more details in French on creolization according to Édouard Glissant, see his various essays published, 1997-2007, by Gallimard in Paris.

2

Patrick Chamoiseau et Raphaël Confiant, *Lettres créoles : tracées antillaises et continentales de la littérature, 1635-1975* (Paris: Hatier, 1991), p.204.

as a fact but as an uncertain 'evolution', a process. On the contrary, multiculturalism, as a configuration of singular cultural elements in a given space can be observed, understood, as it effectively functions; the United States as a whole then appear to the Caribbean writers as an example of multiculturalism, although there could be cases of creolization at the local level. Creolization on the contrary cannot be described because it is an ever unended process, the effects of which are yet unknowable. Yet the postmodern man is constantly involved in it, not only in the Caribbean but everywhere else : 'the whole world is becoming an archipelago of islands and gets creolized'. Creolization is 'a perpetual movement of cultural and linguistic interpenetrability' accompanying '*mondialisation*' (the very concept of globalization) integrating distant and heterogeneous elements³ rather than establishing a relationship between them the way multiculturalism does.

From both the remarks of professor Chaudenson and author Glissant, we understand that creolization and multiculturalism may be interrelated, but that they belong to two epistemological paradigms, and should be approached scientifically in opposite perspectives. Opposing creolization vs multiculturalism would be like, for instance in the fields of physics and chemistry, comparing water and brine. Brine keeps the properties of its components water and salt; they can be separated easily. In a multicultural society, each entity retains its own identity and can be recognized by its characteristics. On the contrary, water has properties of its own which are not the properties of any of its constituents, hydrogen and oxygen. Creole is a language of its own not a mixture of French, or Portuguese, and African even if it is possible to trace the origin of the lexicon predominantly to an European language and the syntax to African languages (although it is not always easy to identify which ones).

In the terminology established for the study of intercultural and transcultural phenomena by the 'Research center on the emergence of new literatures, of new forms of art, of expression and communication' at the University of Limoges, creole appears as an 'emergent third' beyond its African and European constituents, just as water is the emergent third, of hydrogen and oxygen possessing other properties than those of hydrogen and water, not a mixture. In the same line of comparisons, brine on the contrary is a mixture of two recognizable elements, water and salt; multiculturalism would be more like brine as a configuration than water as an emergent third. In the realm of biology, a child is the emergent third of his or her parents, although some characters from the one or the other can be recognized in the novel human being engendered; the human being is a unique, undetermined,

non-repeatable configuration of his or her forbears' genes. So are creoles. But living human beings are not achieved entities (only maybe death – or eternity as Mallarmé puts it about Edgar Allan Poe' tomb – would transform them definitely 'into Themselves'). They are persons in-becoming, unended processes; what they are getting to be is just as unforeseeable as creolization characterized by Édouard Glissant.

The idea of something else, something beyond, something unfinished, something unforeseeable being produced by some kind of a combustion of heterogeneous elements assigns creolization to the theory of emergence⁴ originally developed by physics since the 17th century. The 19th century epistemologist Georges Henry Lewes opposes emergents as phenomena 'that cannot be predicted nor explained by (their) constituent parts' to a *resultants* which are determined by identifiable causes. We recognize in creolization the four propositions that characterize emergence as:

1. **the process** [creolization as a continuing and mobile identity syndrome] ; 2. **by which a new product, a novel situation, an unexpected phenomenon, a work of art, an original idea** [creolization being an unforeseeable evolution]; 3. **arises out of conflicting forces, the clash of heterogenous elements** [creolization being grounded in a traumatic event, a passage through 'chaos' like slavery in the creolosphere]; 4. **when a system reaches a certain degree of complexity** [creolization being described by Carribean authors as a complexity which makes everything possible]; 5. **while it cannot be considered as the logical result of their respective effects nor a combination of their elements** [creolization as an 'emergent third' neither European nor African].

The world has entered into postmodernity when it discovered with the theory of evolution, with the laws of general relativity, with the theory of catastrophe, that things are not ever determined and stable entities, that all measurements are forever false because of the changing nature of objects according to the speed of light and a number of imponderables, that 2 and 2 never equate 4. Then it is no surprise when Édouard Glissant refers to the physics of quanta and the theories of chaos rather than to descriptive linguistics or anthropology to construe language and culture phenomena not as facts but as processes, and creolization not as the expectable consciousness of

One can find a general presentation of the idea of emergence and of its application to the theory and history of literature in my article on 'Emergence' in the *International Dictionary of Literary Terms* (www.ditl.info), in my introduction to the ICLA volume on *Emerging literatures* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1995), and in the section on the 'epistemology of emergence': Jacques Fontanille, Juliette Vion-Dury, Bertrand Westphal (eds.), *L'Émergence* (Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, [...]: Peter Lang, 2011), xi-xiii, 3-48.

the colonized man, but as the emergence of a new vision of the world. That way of being in the world is the emergent third of the conflicting elements which are part of it.

The global extension of creolization lets us consider various degrees and different forms of trauma to which emergent languages, cultures, literatures respond. First, if a trauma, like slavery, seems to be the condition for creolization in the tropical Isles, it does not follow that any kind of trauma necessarily brings a form of creolization (the Shoa for instance did not, or if it did, it would be difficult to include the cultural and linguistic phenomena in the same problematics as the tropicity of the Isles).

Secondly, the absence of a trauma theoretically determines the zero degree of creolization. Hybrid languages without a cultural catastrophe at the origin would not be creoles. Because there is no 'differend' according to Francois Leotard's term in, say, lingua franca, there is no lingua franca literature. As an artifact without any cultural tension in its construction, esperanto is hardly a case of linguistic creolization.

Thirdly, creolization as the process of linguistic indigenization is not a determined fact. It may emerge or not in the same given conditions. Creole developed in the English plantations of Jamaica, and not in Georgia. Creole developed in the sugar 'habitations' of Haiti, but no Spanish based creole emerged in neighboring Dominica nor in Cuba under similar socio-economic conditions involving the trauma of slavery. But it can be argued that, in Cuba for instance, we witness a creolized culture, more than a multicultural one, without a creole language. The conclusion would be that if the emergence of a creole language is a sure evidence of creolization, the cultural process of creolization is much wider, encompassing all aspects of culture, the language included or not.

The relationship and opposition between creolization and colonization has also to be considered. A distinction has to be made between colonization with and without slavery. Being colonized certainly constitutes a trauma apt to induce creolization, but the fact is that European colonization did not produce any significant emergent language like creole outside the slavery Isles. Pidgins and communication languages are not creoles, as bases of emergent cultures. Colonization without slavery, however, had a cultural effect which somehow integrates the postcolonial principle of creolization. Colonization modifies the language and the vision of the world of both the colonized and the colonizer. When the language of the colonizers, their 'discourse genres', their cultural references are apprehended, reformulated by the colonized, they develop a new Weltanschauung an emergent vision of the world. It has in common with the creolization in the plantation islands, neither European nor African, the fact that its 'language game' is beyond the simple interaction or the combination of the European culture of the colonizers and

the culture of the colonized peoples. The Anthropophagist movement in the Brazil of the early 1930 launched by the manifesto of Mário de Andrade (1928) is a strong case of the emergence of new identity, culture, literature through the appropriation, the 'devouration' of European models by indigenous or colonized cultures.

Creolization is a way of deconstructing cultural hegemonies. Postcolonial emerging literatures become emergent literatures when, out of the cultural, social, economical conflagration brought by colonization, they 'imagine' (as Édouard Glissant would say), in whatever modified linguistic language, a novel aesthetic language and build their dialectical vision of the world. Colonization in various parts of the world generates a poetics of emergence akin to linguistic and cultural creolization in the plantation islands. Generally, it could be argued that creolization is what makes postcoloniality an emergent culture, as it triggers a dynamics that energizes a unique, deconstructive discourse on man and the world.

The extension of the notion of creolization from the original creolosphere to postcolonial studies and recently as a principle of world literature points that it could be a dynamics that brings about the emergence of new cultural spaces. The perspectives opened in comparative literature and culture by geocriticism as promoted mainly by Bertrand Westphal, could prove particularly productive in creolization studies. Geocriticism studies 'human spaces', that is spaces emerging from discourse, culture, language practices, literature⁵. These human spaces are not Kantian 'things per se', set objects. They can only be described in postmodern terms, as they emerge not from determining causes but from discourse. They cannot be predicted before they are enunciated; they can only be discussed once they appear at the surface of consciousness. Their limits are liable to variation, and they overlap with other spaces. Creolization is just one of these indeterminate dimensions of culture.

The historical creolization space in the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans was shaped by the European colonial expansion of the 17th and 18th centuries resorting to slavery for hand labor; it resulted from a dual displacement of people, two diasporas, the European and the African ones with heterogeneous linguistic traditions. The French based creole space, to which several parishes (counties) of Louisiana belong, especially Saint Martin Parish, can be equated to what was called at least until the end of the 18th century *la culture des Isles* (the culture of the plantation islands); *culture*

should be understood both as a type of cultivation based on the importation of labor from Africa as slaves, and a way of life in the plantation economy. *Les Isles* referred to the settlements in the tropical areas of the Atlantic and Indian oceans, Saint-Domingue (to-day Haiti), Guadeloupe, Martinique, Dominique, Saint Lucia, Grenada, Saint-Thomas, Trinidad, and in the Indian Ocean The Seychelles, Rodrigues, Mauritius, Réunion. Louisiana and French Guyana, participating in the *culture des Isles* are not of course geographical 'islands', but they should be included in the problematics of the Isles as they were based on the same type of economy and as they used creole as a communication language on the plantations.

From the onset, slavery determined a specific dominant/dominated relationship at the basis of the trauma inherent to creolization. The cultural, economical, social interactions between the communities, their 'differend', were the locus for the emergence of new languages, mainly European by the vocabulary, mainly African by the syntax, a fact which did not occur in other multicultural areas where the daily dominant/dominated connection was less oppressive. The importation of slaves speaking another language than that of the masters as they arrive in the colony is certainly a trauma at the origin of creolization.

Creole speaking areas are generally embedded in multicultural, multilinguistic communities. The language is generally used in the Isles concurrently with dominant European languages, French and /or English, sometimes with other immigration languages, the languages of India notably, or native Amerindian languages in French Guyana.

As the occasion for the study of the relations between the notions of creolization, multiculturalism and diasporas was the 2010 ACLA meeting in New Orleans, a most relevant case of a multicultural space within the creolosphere in which various languages interact would be Louisiana. It offers good examples of overlapping multicultural and creolized situations. Louisiana developed a creole language and culture beside standard French in a plantation society colonizing the Amerindian environment. After their deportation from Canada, the Acadians speaking their own variety of rural French brought into Louisiana a multicultural pattern more prevalent in the Northern territories; still to-day the Houma Indians rather speak Cajun (Acadian) French than creole or creolized French (gumbo). The Hispanic element dating from the times when Louisiana was ruled by Spain at the end of the 18th century regained importance recently due to Latin America migration. Of course, the dominant element has come to be the integrative American English language and culture as the general superstratum.

Out of this multicultural and multilinguistic situation, Cajun French developed various particularities that can be ascribed to a spectrum of hybridities ranging from near conformity to standard French with Acadian

elements, a zero degree of creolization, to the integration of creole lexical and syntactic features. In difference from standard French on one side of the spectrum, and from creole on the other, characteristic Cajun French remaining close to the regional French of Western France integrates archaisms due to its origin (ex. : *éloise* for 'lightning', a Poitevin word), loan words brought by multicultural contacts (ex. : *fais-dodo* for 'dance', a creole borrowing from African origin), and quasi-creolizations (ex. : *revenez-back*, a lexical and syntactic French, English, creole fusion as a goodbye wish to a departing guest). Cajun French appears now as a French dialect with English influences not an hybrid language like creole. It has something in common however with creole as it is also grounded in a trauma, not slavery, but the deportation in the 18th century of the French Acadian settlers from the Maritime provinces of today's Canada, and their vagrancy over the oceans before finding a new home in Southwestern Louisiana.

The case of Louisiana exemplifies the two types of linguistic and cultural phenomena in the colonial and postcolonial world. In the case of multiculturalism, contacts produce a variety of the dominant language under the influence of another language (that could also be the case of the *français de Moussa* in Ivory Coast, being French spoken under the influence of Bambara and other West African languages), and on the creole side they result in the emergence a new language. There is hardly intercommunication between a monolingual creolophone and a standard European speaker never exposed to creole. The evolution of a language such as Cajun French under multicultural conditions, on the contrary, does not impede radically intercommunication with other varieties of the same language.

The two spaces of English and French colonizations overlap in Louisiana, that of the sugar or cotton plantations making use of African slaves, which produced creoles by fusion, and on the other side that of the English colonies north of Dixie and of *La Nouvelle France* including Eastern Canada and much of the American Midwest, which relied on European immigration. In the multicultural pattern of the North, the colonists would speak English or French, the Indians their own language; when the latter adopted English or French it still was a variety of English or French not a hybrid language like creole in the South. In the North of America, there are records of at least two French-Indian hybrid contact languages, probably almost extinct by now: the Souriquoien in Nova Scotia which was used by white fishermen as well as by Indians, and Michif in Manitoba, a fusion of French and Cree. Possibly Hawaiian pidgin, the Spanish based Palenquero in Columbia, the Tupi-Guarani based *Lingua geral* in Brasil, or Chinook in Asia would rather be ascribed to the multicultural paradigm as contact languages without creolization in the absence of a major trauma like slavery and cultural fusion.

On the contrary, Louisiana developed a creole language and culture in close connection with the Antilles *islands*. *Creyol* (also called, sometimes pejoratively, *neg*, *couri-vini*, *gumbo*) belongs to the global family of French based creoles extending from Natchitoches Parish, the northernmost creole area in the world (except of course for immigration Haitian creole in places like Canada or Europe), South down to Guyana, and Eastward to the Indian Ocean. Sub-spaces in the creolosphere can be distinguished with two great areas, one in the Atlantic, the other in the Indian Ocean, but at large the creolosphere constitutes one global space. Pancreolism refers to the common characteristics of creole languages irrespective of the area and the lexical base. Notable differences may exist between, say, Louisiana and Guyana creoles or Seychelles and Mauritius creoles, but globally they can be considered as dialects of one emerging language, since at least some intercommunication is possible between them. A Louisiana creolophone would even be surprised to discover he/she could somehow communicate, beyond local peculiarities, with someone from distant islands he/she may never had heard of, such as the Indian Ocean Seychelles or Rodrigues without a reference to standard French or English; on the contrary there would be little or no intercommunication between a monolingual creolophone and a Frenchman never exposed to creole. Even if the contacts between a Louisiana creolophone and a Seychellois would be exceptional, this possible linguistic and cultural community outlines the specificity of the creolosphere.

Finally, the fundamental characteristics which can be observed in the creolosphere set a series of criteria to approach a postmodern theory of creolization. Down to the widest extension of the notion outside the creolosphere to the whole world seen as an archipelago of creolized islands by Édouard Glissant, creolization retains traces of its origins from the plantation islands. After Freud, trace is what is left in the psychical apparatus of the perceptions which impinge upon it; in this manner worldwide creolization somehow remembers necessarily the trauma of slavery imbedded in the tropical psyche. Traumatic experiences comparable to slavery on the plantations – a brutal conquest, a dispossessing colonization, the harsh exploitation of manpower, etc. – tends to be repressed into the unconscious of both parties. As the analysis of the 'differend' by François Lyotard suggests, creolization would be an attempt at a common discourse and a conquest of linguistic and cultural codes that would legitimate the emergence of a unique vision of the world, both with the slaves and their owners, both with the colonized and the colonizers, with the dominated and the dominants. Linked to the trauma and tropicality motivations, spatiality appears as another fundamental feature of creolization. Creolization is an expanding space to global dimensions; geographically through emigration from the tropical

islands to many parts of the world; linguistically by the terming as creoles of other languages with similar emergent qualities and even of contact languages in a multicultural context acquiring such generative power; conceptually as a process engendering new identities by the confrontation and the fusion of diverse, sometimes conflicting elements, in the postcolonial and postmodern world. Thus the generation of novel identities ever-in-the-making from heterogeneous elements in the original islands as well as in the global 'archipelago' is the hallmark of creolization. What distinguishes creolization from multiculturalism is that it is not a combination or a mixture of identities; it even goes beyond métissage and hybridization to open up on a still-to-be-known consciousness of man in his social, historical, economic, artistic evolution.