



# The history of the word, the memory of the word, the future of the word: an examination of the link between language and culture

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THE HISTORY OF THE WORD, THE MEMORY OF THE WORD,  
THE FUTURE OF THE WORD: AN EXAMINATION OF THE LINK  
BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

**MEMOIRE DE MASTER**

Présenté et soutenu

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I want to replace the word “slave” in texts about our African ancestors with the term “enslaved Africans.” In learning about the link between language, thought, culture, and reality, I find that African peoples, including children of the African Diaspora, have been dehumanized throughout History by elaborate processes of oppression, particularly through language. Systems of language such as the English, French, and Spanish languages, as well as functions of language such as speech and terminology, have perpetuated racist ideologies on the parts of European, European American, Asian, Arab, and even African (including Africans of the diaspora in the Americas and Europe and throughout the world) communities. This work is a first step towards language equality, color equality, hair texture equality, education equality, production equality...and, this work is in the name of Black Power.

I want to thank the University of the Antilles, in particular Mme Patricia Donatien and M Raphael Confiant.

Thank you to my mother, Muffin, my dad, Doc, my Daddyman, Big Dred. Thank you Sista K.

These words are for Dequanna, Naisha, Isoke, Kaitie and all the Sisters welcome in this house!

*I only expect Equality.*

# I. Meeting With The Subject

## I.1

### **General Introduction and The White Man's Burden**

Politically correct - the term refers to the act of conforming to the practice of, or belief in, eliminating public speech or behavior that may offend particular groups of people (Merriam-Webster). It is for this reason that since the 1960s in the United States the term "negro" has been avoided and replaced by the term "African American" or "black" (Bennett). Under this ideology terms such as "faggot" "dyke" and "nigger" are classified as hate speech. This is why Donald Sterling, former owner of the L.A. Clippers, received a lifetime ban from the NBA in 2014 and was forced to sell his team after a recording surfaced, in which he reproached his girlfriend for taking a picture with well known former professional basketball player, Magic Johnson, a black man; and for making it "known" via Instagram that she "associates with black people" (Forbes). Though Sterling had not physically done anything, the nation watched as Sterling dealt with the consequences of what he said. Backlash followed immediately after the tape was released, including the Clippers players wearing their red warm up gear inside out "to obscure any team logo" to warm up for their playoff game in 2014 (Greenburg). In the years surrounding this event, especially in the social and political climates of most leading world powers, namely the United States, many events have transpired where public figures and institutions have been almost forced\* to publicly disassociate themselves from people or institutions that promote or support racism, sexism, and other forms of intolerance and discrimination. These events are important to keep in mind in setting the stage for an argument about the link between Language and Culture. The notion of political correctness isn't a reproach on having "racist" or "bigoted" feelings; this notion is a manner of policing the expression of such feelings in the public arena. It is society's recognition that normalized speech plays a huge part in Collective Thought and, subsequently, cultural manifestations and realities.

The killing of Mike Brown in 2014 by an on-duty police officer prompted subsequent riots and protests in Ferguson, Missouri, his hometown, and around the U.S. More riots and protests took place in Baltimore, Maryland in 2015 after Freddie Gray

died from injuries he obtained while in police custody; many Americans drew attention to the fact that blacks in America were dying at the hands of police officers – who seldom faced consequences – in cases of what citizens considered “excessive force” (The Sun). As many took a stance by joining movements such as “Black Lives Matter,” tensions grew when they were confronted with another movement, “Police Lives Matter,” seemingly arguing that the two ideas are mutually exclusive. Like the novel “Solibo Magnificent” by Patrick Chamoiseau upon which the main argument of this essay relies, an image becomes clear in which one can see that “police culture” – the notion of enforcing the laws of the land – is often in direct conflict with the culture of members of the general population, particularly when groups of the population face discrimination and oppression because the official policies represent the interests of former colonial territories and slave states. Though much of the ideology connected to The Transatlantic Slave Trade and Colonialism in the Americas was thought to be laid to rest when Barack Obama became the first black president of the United States, the “Black Lives Matter” movement has worked hard to point out that, systematically, the oppression of blacks and people of color in the West is alive and well.

As a black American, it has been important for me to discover that the systematic oppression of non-white people is not unique to the United States. This work will highlight cultures of oppression as seen in the aftermath of Imperial and Colonial conquests by European countries. In doing so, we will examine “postcolonial” works such as “A House for Mr Biswas” by V.S. Naipaul and “If He Hollers, Let Him Go” by Chester Himes. Other writers whom are examined are James Baldwin, Chinua Achebe, Aimé Césaire and Ngugi wa Thiong’o. By emphasizing language as a vehicle and guardian of culture, we will explore language use in Literature through a lens of Postcolonial study. European countries such as France, Spain and Great Britain, and The United States outlawed the Transatlantic Slave Trade by 1807, which prohibited the capturing of Africans on the continent; however, slavery within the colonies and the continued abuse of black and colored peoples already enslaved and in servitude in the Americas continued until the mid to late 1800s (International Slavery Museum). After the abolition of slavery by all the world powers, Imperial and Colonial conquest continued into the 1900s. In fact, this work argues that an analysis of certain acclaimed European

literature suggests that the Collective Thought on Imperialism at the time was overall positive (Conrad); and that this ideology has been allowed to shape policy and culture regarding subjugated people has proven fatal even until today.

Thence, we study authors such as Joseph Conrad and Rudyard Kipling, writing in 1899, who not only influenced policy, but also the Collective Thought of their society and societies to follow, and therefore, cultural standards and norms. The introduction to “Heart of Darkness” as published in the Norton Critical Edition states that the novella is “not only a text on the history of imperialism but was itself a participant in that history...” (Conrad). Conrad’s “Heart of Darkness” was regarded as one of the best novellas giving insight into the African cultural reality at that time (Conrad). Though in recent years there has been debate surrounding the arguably racist and imperialist undertones of the novella, there is no debate that the success of this work speaks to the problem of representation of dominated groups in political and cultural manifestations; as well as the need for dominated groups to have avenues of expression and creation to document and preserve their histories and realities. This work examines the literary production of culturally dominated groups in their attempts to create platforms of self-agency and self-representation on the global stage. The essay attempts to show Language as one of the most important factors in the representation of colonized and enslaved peoples. Works studied to develop this argument include “Eloge de la Creolité” (Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphael Confiant), “The Wretched of The Earth” (Frantz Fanon), “Location of Culture” (Homi Bhabha), “The Souls of Black Folk” (W.E.B. DuBois) and “Capitalism and Slavery” (Eric Williams).

Rudyard Kipling’s “The White Man’s Burden” is an open letter to the then president of the United States, encouraging the U.S. to honor its obligation as a developed world power, and, arguably, white nation, to civilize and develop poorer countries – non-European and non-white peoples – in this case, the Philippines. Kipling urges white nations to “Take up the white man’s burden-- / Send forth the best ye breed-- / Go bind your sons to exile / To serve your captives’ need...” (Kipling). These captives he later describes as “...Half-devil and half-child” (Kipling). Whether the poem succeeded in its function or not, the U.S. Congress indeed moved to revise the Treaty of Paris and claim authority over the Philippines, as well as Guam and Puerto Rico (PBS).

Since the poem was published in 1899 there has been criticism and debate over the title and notion “The White Man’s Burden”. While some argue Conrad’s views of Imperialism are vaguely and ambiguously displayed in his work, there is no doubt that Kipling was in favor of European, or white, Imperialism. He outlined the white man’s burden in 1899 but could not have known or foreseen the consequences and effects that continue to plague our society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Because works such as “The White Man’s Burden” influenced policy and culture, a necessary objective of this work is to highlight the white man’s burden in contemporary times. We must also, however, consider the black, or colored man’s burden or obligation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The political systems of all major world powers i.e. France, Spain, The United States and Great Britain have roots in this ideology. The Transatlantic Slave Trade and the subsequent colonial and imperial conquests by white European nations and European Americans has resulted in a present day identity crisis on the part of the descendants of dominated peoples. Frantz Fanon gives an example of the “colonized intellectual” who offers an opinion “speaking as a Senegalese and a Frenchman...” (Fanon pg. 155). W.E.B. Du Bois’ notion of the “Double Consciousness” of the black American is still studied and debated today. So few of us know what is ours in terms of space, thought, customs and traditions, even religions and languages, and basic rights such as dignity and integrity enough to love one’s self. Drawing links between Institution, Policy, Culture, Language, Thought and Language or Speech, this work will rely on literary works and scholarly critiques to highlight the importance of language in the preservation and integrity of dominated cultures and peoples.

## I.2

### **Colonialization and its effects on the world today**

Slavery in the Americas has been referred to as a 400 year “head start” that white Americans and Europeans have had over blacks and people of color in our modern social and political systems; yet, colonialism and imperialism, even after the end of slavery, are responsible for much of the perpetuation of racist ideology into contemporary times. (Conrad). These systems created very elaborate justifications of their economic endeavors, which relied on the forced labor and servitude of subjugated groups of people (Williams). The purpose was to spread the idea that these subjugated people were indeed less than human in their existence and their cultures were primitive and barbaric. The truth is that all of the contemporary world powers (The United States and western European countries) have and have had “black codes” of sorts that dictate the worth and treatment of blacks, Africans, and people of color in the justice system and social hierarchy of those countries (History.com). Any colonial or imperial policy regarding natives of a colonial territory is, without a doubt or need for close analysis, in its function, set up to hinder any true advancement of those native people.

“Americans” of both North and Central America, including the Caribbean, still celebrate the arrival of Christopher Columbus to these lands. Americans of every color in the United States celebrate the fourth of July, or Independence Day, despite the fact that the Revolutionary War fought against Great Britain only won white Americans any sort of freedom. Frantz Fanon was considered a traitor when he went to fight for the Algerians against the French in their war of independence, but the history of strikes and riots in Martinique, most notably the 2009 French Caribbean General Strikes, show that the overseas departments of France were no happier under French rule than were the Algerians. One of the greatest symptoms of colonial and imperial systems is the alienation from any true sense of origin or identity on the part of the colonized – generations into a colonial conquest, there has already been much conditioning to remove any sense of pride or self worth concerning the things that are native to the subjugated. The motive behind imperial conquest is not solely the economic advancement of the imperial power, a reading of the literary and artistic works produced by writers who came from such nations shows a vested interest in spreading the superior culture and customs



of the colonial power as well. This work uses such works to examine language in its colonial and imperial uses; and, considering the inter-textual conversations produced throughout the years in response to these colonial works and realities, we will draw comparisons between postcolonial protest literature in order to establish an arena for these writers to develop a literature independent of their colonial metropolises.

Capitalism and the “slave state” are terms indispensable to understanding the condition of blacks, Africans and people of color in the Americas during slavery and the colonization of the Caribbean and Africa. There were indeed waves of slaves, workers and servants who were brought to the Americas after the end of slavery to continue the industrial and agricultural endeavors of western powers. Author Patrick Chamoiseau, himself, makes mention to the Africans brought from the Congo after the end of slavery to complete poorly paid labor. It is for this reason that this essay focuses on language from two perspectives: the languages used to document this experience by the colonial powers and the languages used and developed by the working people to describe and navigate their experiences and realities. In a slave state like Martinique or the southern United States, for example, versus a colonial territory such as India, the subjugated people were described as, and thus considered, the property of the slave master, having a monetary value but no worth as a human being (*The Slave Trade*). After the end of slavery, these former slaves may have gained citizenship on paper, but in the minds of the already free and white citizens, the colored population served the sole purpose of servitude. A popular phrase arose in the American film industry that perfectly captured the internalization of the colonial mindset, however subtle the indication of white supremacy within policy may have been. “Free, white and 21” captures exactly the attitude and reality of white privilege that is almost inherent in the growth of white European nations such as The United States and France (*Jezebel*).

Scholars, scientists, and social commentators for the most part agree that race and ethnicity are largely social constructs, but the development of this argument must begin with race. Before the Transatlantic Slave Trade became the pillar of the economic system in the Americas, indentured servitude was in place in nearly all the colonial settlements. Amongst other reasons involving the economic security of landowners, the concept of race based solely on skin tone was developed in the Americas by European powers

because indentured servants of European descent were able to escape and blend into established societies and communities. Eric Williams, the first Prime Minister of Trinidad wrote “Capitalism and Slavery,” in which he told the story of a wealthy Englishman who proved the case for race-based slavery when he took 300 indentured servants to Australia. Upon arrival these servants went off to work for themselves as independent members of society and there were no laws or social prejudices to prevent the happening (Williams). Prior to this, race was a completely different concept and could be used, for example, to describe “the German race” (Conrad). In an effort to curb any empathy towards colored servants and slaves, Africans and colored people were placed at the center of a campaign to raise the Caucasian “race” to superior status in terms of culture, intellect, morality, and civilization in general. Before this effort, indentured servants of European ethnicity were also poorly treated, under paid, and overworked and had more shared interests with other servants and slaves. Though the working class continued to receive poor treatment and a low pay, white workers now had the societal advantage of being free and white. Two major binaries developed at this time are “white vs. black” and “rich vs. poor”.

The tension produced by these two binaries is important to consider in the context of the most important binary that this essay must engage: oppressor vs. oppressed. Let’s first establish, if not already clear, that the elevation of the “white race,” otherwise known as white supremacy, resulted in the total rejection and oppression of the “black” or “African race” and ultimately dark-skinned people of all ethnic backgrounds. This created a spectrum of whiteness and blackness, in which peoples have been conditioned to yearn for and seek acceptance into any part of the whiter side of the spectrum (LSUDVM). Languages such as English, French, and Spanish, being languages representative of colonial powers, are problematic on many levels. This essay focuses on Language as a tool of oppression as well as a tool of resistance, mainly because Language, as a result of colonialism and imperialism, is a very complex factor in identity, especially for subjugated people. Speaking the language of the oppressor can be seen as a tactic to negate the origins of a native people, and in a sense, approach whiteness.

A woman born in Puerto Rico identifies with the Caribbean experience yet is American in nationality; but she is called “Spanish” in the United States, despite the fact that it is much more likely that most of her biological make-up can be linked back to

African and indigenous peoples than to Spaniards (Afro-latinas). She is no more Spanish than Chinua Achebe, the Nigerian author who writes in English, is an Englishman. Audre Lorde wrote in a collection of essays that “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house”, but in 1969 James Baldwin said in a conference in London that he is very much, in fact, as much a part of “that Great Western House” that is the United States as any other European American (Antihostile). However, as Baldwin claims in the video of the conference, though he is *American*, no mastering of the English language either orally or scripturally (an argument to be made later in the work), nor the civil engagement of the social, political, or economic systems of his native country (The United States), will afford him the real status of citizen that comes with being born white in this society. Yet, he *is* American, and thus has an obligation to the future generation of black American descendants of Africans, as well as to his African ancestors and other children of the diaspora. This has everything to do with slavery in the Americas, the establishment of the slave state, colonialism and imperialism and the subsequent propaganda to justify such acts of dehumanization.

Language, nationality and geographic space are all factors that have been used to further alienate and dehumanize the descendants African and black people in America and European nations, as well as other dominated groups of people of color such as the Vietnamese, the Arab, the indigenous peoples of the Americas and the Indian. In the struggle to identify one’s self as a person of color, inevitably, in a postcolonial context, Language refers to the way one speaks to describe the world but more importantly, how one describes one’s self. In the same conference in London in 1969, James Baldwin explains that, “the nature of oppression...the most subtle affect of oppression...is what it does to your mind...what it does to what you think about yourself,” (Antihostile). The use of Language as a tool of oppression has allowed the oppressor to take a step back from the reigns and allow the oppressed to dehumanize, oppress, and discriminate against themselves and other “others”. Pierre Bordieu’s notion of symbolic violence demonstrate how hatred can be internalized and perpetuated within oppressed communities in the. Language, being a major topic amongst French Caribbean writers, has been shown, as it is in “Solibo Magnificent”, to be a tool of literary protest for these writers and communities. As “La Loi de la Honte” suggests that all subjugated people take on the

history of their oppressors, colonized writers and creators have an outlet in language, as a tool of protest, to tell the, often, untold story, or History, of their communities (McCusker pg. 2).

**I.3****Context and Concepts*****History and Memory***

The tension between History and Memory in a postcolonial context arises from the fact that it is seldom, if ever at all, the subjugated who are responsible for writing their own history. For example, History tells us that with the Emancipation Proclamation, Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves in the United States. Only an in-depth reading of this text clarifies that at the time that the Proclamation was signed, it only gave freedom to the slaves in the northern states (there were no slaves in the North), the only states under Lincoln's jurisdiction (History.com). The North winning the Civil War is what freed the slaves, and though one might call such a fact a technicality, all people have the right to a documented History that is transparent to the actual events that transpired. This is not the case for subjugated people. Re-education schools and other policies were put in place in colonial environments to devalue the culture of native populations and commence a cycle of alienation and degradation; a clear example of this would be the book published in 2002 by Doris Pilkington entitled "Rabbit Proof Fence". Cultural factors such as religion, language, and traditional customs of native people were suppressed and/or eliminated from the public and often private reality in the colonies.

Scholars have noted how writers, Antillean authors in particular, have shown a dedicated interest in Memory, especially as it concerns a postcolonial context. Authors such as Patrick Chamoiseau write extensively on the tension between Memory and History, leaving scholars, – Maeve McCusker, author of "Patrick Chamoiseau: Recovering Memory," for example – critics and readers wondering what drives the particular interest in the past. Authors, such as Chamoiseau, who are products of postcolonial environments, who hail from the "despised" side of the oppressed, use their literary platforms to explore Collective Memory in order to shed light on the existence of their people and culture, and more importantly their experiences. Representation in story telling is crucial to agency, which is a concept indispensable to formerly colonized peoples. Stories told from the perspectives of the oppressed do not change History but change the documentation of History and more importantly, destabilize the credibility of

such documentation, a process examined in McCusker's novel. The quest for representation is not necessarily a quest motivated by a desire for freedom from an oppressive nation or power. Literal freedom came many years before there were any studies done on the Collective Memories of subjugated peoples. Formerly colonized populations remain chained to the History of colonialization and the image of themselves that has been bestowed upon them. An examination and submergence into Memory frees the colonized population from the slavery of self-ignorance. Memory serves as a gateway to Identity and Origin and ultimately "self-knowledge" (McCusker).

### *Identity and Origin*

Duality and Intersectionality are probably the best terms to keep in mind when considering identity and origin in a postcolonial world, considering the interdisciplinary approach necessary for such a topic. The meeting at the intersections of black, heterosexual, and female is a critical component of my identity. That and the duality that comes along with being an educated, black female Muslim American in a postcolonial society shapes my allegiances and feelings of solidarity to other groups of the population. Education may seem, to some, the least necessary factor to consider; maybe because of an undertone that plays into classism, but it is for that very reason that education plays an important role in (postcolonial) identity. Slavery in the Americas and the eventual Industrial Revolution that followed allowed a new form of economic mobility that was previously unheard of. Class politics thus became unstable, but what is sure is that the new socially and economically elevated families, families sometimes referred to in American literature as "new money", were vying for positions within the already established societies of wealthy families. Blacks, and other people of color, weren't afforded this opportunity despite the fact that there were non-white families who succeeded in securing wealth and influence in the years following Slavery in the Americas, Colonialism and the Industrial Revolution. "The Burmese Days" by British writer George Orwell is a testament to this cultural reality; and while his novel tells the story of an established Indian doctor who, despite his success, fails in his attempts to be admitted into an all white social club of colonial settlers, the case is made that for native peoples, the main avenue of any kind of social mobility was through Western education.

All of the authors we will study in this paper either focus on education in their works as a means to attain socio-economic mobility; and/or they, themselves, were born in colonial environments and attained some sort of prestigious education from a Western institution. The idea of the Western education is, in fact, the focus of the duality that comes with being an educated black (or non-white descendant of those formerly colonized or enslaved) person. Receiving a Western education, perspective, and historical insight into the History of Slavery and Colonialization has been both the disadvantage and liberator of formerly colonized people, and particularly, authors and artists. “Until the lion has his own historian, the story of the hunt will always glorify the hunter,” is an African proverb frequently attributed to the writing of Chinua Achebe. He is not the only author to address the link between education and oppression, nor oppression and identity, and as far as identity and origin are concerned, the link between memory and history. James Baldwin explained in 1969 that the “cornerstone” of oppression rests its agenda to alienate the colonized mind (Antihostile). The authors of *La Créolité* also spend a great deal of time explaining the need to find their true identities buried under imposed French values.

A buried identity proves to be, with no need for deep analysis of anything, a sure sign of a disconnect from Origin. The authors of *La Créolité* name the Middle Passage as a sort of rebirth and view their Caribbean island as their place of Origin. They write that their ancestors, along with the other groups of enslaved or subjugated peoples, created a new cultural reality and sort of solidarity forming a new Origin for their descendants. However, years of colonialization and subjugation coupled with race and class politics make this idea more complicated than that; and for other postcolonial writers, the idea could never be as simple. Black descendants of African slaves in the United States, for example, face the reality that even after liberation we were never able to claim the U.S. with its oppressive and discriminative policies, a land or country of our own; and we face the same estrangement from Africa as is described by the authors of *La Créolité*.

Much of the History of formerly colonialized people before their introduction with their colonizers has been perverted and/or destroyed by those same colonizers. Today, African Americans have no real way of knowing neither their ethnical backgrounds nor what any knowledge of that could or should mean to them today. Frantz

Fanon wrote, rather cleverly, “I concede the fact that the actual existence of an Aztec Civilization has done little to change the diet of today’s Mexican peasant.” He again conceded, “that whatever proof there is of a once mighty Songhai civilization does not change the fact that the Songhais today are undernourished, illiterate...” (Fanon pg. 148). He goes on to argue, however, that “colonized intellectuals” have a shared interest in wanting to “renew contact with their people’s oldest, inner essence, the farthest removed from colonial times,” (Fanon pg. 148). Uncovering Origin and Identity seem to be one of the foremost concerns for these writers because it allows a genuine attempt to place “self” at the center of one’s world; it removes the protective coats of folkloric and “exotic” traditions. It allows the artist to create from a place that harbors no feelings of resentment, shame, or guilt because of the subject, content or language chosen.

### ***Oppression and Language use: Diglossia and Neologism***

Diglossia is a term coined in the English-speaking world in 1959 by Charles Ferguson. He explains that the term refers to a sociolinguistic phenomenon where two languages or dialects of the same language, are spoken amongst the same community. This can be found in a variety of types of environments, Greece for example, where there is no colonial or oppressive force present. The diglossia that exists in Arabic countries exists because of a valorization of literary Arabic over the spoken Arabic, which varies in dialect between countries. The case in former western European colonies is very different. The latter example may also apply to former French colonies in the Arab world because of the valorization of French over Arab in official uses. This is the case in Western Africa and in the Caribbean where the language of the oppressor is used as a status symbol and cultural gatekeeper, of sorts. In the case of the French West Indies, for example, a diglossia arose from a period, or campaign rather, of French assimilation. Delphine Perret writes in her work, “ce statut inégal de deux langues employées par les locuteurs a reçu le nom de diglossie” (Perret pg. 134). She goes on to explain that the word “a été choisi par le linguiste Ferguson en 1959 pour indiquer la coexistence dans une même communauté de deux langues dont les statuts sont différents. Il y a une variété haute et une variété basse” (Perret pg. 134). The authors of “Eloge” wrote in the chapter “The choice of one’s speech,” that when “a mother, thinking she is favoring the learning



of the French language, represses Creole in the child's throat, she is in fact bearing a blow to the latter's imagination, repressing his creativity" (Eloge pg. 104) This stifling of authentic self expression did not, however, go completely unchallenged. The Creole language was born out of the need to express a reality unique to this territory and experience. Such a phenomenon is born from a will to adapt and survive, and so it has. Neologism can be seen to go hand in hand with this phenomenon. The term is used to define the introduction of a new word in literature, art or entertainment, and even politics or scholarly writing, which is not yet common in the every day language of the linguistic community. Chamoiseau and writers of the Créolité tradition frequently use this device in that they write with a "creolized" French, or "frenchified" Creole in order to illustrate the complexity of their language community.

### I.1.1

#### État de Lieux

##### *Language, Langage, Thought and Society*

In his work titled “Course in General Linguistics” Ferdinand Saussure gives the characteristics of language as “a system of signs in which the only essential thing is the union of meanings and sound-images, and in which both parts of the sign are psychological,” (Saussure pg. 15). He further explains that language is homogenous and that language is “the social side of speech, outside the individual who can never create nor modify it by himself; it exists only by virtue of a sort of contract signed by members of a community,” (Saussure pg. 14). In short, language is established when an “auditory image becomes associated with a concept,” (Saussure pg. 14). He is careful to note that giving definitions for words is difficult because language is not universal, meaning, language, speech, speaking are not fixed concepts; he notes that “language” and “speech” are the same word in German. In short he does conclude, “language is a system of signs that express ideas,” (Saussure pg. 16). In a study conducted for the International Conference for Education and Educational Psychology, a number of doctors and researchers conducted a study to investigate “how an individual thinks him/herself in a particular socio-ethnic environment,” by asking participants to answer the question, “In what language do you think?” (Jakupov pg. 2253) The study is important to the development of this paper because it was conducted in Kazakhstan, 20 years after the country’s independence; and because the country has numerous ethnic groups and languages existing within the territory but has Kazakh as the official national language. The similarities to the formerly colonized countries studied in this paper are undeniable, with the exception that the national languages of these countries are the languages of the colonial power. The study first states that though declaring one language the official language of the country, the president claimed to desire no cultural or linguistic domination of one group over another; however the study “clarified that most people wanted to learn the Kazakh language,” and that the people had “formed a stereotype of ‘the prestige of the Kazakh language,’” (Jakupov pg. 2253). In this case, language

doesn't just express ideas, but is also "a measure of a person's emotional intelligence" in a multicultural society (Jakupov 2254).

The same holds true in other societies, such as Martinique where, for years, the French language was valorized over the Creole. The study supported the idea that in society, "people can rarely oppose the rules and regulations established by the dominant ethnic group," (Jakupov pg. 2253). And yet, authors of "Eloge de la Créolité" highlight the present need to valorize their bilingual reality, perhaps in an attempt to shatter the ceiling of diglossia from within. This importance is supported by the fact that the study conducted in Kazakhstan concluded, "language is a condition in the formation of self-identity in a multicultural society," (Jakupov pg. 2255). The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, a linguistic theory based on the work of Edward Sapir and his student Benjamin Whorf, states that the way people think is affected by their native languages; it also states that there are certain thoughts an individual may have that cannot be understood by people of other languages. Though the hypothesis is highly controversial and relatively disregarded since the rise of Noam Chomsky's critics of the hypothesis. However, the theory holds true in certain regards. The writers of "Eloge" liken the language suppression of a forced diglossia to a discouragement of creative impulses and expressiveness; they argue "creativity is necessarily a function of a subjective reading of the world," (Eloge pg. 107). In other words, true expression cannot be the result of another's language. Chinua Achebe supports this idea writing, "I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home, but altered to fit its new African surroundings," (A New English).

Noam Chomsky, author of "Language and Thought," "Knowledge of Language," and "Language and Mind" is an American linguist, philosopher, historian and social critic. He writes extensively on propaganda and the use of language as an oppressive and controlling tool. Language as a symbol of Education is one such function of such oppression. In communities where there is a state of diglossia present, there is also a phenomenon known as code switching. W.E.B. DuBois speaks of this condition in his acclaimed work, "The Souls of Black Folk" in which he explains the idea of double consciousness. Noam Chomsky gave an interview, entitled "Language, Politics, and

Composition,” in which he agreed that “language controls thought” and went on to state, rather definitively, that “there are many properties of language use which reflect structures of authority and domination in the society in which this language is used” (Chomsky). The ideas of code switching and double consciousness illustrate an internalized perception of one’s own language and expression as inferior to that of the dominating culture. Code switching, as defined by National Public Radio, is the practice of switching one’s language or manner of self-expression in conversation. The idea is illustrated in the use of Creole in the fish markets and French in City Hall. NPR notes that among the many reasons people code switch is 1. Wanting to fit in, 2. Wanting to say something in secret, and 3. Wanting to convey a thought. These examples show that language is an innate part of true identity and expression in society.

Saussure clarifies the difference between language (Langue) and Speech (Langage). He begins by declaring, “in the lives of individuals and societies, speech is more important than anything else,” (Saussure pg. 7). Speech is not just the use of language but he goes on to explain that “speech always implies an established system and an evolution; at every moment it is an existing institution and the product of the past,” (Saussure pg. 8). This is integral to the argumentation of this work, as the work has as an objective showing speech to be the link between language and culture. Speech allows individuals to express unique cultural realities within a language system. It illustrates how the English language is spoken differently in England than in The United States than in Barbados than in Australia. This work mainly focuses on the culture present in Martinique, a culture that anchors its identity in orality. In his work “Halte à la mort des langues” Claude Hagège address the importance of language diversity to culture and identity as well. He writes that languages contain our cultures as well as our histories. He makes the link between the presence of a language and the survival of culture writing, “les langues accompagnent les groupes humaines. Elles disparaissent avec eux...” (Hagège pg. 15)

### ***Culture***

In her U.N. sponsored work entitled “State of the World’s Indigenous People” Naomi Kipuri defines culture as the “complex whole which includes knowledge, belief,

art, morals, law, custom, and any other capacities and habits acquired by man as a member of society,” (Kipuri pg. 52). She goes on to add that culture is,

*“...that aspect of our existence which makes us similar to some people, yet different from the majority of the people in the world...it is a way of life common to a group of people, a collection of beliefs and attitudes, shared understandings and patterns of behaviour that allow those people to live together in relative harmony, but set them apart from other peoples,”* (Kipuri pg. 52)

This understanding of culture, particularly the aspect about morals, beliefs, attitudes, and patterns of behavior coincide with a previously cited, yet relatively dated, definition of culture, which speaks about a people’s reaction to cultural manifestations such as art and literature. It is this component of culture that is most important to this work in particular. The development of societal norms, for example the topic of rape culture in America today, refers to these same behaviors and attitudes given as the definition of culture. This definition can be used in referring to “Police Culture” or the culture of police institutions to further the oppression of dominated peoples, as illustrated in by Chamoiseau, writing, “The police were injustice, humiliation, misapprehension, bringing together the absurdities of power and might, terror and folly,” (Chamoiseau pg. 9). This characterization illustrates that the police, collectively, naturally, and in function, served this purpose because of their “attitudes, shared understandings and patterns of behaviour.”

This definition of culture can also be used in reference to the establishment of the culture of people who share a geographic, ethnic, and/or social state or status, amongst other things. There can thus be an established “American culture” “African American culture” “southern culture” a “culture of black women in America”. The argument can also be used in regards to the valorization of the culture of orality in Martinique or the culture of communal and traditional living based on hunting and agriculture as depicted in Achebe’s “Things Fall Apart”. This definition can also be used to explain how imperialist culture and the native cultures of colonized territories are usually in direct conflict with one another – as shown in “Solibo Magnificent” and “Things Fall Apart.” Admittedly, culture is not static, and Kipuri writes that culture is never “constrained and homogenous” and goes on to say that “they are open to multiple influences,” (Kipuri pg.

70). In reference to globalization and dominating forces (or cultures of domination) such as Imperialism and urban expansion and renewal, she acknowledges the positive and negative affects on less powerful communities. She writes that indigenous people have “concerns for the impact on their cultural identity and economic livelihood, and their unfair exclusion from decision-making processes,” (Kipuri pg. 71). Kipuri writes, *“For all these reasons indigenous peoples tend to see globalization as a threat to their territories, their traditions and cultural expressions, their cultures and identities, compelling them to fight harder on a variety of fronts to ensure their cultural survival, as well as find a new way to assert their rights and autonomy.”* (Kipuri pg. 70)

This analysis fits just as well with the analysis of subjugated, colonized and enslaved peoples. In fact, in “Wretched of the Earth” in his chapter on culture, Frantz Fanon writes that, “the colonized intellectual frequently lapses into heated arguments and develops a psychology dominated by an exaggerated sensibility, sensitivity, and susceptibility”, which aligns with the idea that indigenous people “fight harder on a variety of fronts,” to ensure their survival and assert their autonomy (Fanon pg. 157).

## II. Problematic, Objectives, Hypothesis

### II.1

#### Introductory Passage

How can language or culture be problematic? This work seeks to examine the link between language and culture, and thus, must first conduct a thorough examination of both culture and language. Considering a 1989 definition of Culture published in “Multicultural Education,” Culture is not found in “artifacts, tools, or other tangible cultural elements” but in “how the members of the group interpret, use, and perceive them.” The United Nations has offers a more recent definition of Culture which has been explored later in the work, but the previous definition, however old, remains the most relevant to the argument as it shows that society’s reactions to cultural manifestations, literary works for example, is the true insight into a society’s “culture”. Therefore, the general acceptance of or indifference towards the forceful and systematic oppression of groups of the population can be considered a part of a society’s culture – in the same way that “rape culture” is used to describe the general feelings and attitudes towards rape, rapists and rape victims in a community. Obviously, normalizing accepted interpretations and perceptions of words, events and people proves to be devastating, and even fatal, when confined to a colonial (or *post-colonial*) environment where one group forcefully dominates another. In the case of the colonial and imperial conquests of European countries in Asia, Africa, and the Americas, the affects of cultural domination resonate with us today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For example, contemporary critics, namely Chinua Achebe, have dubbed Joseph Conrad’s “Heart of Darkness” a work of racist bigotry; however, Peter Edgerly Firchow wrote in an anthology of the work published in 2005 that it is likely a mischaracterization to consider Conrad racist because of the cultural realities of that time. The concepts of Race and Ethnicity varied largely from what we understand them to mean today. Yet, racism as a phenomenon existed then and continues to exist now, in part because of cultural influencers from long ago. Conrad’s book is, without a doubt, a manifestation of a culture of Imperialistic and Colonial values of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. *Eloge de la Créolité* makes the argument for us that production is important to preservation and perpetuation of Culture, and as an acclaimed literary work,

we see how “Heart of Darkness” influenced Collective Thought on Africans, Africa, and Imperialism by Europeans from the time of its publication until now.

Works such as “Heart of Darkness” and “The White Man’s Burden,” which are not coy in their functions as literary social discourse, cannot and should not be considered individually. Not only do they engage one another in an inter-textual dialogue, they serve as responses to cultural realities, and more importantly to this argument, have themselves received responses through works of literature seeking to expand the social discourse surrounding the topics of conquest and subjugation. Chinua Achebe’s “Things Fall Apart” for example is said to be a response to Conrad’s “Heart of Darkness”. This work highlights many authors and instances of literary productions when the language chosen to produce the work is as much of a (explicit or implicit) political statement as the content of the work, itself. In former slave states and colonial territories, the literary productions of authors who belong to the dominated group of people are important because they often tell an untold history and reality of said group of people. Considering the tools of subjugation and oppression – namely language use – and the tangible and intangible results of such processes, as well as what we know (and will later highlight) about the link between language and thought, we can begin to understand how language and culture can be considered problematic.

This is a question of representation as it is a question of validation and liberation. Ferdinand Saussure defines language as “a system of signs used to express ideas,” (Saussure pg. 16). Therefore the oppression and restriction of language use not only confine the authentic expression of a people, but also limit the verbal representation of that people and culture. This experience is described in “Eloge de la Créolité” as having to look at one’s self with the eyes of another; they write, “Having the Other’s pupils under one’s eyelids” invalidates true attempts of self-discovery and appreciation (Eloge pg. 85). I describe it here as having to define one’s self with the words of another. For obvious reasons this complicates any search to understand or clarify identity or origin. When this becomes normalized, there is then a culture of self-exoticism, self-hatred, self-degradation, and the perpetuation of the cycle of oppression. Another example would be the term “negro” or “negre” used by Anglophone and Francophone descendants of Africans. The use of these terms is to describe a black person but, more precisely, a



“black man”; this implies that normally, or as the standard, “man” is white or non-black. This is further validated by the fact that there is no word in the English or French language to mean, “white man”. Further support of this idea comes from the argumentation in an explanation of Barthe’s definition of Ideology or Myth, “that in British society white, masculine, heterosexual, middle class, are unmarked in the sense that they are the ‘normal’, the ‘natural’, the ‘universal’, from which other ways of being are an inferior variation on an original,” (Storey pg. 4). The use of this word by black or African people is self-exoticism manifested in language use and subsequently thought in the same way that “this is made clear in such formulations as a female pop singer, a black journalist, a working-class writer, a gay comedian,” (Storey pg. 4). This is in the same vein with the use of the term “Metropole” by the “overseas departments” of France; the departmental status aside, this terminology centers France and marginalizes the departments, which are not apart of the continental territory in a way that must have psychological affects in terms of identity and origin. Yet, just as the presence of this word is telling of a cultural and psychological phenomenon, the presence of native languages in artistic production is also telling, as well as promising, of possible cultural and social liberation. Language use in a society is, indeed, proof of resistance to domination, which may tell us more about the past, present and future of culture and language in our societies and the world.

## II.2.

### **Solibo The Magnificent, Martinique, and La Créolité and Patrick Chamoiseau**

#### *Solibo Magnificent*

Patrick Chamoiseau's "Solibo Magnificent" or "Solibo Magnifique" in the original French is, on the surface, the story of a creole storyteller in Martinique. The at once loved and relatively forgotten storyteller meets his end at the end of the carnival season in Martinique, as he engages a crowd of friends and onlookers in a traditional call and response routine of storytelling. Mid story, Solibo drops dead giving out one last call, to which, though not the usual call for the response in this tradition, his audience replies and awaits the next word from Solibo, whom the author/narrator would describe as "The Master". So enthralled by this performance, the audience barely dwindle as Solibo lays dead, or dying, for what is at least a few hours. When the crowd later realizes that the Master has seen his final hour, a slew of home remedies and folkloric healings are tried to revive the fallen Solibo. When nothing seems to help, the focus shifts from the solution to the problem. The man has fallen with no visible signs of trauma, and the onlookers are left to guess at what has killed this seemingly healthy man. "Snick't by the word" is the final consensus of the motley group of vendors and jobbers\*, merchants, "Independentists" and the author himself, the "word scratcher". A character from amongst them, Doudou-Ménar, leaves to find help, which she finds – or not – in the form of the local police department. The Chief Sergeant on duty at this time, overzealous and arguably inebriated on his own power, comes in time to round up the group of Solibo's friends and family and begin what he has dubbed a murder investigation.

The presence and function of the police in the plot drive forward the idea that it is only on the surface that this story is just about the death of a creole storyteller. Chamoiseau presents the novel in two parts, "Before the Word (Document of the Calamity)" and "After the Word (Document of the Memory)". This paper relies on the development of this novel to define the meaning of "The Word" and examine the link between language and culture in a postcolonial context. In the wake of Solibo's death and the subsequent police investigation of his friends and family, the members of the group

tell stories about Solibo's life (it is important also to note that the author, Chamoiseau, asks the reader to not remember Solibo as the fallen storyteller defamed on the Savanna; but to remember him in his finest days when his presence reverberated throughout Martinique like the sound of the horn of a great cruise liner) and the memories that he has left them with. It is then that the group realizes the two details crucial to the development of this argument. In the midst of the investigation, Solibo is denied the traditional rites of passage of which he often helped to uphold and carry out for his countrymen in various respects. The group then realizes that Solibo, the creole storyteller, is the keeper of many of their customs and traditions, and now that he has passed on, this very culture risks being of another time passed, as Solibo now is (Chamoiseau pg. 8).

This essay deals with language in two regards in French, *la langue* and *le langage*; and three in English: language, terminology, and speech (*le langage*). As explained before, we look at language in terms of terminology, property of man vs. human being, for example; as well as language in terms of the system used to communicate. French and English, languages representative of Colonial powers, are examined in their uses as tools of oppression as they are forcibly placed, in colonial environments, on a sociolinguistic pedestal over the maternal languages of colonized people. We also examine language, or *langage* in French, in terms of speech. Many postcolonial writers deal with language in the first regard in their writing, but writers of the Antilles, particularly of the Créolité movement, pay particular attention to speech as a window into identity. The original novel is written in French but the narration of the novel allows Chamoiseau to take liberties with language. The narrator uses a type of creolized French, much of the dialogue is in Creole and there is even the use of a creole, by perhaps the most elderly of the group, which the characters of the novel admittedly no longer understand.

The use of the creole storyteller draws the link between language and culture for the reader – we are able to see how important a verbal expression of self and reality is to survival in a colonial (or postcolonial) environment. The reader can also recognize the use of the police force as the unofficially, official enforcers of colonial power and rule. Though the police chief sergeant himself recognizes that the distance between France and the Caribbean island of Martinique undermines any real chance that the laws of France

will be applied the same way in Martinique, he along with fellow officers, are determined to enforce their mandates despite how literally out of place they might be. Others admit to the difference between the jobs of the police in Martinique and actual law enforcement. The guardian of the peace, "...With only his mask of imperial justice," explains, "Madame, I am a guardian of the peace, the law it's another matter, it's made in France, you understand?" (Chamoiseau pg. 25, pg. 26) Yet, in a 2014 interview Dick Gregory, African American author, comedian and activist, said that it is the explicit job of the police to enforce the oppressive law of the colonizer. Though the police have no direct connection to Solibo's death, their subsequent involvement illustrates the inability of the two cultures (oppressor and oppressed) to coexist in harmony.

### *La Créolité and Patrick Chamoiseau*

"Our history (or more precisely our histories) is shipwrecked in colonial history." (Eloge pg. 98) Thus begins the second section entitled "Updating true memory," in the chapter entitled "Creoleness" in "Eloge de La Créolité"; and it can only be assumed that by "our" the authors are focused on the subjugated groups of people within their territory and (perhaps) all colonial territories, if not, at least, other Caribbean islands and former slave states. The thing to note about such imagery is that even if the cargo and crew are saved – rescued after the wreck – the ship is through. Even in the event that pieces of the ship can be crafted together to form a new barge of sorts, the original ship is forever lost. To make the ship sail again at sea would require mending it with materials foreign to the original. One must then ask, what is more important to the idea of transmission: the cargo or the vessel? More importantly in this analogy, is History the cargo or the vessel? The authors go on to explain how the adoption of another's history is the cause of a "false memory," again drawing the link between History and Memory. They explain that it was Edouard Glissant who pointed out the inaccessibility of Caribbean history to historians. "Their methodology restricts them to the sole colonial chronicle," they write (Eloge pg 99). It is then clear that it is History that is the precious cargo of transmission. I am thus forced to believe that it is therefore people who are the vessels of the transmission of history. It would be true – especially for the argument of *La Créolité* – that a people (here people is used to mean a culture, race, and society, in the way that it vaguely engulfs the

one or all of the three aspects) shipwrecked on the shores of anything, would rest there, either tragically remembered or forever forgotten; or, as the idea of La Créolité would argue, the people would emerge from the wreckage mended with aspects (peoples, cultures, influences) foreign to the original existence of that people. The authors argue that the history hidden to historians is only accessible through “artistic knowledge” (Eloge pg. 99). It is thus production that serves as the tools necessary to make whole again the vessels at risk of losing their cargo – History – to the vast depths and darkness of obliterating Time. It is here that Chamoiseau finds and illustrates the tension between the call of the authors of *Eloge* to create and produce, and the actual Creole culture they are trying to preserve.

Patrick Chamoiseau admitted his interest in the ability of Time to obliterate in a May 2011 interview with Luigia Pattano. His words were in fact “urban renewal” but when one considers that the difference between an economy dependent on slave labor and that form of slavery becoming obsolete due to the Industrial Revolution is solely Time, the tension between preservation and renewal becomes clear. He addresses the issues that arise from the coexistence of French and Creole cultures in Martinique, and through the death of Solibo the creole storyteller, expounds upon the imagery of the shipwrecked histories of colonized peoples. The very story of Solibo’s death and the hours that followed is the production of not just the author but also of Solibo’s other friends and family members present to witness the event. The group tells stories about Solibo, and thus preserves not only the memory and existence of Solibo, but also of themselves and gives new life to their culture and History. He is the storyteller but they are each charged with the task, even if just for a little while, and discover the importance of such “memorial accounts” to their integrity and wholeness.

Memory and orality and History and documentation are the pairs outlined in “*Eloge*” as well as in “*Solibo*”. Solibo himself tells the author that, “your pen will make you die...” (Chamoiseau). Yet, the authors of *Eloge* urge Antillean artists to produce and create in their Creole tongue, in their Creole spirit and their Creole imagination. Chamoiseau himself, though he is forthcoming about the skepticism and critiques of “the Master,” seems to be forging a place for the Creole tradition of Orality, and the Memory of Creole History, existence, and reality, to exist on the world stage. “*Solibo*

Magnificent” can be seen as the author’s attempt to appease both tradition and progression. Solibo explains to the Chamoiseau, “to stiffen, to break the rhythm, is to call on death...” (Chamoiseau). In the same vein, the authors of “Eloge” write that, “Creoleness is an open specificity. It escapes, therefore, perceptions which are not themselves open. Expressing it is not expressing a synthesis, not just expressing a crossing or any other unicity. It is expressing a kaleidoscopic totality...” (Eloge pg. 89). So while the authors admit that La Créolité in its essence is rooted in orality, it must be able to be shaped by the culture and influences of the times, including modernity and globalization. Creoleness cannot be caged or limited to orality neither can it be trapped on a page in forced, practiced, or rigid written expression. The authors write that, “its expression must be the result of a serious aesthetic approach” (Eloge pg. 103). Art and production – through the creolized French and neologisms of Chamoiseau and artists of his kind – (must) allow Creole expression the fluidity necessary to its growth and existence in modern times and on a world stage. Noam Chomsky agreed that writing “is an avenue to social and political empowerment of the disenfranchised” (Chomsky). He went on to argue that in a globalized, complex world, writing functions in a manner which speech cannot. Still, Chamoiseau, in uncovering “true memory” understands a sort of obligation to History – the history, for example, of the long gone creole storytellers of Martinique – and arguably the Future, and privileges transmission in expression, instead of expression in transmission.

### II.3.

#### Initial Questions

Before defining a specific problematic, it was necessary to pose some initial questions, pulled from the subject of this paper to further center the focus of this examination and its motives.

1. This essay, thus, analyzes what is the difference between History and Memory.
2. This work must define what is the difference between language (langue) and speech (langage).
3. This work analyzes how important are History and Memory in shaping the Future?
4. The essay considers what comes first, language or culture and what effects does one have on the other.
5. Considering research done on language and thought, and Collective Memory, this work examines what effect, if any, does language have on Memory.
6. This work aims to define Culture, illuminate how is Culture developed and demonstrate how Culture is established.
7. This essay focuses on how the term “The Word” correlates to language (language/langage).
8. The essay does an examination into how is language developed.
9. The work seeks to highlight the links between History, Memory and Origin.
10. This essay clarifies the links between Culture, Identity and Origin.
11. The work must interrogate the links between History, Memory, and Culture.
12. A task at hand is to determine how accurately, if at all, a cultural reality can be expressed in the language of another.
13. The essay considers why is it important to understand what is meant by “The Word.”
14. We consider the ways to preserve culture, given that culture is continuously changing.
15. This work highlights the cases when examination of culture would not be retrospective.

### **II.1.1.**

#### **Problematic**

In former colonized and ex-slave societies where the dominated people have had limited to no involvement in the progression and documentation of History, many issues arise concerning origin and identity. These issues manifest in the accepted and promoted realms of traditions and customs regarding, but not limited to, food, language, ceremony, religion, superstition, accepted norms and even education; these realms, considered together, can be considered the Culture of said people. Language, though considered a cultural realm, is also considered a vehicle of Culture. The need for a people to communicate their cultural realities is a factor of life that is found across societies, communities and geographic spaces. This fact may be evidence that Language is indeed a primordial and inherent necessity in the establishment and maintenance of a community and therefore a Culture. If this is true, there must be direct links between the development of language and that of culture. Relying on this notion, this essay asks the question, “How is language proof of the existence of a culture? Proof of a culture’s survival? Proof of survival in a setting where there is a diglossia present in the language politics? And in particular, proof of a culture’s survival in a former colonial and/or slave state?” In a similar vein, considering the link between History and the future, this work considers “what does a culture, or a people, owe its past in the building of its future?”



## II.1.2.

### Objectives

Conducting an examination of the link between Language and Culture embodies a large number of factors and concepts and requires a true interdisciplinary approach. So much so that it is important to remind the reader that though this work is based in the context of Colonialism because of the use of language as a tool of oppression, the true nature of this work is to allow the oppressed culture the platform to present itself outside of the link that it has to the oppressive culture. This work seeks to valorize the development of language as a basic tool of self-expression and therefore, circumstantially, a necessary tool of resistance. The main objectives of this work are as follows:

1. Highlight link between Language and Culture to show language as a tool of protest and resistance.
2. Highlight inherent cultural differences in language use in different societies
3. Comment on creolisation and the preservation of cultures in the future of the world
4. Define “The Word”
5. Comment on the authors of *Eloge de la Créolité*'s call for creole writers to produce in order to preserve
6. Draw links between all literary protest authors and techniques
7. Highlight Patrick Chamoiseau's attempt to depict a link between Language and Culture through his character, Solibo.

**II.1.3.****Hypothesis**

As with any scientific research or exploration, the knowledge and motivations held before the beginning of the research play a particular role in shaping what we believe will be found in our research efforts. There are certain beliefs I hold in beginning this work, and though I am in a quest for information and not affirmation, this section is dedicated to the ideas that I expect will prove true upon further research and examination.

1. The Creole language, as found in the French Antilles, was almost “destined for failure” as a vessel of cultural preservation and valorization in comparison to French during the years of overt cultural and political oppression because of the cultural differences present in the linguistic politics of the languages sharing the territory. For example, the French value an orator who “speaks like a book” while the Creole language is born from an unconventional and expressive oral tradition.
2. Without an authentic form of expression, culture dies/changes.
3. Speech (le langage) is the link between Language and Culture – for example, the fact of speaking Ebonics is the link between the English language and the cultural reality of an African American.
4. The future (the preservation) of culture is in uncensored production.

### III. Methodology and Conceptual Framework

#### III.1.

##### Development of Binaries

###### *History and Memory, Official and Unofficial*

“Klein and Laqueur suggest, for example, that the rise of memory has somehow been at the expense of history. They yearn for a return to a more dispassionate and objective way of dealing with the past, and to an ethics of remembrance which is less grounded in the subjective...” (McCusker pg. 7) Depending on which side of History one identifies with, one would find it necessary or not to mention that the Klein and Laquer mentioned above are educated, white men. A factor that seems worthy of consideration considering their stance on the binary (and their role in developing the argument that there is, indeed a binary present) of History and Memory. “Until the Lion has its own history, the story of the hunt will always glorify the hunter,” is the African proverb that clarifies that the tension brought between Memory and History is done so on the part of Power. “If, as Frederic Jameson famously suggested in the *The Political Unconscious*, ‘history is what hurts’, Laquer and Klein would counter that in contemporary literature and culture, memory offers the false promise of healing,” (McCusker pg. 7). These would then be the words, the premature and uninvited conclusion, of men with only one viewpoint into the true reality, the true history, of colonialism. As described in *Eloge de la Créolité*, Memory is not an search for healing; it is the doorway to interior vision and self-acceptance, which may then lead to healing. When the story of Slavery in the Americas is told by History, the slave revolts are often left out, painting the picture that these enslaved people were helpless, docile in their condition. It is Memory that points out to young men and women the places in the soil still damp from the blood, sweat and tears shed in the fight for freedom. It’s in the telling of these tales that the binaries History vs. Memory and Documented vs. Undocumented have their real importance.

Solibo Magnificent dies on the Savanna with a group of friends and family surrounding him – the group witnesses the event and comes to a consensus about the only possible explanation. Yet when the police, or the Institution – the representative of French Colonial Power – become involved, Chamoiseau illustrates the binary clearly.

“The distinction registers a fault line between the public and official domain of written record, and the private and intimate nature of intergenerational memory,” writes McCusker about Chamoiseau’s treatment of History and Memory. An example from the text would be in the “List of witnesses extracted from the general report of the preliminary investigation...”

*“—Eloi Apollon, nicknamed Sucette, claims to be drummer of krickrack tales, in reality has no occupation or permanent address.”*

*“—Justin Hamanah, nicknamed Didon, claims to be master jobber at the vegetable market, in reality has no occupation, resides at 10 rue Schoelcher, Terres-Sainville.”*

*“—Conchita Juanéz y Rodríguez, of Colombian nationality, has no occupation, looks like a hooker, has no permanent residence.”*

*“—Sosthène Versailles, nicknamed Ti-Cal, municipal employee, resides on the new extension of rue Liberté, Volga Plage, known as Independentist.”* (Chamoiseau pg. 12)

The treatment – description rather – of the witnesses speaks to the nature of these binaries. “When Bouaffesse asked him: What kind of work you do for the béké?” it is explained to the reader that, “Lands, factories, and the structures of economic production (direct or indirect) belonged to the békés. Whatever one’s function, one worked for the békés. The expression has stayed on, inasmuch as things have evolved little.” (Chamoiseau pg. 61, pg. 62) It is then confirmed that the difference between History and Memory and Documented and Undocumented is, indeed, power. The occupations given by the witnesses above cannot be confirmed as paid occupations of the béké and are thus labeled unreal, concluding that the individuals hold no jobs; however, in the case where the witness admits to having no job, the power structure (Chief Sergeant Bouaffesse) again assigns the job that he sees fit for the individual, mentioning that she “looks like a hooker.” The one job that is noted as a “real job” is that of the State employee.

Power is again summoned to cement the divide between Documented and Undocumented on the level of socio-linguistic policies. A tension between French and Creole becomes apparent through the police investigation. First, Congo refuses to speak French but is told by the Chief Sergeant that he must speak French. The Chief Sergeant explains, “I’ve got to write what you’re going to tell me, this is a criminal inquiry now, so no black Negro gibberish, just mathematical French...” (Chamoiseau pg. 67). The tension

is further exasperated on the other levels of language and terminology. First, the inspector called in by the Chief Sergeant to handle the case must create a list of his own. He asks questions, but ultimately, the Chief Sergeant must translate for him. There is a disparity on two fronts, the use of Creole in official documents and the use of terminology and the need to translate one single language. The scene is thus described,

*“–Thank you, Chief Sergeant, but I understand Creole.”*

*“–Just trying to be helpful! You’re an inspector, you shouldn’t delve in the patois of these bums.”*

*“–It’s a language, Chief Sergeant.”*

*“–Well then, if it’s a language, how come your tongue is always rolling off such a polished French? And why don’t you write your report in it?”* (Chamoiseau pg. 95)

The inspector does not feel the need to answer the question, but it is a question worth posing. Considering in which language to write would plague a number of Fanon’s “colonized intellectuals” but the matter becomes even more complicated when one must translate linguistic indicators of one language. The inspector goes on to say, “We’ll have to find out this man’s civil status. Mr. Longue-Bête, what is your age, profession, and permanent address?” (Chamoiseau pg. 95) The citizen only understands, however, after the Chief Sergeant clarifies, “The Inspector asks you what hurricane you were born after, what you do for the béké, and what side of town you sleep at night?” (Chamoiseau pg. 96) This exchange highlights the true nature of social, linguistic and political oppression within the French Caribbean. For years the descendants of colonized and enslaved people were limited in their educational, social, and professional capacities. The novel takes place in a time when French assimilation is not only encouraged, but also, in many cases, forced. Individuals such as the witnesses present in Solibo’s death are then further disenfranchised because of their inability to navigate and assimilate into French culture and the epidemics of modernity and globalization. Their unofficial, undocumented status assures that they – individuals whom these characters represent – will never be remembered as part of French History, or at least that any remembrance is steeped in the exterior vision of the colonizer.

***Subjugator and Subjugated, Colonial Power and Colonized People***

The binary created between the subjugator vs. the subjugated, and the colonial power vs. the colonized people manifests on many levels. In colonial and postcolonial texts there is present within the psychology of both the oppressor and the oppressed a sincere valorization of and affinity towards all things related to the colonial power. Culture, language, mannerisms, dress, and even products are placed so high on a pedestal above all things local, “native”, and basically of the oppressed. In describing the seductive routine of the young bachelor Chief Sergeant in “Solibo Magnificent,” the author explains that a pack of American cigarettes was important to the routine, noting, “local Mélias discredit you!” (Chamoiseau pg. 33) The irony in this is in the fact that in its status as an overseas department of France, and before that as a slave state and colony, the local production of goods in Martinique sustained the economy and solidified its value to the French. In another novel, Richard Wright’s “Native Son,” the protagonist builds on the binary in the way that we, citizens of postcolonial western civilizations, know it best: the haves (the oppressor) vs. the have nots (the oppressed). Bigger recounts a realization that solidifies the binary in his mind,

*“He had learned that Mr. Dalton owned the South Side Real Estate Company, and the South Side Real Estate Company owned the house in which he lived. He paid eight dollars a week for one rat-infested room. He had never seen Mr. Dalton until he had come to work for him; his mother always took the rent to the real estate office. Mr. Dalton was somewhere far away, high up, distant, like a god. He owned property all over the Black Belt, and he owned property where the white folks lived, too. But Bigger could not live in a building across the “line,”* (Wright pg. 164)

Here the binary is illustrated not just as a psychological manifestation one feels; it is indeed a physical boundary that separates the two groups of people. This example is seen again in the novel “Burmese Days” written by George Orwell.

In “Burmese Days” the British colonial presence in Burma is “waning” as described on the back cover. The British natives must find ways to amuse themselves and the novel tells of how Englishmen spend their time in a “Whites-only” country club, the likes of which are numerous, yet exclusive, in the country. The irony, and the difference between the examples in this novel and those in “Native Son”, is that in the novel gives insight into the racism and prejudice enacted on the native soil of the colonized people. In

the passage to follow an English country club member expresses his feelings at the idea of the club integrating local men into the club:

*“Just listen to this, ‘It has been suggested that as there are as yet no Oriental members of this club, and as it is now the usual to admit officials of gazette rank, whether native or European, to membership of most European Clubs, we should the question of following this practice in Kyauktada...’ He’s asking us to break all our rules and take a dear little nigger-boy into this Club. Dear Dr. Veraswami, for instance. Dr. Very-slimy, I call him.”* (Orwell pg. 22)

The use of the term “nigger-boy” juxtaposes the example in the very next sentence where the speaker himself suggests the new rule would admit the likes of a native *doctor*, not exactly a petty thief or uneducated servant. The narrator reveals, however, that the speaker “really did hate Orientals – hated them with a bitter, restless loathing as of something evil or unclean,” and admits that though unfounded in this belief, men like Ellis were “common,” (Orwell pg. 24). The novel shows the resistance to any cultural or racial integration on the part of the colonizer, and “Solibo Magnificent” shows an example the valorization of the colonizer’s culture; but there is also the example of the mixture of culture and traditions, as seen in V.S. Naipaul’s “A House for Mr Biswas”.

In Trinidad, similar to Martinique, the geographic mixing of cultures during colonialism and in the postcolonial society was inevitable. Cultural and racial purity was, however, viewed on all sides as a way to maintain status and integrity. Creolisation being an inevitable effect of Colonialism – according to the authors of “Eloge” – however, soon some cultural leniencies eventually took place as not only a manner of survival, but also a method of mobility in this new society. In the case of Indians and Hindus, this *mélange* is considered with an undertone of scorn, as the differing cultures are presented as in contrast with one another. Naipaul’s narrator in “A House for Mr Biswas” paints the cultural identity crisis through the juxtaposition described in this character’s actions, “sometimes she spoke Hindi incantations; sometimes she searched with a candle in one hand and a crucifix in the other...” (Naipaul 1969 pg. 422) Again he has the protagonist point out the contradiction, “I mean look at the facts. Marrying off her favorite daughter in a registry office. Sending the two little barbers to a Roman Catholic college,” (Naipaul 1969 pg. 117). The protagonist throws these verbal “attacks” at his wife in an attempt to

negate the purity of her family's Hindu and therefore Indian identity. Naipaul isn't the only postcolonial author to use European or colonial "formality" in documentation and therefore validation to juxtapose native culture as with his example of marrying at the registry office. Neither is he the only writer to use religion and more specifically the Christian church as an example of assimilation to Western culture, and arguably to internalization of oppressive techniques on the part of oppressed peoples.

***White and Black, The Creation of the Spectrum and Race Based Oppression***

The term "race-based oppression" is actually a euphemism because scientists and scholars have proven that the notion of race as it is widely accepted in society today is totally an imperial construction, which in fact masks the real goal of such oppression which more accurately should be called "anti-black" racism or oppression. The term "nigger" is commonly associated to slavery and racism in the Americas, more specifically the United States, but an examination of texts on colonialism prove that the word was indeed used as a derogatory term referring to darker skinned people of different ethnic backgrounds. George Orwell's example of the British colonial's refusal to allow Burmese natives membership into the club supports this fact. "Do what you like outside the Club. But, by God, it's a different matter when you talk of bringing niggers in here," (Orwell pg. 24). The natives he so vehemently refuses are actually Southeast Asians and are dark in complexion but differ greatly in resemblance from natives of most African countries. While the races and cultures of oppressed people vary largely (as European imperialism was indeed a global project), the race, at least, of the oppressor has largely remained the same. In the essay "Dynamics of Place" in the collection "New Essays on Native Son," Richard Wright is quoted for a piece he wrote entitled "12 Million Black Voices." In this essay the author presents Wright's recollection of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, "We millions of black folk who live in this land were born into Western civilization of a weird and paradoxical birth. The lean, tall, blond men of England, Holland, and Denmark, the dark, short, nervous men of France, Spain and Portugal, men whose blue and gray and brown eyes glistened with the light of the future, denied our human personalities..." (Kinnamon pg. 89). Though the idea of racial purity became increasingly more absurd throughout the years, the attempts classify racial purity only



grew more and more prevalent. Thus the creation of the white to black spectrum came about.

In “Solibo Magnificent” the race spectrum is a latent theme throughout the novel. Though other Antillean writers seem to address race in the same manner in their works it seems arguable that the topic arises because of the real psychological interest in race actually present in this society. In “Eloge de la Créolité” the authors urge, *“In multiracial societies, such as ours, it seems urgent to quit using the traditional raciological distinctions and start again designating the people of our countries, regardless of their complexion, by the only suitable word: Creole. Socioethnic relations in our society ought to take place from now on under the seal of a common Creoleness...”* (Eloge pg. 90)

This suggestion is indeed exclusive to the “multiracial societies” such as Martinique; the United States could not be described as a multiracial society, anti-miscegenation laws being prevalent in most states into the 1970s, although there are many individuals who now identify as “mixed-race”. This idea is, however, problematic because it actually (if indirectly and inadvertently) furthers anti-black racist agendas – and it is important to note that for this reason many black Americans, “colonized intellectuals,” vehemently oppose such suggestions. The dealing with race in Antillean literature, including “Solibo Magnificent” proves this point. Doudou-Ménar is described as having a son “who sings in Spanish in a band where other ne’er-do-wells pretend to be Latins...” (Chamoiseau pg. 24) The author recognizes the culture of symbolic violence inherent to the descendants of formerly colonized and enslaved peoples to, at all costs, negate blackness. He describes a scene in a nightclub, noting that women there “savagely refuse to dance if the guy doing the asking is darker than they are,” and luckily for the guy in this scene, he has “light brown skin.” (Chamoiseau pg. 34)

The evidence of anti-black racism and the creation of the white to black spectrum is also evident in the labeling created to define levels of blackness, or whiteness, in post Slavery times. In the United States, anti-miscegenation laws clearly defined how much blood percentage qualified one as a “mulatto,” being half black and half white (in reference to the parents), or a “quadroon,” having 1/4<sup>th</sup> black blood, being the child of a mulatto and a white; and amongst other classifications there was even a name for a

person with 1/8<sup>th</sup> percent black blood. However, the treatment of race in George Orwell's "Burmese Days" illustrates that for many white Europeans, non-whiteness was all the same regardless of skin tone or ethnic origin. On the part of the colonized, however, skin tone and shade, hair texture and facial features. Cultures, even today and particularly amongst the descendants of formerly colonized and enslaved people, continue the habit, the mission really, to white wash the family. The finer the hair, the lighter the complexion, the better. Though the authors of "Eloge" call for a sort of racial indifference, the terms designated and prevalently used in their society to designate levels of blackness or origin show that the idea is hardly widely accepted within the culture. The glossary of "Solibo Magnificent" defines a number of the racially indicative terms used throughout the novel; "chabin" for example, refers to "a light-skinned mixed-race individual with blond or reddish hair..." "Syrians" refer to Arabs of apparently any Middle Eastern country living in Martinique and "coolie" refers to an individual of Indian ethnicity in Martinique (Chamoiseau pg. 187). This is noted to emphasize the fact that many of these terms are used in a purposefully oversimplifying manner in order to negate blackness, an act in itself that promotes anti-blackness (Afro-latinas).

### III.2.

#### Further Examination of Linguistic Politics in Colonial Settings

##### *Literary Movements and Social Discourse*

##### India and Trinidad (V.S. Naipaul, Homi Bhabha)

V.S. Naipaul and Homi Bhabha represent two very different sides of British colonialism. Both writers of Indian origin, Naipaul was born in Trinidad while Bhabha was born in India. While they both follow the trend of formerly colonized intellectuals seeking higher education at the “illustrious” universities in the land of the colonial power, their subsequent literary careers seem to have very different agendas as far as social commentary and postcolonial discourse. In “Location of Culture” Bhabha refers to the testimony of postcolonial criticism to “the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation,” their (postcolonial criticisms) intervention in “those ideological discourses of modernity that attempt to give a hegemonic ‘normality’ to the uneven development and the differential, often disadvantaged, histories of nations, races, communities, peoples,” (Bhabha pg. 171). He goes on to talk about the “historical necessity for elaborating empowering strategies of emancipation,” and the scholar, even the casual reader, can see how he very much differs from V.S. Naipaul. Debates on the actual racial and imperialist charge of Conrad’s work aside, Naipaul, shows a devout interest in the study of Conrad where Bhabha cites Frantz Fanon. The introduction to Naipaul’s “Literary Occasions” tells of the author’s first attempt to write about his homeland, Trinidad, and that he found it “very hard to write about.” (Naipaul 2004 pg. ix) In the essay “Conrad’s Darkness and Mine,” which makes up the larger collection of essays “Literary Occasions,” Naipaul recounts a fictional story of Conrad’s entitled “Karain,” comparing it to the first Conrad work he had been exposed to “The Lagoon.” He briefly describes the story’s plot, stating, “all the suggestions that were implicit in ‘The Lagoon’ are now spelled out,” (Naipaul 2003 pg. 164). Naipaul draws the conclusion about the importance of the white men who “have names; they talk, and act as a kind of chorus,” but does not spell out the implication of the plot: a native man ensures his own demise, is temporarily saved through the remedies of native practices, or witchcraft, but is ultimately restored as a “man” through the intervention of white

European explorers – these explorers whom he happily, eagerly even, goes out to meet in search of help as they arrive in their ships (Naipaul 2003 pg. 164). The story of “the white savior” is all too clear (and arguably refutes claims of Conrad’s negative feelings towards imperialism), yet Naipaul reveres the “truths” of this story as “difficult ones,” (Naipaul 2003 pg. 165).

The back cover of “the masterpiece that first establishes V.S. Naipaul among ‘the handful of living writers of whom the English language can be proud,’” “A House For Mr Biswas” is a very interesting, and telling, analysis of the work. Paul Theroux writes, “*A House for Mr Biswas can be seen as the struggle of a man not naturally rebellious, but in whom rebellion is inspired by the forces of ritual, myth, and custom..Though he has married into the family [the Tulsis], Mr Biswas remains an outsider and refuses to follow the family in their habitual devotions; he won’t be recruited, and he has a perfect terror of being enslaved. He is not submissive, and many times in the novel makes a solitary stand against the others. His victory is in liberating Anand [his son] and in dying in his own house...*” (Naipaul 1969 back cover).

Naipaul writes in the essay “Foreword to *A House for Mr. Biswas*” that this book is the closest to him of all his works. He admits, “it s the most personal, created out of what I saw and felt as a child,” and though he likens the novel’s protagonist to his very own father, Mr. Biswas can very much be likened to postcolonial writers such as Naipaul himself. The protagonist is born unlucky, a poor Trinidadian of Indian descent. He is the indirect cause of his father’s death and is very much unlike his brothers and sister. Just based on the analysis on the back cover of the novel, one can argue that Biswas’ status as an outsider and refusal to “follow the family in the habitual devotions” is representative of Naipaul’s refusal to engage in the postcolonial, “anticolonialist literary militantism” to which even the writers of “Eloge” and Bhabha admit a feeling of relief upon liberation from its chains. The “victory” Biswas feels in “liberating” his son is won through Anand’s acceptance and ultimate academic success in a prestigious occidental school. The house, the symbol of freedom and identity, is arguably the literary lane Naipaul is trying to carve for himself, though he is an “Asian colonial from a New World plantation island,” (Naipaul 2003 back cover).

**Africa and Africans of the Diaspora (Critiques of Chinua Achebe's use of English, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's choice to write in native tongue and African American Naturalism)**

Language, agency and speech are all themes common to postcolonial literature across the globe. Though many of the experiences of subjugation and oppression are results of very similar systems, the experiences of Africans vary greatly from those of African Americans. In terms of literature, however, there is the common thread of the English language – variations of Standard English or Standard King's English – and its use as both a tool of oppression and a technique in illustrating identity. African authors Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong'o are prominent authors who present Africa and Africans from an African perspective – a rather groundbreaking and radical move since most of the world previously received all information on the subject from European explorers, historians, writers and the like...many of whom had their own personal agendas and skewed perspectives. Writers of the African American Naturalism literary tradition also provide a first hand account of the life of an African American living in segregation and oppression in the 1930s and 1940s in the United States. The different lanes both show the violent clash of systems of oppression and the human innate will to survive and progress; as well as the psychological affects of oppressive forces acting on one's life and the resulting changings seen in communities and territories because of Colonial, Imperial and oppressive rule.

Another aspect of African and diasporic literature that sheds light on the common experiences of colonized people, no matter where they are on the globe, is the sense of homelessness. The writers of "Eloge" write about the mythical Africa to which they can never really lay claims, African American writers share their experiences as second class citizens in the native countries; and African writers talk about the change and inability to go back to a home, a culture, an Africa, once known before colonialism. In an interview with NPR, Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o, the leader of the call for Africans to write in their native tongues, tells of the disconnect he, and African intellectuals like him, feels after being educated in a occidental tradition and ultimately loosing his ability to communicate with his family and tribesmen. Similarly, Chester Himes, African American writer of the Naturalist tradition and author of "If He Hollers," illuminates the struggles of the black middle class in America, "segregation from low-income blacks, frustration at

not being able to assimilate into white society,” (Als). Wa Thiong’o writes in his memoir “In the House of the Interpreter” of his experience the first time he left school on holiday to return to his village. He writes, “...our school uniform of khaki shirts, shorts, and blue ties marks us as different from the general passengers, all black Africans, their clothes in different stages of wear and tear,” (Thinog’o 2012).

Chinua Achebe recounts his horror in the revelation that his childhood literary heroes, both the authors and characters, not only portrayed Africans as savages, but also that these stories were about him; furthermore, these stories, though fictitious, played a part in influencing the thoughts and policies towards Africans and other colonized communities. Ruth Franklin recalls where in an essay, Achebe writes, “I did not see myself as an African to begin with...The white man was good and reasonable and intelligent and courageous. The savages arrayed against him were sinister and stupid or, at the most, cunning. I hated their guts,” (Franklin). At that point Achebe was very much like the native man described in Naipaul’s recollection of Conrad’s “Karain.” However, his novel “Things Fall Apart,” a response to Conrad’s “Heart of Darkness,” is in stark contrast with the image of the “white savior.” If, however, Achebe’s work was critical of colonial presence in African countries, colonial critics were ever critical of his writing. ““How would novelist Achebe like to go back to the mindless times of his grandfather instead of holding the modern job in broadcasting that he has in Lagos?” the British journalist Honor Tracy asked,” (Franklin). Others criticized his use of the English language; one critic deduced the dialogue to “folk-patter,” but Achebe defended his use of the English language (Franklin). Achebe’s goal is not only to present the African experience on the world stage, but also to normalize the African experience to readers, writers, and children like himself and wa Thiong’o who grew up reading and revering Shakespeare.

Naturalism as a genre is still widely debated in terms of its definition and defining characteristics; however there is a consensus on two major characteristics of the naturalist novel. The first is that “the naturalist populates his novel primarily from the lower middle class or the lower class...” and that the setting is often “commonplace and unheroic” and basically an extension of the mundane of daily life (Campbell). Yet,

*“...the naturalist discovers in this world those qualities of man usually associated with the heroic or adventurous, such as acts of violence and passion which involve sexual adventure or bodily strength and which culminate in desperate moments and violent death”* (Campbell).

The second characteristic is in the theme that the characters are depicted “as though they are conditioned and controlled by environment, heredity, instinct or chance” (Campbell). Though Achebe is not of the naturalist tradition, and writers such as Himes and Wright write of the black experience under the domination of American race politics, the presence of violence, rage, and desperation are present in works, namely “Things Fall Apart” as they are in the African American Naturalist tradition.

### ***Linguistic Politics of Martinique: Valorization of French over Creole***

“When men cannot communicate their thoughts to each other, simply because of difference of language, all the similarity of their common human nature is of no avail to unite them in fellowship.” The quote is attributed to St. Augustine in his book “The City of God” and came into existence during the time of the Roman Empire. Justly so, the quote has a rather imperialistic viewpoint. Modern Europe, in part thanks to the CEFR, has taken a stance counter cultural, and more importantly, linguistic, purity through assimilation. However, these views are fairly recent. A brief history of the French language, as described in the book “The Story of French” authors Jean-Benoit Nadeau and Julie Barlow explain that Latin was the official language of France until the 16<sup>th</sup> century when King Francis I made French the official language of France. The French Academy was created in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and thus began the purification of the French language. Though the French language accommodated artistic, scholastic, scientific production for centuries, the common idea that the French language was a genius language rested with francophone people who self-identified as “French.” As for former colonies, Nadeau and Barlow credit postcolonial literary production as one of the falls of the prestige of the language. Authors of “Eloge” use a popular Haitian proverb, “Palé fransé pa vlé di lespri” or “speaking French is no proof of intelligence,” (Eloge pg. 107) In recent years France began to recognize the regional languages spoken on the territory, but the artists and creators of these linguistic communities are seeking an artistic arena

free of forced, almost inevitable, association to the colonial language, culture, and history.



### III.1.1.

#### Solibo and The Word

##### *Character Representation and Solibo as “Langage”*

“Sucette had left his flesh to fill up the ka, or did the ka bulge from his gut? A vibration melted the man with the barrel, and Sucette’s body roared loud as a kidskin.” (Chamoiseau pg. 14) This scene describes the Master’s drummer, Sucette, as the night that Solibo Magnificent dies on the savanna unfolds. Chamoiseau, however, seems himself unsure if the man is the drummer, or the drum. The two seem to merge as the Master, Solibo, lies dead on the savanna, and Sucette fills the silence with sound and energy. What happens next is most important to note. After hours, “exactly three hours, thirty-eight minutes, and twenty-two seconds, says the coroner,” Congo, the elder – ancient, even – of the group notices that something is wrong with Solibo...he pronounces him dead (Chamoiseau pg. 16). The author’s admission that he, himself, is not sure whether Sucette is himself the drum, the ka, the source of the sound that escapes him and fills the silence, is the open door to build the argument around character representation. A character analysis and development of character representation stems from this admission from the author, and the development of the argument starts with Congo. The oldest of the bunch, named “Bateau Français” or “French Boat,” he is nicknamed Congo, a representative of the “African field worker brought to Martinique after the end of slavery; also the descendants of such field workers,” (Chamoiseau pg. 187); and he is representative of Memory. In Maeve McCusker’s “Patrick Chamoiseau: Recovering Memory,” McCusker writes that “the absolute historical invisibility of the slave, coupled with a willed amnesia surrounding slavery, means that the trail of historical consciousness has been definitely and repeatedly eroded,” (McCusker pg. 8). It is thus arguable that Chamoiseau depicts Congo as Memory. There is a “willed amnesia” on the part of both the colonizer and the colonized (for reasons detailed earlier in the work) towards slavery. Most of the characters in this novel would identify as “black” – and at least some part descendant of African slaves – but have no admitted or “willed” connection to Africa.

Congo, as Memory, is not only an attachment to Africa, but also to an African heritage, to Slavery, and to a Martinican culture prior to globalization. He speaks a Creole that is no longer recognizable by even the Creolephone characters of the novel. "...his way of using the tongue is near to extinction around here," the author explains (Chamoiseau pg. 19); he has "his accent of original African," (Chamoiseau pg. 19) and "seemed to owe Death four centuries," (Chamoiseau pg. 16). What's more interesting is the author's observation that Congo seemed to be "shaken to see Death, his old creditor roam," (Chamoiseau pg. 18). It is another who claims that if Solibo has died, "it's been brewing for a long while, long before this..." (Chamoiseau pg. 19); however, it's the author's realization that unearths the possibility that it may be Memory (Congo) that Death is after, and succeeds in this mission only through the death of Speech or "Langage" (Solibo). Congo is the last of three characters to die in this seemingly sudden turn of events (which admittedly couldn't actually be so sudden at all), and Solibo is the first. Congo is the one who concludes that Solibo has been "snickt by the word..." and it is the three deaths considered together that allows such character analysis (Chamoiseau pg. 20). Congo (Memory) determines Solibo's cause of death; Congo subsequently dies because of Solibo's (Speech) death, and our second victim, Doudou-Ménar, dies in her tireless attempt to save Solibo. Doudou-Ménar, or the sweetheart troublemaker as the glossary of the novel would define her name, represents The People.

Doudou-Ménar does not just represent "People" but in fact "The People" and those people being specifically colonized people and particularly those on the island of Martinique. The islands of the French Caribbean are known for a culture steeped in what's best described as "the Fantastic" – from Haitian Voodoo, and Martinican Quimbois, to the frequent literary themes of Fate and Destiny, and even the well known expression, "si Dieu veut" – which gives way to the idea that these people are not only left to their own devices to battle against imperial power but also the forces of Fate and Life itself (the author even tells of Solibo's own mother who "when she tried to grab fate's fickle finger, it slipped away. She never took hold of her destiny," (Chamoiseau pg. 45)). Doudou-Ménar, on the other hand, is a fighter. She is a street vendor and fights against the odds of many vendors, many treats, and not enough coins, as described here, "...Doudou-Ménar very early on had faced severe competition from cake, docoune,

sherbet, and even kilibibi vendors...A whole day going up and down, elbowing through a crowd of spectators...By the end of the afternoon her basket was still half full and the blessed rosary in her purse protected fewer coins than hoped for,” (Chamoiseau pg. 24). It is this fighter who volunteers herself for the job to find someone to help Solibo, and like a citizen of any Republic, she believes she has found that help in the “Law.” Doudou-Ménar’s characterization as The People is solidified in this act. At the police station, she is not met with the help that she seeks but instead with condescending indifference and then hostility and violence. In the conference in London, James Baldwin verbalized a point known all too well by the colonized and descendants of the colonized people of Western imperialism: “When you try to stand up and look the world in the face like you had a right to be here...you have attacked the entire power structure of the Western world,” (Antihostile). Chamoiseau, privy to this fact, illustrates this exact phenomenon with Doudou-Ménar’s experience at the police station. He writes,

*So Justin Philibon suddenly swelled up: You came to bring the circus here, didn’t you? ..At that instant, in the police station which had seemed abandoned, doors opened, the hall filled with light and dark blue silhouettes, a jangling of keys and handcuffs. Silent slow men lined up behind the counter and staked out Justin Philibon, others discreetly obstructed the exit and marked Doudou-Ménar as if she were a soccer forward. The big woman noticed the maneuver, but instead of sanely freaking out, she seemed to take a strange pleasure in it. In this woman, street champion, any threat, any gurgle in the stomach, launched a desire to massacre. She was already regarding the policemen with eyes clotted with hatred.”* (Chamoiseau pg. 26)

Chamoiseau writes again of Doudou-Ménar’s sentiments towards the police describing it as, “the murderous intent of a resentment that knows no horizon,” (Chamoiseau pg. 27). Though she expects help from the police, Chamoiseau makes it clear that Doudou-Ménar, The People, has some kind of experience enough to hate and resent the police, recognition of their inability, unwillingness, and/or an inherent function, which does not permit them to be of any assistance to these people. If it is not clear Chamoiseau also uses the example of “three rastas whose charges were still being drawn up,” and the contrast drawn by the guardian of the peace clarifying that the scene was taking place “at a police station and not at the fishmarket,” to show that the true purpose of the law is neither in

nor of the people (Chamoiseau pg. 25, pg. 26). Doudou-Ménar eventually dies after her numerous, well-fought battles against the police. Following such characterization, Chamoiseau demonstrates that once expression or Speech (Solibo) has died, The People (Doudou-Ménar) dies, and then so does Memory (Congo).

It is then that the question of the black man's burden presents itself. In the same conference in London, Baldwin describes his ability to play the role of a good citizen – to get a job and make a living and perhaps participate in what would be considered “civic engagement”...however, he considers this would be a betrayal to himself and his people, as he considers the United States, his place of birth, “a criminal nation,” (Antihostile). It is then necessary to conduct an analysis of one other major character before the analysis of Sucette, the Master's drummer. Chief Sergeant Philémon Bouaffesse happens to be standing duty the night of the Solibo's death and is thus introduced to the case – the case he then deems a murder. It is this murder investigation that leads to the deaths of Doudou-Ménar and Congo, turns the admirers, friends and family of the Master into witnesses and suspects in his death, and ultimately prevents Solibo the respectful and well-deserved treatment of the traditional wake and other rites of passage customary to this culture and time. It is Chief Sergeant Bouaffesse who stands in direct opposition to Congo, Memory, and the elder who demands respect on Solibo's behalf. It is the Chief Sergeant, who Chamoiseau uses to drive home the point about character representation. The reader is told that Bouaffesse is not actually the family name of the Sergeant's mother or father. Chamoiseau writes,

*“The son of Stéphanise Laguinée and Pierre-Jacques Gros-Désors, he bore the surname of one called Bouaffesse, a good blackman, though unable to resist the stale syrup of quimbois that Stéphanise had mixed into his punch. Right then and there, quivering with a sudden paternal fiber, the good Bouaffesse went to recognize the latter's child at the registry office. Once the name was obtained, Stéphanise Laguinée advised the good man to go transpire under another sun...”* (Chamoiseau pg. 29).

The glossary tell us that his mother's name “Laguinée” refers to Guinea, the African country and “a maroon stronghold” in the Americas, and that “Bouaffesse” comes from the French “bois-fesse” or “stick-for-the-ass,” (Chamoiseau pg. 185). Contrasting James Baldwin, Congo and Solibo, Bouaffesse is representative of the “blackmen” who ally

themselves on the sides of “criminal nations” and in this case, the Republic of France. He literally sheds his connection to Africa – his mother representative of the mothers who forbade their children to speak Creole, favoring the French and the idea of some sort of social mobility – to attain, under any circumstances, any kind of attachment to the colonizer, though stifling to the potential of any authentic self expression, as the name “Bouaffesse” would suggest. Yet, Chamoiseau negates the idea that the Chief Sergeant has regrettably been disconnected from his true self, his true identity. His service in the French-Algerian war noted, Chamoiseau says of the Sergeant, “He was made to be a chief, but on the winner’s side. To lead a group of scabby maroons, for example, wouldn’t have interested him,” (Chamoiseau pg. 32). How then to characterize the Chief Sergeant? In a story about words, the use of words, and expression (particularly in a colonial setting) it is clear that the Chief Sergeant Bouaffesse is thus the “representative of Institution.”

The interaction between “the representative of Institution” and the other characters is important to note. The Chief Sergeant is interested in the case concerning Solibo (Speech) solely for motives of power and fame and he “fucks” Doudou-Ménar (The People), literally and figuratively, numerous times only to then deny her publicly using his position to shield any proximity to him she may try to demonstrate. His interaction with Congo (Memory) is of particular importance. He admits an initial awe and respect for the man. Partly because of Congo’s age and also because of the respect he manages to show towards the (in the eyes of the Institution) despised, good for nothing, lowly Solibo. The old man reveals his refusal, or inability, to speak French – he forces the Chief Sergeant to meet him on his own terms. He (true to Memory’s treatment in Caribbean and postcolonial literature alike) sticks to his version of events, unmoved by the Institution’s refusal to accept his “truth.” He demands respect for the fallen Solibo. The representative of Institution can only hold in so much of this dignified disregard towards the Institution and institutional power. Congo demands respect for Solibo one last time before the Chief Sergeant loses his cool and the standoff comes to blows,

*“..Respect, respect, you’re the one talking respect? I, I am a man of respect who respects your white hair, otherwise I would have already broken your head on the masonry! No, oh no, where is my mother Stéphanise to see this?! An old blackman who*

*comes from I don't know where and stands in front of me and talks respect! God, Lord! I respect everything: Jesus Christ, the Pope, our Mother Republic, Social Security, Air France, Cooperative Bank, I respect the Law, Philosophy, World Peace, NATO, de Gaulle, the Peugeot 604 and even the two cylinder, I respect Schoelcher, Felix Eboué, Joan of Arc, the coolies, I don't like the Haitians but dammit I respect them! You, you're a stray dog, where's your respect? ...in the name of the Law, I'm going to crush your onions...The old man suffered the assault without budging."* (Chamoiseau pg. 109)

Here the binary of Official vs. Unofficial comes to a head as the Chief Sergeant makes clear the things, people and institutions worthy of respect, and through such respect, preservation, even if indeed only through memorialization.

### ***Langage and Culture...and Identity***

"Our Creoleness was, therefore, born from this extraordinary 'migan', wrongfully and hastily reduced to its mere linguistic aspects, or to one single element of its composition." (Eloge pg. 88) Here the writers of "Eloge" argue that to understand their cultural reality and frame of reference is not to understand the birth of the Creole language. Delphine Perret, in her work "La Créolité: Espace de creation," breaks down the history of the use of the word Creole. One learns that in its original use, it didn't refer to language at all. Perhaps what the authors are trying to argue here is that the cultural reality of the French Antilles is much more complex than the statement, "the Creole language was born out of the need of ethnically and linguistically different communities to communicate with one another." Yet the writers go on to say that a return to a tradition of orality restores "this cultural continuity (that we associate with restored historical continuity) without which it is difficult for collective identity to take shape," (Eloge pg. 97). One finds then that there is a deep connection between the cultural reality that is "Créolité" and the Creole language. This is because, as the authors write, "Creole orality, even repressed in its aesthetic expression, contains a whole system of countervalues, a counterculture; it witnesses ordinary genius applied to resistance, devoted to survival," (Eloge pg. 95). In the French Caribbean the creolephone population, a formerly disenfranchised population, identifies with the need, the every day task, to survive. Starting over, replanting, re-growing does not mean defeat. Many communities of

colonized and enslaved peoples, and their descendants, relate to this idea. Expressing this reality, thus, is not the same as communicating within it. It returns to the question of transmission vs. transportation in communication and above all, literature and storytelling. A review of the novels examined in this work should reveal that often, when telling a story, the history or memory of an event, the speech used serves as window into how and where the interlocutor (the writer or storyteller) self-identifies within the event.

### *Translation and The Word*

#### **Agency in Postcolonial/literary protest works**

There's a debate going on right now in the United States about whether or not there is a need for Black History Month. There are some who, in the name of integration, call for the end of channels such as Black Entertainment Television. The argument goes that White Americans don't have "White Entertainment Television" and thus the concept of a TV station centered on Black culture is racist. What these critics fail to take into consideration is that White culture in America is mainstream culture; the same is the case in France and Great Britain. Any given station at any time reflects White culture in their programming, including commercials. #OscarsSoWhite was a hashtag popularized on social network Twitter to bring awareness to the fact that people of color are underrepresented in the media in almost 100% of the cases. In Popular Culture, from film, to TV, music and literature, representation and inclusive storytelling are hot topics among "colonized intellectuals." In 2016 where one can see the affects of globalization all around, the death of culture – the consequent death of a people – is directly related to the way that culture is represented in the arts and entertainment. Homi Bhabha writes of "a history of discrimination and misrepresentation" which he claims is "common among, say, women, blacks, homosexuals, and Third World migrants," (Bhabha pg. 176).

Postcolonial writers, including writers of the Caribbean and African American literary traditions, have strove to carve out a place for themselves within the literary market a part from chapters within English, British and French literature courses. For Antillean writers of la Créolité tradition, writing in Creole not only allows "a more precise expression..." but also lifts the burden that comes with one-sided storytelling. In 1970 Chester Himes, renowned African American Naturalist writer said, "I think the only

function of the black writer in America now is just to produce works of literature about whatever he wants to write about...At least the world will be more informed about the Black Americans' subconscious." (Als). The point that is made is that the more works we have from writers who descend from the despised side of colonialization, the less concerned these writers have to be with the messages they produce. People of color can be depicted as heroes and villains, doctors and junkies, teachers and single mothers, "traditional" families and well-to-do neighbors. All this, and they are not tasked with the challenge of accurately portraying "the experience" of "insert subjugated group" in "insert Western power-country."

It is for this reason that translators who translate postcolonial works that must be translated in order to reach broader linguistic audiences must take certain precautions. Ngugi wa Thiong'o writes in his native tongue and translates his works himself into English. Raphael Confiant has taken the time to translate some of his works produced in Creole into French himself as well. It is safe to assume that translators meet with authors before producing any work of translation; yet, it might still be received better on the part of the reader when there is a translation with which the reader does not agree with, knowing that the translation came from, or had been approved, by the author his- or herself. Translation requires not just knowledge of language but also knowledge of culture, of social and political history. In the case of *Solibo Magnificent*, translated by Rose-Myriam Réjouis and Val Vinokurov, there is arguably a lapse of such knowledge. Though the novel should receive an overall good review concerning its translation, there is one instance in particular that this work – given the mission of this work – must address. In a translator's note at the bottom of the page, the reader is given the explanation of a translation that will be repeated numerous times throughout the work. The note reads,

*"Chamoiseau uses the French word nègre (Negro) in the Creole sense of 'man,' as in nèg blanc, which means "white man." This is why we invent "blackman" to translate to a word which is specific to the Creole lexicon, albeit not unrelated to the genealogy of '(my) nigger' as used in contemporary African American speech."* (Chamoiseau pg. 16; my emphasis)



The treatment of the issues with this translation and explanation truly deserve a thesis paper of their own; however, this being a paper on language and culture, centered on a novel about language, speech, expression and culture, it is important to at least begin to uncover the perpetuation of racist and imperial ideology buried within the statement.

The first issue at hand is the fact that there is no consensus on the use or meaning of the word “nigger.” When used publicly and in debates, such as in a 2015 CNN interview, the word becomes “N-word” and as the interview shows, there is no concrete or collective understanding “as used in contemporary African American speech.” The 2012 hit song “Niggas in Paris” by rappers Jay Z and Kanye West depicts the word spelled with an –a at the end, in place of the –er ending that is referenced in the translator’s note. In its contemporary use in African American speech it is predominantly found with the –a ending. This term, arguably a term of endearment, is never confused with “nigger,” ending in –er as it is used as a racially charged insult. In the CNN interview, Trinidad James is questioned on his use of the word. He argues that his use of the phrase “my nigga” is interchangeable with “my friend” – here it is clear that in some uses by African Americans the word has no racial identification. Though many identify the word with Slavery in the Americas, its use in the novel “Burmese Days” demonstrates that the word was used in imperial settings to negatively refer to any and all people of darker skin tones and non-European ethnicity, not exclusively Africans or the descendants of Africans. The problem with the explanation in the translator’s note is exactly the root of the debate on CNN. In terms of representation, and who can use the term, journalist Marc Lamont Hill clarifies that another black man, Trinidad James specifically, “has to deal with the same born into the same oppressive situations, he’s born into a world where anti-black racism prevails, he lives in a world where police might still shoot him on the street, no matter how much money he has; we share a collective condition known as nigga...” (Ferguson). It is this collective condition that gives these men the authority to speak on the topic, though it becomes increasingly clear that there is no general consensus on the use or meaning of the word. Though nigger is clearly not exclusive to African Americans in its derogatory use, it is the translator who makes the connection to the African American speech. The translators, neither of whom are African American – referring to black descendants of Africans in America who can

only trace their lineage back to the African Slave Trade in the Americas – are not only wrong in their explanation, but also they prove the point about representation in literature, and why it is so important for the descendants of formerly colonized and enslaved peoples to write their own narratives and illuminate their identities on their world stage.

The second issue with the explanation also stems from representation, identity and terminology. The “invention” of the word “blackman” to translate Chamoiseau’s use of the term *négre* is, arguably, another technique of exoticism on the part people of color because of colonial and imperial systems of oppression, and particularly language. The translator admits that the use of the term “*nèg blanc*” means “white man.” It is also explained that the word used in the original text is the *French* term “*nègre*” which translates to the English “negro.” Why then the need to create the word “blackman”? Not only does “negro” already mean “black man” – and the explanation of “white man” is not collated to make one word – but also its factual that the use of “negro” in the English (even if only in the American English lexicon) was still relevant when the work was published as well as in the setting of the novel. The translation supports the idea that the standard definition of man is naturally a white man, and that a black man needs a sort of neologism to be represented in literature and in life. The use of a creolized French, and neologisms in general, in Antillean and postcolonial texts arises from a need on the author’s behalf to describe a phenomenon that only exists in their unique cultural reality. The translator explains that it is for this reason exactly that “blackman” is created in the translation, but a man black is not a cultural phenomenon unique to Martinique and the French Antilles.

### **The Footnote**

In the field of literary translation, it is often said that the footnote is the embarrassment on the part of the translator. It’s assumed that a good translator will be able to use the techniques of translation to transmit the ideas of the original text. One of these techniques is called “the equivalent” and involves the translator finding an expression equivalent to that used in the original text. An example used for translating between English and French would be the English expression “raining cats and dogs.”

Anglophone speakers are aware that there is no way it can literally rain cats or dogs, but the Anglophone imagination allows such expression to convey the message that the rainfall is extremely heavy. In French such is not the case. Francophone speakers take this expression as meaningless, however, there is an equivalent in the French language: *il pleut des cordes*. This technique is employed because the languages have two different ways of expressing the same reality. What happens then when a cultural, and thus linguistic, reality is unique to a specific language community? In *Solibo Magnificent*, and in other postcolonial texts since the valorization of local language use in literary productions, the footnote has indeed been indispensable. The translators of *Solibo Magnificent*, for example, have many footnotes throughout the text. This arises for a few reasons.

The section above is a critique of one of the uses of a footnote in the text – an explanation of a translation given by the translator. Though this paper disagrees with the translators' explanation, the use of the footnote in a text of this nature is supported. There are other examples in the text where the author himself offered his own translation of Creole into French; and times when the translators offer definitions of expressions, although these expressions are translated into English. This work refers to the imagination of a language, which is visible in the use of expressions such as, "...the laughter of a matadora being kneaded and plowed..." which the reader is told to mean "doing it standing up" in a footnote on the same page (Chamoiseau pg. 15) However, in an article entitled "La traduction en milieu diglossique" by Raphaël Confiant, the author quotes French translationist Henri Meschonnic to shed more light on what exactly is the "imagination" of a language. In fact he writes that Meschonnic "declare qu'il faut traduire 'la langue-culture'" (Confiant pg. 2). Confiant goes on to explain that, *"culture ne signifie pas simplement la connaissance des moeurs de l'aristocratie anglaise, de la musique noire americaine...ou de tel or tel aspect de la vie et de l'histoire des populations Anglophones, hispanophones, germanophones ou autres. 'Culture' signifie ici la prise en compte, dans l'acte de traduction des paramètres, certes linguistiques et literaires, mais aussi philosophiques, anthropologiques, psychologiques, sociologiques et historiques..."* (Chamoiseau pg. 2, pg. 3)

This approach takes into account not just the socio-cultural factors of language but also how these factors have come about and what they mean in the present linguistic community. This approach means a translator would be aware that in the contemporary use of the “N-word,” African Americans differentiate between the term “nigga” and “nigger”. Confiant goes on to elaborate on the topic of translation within a linguistic community where there is a diglossia present. Naturally he presents the example of Creole and French, noting not only that the creole language is “une langue jeune, encore massivement ancrée dans l’oralité,” but also that it is “impossible, en effet, de chercher des équivalents entre une langue comme le creole qui est en voie de se constituer en langue littéraire depuis une cinquantaine d’années et une langue comme le français...” (Confiant pg. 3) For this reason it may be so that footnotes will be an appropriate, if not the most appropriate, technique in translating works originally produced in Creole and other local, previously oppressed, languages.

### **The Word and La Créolité**

The declarations within “Eloge de la Créolité” are likened to testimony by the authors because they stem from experience rather than theory. This experience places the authors in a position to offer these words, these declarations, “to any person of ideas who conceives our space...in any discipline whatsoever, who is in the painful quest for a more fertile thought, for a more precise expression, for a truer art,” (Eloge pg. 75) The authors declare themselves sons of Césaire, but charge him with furthering their (the Creole people of the French Antilles, the colonized intellectuals) sense of alienation and self-exoticism. Negritude placed a (necessary) emphasis on African roots and African origin, African identity, but “ship wrecked in colonial history,” the writers of “Eloge” never saw the shores of Africa from the “archipelago and its foothills of firm land, the continental immensities.” La Créolité was born out of a need to go deeper into self-expression and identity, to have a firmer understanding of self-knowledge. Each literary movement completed a task of unearthing a layer of self, buried beneath an oppressive and alienating culture of exterior vision. Yet, each literary movement required a further examination because they, in part, fell short freeing postcolonial Caribbean writers – in particular, Martinican writers – cultural, ethnic, historical, memorial, and linguistic

obligation. The writers of “Eloge” explain that their identity is found in an open culture, neither fixed nor exclusive. In the same way that Creole literature must accomplish many tasks at once, self-develop in production and reflect an artistic knowledge of literary creation while remaining objective to its own aesthetic integrity, *La Créolité* offers thinkers and creators a space to observe and participate. The interior vision describe within “Eloge” frees these creatives from the guilt of any contradiction.

*Solibo Magnifique* is Patrick Chamoiseau’s illustration of this. He finds the space where French doesn’t negate Creole, and preservation and renewal have found a middle ground. Delphine Perret includes in her work “*La Créolité*” an interview between she and Patrick Chamoiseau in which he explains the idea of liberation attached to the carnival in Martinique and its significance in *Solibo Magnifique*. In one sense, the Master is free to live as an oxymoron; in another the author is free to celebrate the complex reality that is demonstrated in the linguistic politics of Martinique. Humanity is found in this liberation. Some criticize Chamoiseau’s use of neologisms and his use of a creolized French. However, as the author’s of “Eloge” explain that Creole is an ever-changing language, and their creole identity and production will be “the free, responsible, and creative use of languages,” one begins to understand the connection between *The Word* and *La Créolité*. The task of *The Word*, much like the task of *La Créolité*, is not to dwell in History or Memory in order to tell the tales of where we have been and how we have gotten here. The job at hand is to call upon those experiences, both historical and memorial, in the expression of Now. Humanity is found in Now. Existence is elated in the total unabashed acceptance of Now.

## IV. Results

The Word is the verbal transmission of humanity. The writers of “Eloge” seek to bridge the gap created between their culture of orality and the need to present their existence on a global stage; they explain, “hence the need to reinforce its oral density with the contemporary power of writing,” (Eloge pg. ). They tell of the realization “that ancestors are born everyday and are not fixed in an immemorial past; that tradition takes shape everyday, and that culture is also the link we ought to keep alive between the past and the present,” (Eloge pg. 97). Literature is often about transportation – even in the aesthetic exploration of “memory” and “identity” but especially in documentation and the “colossal task” of “the inventory of reality” as Frantz Fanon would put it. The idea, the mission, of most literary work is to bring the reader to a place, thus the conclusion that its mission is transportation. The Word, the inherent and genuine – the internal – understanding of culture, tradition, and existence, brings something to you – and has for task, transmission. Chamoiseau himself explains that The Word “was not about understanding what was said, but about being open to it, letting it carry you away...” (Chamoiseau pg. 13). The writers of “Eloge” declare themselves free of “anticolonialist literary militantism,” (Eloge pg. 100). In the established humanity of Creole culture they are free to exist and transmit with a duty free ability see and express the world in its complexity and their own. In the same way, “The Word” frees Achebe from the perverted and definitely designated requirement to fit into English literature because of his use of the English language; and all postcolonial writers who hail from the despised side of the colored and formerly savage – writers such as Chester Himes and V.S. Naipaul, alike – from the burden of representing the ideals, the ideas, the struggles and the values of an entire race. “The Word” is the expression, the evocation of the past, evidence of the present and the declaration of a future.

The Word is the ability to “emphasize the importance of creative heterogeneity of the enunciatory ‘present’ that liberates the discourse of emancipation from binary closures,” (Bhabha pg. 185). Much as The Word frees, it frees Solibo of his burden of the storyteller with no audience. The Word celebrates, commemorates, and lives with or

without an audience because The Word is the un-refuted proof of existence and survival. And what this means to my experiences and to me...I, too, am free. I was troubled by the idea of the creolisation of the world. I worried for the dark child, the black race...the African that I celebrate in myself. In understanding how language, and lagage, are able to be remade and reshaped and adapt to new environments as the vessel, the human, needs new forms of expressions for these environments, I am reassured. I see Africa in the neighborhoods of New Orleans, Louisiana as I see Africa in Terresaine-Ville. Furthermore I see that the celebration of blackness does not have to be in given in spite of anti-African campaigns. A Word for humanity's sake is the essence of the power in The Word. We live. We create. We survive and we grow. We accept who and what and how we are right now and celebrate and express the reality of Now in its complexity that is undeniable and the beauty that has emerged anyway. The creolisation of the world does not have to mean the loss of culture; neither does the preservation of culture have to mean stagnation. For taken from the water, the conch but echoes the sea...but then again, what could bear the burden of containing the whole sea?

*“One writes but words, not the word, you should have spoken. To write is to take the conch out of the sea to shout: here's the conch! The word replies: where's the sea? But that's not the most important thing.”* (Chamoiseau pg. 28)

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