

Symposium: Creolizing the Canon: Philosophy and Decolonial Democratization?

How does creolization fare as a social-scientific concept? While Jane Gordon seeks to underscore the potential such a concept might have in the social sciences and philosophy, her discussants Gopal Guru, Kipton E. Jensen, Mickaella Perina, and Sundar Sarukkai draw attention to descriptive and normative issues that need to be addressed before arguments formulating and enacting creolization processes can be brought into domains of life from which they have been historically excluded.

Key words: creolizing; canonization; Fanon; epistemic decolonization; hybridities; comparative philosophy; Black radical tradition; Glissant

Creolizing the Canon

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“What makes the world, Woolf reminds, is not the mere fact of it but the waves of relations into which it plunges you.”
—Jesse Kindig¹

“The future will come, imperfect but alive. But what will be left in the sand when this tide has ebbed?”
—Jesse Kindig²

Creolization emerged as a concept to describe forms of mixture—in the genetic material of people, foods, languages, landscapes—in the colonies, primarily of the Americas but also beyond them. In ways that were often simply adaptive, how people reproduced, grew and prepared food, spoke to one another, and interacted with the more-than-human world combined in ways that were radically transformative. This was noteworthy because the particular ingredients in relations of influence were unprecedented—these were not people who had interacted at all previously, let alone been engaged in the protracted wars of invasion and resistance, kidnapping, enslavement, and revolt that birthed the Euromodern world. In addition, efforts to rationalize the rightfulness of a world dominated by the violent interests of Christian, white, and European narratives of civilization, order, political legitimacy, and full-fledged reason suggested unilateral relations of origin and influence that were contradicted by the creolized facts on the ground.

At one level, then, creolization, as a social-scientific concept, offered a lens to perceive a counter- and more truthful narrative of what actually emerged out of the violently dispossessing worlds of plantation settler colonies. Such a lens was indispensable because rationalizing ideologies did not only shape laws, policies, and social norms, but also how people conducted inquiry and research, their very ability to perceive the world around them with accuracy.

Central to what such analysis of creolized forms of life revealed were the contradictions of two theses about African-descended people: First, that the historic and ongoing trauma of the Middle Passage and racialized enslavement stripped African people of any African ways of knowing and being, producing human personifications of the concept of bare life—or, in old terms, that enslaved Africans became human beings without culture. In addition to the obvious point that such a formulation is an impossible oxymoron, the profoundly African nature of Caribbean life, until the more recent hegemony of US culture, belies the governing assumptions. Second was a similarly distorted view that African and African-descended people remained encased in African “retentions,” impermeable to the changed conditions in which they lived. Part of what creolization was helpful in offering was a human way of understanding the life-worlds that were forged in the inhuman situation of racialized plantation slavery.

At the same time, as Paget Henry (2000) importantly observed, as did Robert Chaudenson with Salikoko S. Mufwene (2001) with special focus on the linguistic domain, the extent of creolizing was uneven in different aspects of life. It was far more evident in music and food and dance than it was in formal intellectual and political spheres. In these sites of continued authority, power, and Reason, the influence of European and Euro-descended people remained exclusive and monopolizing. These patterns were mirrored in the academy, even in a Caribbean that had been formally independent for some four decades. Students of ethnomusicology, dance, and literature were far more likely to encounter works of the fuller range of Caribbean people than any who studied philosophy or political theory.

The question guiding the project of creolizing political theory and the idea of the *Creolizing the Canon* book series was to ask whether we could formulate and enact arguments that would bring creolizing processes into domains of life that had been deliberately insulated from them. There were both resources for and challenges to doing so.

In a way that was strikingly different from the political obsession with original, sanitized foundings in the United States (Bernal 2017), in the independence movements of the Anglo- and Francophone Caribbean, there was a deliberate celebration of creolization as naming what was distinctively non-European and non-Euro-Caribbean. Rather than a territory that mapped clearly onto a people and language with supposedly deep, singular, homogenous national roots, Caribbean national identity celebrated a multination of people who *became* unified and local. Such discourse emphasized the *process of emergence*, even if in stylized and highly imperfect form, over an original unsullied core that had to be defended from dilution or bastardization.

Such formulations were distinctive and rightfully celebrated by many critical theorists and poststructuralists trying to envision identities and forms of collectivity and institution-building that, in being more porous and open, could also be more democratic, egalitarian, and living. In their celebration of the antithesis of sedimentation, they offered models, ideals, and perhaps some instantiations of political forms that did not understand what was prized through the model of reification. They appeared to offer a *political* account of membership, identity, and belonging. If born of tragedies and brutality that none would have chosen, they seemed also to have instantiated ways of being sought by challengers of the existential bankruptcy of Euromodernity.

Such formulations, both as statements of ideals and accounts of empirical reality, had their limitations. They were, as is true of all concepts, interpreted and refracted through local political vocabularies and meaningful associations. In island political cultures birthed with racialized plantation slavery, they remained dominated by color hierarchies. In such a context, creolization appeared only to reinforce the greater value of mixture evident in lighter skin or those mixed with non-Africans. Similarly, at the center of creolizing imagery was emphasis on the rural over the urban, when the latter

arguably evidenced greater continuation of the process of creolization than purer versions of some of its outcomes. Creolization also seemed, in centering processes of mixture, to cherish meeting and reconciliation, including, presumably, with one's historical and continued oppressors. As an ethic, this seemed to undercut the necessary ability to draw clear political fault-lines, those essential for clarifying who could (and would not) function as emancipatory allies. Finally, as a discourse that is part stylized history and part national ideal, actual commitments to an ever-emergent polity appeared temporally limited: writers suggested that in its emphasis on what had emerged as indigenous, peoples who had inhabited the islands were framed as entirely gone, with little attention to or interest in the actual history of invasion and resistance.³ Similarly, it was said that processes of creolization were not as amenable to or agile with newer populations of exploited laborers, whether Indian or Chinese. Rather than actually remaining open, the focus instead reflected the foundational racial divides that had set the grammar of racial obsessions centuries before.

As debates over how processes of creolization actually unfolded and were mobilized as political currency in the Caribbean, we should be aware of these criticisms, but mainly inasmuch as they can inform our use of creolization as a deliberately crafted undertaking in the more controlled domain of intellectual production. For instance, creolization need not involve mixture on the model of racial mixture or reconciliation with the conventionally powerful. Indeed, the kind of ongoing development of political ideas and legitimacy it requires is anathema to most members of such camps, who prefer the hijacking of the process of creolization by a small set of its elite products. This is precisely what transpired in cases where elite, mixed-race people who were fruits of particular moments of creolizing processes claimed special, exclusive authority as creole or creolized (rather than remaining active parts of a continued process of creolizing).

1 *Creolizing the Canon: The Book Series*

Created as a partnership between the leadership of the Caribbean Philosophical Association and Sarah Campbell of the then newly created, London-based Rowman and Littlefield International, the *Creolizing the Canon* book series articulated the intellectual argument and created a clearly designated publishing forum for scholars in the humanities and social sciences who sought to revisit the writings of familiar figures, concepts, or formations through the lens of creolization; to make the case for the study, as canonical, of figures who had not yet been regarded as such; and to enact the generating of scholarship undertaken in a creolizing manner.

Thus far, the *Creolizing the Canon* book series has produced volumes in the first mode focused on Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Gordon and Roberts 2015) and G.W.F. Hegel (Monahan 2017), with manuscripts featuring Jean-Paul Sartre and Hannah Arendt in various stages of preparation. We have also commissioned *Creolizing the Greeks* and *Creolizing America*. We envisioned John Drabinski and Marisa Parham's *Theorizing Glissant* (2015), *Journeys in Caribbean Thought: The Paget Henry Reader* (2016), *The Philosophical Treatise of William H. Ferris* (2016), and the manuscript *Creolizing Ali Shariati* as exemplifications of the second mode, with the forthcoming *Creolizing Rosa Luxemburg* as straddling these first two sets of books. Finally, we understood Nigel C. Gibson and Roberto Beneduce's *Frantz Fanon, Psychiatry and Politics* (2017), the English translation of Nathalie Etoke's *Melancholia Africana* (2019), and the English-language publication of *Afrocubanas* (2020), edited by Devyn Spence Benson, as examples of the third.⁴

Put simply, the first stream of publications revisits figures who—and soon, conceptualizations, which—in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries would regularly appear in courses or on

required reading lists introducing students and lay readers to the history of (western) philosophy or political thought. Our aim was to locate specific ideas or modes of thinking in each that had been considered particularly generative by thinkers beyond Europe or the Euro-Americas and to explore the creative and innovative ways that these ideas had been put to use and often thereby transformed. Our claim was that the resulting engagements were not only worthy of study in their own right as often historic, creolized political ideas, but that they should be appreciated as relevant to how the figure and their intellectual and political legacies are understood. Specifically, the Global Southern critical engagement of Rousseau or Hegel or Luxemburg often revealed both the potential and the limitations of their initial formulations, how both reflected the political situatedness from which the original thinker wrote, and how it was through reconsideration in a different context that the ideas might be made of more contemporary relevance. Put differently, the original figure's arguments are placed into a different stream of life, positioned in political relations that have existed historically but that have not yet been treated with sufficient intellectual attention. In such deliberate recontextualization, we were seeking to illuminate political questions and concepts that were more thoroughly relational and therefore also more potentially global in their reach.

The second stream of books, which seeks to include new figures as canonical, suggests an affirmation of a conception of the idea of canon but in a plural mode. Rather than canon formation or reification as a practice of narrowing and exclusion, of determining who is not sufficiently authoritative or relevant, this second line of publishing reflects the position that for every intellectual or political endeavor, there are valuable existing resources that can function as indispensable guides. In this sense, for each such project, there is a relevant set of figures and texts and concepts, or *their canon*. For work in Caribbean thought, especially Caribbean literature, Édouard Glissant is clearly already such a figure. However, the volume's contributors successfully make the case that a broader range of scholars might benefit substantially from thinking with his writings. In studying Afro-Caribbean philosophy as a historical formation, scholarly subject, and intellectual movement, one would waste considerable time if they did not orient themselves through the foundational conceptual frameworks of Paget Henry. Likewise, we hope that in attempts to think the global in the twenty-first century, more non-Iranian and non-Persian-reading readers will engage with the intellectual contributions of Ali Shariati.

Similarly, while Rosa Luxemburg maintains canonical status among most Marxists and her reformulation of primitive accumulation has been taken up and extended widely, the lack of translations of most of her corpus until relatively recently, her tireless record as a proto-revolutionary Marxist humanist, and her existence as a physically disabled Eastern European Jewish woman have meant that she has not received the full attention she deserves. Drucilla Cornell and I, together with the other twenty-two contributors to *Creolizing Rosa Luxemburg*, therefore make the case for her rightful place as canonical for contemporary theorists of radical social democracy, the relationship of nationalism and internationalism, the nature of revolutionary subjectivity, the contemporary usefulness of the mass strike, the understanding of primitive accumulation and dispossession, racial capitalism, incarceration as a tool of political violence and torture, and the formulating of a genuinely open dialectic of liberation. If readers continue to keep the ideas of Luxemburg alive through their critical engagement, our work will have succeeded in its own terms. Our suggestion is that her worthiness as canonical is estimated in large part by her continued value to the thinkers and projects she would have prized.

Finally, much of my understanding of creolizing thinking is informed by how Frantz Fanon undertook his work. Analysis of his conception of and approach to his psychiatric and political projects, drawing on newly translated writings, is the focus of Gibson and Beneduce's text. It is also

exemplified in Etoke's rich literary-philosophical exploration of melancholia and overcoming in the Black diasporic world, and in the collective endeavor that produced *Afrocubanas*, a text with already canonical status among activists and scholars of Cuba and the revolutionary Caribbean.⁵

2 Creolizing Political Theory

My main contribution was to suggest what it meant to use creolizing as a way of thinking about how we study the history of and how we undertake the contemporary writing of political theory. As such, I will explain how I conceive of this endeavor in the hope of fleshing out what I introduced through the earlier discussion of the *Creolizing the Canon* book series.

First, creolizing political theory and specifically the canon of political theory involves a particular orientation toward historical work. Although some philosophers and political theorists draw on the work of intellectual historians, many devote more attention to the world of the text than to the world in which it was authored. This can mean that scholars rely on very general and often highly inaccurate renderings of the relevant political geographies. This can lead to imposing *ex post facto* or *just plain wrong* conceptions of proximity and distance, actual and imagined discreteness, particularly when investigating sources of inspiration, relations of indebtedness, and other forms of influence. When creolizing political theory, we try to assure that we are not naturalizing or simplifying contested geopolitical relations that were only later (and even then incompletely) solidified.

Excellent examples of works that exemplify this spirit are Susan Buck-Morss's *Hegel and Haiti* (2009; 2000), Peter K.J. Park's *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy* (2014), and Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih's *The Creolization of Theory* (2011). Lionnet and Shih rightly insist that many of the events and problems that organized and fundamentally informed the work of historic thinkers were not emphasized or sufficiently stated as generative. These included the Algerian Revolution for writers like Jean-Paul Sartre or US Black uprisings of the 1960s and 1970s for theorists like Michel Foucault. Rooted in greater attention to the past and present of creolization, such authors unearth questions that, if answered, would render their historicism more rigorous, even on its own terms. Ironically, through such an orientation, one can have a fuller encounter with the project and world of the given work. As the lens of creolization did in the settler colonial plantation societies of the Caribbean, what is revealed is that the nature of contribution and influence is far from unilateral.

Second, creolizing political theory involves conceptualizing the task of theorizing as creating conversations among thinkers and ideas in ways that break with existing scholarly norms. Conventional ways of mapping intellectual traditions or networks and evidence of influence would discourage such couplings that might well be seen as confounding at least one conception of the dictates of rigorous scholarship. In some cases, the relevant conversations did occur but academic divisions of labor and their resulting expectations left readers ill-equipped to reconstruct them. In other instances, the conversations did not take place because the worlds of the potential interlocutors were perceived as distant on the basis of linguistic, national, religious, or racial differences. The point is neither to minimize such distinctions nor to flatten them as objects of analysis. At the same time, creolizing asks what putting them together reveals about the distinct expressions and facets of international processes. How can our political concepts be sharpened by this fuller gauge of the relations structuring the globe? How can they inform constructive responses?

Still, it would be fair to ask whether or the extent to which this approach is rewarding. If such projects enrich discussions of Rousseau and Hegel, but mainly through drawing on the more comprehensive insights of Global Southern figures, are we just improving the quality of our

understandings of the existent Euromodern canon? If Global Southern writers tend already to reflect more thoroughly creolized concerns, do creolizing methods offer anything useful for illuminating their contributions? If not, are they of any value to projects of epistemic decolonization?

If creolizing as a method only assisted in producing readings of canonical figures that were better *because they were more accurate*, that would not necessarily translate into a contribution to epistemic decolonization. It would depend on the nature of the added accuracy. For instance, if what was revealed was the much greater reliance of European figures not only on the historic actions of non-Europeans, but also on their interpretations of the meanings of such actions, that would contribute to a very different understanding of the relations of indebtedness of Europe to the rest of the globe in cultivating what is typically framed as its sui generis intellectual tradition. In so doing, it would challenge the long held and often repeated view that much of the globe contributed the labor of their bodies while Europeans monopolized the historic work of the mind. Illuminated through one canonical European figure, such as Rousseau, it would beg questions about the intellectual debts and influences of his many contemporaries, predecessors, and heirs, suggesting very different political theoretical genealogies than those currently drawn.⁶

As already mentioned, the *Creolizing the Canon* book series did revisit two European figures. We chose them because we sought to make the creative use of their ideas in the Global South part of the intellectual record and because doing so indicated *how* their ideas remain of continued and enriched relevance. Still, as already indicated, there are canons beyond those of Euromodern philosophy. Within the United States alone, it is remarkable how the global political terrain and the preoccupations of the shifting populations teaching political theory alter the character and framing of these lists of texts and figures. One example is the increasing canonization of Frantz Fanon within the academy. The fact that he has been canonical in other circles since the 1960s is a reminder that canons should be considered multiple. At the same time, as Inés Valdez (forthcoming) suggests, there are different forms of canonization. Some versions of the process encourage the very kinds of inaccuracies that creolizing hopes to counteract.

But is there any gain in a creolizing method when used to read and engage subaltern thinkers whose work is often already highly creolized? A first emphatic “yes” comes in the form of the aim in creolizing theory to develop a language for seeing distinct modes of reasoning and argumentation as valuable in their own right. In other words, much scholarly literature on the more heavily creolized writing of Global Southern thinkers winces when it follows norms distinct from theirs, assuming that what is different must be a weakness. Second, as Anuja Bose has argued, the potential of any political concept is not necessarily inherent in it when first conceived. Just as it is when “subaltern political actors forge impure and unacceptable versions of political concepts that their potential emerges anew,” creolized political concepts “have world-transforming qualities that were never present in their original unalloyed form” (forthcoming). Finally, as Lewis R. Gordon (2015) has consistently shown, there is a tendency of applying highly asymmetrical assessments to the political writings of Global Southern thinkers. While European and Euro-American writers can explicitly (and inexplicitly) borrow from the work of subaltern and non-subaltern others while still being recognized as making distinctive contributions in their own right, there has been a long tendency of indexing—especially Africana writers—through the white figures to whom they are supposedly only indebted. Part of the contribution of the creolizing method to Global Southern thought is to affirm that all productive thinkers—regardless of their geopolitical location—draw from the contributions of others and that such engagements do not cancel out their capacity also to produce original, historic ideas. For many Africana scholars this is an obvious point. However, much of the secondary literature on Global

Southern political thinkers in the second half of the twentieth century framed even remarkably original anti-colonial revolutionaries as only capable of producing works of Eurocentric mimicry.

Still, as the discussion of the book series made clear, if creolizing offers a way of engaging with the intellectual past and how it is misperceived and foreclosed, this is because it is galvanized by constructing political ideas for the present and future. In so doing, it does hope to center, embolden, and emulate ways of doing work that are already heavily creolized and creolizing. As most scholars of comparative philosophy or political theory recognize that it is often transnational scholars who are best equipped to undertake such work, much creolizing work occurs outside of hegemonic centers of the Global North. This is for obvious reasons. Outside of such sites, pursuing an education typically requires “learning” works that are regarded as important and authoritative in sites of global power. Still, at least in more alternative and radical institutions and intellectual circles, such texts are read alongside critical responses to them that are often anchored in questions and objections that are more local. Creolizing methods would counter the default view that the latter must only be reactive or mere critical commentary. It would suggest that all political ideas are creative responses that draw on varieties of resources, longings, and hopes. In doing so, it is highly likely that what will function as compelling examples and clinching arguments will reflect their particular audience. It might conceive of the relation of the political to other domains in ways that are unfamiliar to outsiders or to those who have been trained to perceive the world through academic disciplines that reflect other historical priorities and exigencies.

For these reasons, in a contemporary academy divided between advocates of interdisciplinarity as the only viable way forward and those who affirm unique disciplinary specialization as all that can justify the continued investment in particular fields, creolizing political theory (and inquiry more generally) throws itself behind rearticulating the fractured but ultimately shared world to which separate fields refer. This means that we don’t decry the value of illuminating methods, however difficult or seemingly obscure they might be, or the value of communicating in broader idioms, but we do treasure and want to contribute to field languages that can be more widely useful and shared and that are likely to be transdisciplinary or to combine historically distinct fields in ways that are mutually transformative. Such endeavors might become regularized in the ways that other innovative forms of research stabilized and were reproduced as legible fields.

In creolizing, one is galvanized by questions and problems which inspire doubt that the growing insularity of academic disciplines is a requirement of their actual rigor. At the same time, just as with actual processes of creolization, one does not pursue mixture because it is intrinsically valuable. Instead one studiously avoids the idea that crossing scholarly boundaries is a sign of sloppy impurity or lack of seriousness as one seeks to reconnect relations that have been unnecessarily severed.

3 Creolizing Political Ideas

I became interested in the concept of creolization and of creolizing to describe or name the way that I thought twentieth-century Martinican revolutionary psychiatrist and philosopher Frantz Fanon’s conception of national consciousness productively reworked what was politically indispensable in eighteenth-century Genevan thinker and writer Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s infamous notion of the general will.

If there can be no progressive politics absent the formulation of a shared, common (rather than narrow, exclusive, dispossessing) good, Rousseau had offered one of the fullest accounts of how this was forged and when it was actually in evidence. In so doing, he made clear, in contemporary

language, the fundamental tensions between liberal and democratic or egalitarian conceptions of person, politics, and legitimacy. Far from an overly sanguine account of reconciliation or of everyone getting along, Rousseau was very clear that the general will could not include both those made rich through dispossession and the dispossessed, or both those who thought everyone unlike them were damned and the supposedly damned. He also portrayed how one had to think and then act when willing politically or seeking to build and maintain a public self. Such orientations could be undercut when allegiances to one element of one's multiple identities eclipsed concerns tied to others.

While remarkably useful, Rousseau's account was primarily conservative, in the sense that he overemphasized how a general will was prone to erosion and the challenge or impossibility of its recovery. For these reasons, Fanon's phenomenological account of how a revolutionary consciousness of an emergent anti-colonial nation was forged through multifaceted and dialectical forms of struggle appeared to pick up and carry the notion of the general will forward in directions that Rousseau was either unable or unwilling to fathom. Fanon also stressed how such a consciousness could be hijacked and cynically mobilized and how the alternatives might look. Both highly local and thoroughly transnational, such movements could only emerge in tandem with other anti-colonial ones that pooled intellectual and other forms of resources, including the willingness to fight regardless of the likely outcomes. They had to directly negotiate salient differences. This was achieved first through the designation of shared sources of alienation, exploitation, and oppression. However, if such sources of unity were not transformed into the construction of new institutions, old and new fault lines would reemerge as ungovernable. Not to be undercut by the global reach of racial capitalism, such collective organizations had to connect national projects into an ever-deepening anti-imperial transnationalism (Bose, forthcoming).

If Rousseau offered a view of a common good that did not articulate freedom or justice as unbridled individual consumerism but as securing fragile conditions of collective thriving, Fanon gave the idea political flesh. Thinking in ways informed by direct exposure to mundane life in Martinique, France, and Algeria, Fanon put seemingly disparate faces of the same and related global processes into relationship, illustrating how a revolutionary global counter could be formulated. And in response to his urging that each generation shoulder political responsibility for their times, new generations of activists and writers are rethinking Fanonian national consciousness for this moment.

It is no accident that the general will and national consciousness are the focus of my effort to elaborate the creolizing of methods. I was exploring how a method could not just aggregate strategies, commitments, and texts tied to interests of discrete, partial actors and divergent disciplinary camps but could essay to articulate the imperfect and unequal world that they shared in order to offer fresh visions of what is required to nurture and sustain legitimate political life within it. I was considering whether there can be a methodological general will or methods that break with (less reflected upon dimensions of) the defining lens of liberalism.

Put differently, while creolizing political theory has been deeply informed by ways of narrating a historical and contemporary social process and what these ways illuminate about the prototypical nature of the Caribbean as a place where the different faces of Euromodern global capitalism coexisted rather than being spatially separated, there was nothing intrinsically progressive about the mere fact of mixture.

4 An Acknowledgment of Creolizing's Limitations

No political project can distinguish itself entirely from the web of associated words and meanings that govern and facilitate political discourse.

For a political theorist based in the US academy, creolizing stands out as especially generative. After all, this is an intellectual and political context dominated by a conservative Anglo-capitalist liberal philosophical anthropology, saturated with what Michael Monahan (2011) has richly described as the politics of purity. As such, it is strongly prone to disavowing historical mixture with a real preference for institutional ossification and cultural mummification.

Still, in most of the rest of the American hemisphere, a weakness of creolization as a concept is that it will always be associated with the uncritical versions of the ideology of *mestizaje*. In these iterations, mixture was pursued as an avenue of obliteration through absorption. In other words, if the US antipathy to mixture aimed to radically separate and oppress, mixture can also be and has been used as a strategy of erasure and eradication. One must therefore approach an understanding of creolizing dialectically and with contextual appreciation.

Juliet Hooker (2017), among others, has aptly articulated concerns with celebrating mixture as an a priori, universal good. I shared and still share these concerns, as evident when I argued (2014) that there are instances when calls for mixture would amount only to further demands for forced incorporation on potentially genocidal terms. This is clearly the case where creolization is with the hegemonic who remain thoroughly invested in their non-relations with those they subordinate. This is why my examples of progressive creolization begin with an assessment that there can be no general will with those committed to domination.

The distinction between pointing out instances where creolization took place in spite of its disavowal and instances that I would single out as progressive does turn on the centrality of the idea of creolizing the general will or the mechanisms and kinds of relations that produce national consciousness. My argument was that transformative relations cannot emerge without processes of creolization since they require generating new modes of being, communication, and interaction. In this sense, while *instances of mixture* are what creolization has always sought to explain, creolization is the byproduct of a particular kind of unprecedented human relations. In this sense, my view is consistent with Hooker's (2017) own grappling with these questions regarding mixture in the work of José Vasconcelos and W.E.B. Du Bois. She argues that, while mixture is not an intrinsic good, in most instances openness to mixture is better than its opposite, especially in a hemisphere dominated by US hegemony and its racial logics. At the same time, when forced inclusion has been a dominant strategy of settler colonialism and one aimed at Indigenous conquest, one can understand and must affirm the appeal of and need to be left alone (Deloria 1969). It is essential to developing alternative terms of engagement.

There is no doubt, and I repeat it explicitly in my book, that the conditions that birthed the concept of creolization were ones that we would never want to emulate. At the same time, they continue to cast long shadows over contemporary global life. Reflection informed by creolization therefore offers resources for understanding how to creatively construct a no longer colonial future.

5 Closing Thoughts

In a recent interview in the *America in Revolt* series organized and hosted by the Global Center for Advanced Studies (GCAS),⁷ Creston Davis asked Henry Giroux what would catalyze a transformation of contemporary global protests in the immediate aftermath of George Floyd's murder by police into a movement for systemic political, social, and economic transformation. Giroux rightly responded that such systematic, universalizing analyses are already evident in many of the arguments and actions of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Drawing on classic texts in Black Marxism and decades-long efforts to nurture concrete alternatives, BLM leaders have explicitly connected questions of dedicated over-investment in institutions of punishment and violence to the ramifications of widespread disinvestment from education and public health, nurturing public participation and other, viable forms of economy. Consistently supporting existing instances of and calling for the expanded creation of democratic modes of organizing collective living, which includes shared problem-solving, they have framed the carceral state as an expression of the larger, expanding project of authoritarianism and fascism.⁸ In so doing, from its inception, the movement has seamlessly connected the ways that Black, trans, Palestinian, Indigenous, disabled, incarcerated, poor... peoples are *made* vulnerable in ways that have mobilized activists for radical democracy the world over.

As such, they are exemplifying Lewis R. Gordon's argument that, particularly in the South African and US contexts, attacks on Black political voice and appearance have always constituted attacks on politics itself. Explaining Black Consciousness, as formulated by Steve Biko, Gordon writes:

His genius included rendering politics *black*. By fusing the apartheid state's opposition to blacks with its opposition to politics, he was able to pose a genuinely revolutionary question of social transformation [. . .]. Black Consciousness is thus identical with political life, and those who are willing to take on the risk of politics in a context where a state has waged war on politics are, as their opposition mounts, blackened by such a process. As a political concept, this makes the potential range of Black Consciousness wide enough to mean the collapse of the antidemocratic state. (Gordon 2008: 88-9)

A class that is entirely (rather than only mainly) antipathetic to politics has seized the global reins of conventional power. The illusion that they can dominate only some while all others experience blissful liberty is increasingly eroding, leading to wonderfully cacophonous upsurges of open, public expression. (In the US context, Corey D. B. Walker has referred to this as the "American Spring.") At their center are demands for political alternatives to oppressive institutions. They reiterate again: *We can and must do better*. They are demanding responsibility to reactivate a political process of devising different ways of meeting human needs. Such work requires new negotiations that center the multiple insights of those implicated as they aim imperfectly to realize a general will. While such work is fundamentally informed by what it is like to live as people with particular identities, the question they pose is how to make those understandings inform new political solutions. In so doing, they are reactivating a creolizing process. Put simply, while creolizing methods and politics are not always progressive, progressive methods and politics are always creolizing.

¹ Kindig (2020: 17).

² Kindig (2020: 20).

³ While not within the framework of creolizing, on the process of settlers taking on versions of Indigenous forms as part of the process of "lasting" or rendering living Indigenous people as only past, see Jean O'Brien (2010).

⁴ The link to all of these texts is here: <https://www.rowmaninternational.com/our-books/series/creolizing-the-canon>

⁵ A basic insight that follows from creolizing arguments is that important ideas are not only generated in one language. We are therefore trying also to assure that important works not yet available in English are published in translation through the book series.

- ⁶ As I hope the references to *the global* or *the greater world of ideas* in this essay indicate, creolizing offers one way of engaging with the project of *world philosophies*. It draws on and at the same time offers a distinct orientation to a more central approach to world philosophies, namely work in comparative political theory. Such work, in the main, adopts an “encounter” approach to broadening the scope and reach of philosophical engagement. As Andrew March (2009) has pointed out, some work that is designated “comparative,” for all of its richness, is not actually comparative at all. Instead, it borrows or is ascribed that name so that its actual undertaking, of in-depth studies of ideas that emerged in a region outside of Europe and Euro-America, can be made to appear legitimate or legible in existing scholarly terrains. Despite the question of naming or misnaming, many such studies indubitably broadened understandings of the rich past and present of political theoretical ideas by devoting serious attention to previously excluded people and places. Among works that are explicitly comparative, many have, in ways that creolizing affirms, challenged the idea that comparative work requires assuming that intellectual cultures have been hermetically sealed, developing in parallel, independently of one another. As Euben (1999) illustrates, it is the fact of mutual indebtedness that worlds now treated as discrete can be engaged in comparative discussion. In insulating ideas as part of radically separated traditions, whether Chinese or Indian or Arabic, we might therefore be masking the conditions that gave rise to conceptual innovation. It might have been (and now be) exactly as existing answers are strained that thinkers resituate traditional forms of argumentation with the newly encountered in combinations that are familiar and transformative. Such cases affirm Brower’s (2008) claim that conceptual innovation often comes of partial assimilation of what is borrowed in results that might, from an academic view, be considered *mistranslations*. Rather than trying to express respect through understanding the ideas’ meanings in their original contexts of emergence, as many comparative political theorists seek to do, those engaged in political work may simply put relevant terms to work in their own life-worlds. The ability to do so seems to minimize the consequences of the idea that communities are divided by untranslatable differences or insurmountable degrees of impermeability. None of this is to suggest that scholarly work that attends to radical uniqueness, pushing us to understand distinct contexts, does not play a central role in enlarging our grasp of what is possible. But as they do, they reflect priorities distinct from those that would say that excellent ideas are not only of value to their particular sphere but needed in the world of thought writ large, even if their inclusion might involve their altering. Finally, in a way that should not be diminished, there is a preference in comparative work for tolerant dialogue as the model of interaction. Not only, as we’ve already mentioned, might such forms of engagement be distinct from what in fact catalyzed transformations in thinking, but this methodological approach often explicitly and unwittingly centers liberal terms and values as the organizing template of possible exchange. Finally, with few exceptions, the majority of comparative political theory at the start of the twenty-first century revolved around meetings between European/Euro-American and East Asian, East Indian, and Muslim worlds. This is more worrying when such texts are framed as “global” or as “inter-civilizational dialogues.” While this in part resulted from understandably contingent features of the lives and interests of scholars pioneering such work, as a literature, such works together frequently center what is framed as east-west meetings to the exclusion of north-south or south-south or east-south ones. For a longer discussion of these points, see Gordon (2014: 203–20).
- ⁷ The interview took place on June 12, 2020 and is available here: <https://www.gcasreview.com/blog/2020/6/12/henry-giroux-america-in-revolt-discussion>
- ⁸ On the relationship between matter and mattering and the necessary relationship between the language and terms for economic versus other forms of valuing, see Alena Wolflink (2019).
- ⁹ The lecture in which this formulation appears (and which took place on June 14, 2020) is available here: <https://www.gcasreview.com/blog/2020/6/14/prof-corey-d-b-walkers-lecture>

Challenges to Creolizing Theory

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This article describes some well-intentioned attempts to democratize the knowledge domain in the social sciences and humanities. Drawing on the cultural processes leading to the term “creolization,” which described a particular phenomenon of mixing between cultures primarily in the American region with an African heritage, the author describes attempts to creolize disciplines such as philosophy and political theory. Recognizing that the notion of creolization arose primarily in the domains of “music and food and dance” rather than in the “formal intellectual and political spheres,” there was a move for “creolizing political theory” as well as “creolizing the canon” (Gordon 2020a: 95). This project of creolizing the canon had three parts: using a creolized framework on established scholars, discovering and promoting new voices speaking from the marginalized communities, and supporting the method of creolization for more broader use.

While we agree that this project is worthy of support from communities across the globe, we are also worried about certain tendencies inherent in this project that seem to promote and perpetuate hegemonic and colonial discourses. First of all, how does the term “creolization” capture processes across the world? Are there not other terms in different cultures that capture the spirit of hybridization? When creolization becomes a dominant term that subsumes other hybrid narratives, there is a very good chance, as has happened before, that it will lead to the erasure of the differences in hybridization practices across the world. One example that captures a more complex dynamics of hybridization is the term “sanskritization,” coined by the Indian sociologist M. N. Srinivas. Sanskritization is a term that isolates the hierarchical nature in the mixing and borrowing of cultures, where the “lower” castes imitate rituals of the “higher” caste in order to pull themselves up in the hierarchy. Similarly, there must be terms expressed in many local languages that describe the mixing of cultures in many parts of Asia and Africa. While it is clear that creolization is not meant to act as a dominant term, nevertheless the fact that it is produced as part of dominant discourses and from dominant intellectual societies makes it highly vulnerable to intellectual hegemony. For creolization to truly function as an egalitarian term, it would be necessary to have/invoke/use a set of synonymous terms from around the world instead of an exclusive use of this term to describe a broader hybridization process.

In spite of Gordon’s claim that creolization names “what was distinctively non-European and non-Euro-Caribbean” (Gordon 2020a: 95), the non-European is partly missing in the discourses around this term. “Non-European” is a misleading term, for we have to ask how it maps onto Asian societies, since there is obviously an African component. This aspect raises a deeper conceptual problem: Is creolization intrinsically linked to color? The examples, such as the discussion about lighter skinned people in the literature, would seem to suggest that this is so. When color is not the central issue, as in other forms of hierarchical societies, what is the process that is similar to creolization? One can force caste and class inequalities, for example, into the matrix of creolization, but to what end?

The reason why this question becomes important is because of a greater worry about the use of creolization in the context of intellectual labor. Can creolization of intellectual practices be analogous to creolization of everyday practices? We know that there are vibrant cultural mixes inside dominant groups. There are cases where there is a co-habitation of different cultures through these processes of hybridization of food and music. When cultural hybridization takes place, there are many

kinds of transactions and exchanges that facilitate it. This is not so in the knowledge domain, and given that this domain is inherently exclusionary, it is almost impossible to have transactional exchanges of cultures in this domain. Thus, it is far more difficult to imagine the act of creolization across different knowledge cultures. In Gordon's essay, it is assumed that creolization is transferable to knowledge domains, but we know that this is not true given the long experience of how Asian and African philosophies and sciences have fared in global academics. The reasons are foundational in the differences in the framework and languages, as well as institutional in the way journals and the publishing industry function to preserve and promote dominant systems. So before methods of creolization can be considered, we need to know the conditions under which creolization of theory and knowledge will be possible. If we don't start with this awareness, then creolization becomes more of a charity principle or a kind of indifferent accommodation of "others."

There is another important reason why the process of creolization of cultural practices cannot easily transfer into the knowledge domain. There is already a process of creolization in the cultural "field" as it were, and we have evidence of how creolization has happened in language and in some cultural practices. So, in an anthropological sense, we can identify creolization as something which is present in the field. However, we do not have such examples in the academic and intellectual domain. Comparative philosophy is not creolization. Hybrids of knowledge systems have been notoriously difficult to produce given the dominance of hegemonic systems in all dominant knowledge practices. Where some attempts have been made, they are still working within rigid structures of hegemony of western thought. So there are no pointers from the "field" on how creolization would be possible here. Rather, the potential problem is the imposition of creolization on academic production leading to creolization that is a facade and not something that is substantial.

Moreover, the methods of creolizing can themselves be a problem. From the description in this essay they seem to be working within the same framework of hegemonic western thought. Gordon notes that the project will "revisit figures who—and soon conceptualizations, which—in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries would regularly appear in courses or on required reading lists introducing students and lay readers to the history of (western) philosophy or political thought" (Gordon 2020a: 96-7). Students in which countries? And belonging to what kind of educational system? Even if this is meant for those who follow the western models of texts and authors, this process does not challenge the politics of canons themselves, which cannot be done unless there is a systematic and rational "method" to describe the theoretical foundation of incorporating alternate epistemologies.

To address this problem, we have to understand what really constitutes creolizing an idea. In the present description, it seems that it is more an attempt to make some authors more globally acceptable. Otherwise why and how does one try to creolize Hegel without taking into account his racism and his explicit prejudice against Asian and African societies? If somebody asks why Hegel should even matter globally, is it only because he is part of the canon of a racist dominant European tradition? So what is creolization doing in this case? Isn't it better to try and populate the reading lists with writers from other societies and other experiences? For whom is Hegel important? And why? Why is it even important to bring him into the creolizing narrative? If the answer is that it is because he is an important figure for the western intellectual tradition, then is the aim of creolization meant only for the west? This is a valid reason in itself—but if this is the case, then why invoke the marginalized and the dispossessed in legitimizing the functions of this concept and further relate it to decolonization and the Global South? The three types of creolizing discussed earlier are also representative of approaches to decolonization. So what does the idea of creole add to the larger project of decolonization?

1 Creolizing Political Theory

The attempt to creolize political theory is not only interesting but also important. But we first have to begin with a difficult obstacle to this possibility, and that is the idea of theory itself. Gordon points out that “creolizing political theory involves conceptualizing the task of theorizing as creating conversations among thinkers and ideas in ways that break with existing scholarly norms” (Gordon 2020a: 98)—but how is this conversation possible? Unless we have an account of the difficulties of doing this meaningfully and the many reasons why this has not been globally accomplished so far, it is merely a hopeful and well-intentioned statement. One of the biggest challenges of decolonization is to make other notions of theory more acceptable to the west. The long history of European scholars who declared that “theory” is a special Greek contribution and one that is not available to the Asian and African philosophical traditions needs to be engaged and countered before we can even begin to hope for “conversations among thinkers” (Sarukkai 2005). The concept of theory needs to be first decolonized and creolized before we decide on which writers need the creolization framework.¹ If we do not do this, we would still be working within the dominant idea of theory without recognizing that theory itself is a matter of contention between different intellectual cultures. Some of the major counter-traditions of theory include the following characteristics: the question of language of theory, the aim of universalization in theory as against focus on the particular, the abstraction of individual experience into theoretical categories, and the removal of the human subject in theory through these processes, including the ways of writing which cannot accommodate personal reports, dialogues, songs, and stories.

In addition, there is an extremely important problem that arises in any attempt to find common grounds for theory across these cultures, which has to do with the relation between ethics and theory. Modernist paradigms of theory, influenced deeply by the notion of theory that arises in science, remove the question of ethics from the act of theorizing.² But this is not true of other forms of theorization in other cultures. How is creolization going to accommodate ethics of doing theory? The ethical basis needs accommodation of plural perspectives depending on the enmeshing or intersection of several disciplines. Do we require different ethical norms before we creolize western theory? How effective will it be in achieving critical self-reflection for theorists who could be quite disdainful of those whose life conditions are being theorized? Why do certain theorists study certain communities to which they do not belong? Is there an ethical issue in this and similar actions that drive modern social theory?

Other than the well-established prejudice of famous philosophers in the western tradition, there is another reason why a kind of incommensurability has plagued this problem of theory. This is the inability to understand, engage, take seriously and incorporate alternate conceptual worlds of the non-western traditions. Even the concepts “human” and “nature” are so different across these cultural traditions. To understand what these descriptions mean, one has to seriously acknowledge and understand the metaphysical ideas that underlie these traditions of thought. Look at the well-known example of Michael Oakeshott’s claim that politics as an idea was not available to cultures other than the Greeks and the Romans (thereby excluding both politics and theory from the non-western imagination), and Orlando Patterson’s book *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture*, which argues that the concept of “freedom” was present only in the Greeks and the later western societies. Comparative philosophy that tries to argue how other cultures also “possessed” these concepts does not help. First, we need to understand why it is even important for these western scholars to make these kinds of claims. Who are they addressing? And what do they want to say through these claims? How will creolization deal with attitudes like these which are legitimized by one form of scholarship, before one

can even think of throwing open “theory” to everybody? For example, if there is a tradition which holds that mind and body do not constitute a duality, then how will a political theory based on such dualities get creolized? What is the method of incorporating conflicting metaphysics, some of which are contradictory and cannot be put together in the modernist paradigm? So, to what extent is creolization willing to go? When the ideas of “human” and “development” and the task of knowledge in these traditions are so different, how can they be creolized without first describing the mechanism of dealing with conflicting conceptual worlds?³

We cannot creolize Rousseau and Hegel by drawing on “insights of Global Southern figures” (Gordon 2020a: 98) because the discourse itself resists this creolization. We have to accept that ideas and theories may embody inequality and prejudices of the individuals who create that theory. The reason that this form of creolization is not possible is because the structures which make us take Hegel as the starting point are already loaded in his favor. The publishing world and the academic and intellectual capital of institutionalized western academics are deeply resistant to changes demanded from the decolonization project. Endemic examples of how papers and books submitted from places like India are dealt with by mainstream journals and publishers in the US, UK, Europe, and Australia even today are an illustration of a systemic prejudice that goes beyond individual editorial prejudices. The acceptance of Asian and African scholarship is based on conformity with the demands of the western “system.” This malaise has become so deep that it is only the production of knowledge about Asian and African societies that is still dominantly influenced by publications and by scholars in the western world. On the other hand, knowledge about western countries is produced, circulated, and legitimized entirely within their own countries. Indians and Africans are not writing (and will not be allowed to write) definitive accounts of the nature of European and American societies. Even the most “important” journals in Indian philosophy, for example, are produced within a dominant western institutionalized network, and the spokespersons for these practices are more and more those who are situated in the west. Major books on classical Indian philosophy are not only produced within these structures, but they also systematically keep out Indian scholars who are in India, thus creating their own discursive narrative legitimized by their power structures. This process continues the historical processes related to hegemony and colonization. Thus, in intellectual production too, the colonized have to “become” or at least “act” like the colonizer in order to get some form of acceptance. But the enduring paradox is that because they do this, they will never be accepted fully by western scholars! We do not see how these types of creolization will help address this foundational problem, a problem that is as much present within Asian and African societies where dominant intellectual practices (such as those related to caste) do not allow the spread of non-dominant intellectual traditions.

Thus, it is not clear how the aims of creolization will be accomplished since they seem to be more hopeful than pragmatic. The proponents of creolization might claim that we need to make a meaningful dent in these writers first, but we believe that it would be wrong to dissociate ideas from modes of production of ideas, including the structures of publishing, circulation, funding, and reviewing followed by journals, etc. If these processes were made more egalitarian and more sensitive to a truly diverse knowledge system, then creolization would have been a natural process. This does not happen because there is no equivalent infrastructure of intellectual production present in the Global South. And that is not going to change. So the point is not to depend on some abstract notion of good intention but instead to focus on the material production of ideas that cause inequalities and prejudice.

As it stands, it seems as if what creolization is doing is to invite other people into our home instead of going to their places of residence. Unless the dominant intellectual systems visit other systems as guests and understand their lived processes of knowledge creation and fit their ideas with

those of the marginalized and those who are materially and intellectually dispossessed, a truly egalitarian creolization would not be possible.

Finally, we can see how it is so difficult to avoid the pitfalls of domination even in scholars sensitive to creolization. If we look at the references in this paper, they are all publications produced within the dominant western academic structure—the references are thus not creolized. Creolization has to be mindful even of these “minor” elements that are part of the intellectual discourse of the dominant west.

¹ See Guru and Sarukkai (2019, 2012).

² See Guru and Sarukkai (2012).

³ For one example of how we approach this problem, see Sarukkai (2016).

To Teach or Not to Teach, and If So, How Best to Teach Hegel at Historically Black Colleges and Universities?

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The first thing that one learns about Hegel at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (hereafter HBCUs) is that he was a racist and a bigoted euro-centric imperialist. In what one might consider to be a standard primer to Afro-centric philosophy, “Egypt: Ancient History of African Philosophy,” Theophile Obenga writes:

As we know, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), who was not a historian, but a great philosopher, stated in his lectures delivered in the winter of 1830–1 on the philosophical history of the world: “Africa is no historical part of the world; it has no movement or development to exhibit.... *Egypt...does not belong to the African Spirit*” (1956: 99; emphasis [Obenga’s]). This view of the Hegelian philosophy of history has become almost a common opinion and an academic paradigm in Western historiography. A great culture or civilization cannot be produced by African (Black) people. Moreover, African people have never made any kind of contribution to world history. Even some brilliant African minds still accept as true Hegel’s incongruous statement. In modern times the primary document concerning the “question” of the ancient Egyptian connection with the rest of Black Africa was, until the Cairo symposium,¹ Hegel’s *Philosophy of History*. Thus, it took one century and 44 years, from Hegel (1830) to the Cairo symposium (1974), to change the paradigm installed by the German philosopher. (Obenga 2004: 32-3)

Obenga and others believed, back in 2004, that the “Cairo symposium was, then, a turning point in African historiography and philosophy” (Obenga 2004: 33). “Many Black scholars reject G.W.F. Hegel,” writes Babacar Camara, “for his *Philosophy of History* ignominiously and grotesquely denigrates Africans” (Camara 2005: 82). Lyotard once remarked that Hegel—and what followed in his wake, ideologically—is culpable for aiding and abetting the horrors of Auschwitz because he provided the Third Reich with a rationalization for imperialism, under the auspices of emancipation, for what Hegel himself described the “slaughter-bench of history” (see Hoffheimer 2001: 37, 44). And while Kaufmann and Knox argue that his claim is preposterous, and that it is a grave mistake to conflate Hegelianism with totalitarianism, Popper insisted that “the Nazis got their racism from Hegel” (Kaufmann 1996: 85; Knox 1996: 102).

In the following response to Professor Gordon’s essay, “Creolizing the Canon,” I would like to consider an array of questions of pedagogical practice and historiographical research when it comes to teaching the western canon in general and Hegel in particular at HBCUs, but also at Primarily White Institutions (PWIs), in the twenty-first century in the USA. After twenty-five years of teaching the history of philosophy, primarily the canon of western philosophy, at HBCUs and PWIs, in the US as well as in Germany and Africa, I have come to think of Hegel—among other canonical figures in the history of philosophy—as a teaching tool if not a social-scientific method that resembles what Gordon describes as creolization. The Black experience in the USA is not altogether dissimilar to what occurred in the Caribbean: slavery, exploitation, and dehumanization at the hands of white supremacists. Without minimizing significant differences, I agree with Gordon that “creolising practices are also in evidence beyond [the Caribbean]” (Gordon 2014: 70-1). Decolonizing if not creolizing the canon in

the USA is still desperately needed, to be sure, but it should also be said that there is plenty of evidence of what Gordon denominates as “creolizing practices” among Black philosophers in America.

1 Becoming More Erudite about Africana Studies (and Hegel)

In his *Philosophie der Geschichte*, Hegel claimed that Africa contributed absolutely nothing to world history. “It is not just blacks whom Hegel deems psychologically inferior,” writes Moellendorf. “Asians from Mongolia, Tibet, India and China are criticized because their religious practices are deemed to be unworthy of free persons. American Indians are seen as a feeble race, as if they were themselves responsible for their own slaughter” (Moellendorf 1992: 247). Susan Buck-Morss goes so far as to say that in his “effort to become more erudite in African Studies during the 1820s, *Hegel was in fact getting dumber*” (Buck-Morss 2000: 863, my italics). Hegel was worse than irresponsible on Africana history. Buck-Morss suggests that Hegel’s lectures were even more racist than his writings. Even worse than his shabby comments in the *Philosophy of History* (PH, §§ 96; 99), writes Buck-Morss in *Hegel and Haiti*, Hegel “deemed all sub-Saharan Africa, this ‘land of children,’ of ‘barbarity and wildness,’ from any significance for world history” (Buck-Morss 2000: 859). This sustained miseducation is itself worth pondering, not merely for students of nineteenth-century philosophy, but for contemporary scholars in all fields. What I wish to suggest here vis-à-vis Hegel and Marx could be applied more generally to our approach to teaching ancient and medieval philosophy.²

Hegel was most certainly aware of the massive slave uprising in Haiti, which was inspired by the same ideals that animated the French Revolution that Hegel celebrated in his youth. As a case in point, Hegel wrote that “[Blacks] cannot be said to be uneducable, for not only have they occasionally received Christianity with the greatest thankfulness and spoke movingly of the freedom they have gained from it after prolonged spiritual servitude, but in Haiti they have even formed a state on Christian principles” (Hegel 1978: 54). By way of contrast, here is C.L.R. James’s own description of the Haitian revolt in *Black Jacobins*:

In August 1791, after two years of the French Revolution and its repercussions in San Domingo, the slaves revolted. The struggle lasted for 12 years. The slaves defeated in turn the local whites and the soldiers of the French monarchy, a Spanish invasion, a British expedition of some 60,000 men, and a French expedition of similar size under Bonaparte’s brother-in-law. The defeat of Bonaparte’s expedition in 1803 resulted in the establishment of the Negro state of Haiti which has lasted to this day. The revolt is the only successful slave revolt in history [...]. (James 1963: ix)

James is probably correct in claiming that Haiti constituted the only successful slave revolt in history. But depending on how one defines a *successful* revolt, it could be argued—and has been argued—that there were hundreds of successful slave revolts or rebellions in the USA.

2 The Hegelian Aftermath: What the Black Radical Tradition did with Hegel and Marx

It is instructive to rehearse what the Black philosophical tradition has done with Hegel: e.g., Fanon, Nkrumah, C.L.R. James, Walter Rodney, Du Bois, Angela Davis, and even Martin Luther King, who

once claimed that Hegel was his favorite philosopher. What we're supposed to learn from the Hegelian aftermath is still contested. Hegel, and what philosophers do with Hegel, is a cultural battlefield. The reception history of Hegelianism in America, which Hegel called "the land of the future," is an interesting because contentious case in point. What the Black philosophical tradition has done with Hegel is doubly fascinating.

Fanon made much of the master-slave dialectic in Hegel, not merely as a philosophical insight but as a psycho-analytic principle. Though it may be true that, when the western canon of philosophers defended liberty and justice, it was often in defense of what Angela Davis calls a pseudo-concept of freedom on behalf of "just us," as Charles Mills puts it, many of the central themes still serve as an expression of an insight that preceded and transcends Hegel and his times. Just as the Declaration of Independence spoke to a truth beyond the original intent, that all men and woman are inherently equal, so too Hegel provided many of the tools used by anti-colonial and anti-imperialist liberation philosophers. In some sense, the black radical tradition³ has been able to use the tools of the oppressor to liberate the oppressed in a way that defies Audre Lorde's admonition that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (Lorde [1979] 1984).

In Fanon, the most direct encounter with Hegel's master-slave dialectic is to be found toward the very end of *Black Skin, White Masks*, in a sub-chapter titled "The Black Man and Hegel" (Fanon [1952] 2008: 191-7). Hegel also makes an appearance in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) in the opening chapter on violence. In "Racism and Culture," Fanon refers to Hegel's analysis of "alienation" and "bad conscience" as well as the master-slave dialectic construed as stages of race-based exploitation, a pernicious process that leads from "vulgar racism of exploiting arms and legs" to "the [perfected] means of production [which] brings about the camouflage of the techniques by which man is exploited" ([1956] 1967: 209). Fanon is eager to show that racism and cultural hierarchy are "but one aspect of a systematized hierarchization implacably pursued" (Fanon 1967: 31; 2016: 206). Although Fanon claimed in 1956 that racism was "only one element in a vaster whole—that of the systematized oppression of a people" (207), he would agree with Walter Rodney—the Guyanese philosopher who wrote *Grounding with My Brothers* ([1969] 2014) and *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*—that in the present world, as things stand, it remains "the most binding factor in our world" (Rodney 2014: 53).⁴ C.L.R. James deals with Hegel most explicitly in his 1948 *Notes on Dialectic: Hegel, Marx, Lenin*, though there are discussions of Hegel and Marx throughout his corpus. Hegel is illustrative of what James calls the "instinctual dialectic," whereas Marx and Lenin were representative of what might be called a "theoretical dialectic" (James 1948: 33; see Douglas, 2013: 102). Cedric Robinson also discusses the master-slave dialectic in his "Anthropology of Marxism." (Consider also the progressive readings of Hegel in James and Grace Boggs as well as Dunayevskaya.)

3 Black Hegelianism: The Case of Angela Davis

Just as Kwame Nkrumah was able to invoke Kant's ethical principle in *Consciencism* to argue against the dehumanizing racial tendencies in European philosophy against Africans, and in ways similar to how C.L.R. James used Hegel's negative dialectics to extend his truncated notions of autonomy and humanism, Angela Davis used Hegelian notions of alienation to demonstrate pseudo-concepts of freedom inherent in western philosophy. Davis claimed in her "Lectures on Liberation" that it was sometimes possible to "use the Bible against the missionaries"; similarly, Davis and others show that it is sometime possible to use Hegel as a corrective to the pernicious and paradoxical pseudo-concepts so characteristic of the western world. Indeed, Camara argues that "Hegel contradicts himself, and the

very dialectic analytical method that excluded Africa from universal history also fully reinstates it” (Davis 2005: 82).

Angela Davis claims that “one of the most acute paradoxes present in the history of western society is that while on a philosophical plane freedom has been delineated in the most lofty and sublime fashion, concrete reality has always been permeated with the most brutal forms of unfreedom” (Davis [1969] 2010: 45). In her own use of the infamous “master-slave” dialectic, which she understood backwards and forwards, in practice and in theory, Angela Davis wrote:

For the master feels himself free and he feels himself free because he is able to control the lives of others. He is free at the expense of the freedom of another. The slave experiences the freedom of the master in its true light. He understands that the master’s freedom is abstract freedom to suppress other human beings. The slave understands that this is a pseudo concept of freedom and at this point is more enlightened than his master for he realizes that the master is a slave of his own misconceptions, his own misdeeds, his own brutality, his own effort to oppress. (Davis [1969] 2010: 49)

Even for those students and faculty who object to the intellectual colonialism inherent in the canon of nineteenth-century philosophy, but who wish to understand the history of philosophical ideas, Hegel is perhaps unavoidable. Whether caricatured as the greatest philosopher of the nineteenth century or as “a stupid charlatan,” as Schopenhauer claimed, or the “source of all our sorrows,” as Kierkegaard maintained, whether as a historian of philosophy or a philosopher of history, whether right side up or upside down, as Marx suggested, whether problematized as an incipient racist or an ardent nationalist, it’s difficult for students of nineteenth-century philosophy to sidestep or otherwise evade Hegel.

Some would argue that Du Bois was not only a self-described Marxist but also a Hegelian of some sort, not just early on, but later too. Neither pastiche nor parody, Du Bois appropriated Hegelian and Marxian ideas and methods as a means of promoting a counter-hegemonic normative system and, as Davis turns it, attempting “to eradicate some of the misery in this world” (Davis 2010: 66). Andrew Douglas reminds us that “Du Bois always warned against any simple embrace of the ideas and values derived from what he called the ‘White world’” (Douglas 2015: 26). Charles Mills is surely right to suggest that “in understanding the workings of a system of oppression, a perspective from the bottom up is more likely to be accurate than one from the top down” (Mills 1997: 109). Better yet is Angela Davis’s observation in “Lectures on Liberation” that “[t]he collective consciousness of an oppressed people entails an understanding of the conditions of oppression and the possibility of abolishing these conditions” (Davis [1969] 2010: 49).

Angela Davis would have us construe slavery as the most extreme form of un-freedom, the reality rather than the metaphor, slave ownership rather than the “slavery of wage labor.” (The analogy or simile is instructive, but the ways that slavery is disanalogous to wage-labor is also meaningful.) Although one could limit the term “Black Marxism” or “Black Hegelians” to Marxists or Hegelians who are Black, I wish to use the term in the broader sense of a hermeneutical turn in American historiography.⁵ Following Dawson and Badiou as well as Gordon, I want to “regain a politically constituted definition of ‘black’” (Dawson 2013: 177) that is “less the demand of a social faction or community to be integrated into the existing order than something which touches on a transformation of the order as a whole” (Badiou 2001: 109). Professor Gordon argues elsewhere that “creolisation has referred very explicitly to *illicit blendings* (Bernabé, Chamoiseau, Confiant 1990) or to those that contradicted and betrayed the project of forging a Manichean racial order amidst the heavily mixed

and transnational plantation societies of the New Worlds on both sides of the Atlantic” (Gordon 2014: 70).

4 Cornel West on the Value of Hegel’s Notions of Negation and Transformation

Now let’s think about power and how it works, how ideologies arise from socio-economic systems, which implicitly or explicitly promote the exploitation of one group of people against another group of people. Systems of domination and exploitation are doomed, we say, but the damage done is unforgivable. In “Philosophy, Politics, and Power: An Afro-American Perspective,” Cornel West suggests that Hegel is best read as a philosophical historicist who recognized the influence of power and politics in determining the leading ideas of each age; it was Hegel who said, as West reminds us, that “philosophy is its own time comprehended in thoughts” (Hegel 2002: 9). Even if we cannot say that Hegel was the founder of historicism, argues Beiser, since there is precedent for this doctrine in Germany and elsewhere, he was “a central propagator” of it. As for the other aspect of historicism, elaborating on the “organicism” that Beiser describes,⁶ Hegel also believed that history is in some sense progressive. Hegel sometimes suggests that each culture has an epicycle that leads from birth, childhood, maturity, and decline. Other times, Hegel is eager to point out that there are laws in history, and that it is possible to conduct cross-cultural comparisons. Perhaps this is the philosophical idea behind Theodore Parker’s view of history, one adhered to also by Martin Luther King, namely, “that while the arc of the moral universe is long, it bends toward justice” (King [1961] 1991: 52). But neither Hegel nor King believed that progress was inevitable.

West suggests that Black philosophers must “retain Hegel’s notions of negation and transformation of what is in light of a revolutionary not-yet” (West 2000: 411). West uses Hegel against Hegelianism:

The notions of negation and transformation—the pillars of the Hegelian process of *Aufhebung*—promote the activity of resistance to what is and elevate the praxis of struggle against existing realities. In this way, Afro-American philosophers must wage an intense intellectual battle in the form of recovering the revolutionary potential of Hegel against the ironic repetition of Hegel, which dilutes and downplays this potential. The revolutionary potential of Hegel—indigenously grounded in the prophetic religious and progressive secular practices of Afro-Americans—can be promoted by a serious confrontation with the Marxist tradition and, among others, the [later] work of Michel Foucault (West 2000: 411-12).

Keenga-Yamahtta Taylor, for one, perhaps as an exemplar, sees racism through the lens of class and analyzes class with an eye fixed on race. “Because of the gross inequality it produces,” writes Taylor, “capitalism requires various political, social, and ideological tools to divide the majority—racism is one among many oppressions intended to serve this purpose” (Taylor 2016: 205-6). Malcolm X put his finger on the problem, in 1964, when he quipped, “You can’t have capitalism without racism” (Heron [1964] 1990; also, Taylor 2016: 197).

There are those who propose to simply ignore Hegel and all those like him, including Emerson, William James, and even John Dewey, who is perhaps rightly castigated by West and Eddie Glaude for his conspicuous sins of omission. Nkrumah claimed that African socialism was an alternative to Marxism and that even Marx, despite his insight into class struggle, was nevertheless

tainted by white supremacy (see Lee and Hord 2016: 107). Hegel expresses the prejudices of his age, certainly, but he also provided a subversive clue to what unfolded—from the outset, historically, as an initial reaction, but one that ricochets throughout its dialectical epicycle—as an anti-colonialist philosophy of freedom and refrain of political resistance. In his review of John Gray’s *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, Kwame Appiah (2019) recently suggested:

For critics like John Gray, the Enlightenment’s self-satisfied rationalism and belief in progress were bound to fuel notions of racial and civilizational hierarchy, and can be linked to twentieth-century totalitarianism. And its toll continues: liberal rationalism is, in Gray’s view, an impoverished creed that has asphyxiated richer forms of life. That’s why, he says, Western societies that rely on liberal Enlightenment values “are plagued with anomie and nihilism.” Yet these objections don’t settle the matter. The expressions of prejudice from Kant and Hume are worth noting not because they’re peculiar to the so-called Enlightenment project but precisely because they aren’t: so commonplace were such views that even these rarefied intellects weren’t immune to them.

The notion of history as the march of freedom—that freedom constitutes the inner law of history, whether expressed in Frederick Douglass or in Karl Marx, whether one says that “all progress is the result of struggle” or that history is constituted by the conflict between classes, that civilization marks the path from an arrangement where only one or perhaps just a few are free to a state wherein all citizens are free, from monarchy to participatory democracy—is enticing. As a method of unmasking if not dismantling the pseudo-concepts of freedom and democracy indicative of the western canon of philosophy, creolization serves as means by which “to reactivate a political process of devising different ways of meeting human needs” (Gordon 2020: 10).

5 Tentative Conclusion: The Hegelian Kick

Not only have they kicked the black but they have also told him how to react to the kick... With painful slowness he is now beginning to show signs that it is his right and duty to respond to the kick *in the way he sees fit*. (Biko [1971] 2002: 67)

One of my colleagues at an HBCU once told me that reading Hegel—for a philosopher, or at least for a historian of philosophy, if not a philosopher of history, and despite the fact that reading Hegel is difficult—was simply unavoidable. But for some students, Hegel represents a tradition—perhaps even a discipline—that has delivered a steady series of kicks. Perhaps creolization, as a social-scientific method, provides a compelling answer to Biko’s question on “how best to respond to the kick.” To ignore issues of race, class, and gender, in philosophy especially but also in other disciplines, or to think of philosophical systems as somehow universal and necessary, objective, timeless, abstracted from time and place, and color blind, constitutes a form of complicity with racism, classism, and sexism. The case of Hegel, and the history of Hegelianism, is illustrative of what might be called the “Kosambi-model” of historiography by which we “learn about the present in light of the past [and also] learn about the past in light of the present” (Kosambi 1951: 23, 47).

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- ¹ In 1974, Theophile Obenga was one of about twenty participants in a UNESCO symposium in Cairo, where, together with Cheikh Anta Diop, author of *Antériorité des civilisations nègres* and *Nations nègres et culture*, the African origin of the ancient Egyptian civilization was definitively established. For more about the Cairo Symposium, see *The Peopling of Ancient Egypt and the Deciphering of Meroitic Script: Proceedings of the Symposium Held in Cairo from 28 January to 3 February 1974*. The General History of Africa, 1. Paris: Unesco, 1978.
- ² Although I originally taught ancient philosophy as—in the words of Whitehead—a series of footnotes to Plato, I now teach it in a way that places Greek philosophy within the context of ancient Kemetic thought, including the Book of Life and the Maxims of Ptahhotep, Indian philosophy, Chinese philosophy, Persian thought, and ancient Hebraic philosophy. Teaching ancient philosophy from a cosmopolitan or cross-cultural point of view is valuable also for teaching philosophy in later antiquity and the medieval world. Consider the case of Plotinus: According to the standard way of doing the history of philosophy, we are taught to interpret Plotinus, who was born in Lycopolis, Egypt, as a Neoplatonist. “It is quite possible,” thought Elmer J. O’Brien, “to ease one’s entry into the complexities of Plotinus’ mystical doctrine and arrive at a true assessment of it if one initially lays hold of certain of the basic doctrines he seems to have taken over from his predecessors.” But when O’Brien suggests that we familiarize ourselves with “these basic doctrines first, then what Plotinus did with them,” he narrows the range of these basic doctrines to Plato and Aristotle. But in Alexandria, in 270 CE, Plato was but one of the many influences contributing to Plotinus’ ethics, metaphysics, cosmology, and theological meditations. Plotinus was familiar with the philosophical currents in Persia, India, China, Africa, and Judea. Rather than reading Plotinus as a variation on Plato, or an eclectic misreading of Plato, we should read him alternatively with an eye turned toward the confluence and contention of non-Hellenistic influences; in that case, what some may view as a misreading of Plato may well constitute Plotinus’ genius for complementing or correcting his reading of Plato with his knowledge of ancient Kemetic thought. By studying these non-western ancient philosophers, by exploring the confluence and contention of influence that shaped ancient philosophy, we also come to a better appreciation of world philosophy as well as what’s unique or distinctive, if anything, to the western canon of ancient philosophy.
- ³ Charles Mills writes: “White ‘radical’ theory—white Marxism and white feminism—has challenged mainstream liberal-democratic theory with the concepts of the ‘bourgeois’ state and the ‘patriarchal’ state. The black radical tradition, by contrast, going back at least to the nineteenth century, in the writings of David Walker, and coming forward through Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, W. E. B. Du Bois and many others, has not hesitated to depict white supremacy as the political system dominating black Americans and other people of color” (Mills 2018: 27). Mills’ own project is preoccupied with black radical Kantianism and black radical liberalism.
- ⁴ In *Groundings with My Brothers*, Rodney elaborates: “In doing so, I am not saying that is the way things ought to be. I am simply recognizing the real world—that is the way things are. Under different circumstances, it would have been nice to be color blind, to choose my friends solely because their social interests coincided with mine—but no conscious black man can allow himself such luxuries in the contemporary world” (Rodney [1969] 2014: 217).
- ⁵ Nikhil Pal Singh suggests that while there are important exceptions, “thinkers in the Marxist tradition have largely failed to give sustained and sympathetic attention to this issue [viz., the role of racism in the history of capitalism]” (Pal Singh 2017: 79). This frustration with how the American Left has “relegated the struggle of Blacks to a subsidiary position in the revolutionary movement” (Haywood 1978: 234) reaches back at least as far as Hubert Harrison, who A. Philip Randolph called the “father of Harlem radicalism.” In recent years, at least in the USA, writes Abigail Bakan, “Marxism is often acknowledged but circumvented, dismissed for its apparent tendency to emphasize class relations and economic materiality to the exclusion of other forms of oppression and other ways of understanding

domination” (Bakan 2014: 99). And while some declare an inherent incompatibility of a Marxist perspective with consistent anti-racism (Robinson 2000), or claim that Marxism should be rejected as Eurocentric and the victim of Orientalism (Said 2003), Bakan believes—citing many Marxists who are also race and gender theorists—that the divide is by no means definitive.

- ⁶ Beiser explains Hegel’s historicism in this way: “(1) History. Everything in the social and political world has a history. All laws, institutions, beliefs, and practices are subject to change, and each is the result of a specific historical development...; (2) Context: We should examine all beliefs, practices, and institutions in their historical context, showing how they arose of necessity from their specific economic, social, legal, cultural and geographical conditions...; (3) Organicism: Society is an organism, an indivisible whole, whose politics, religion, morality and legal system are inextricably intertwined” (Beiser 2005: 29; also 262).

Creolization, Epistemic Decolonization, and the Problem of the Unpredictable Outcome

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Epistemic decolonization is a challenge that requires a clear and strong commitment on the part of various actors in the production (and reproduction) of knowledge. A non-hegemonic inquiry must take seriously issues of production and reproduction of knowledge-making practices, issues of credibility and authority, and resistance and controversies; it must also examine how new deployments of power and authority are manifested, overtly or not.

Calls to “decolonize” are not new per se, but recent and renewed calls to decolonize manifest a shift in focus. Contrary to the 1960s decolonizing project that correlated decolonization with nation-building and stressed the necessary decolonizing of geographical or physical territories, the more recent project focuses on decolonizing knowledge productions. The new agenda includes on the one hand a criticism of the production of a Eurocentric and imperial knowledge and on the other hand an effort to conceive of what the alternative would be. Admittedly, the project of epistemic decolonization has taken different forms and produced a variety of concepts and frameworks including, but not limited to, coloniality,¹ epistemic coloniality,² epistemic disobedience,³ epistemology of ignorance,⁴ epistemology of resistance,⁵ disciplinary decadence,⁶ the study of world philosophies, and creolization. The proliferation of conceptual frameworks suggests both the value and the urgency of epistemic decolonization.

Jane Gordon’s essay, as I read it, makes a compelling case for “creolizing political theory” and political ideas and “creolizing the canon” as ways to bring creolizing processes into recognized and authoritative intellectual and political domains. Here creolization is conceived of as a “social-scientific concept [...] a lens to perceive a counter- and more truthful narrative of what emerged out of the violently dispossessing worlds of plantation settler colonies” (Gordon 2020a: 94). The focus on political theory and the canon appears warranted since epistemic colonization is a crucial component of the system of oppression and domination that is colonialism and occurs when local knowledges are silenced or neglected and the colonizer’s knowledge is imposed and strengthened. In what follows I will discuss what I see as three crucial points in Gordon’s essay: a) the idea of creolizing as implying transformative and alternative forms of relation, b) the idea of the canon in a “plural mode” and its relation to creolization as a political project with possible limitations, and c) the possible relations between creolization, interdisciplinarity, and the idea of world philosophies.

1 On Creolizing’s Transformative Potential

Understood as a general principle of emergence of social life, principally in the South region of the Americas, creolization is, in Gordon’s view a social-scientific concept that “offered a human way of understanding the life-worlds that were forged in the inhuman situation of racialized plantation slavery” (Gordon 2020a: 95). In that sense creolization denotes both the process of emergence of social life and the social-scientific concept by which these life-worlds are understood. However, as Gordon emphasizes, “the extent of creolizing was uneven in different aspects of life” (Gordon 2020a: 95); some sites of knowledge, such as dance or literature, were more open to creolization than others, such as philosophy or political theory, where the European canon maintained exclusive authority.

Against this background, creolizing the canon and creolizing political theory are presented as intentional intellectual endeavors to produce creolization where it did not previously occur. Because creolization is understood strictly as a method of inquiry inspired by the principle of emergence of social life but not reducible to it, Gordon acknowledges several criticisms often raised against processes of creolization but does not take them to be necessarily applicable to the creolizing method she proposes. Criticisms of processes of creolization include the assertion of the perils of an uncritical celebration of mixture or hybridity as well as the recognition of the dangers associated with the assumed unity of diverse peoples. Gordon does not see the creolizing method as vulnerable to this type of criticism but concedes that the method can be informed by such criticism. She asserts that much of her understanding of “creolizing thinking” is “informed by how Frantz Fanon undertook his work” (Gordon 2020a: 97). Certainly, Fanon’s writings can be regarded as resulting from a creolizing method to the extent that he engaged with and challenged the western canon, while imposing the voices and experiences of the colonized—voices and experiences that colonialism intended to silence—and thereby reshaped the contours of western disciplines such as psychiatry, political theory, and philosophy. In that sense one might understand his work as neither interdisciplinary per se nor limited to the confines of one single discipline but rather as “rearticulating the fractured but ultimately shared world to which separate fields refer” (Gordon 2020a: 100). Such rearticulation is, as I understand it, what successful creolization is expected to be. Interestingly one might also see an invitation to creolizing in Fanon’s own claims. At the end of *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon suggests that we all become pioneers and innovators and calls for a diversification of connections and a humanization of communications. He writes: “Let us reexamine the question of man. Let us reexamine the question of cerebral reality, the brain mass of humanity in its entirety whose affinities must be increased, whose connections must be diversified and whose communications must be humanized again” (Fanon 2004: 238).

One might also be reminded of the work of the Martiniquan philosopher Edouard Glissant in this context. The epistemic project discussed here is a project of transformative relation, and relation is central to Glissant’s work although perhaps more salient in his later work where “relation” is conceived of as a particular aptitude to build social relation. In Glissant’s view, creolization is a form of social life specific to the southern region of the Americas that explains a conception of identity as relation as opposed to intolerance and exclusion. In his earlier work he discussed transversality as a dimension of human behavior. In *Caribbean Discourse* he notes that the diverse histories of the Caribbean “bring to light an unsuspected, because it is so too obvious, dimension of human behavior: *transversality*” (Glissant 1989: 66). Transversality is understood as a form of relation that is brought to light by the histories of the Caribbean which suggests that Caribbeans’ experiences are inherent contributions to modernity although they have been excluded from Euromodernity.

Perhaps the best evidence of the creolizing method resides in the *Creolizing the Canon* book series which, as described by Gordon, provides a space for scholars in the humanities and the social sciences to revisit the works of canonical figures and concepts, to make a case for seeing less recognized or neglected works as canonical or, more generally, to produce scholarly works informed by the creolizing method. Creolization is typically conceived of as a “byproduct of a particular kind of unprecedented human relations” (Gordon 2020a: 102) and, as I understand it, the *Creolizing the Canon* book series offers a space for deliberate scholarly engagement and stresses particular unprecedented relations in the domain of intellectual production, whether these relations already happened and were neglected or whether they did not happen but could have productively occurred.

2 The Idea of the Canon in a “Plural Mode”

At one level, the series offers an academic space for innovative forms of engagement with texts that are regarded as canonical, thereby providing an intentional “recontextualization” that aims at generating new understandings on crucial questions and concepts. At another level, recognizing that intellectual and political endeavors are grounded in a “relevant set of figures and texts and concepts or *their* canon,” the series affirms a conception of the idea of the canon “in a plural mode” (Gordon 2020a: 97). So, the existing canon is both engaged with and productively challenged to enhance understanding, and it is extended to include new figures and new conceptual frameworks. Gordon notes that, for example, the foundational work of Paget Henry is essential for developing works in Afro-Caribbean philosophy, or that Edouard Glissant is already a canonical figure in Caribbean thought whereas Frantz Fanon’s canonization has constantly been increasing in political theory.

Interestingly, while these works are examples of creolizing thinking, one wonders whether the canon, even when understood as plural, does not remain insular and unable to fully account for the creolizing dimension of these works. Perhaps the tension between creolizing works on the one hand and the canonization that might in the end recast them to fit traditional disciplines is inevitable given the assimilative power of academia and its various geographies of power, but it seems important to keep this tension in mind to develop effective methods of relation and resistance. Moreover, as Gordon notes, referring to forthcoming work by Inés Valdez, canonization comes in various forms, and some forms will reinforce the “very kinds of inaccuracies that creolizing hopes to counteract” (Gordon 2020a: 99). This, in my view, is an important point that it would have been interesting to develop further. How do we understand the idea of a creolizing method that “hopes” to counter inaccuracies? I appreciate the use of “hope” here and understand it as signaling the open-endedness of creolizing processes, but I wonder whether it does not also suggest a tension between a creolizing process, an intentional method of inquiry, and the result of such process.

I see here an opportunity to put this method in relation with Glissant’s work and especially with the emphasis Glissant put on the unpredictable character of the outcome of creolization. I wonder if taking Glissant’s contribution seriously might not make more visible a productive tension between the “deliberate crafted undertaking” that is creolizing the canon and the unpredictability of the outcome associated with creolizing. In Glissant’s words: “Creolization is unpredictable, whereas the immediate results of crossbreeding are more or less predictable. Furthermore, creolization opens on a radically new dimension of reality, not on a mechanical combination of components, characterized by value percentages. Therefore, creolization, which overlaps with linguistic production, does not produce direct synthesis, but *résultantes*, results: something else, another way” (Glissant 2008: 83). This unpredictable aspect is crucial for Glissant because it makes creolization a counter assertion to what he regards as ideological thinking, thinking associated with conquest, and “the thought of an imperative system” (Glissant 2008: 83). In Glissant’s view, creolization is never the action of achieving a goal toward which one has worked but rather an unpredictable process grounded in an unprecedented encounter that can only be understood as creolization after the fact. For him, creolizing is a process that can only be assessed looking backwards. Engaging Glissant’s understanding of creolization processes might help comprehend and perhaps accept canonizations that present the inaccuracies creolizing hopes to counter but cannot guarantee or even expect to always counter. Creolizing is a process and a becoming; canonization as discussed here is not a becoming but a being produced by a process of engagement that brings selected silenced or neglected works to the fore in the very specific context of academia understood as a site of power and knowledge production. So, it

seems important to distinguish the goal of engaging in the method of creolizing and the creolizing work that may or may not be produced as a result.

The tension between the deliberate practice oriented toward a preconceived goal of applying the creolizing method and its result appears linked to a different concern about the implications of the canon in a plural mode. How plural can a conception of the canon be? Or put differently, how compatible are creolizing and canonizing? Is canonizing even desirable if a crucial goal of epistemic decolonization is to create forms of knowledge production that do not follow colonial and imperial logics? It seems to me that canonizing might be in some respect a form of foreclosing while creolizing is not, and perhaps should not be, especially in a world defined by the legacy of settler colonialism, by imperialism, and by racial dynamics. I wonder whether in the end the very idea of a canon is not recentered by a creolizing process that hopes to counter the hegemony of the western canon but might allow for new forms of exclusion and neglect or newly formed hierarchies. Canonization is a form of categorization, and categorization, as Colette Guillaumin shows, is as pregnant with knowledge as it is with oppression (Guillaumin 1972: 183 et seq.). I submit that the canonizing process, that is, one of the possible results of the deliberate and intentional method of creolizing, should be distinguished from the canonization that “results” from unpredictable creolizing, and that the former needs to be constantly questioned and reexamined to ensure the very possibility of a method of creolizing.

3 Creolization, Interdisciplinarity, and the Idea of World Philosophies

As an activity of knowledge creation centered on a form of engagement that elaborates a “creolizing of methods,” in addition to the creolizing of understandings and conceptualizations, creolizing the canon might productively be put in relation with other methods of epistemic decolonization such as works in world philosophies generated through various methodologies. To engage in the creolizing of methods defended by Gordon is to engage in a praxis that is neither interdisciplinarity per se nor the reaffirmation of unique disciplinary specializations; it is to reshape “the fractured but ultimately shared world to which separate fields refer” (Gordon 2020a: 100). As a method of inquiry, creolizing imposes a distancing from traditional scholarly norms, to recognize that the contributions made by Euromodernity might be understood with more accuracy when put in relation with thinkers from the Global South and to identify those from outside the European canon who deserve canonization whether their own work is a version of creolizing or not. In that sense, creolizing the canon seems to take on a responsibility toward the past and a responsibility toward the future. History matters to this creolizing thinking: intellectual contributions that have been neglected, misjudged, or disallowed in the past get reconsidered, and new ideas for the present and for the future, including ideas to “construct a no longer colonial future” (Gordon 2020a: 102), get generated.

On one level, creolization can be regarded as a counter to what Glissant called “fundamentalisms of rationality, of science, of languages” (Glissant 1995), and in that regard it has a remarkable potential for reconceptualizing. To return to a point I made earlier and to thinkers whose works, on Gordon’s account, have been through the process of canonization, it is worth being reminded that both Glissant and Fanon challenged the boundaries of unique disciplinarity and went beyond interdisciplinarity in their work. Fanon and Glissant both wrote from within traditional academic disciplines—psychiatry, political theory, philosophy, critical theory—and from outside their boundaries, opening these disciplines to experiences and understandings that were initially excluded, while challenging ideas and beliefs about rationality and knowledge. The attention to such forms of fundamentalisms coupled with an attention to history and political geographies are central, in my view,

to both creolizing and the study of world philosophies. On another level, a constant engagement with the large variety of traditions in world philosophies might a) alleviate the risk of recentring the canon, albeit a plural one, and b) emphasize the important character of specific methodologies and practices in particular contexts. To engage in creolizing the canon and to account for neglected contributions from the Global South is also to engage with a variety of texts including philosophical treatises, essays, novels, and plays that have specific meaning and relevance in relation to particular contexts and methods. The analyses and discussions of different forms of expression taken by philosophical inquiries—such as poetry, aphorisms, or philosophical arguments, for instance—are an important aspect of the study of world philosophies and might be beneficially put in relation with the creolizing method. An interesting example of what I have in mind here is Glissant's refusal of a strict rupture between poetry and knowledge. I am referring to Glissant because of the already achieved canonization of his work discussed above, but other Caribbean thinkers such as René Ménéil⁷ or Aimé Césaire⁸ have expressed the same position. The understanding of an important relation between poetry and knowledge implies a reconceptualization of the theory of knowledge traditionally deployed in western philosophy. In this view the work of poetics is to transform reason and open it up to the complexities of a world in relation. There might be valuable insights in accounting for the transformative power of poetry and other practices, forms of expressions, and methods as well as creolizing, and all these approaches put in relation might be required to attempt to create less colonial and less imperial sites of knowledge production.

¹ See Wynter (2003) and Quijano (2000).

² See Mignolo (2000); Martín Alcoff (2007); Grosfogel (2007).

³ Mignolo (2013).

⁴ See Sullivan and Tuana (2007).

⁵ See Medina (2012).

⁶ See Gordon (2007).

⁷ René Ménéil (1907-2004), Martiniquan essayist, poet, political theorist, and trained philosopher. Contributor and editor to the literary journals *Legitime Defense* (1932, one issue, focused on literature and Martiniquan identity through a critical lense) and *Tropiques* (1941-1945, focused on the condemnation of the culture and the administration of the colonial order in Martinique). His book *Tracées: Identité, Négritude, Esthétique aux Antilles* (1981), a collection of essays, has not been translated into English, but several essays can be found translated by Michael Richardson and Krzysztof Fijalkowski. See Richardson and Fijalkowski (1996).

⁸ Aimé Césaire (1913-2008), Martiniquan poet, essayist, playwright, and politician; co-founder with Léon Gontran Damas and Léopold Sédar Senghor of The Negritude Movement and co-founder with Suzanne Césaire and other Martiniquan intellectuals of the literary journal *Tropiques* (1940s) engaged in the condemnation of French colonialism. His large body of works is available in English translation; of special interest to this discussion are: *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* (initially published in French in 1939), *Poetry and Knowledge* (1944-45), *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950), and *Letter to Maurice Thorez* (1956).

Creolizing the Canon: A Reply

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I would like to begin by thanking Gopal Guru, Kipton E. Jensen, Mickaella L. Perina, and Sundar Sarukkai for their thoughtful and critical engagement. I take the quality of their arguments and questions as a sign of the generative dimensions of creolizing theory. If it is a valuable enterprise, it is not necessarily because it offers all of the answers we seek. It would instead be because it provokes the kinds of challenges that will improve the way that we undertake our shared intellectual-political endeavors.

While the authors have raised a rich array of points that could be usefully considered here, I have organized my reply around three key themes that run through all of the essays, but which are especially magnified, first, in Jensen's clarification of the scope of the meaning and potential use of creolizing, second, in Perina's astute illumination of the hopefully productive tension between canonizing and creolizing processes, and, third, the forms of institution-building that creolizing must involve, if it is not to collapse into the naivete of which Guru and Sarukkai warn.

1 How to Teach, Or What the Black Radical Tradition Did with Hegel and Marx

Jensen offers a poignant example of my (and other scholars') claim that creolizing practices are also evident beyond the Caribbean.¹ His focus is on the ways contributors to the Black Radical Tradition have revisited and substantively reworked Hegelian and Marxist accounts of freedom and unfreedom with results that break new theoretical ground. In this sense, designating the innovations of W.E.B. Du Bois, Frantz Fanon, Walter Rodney, C.L.R. James, Kwame Nkrumah, and Angela Y. Davis as a *Black* Marxism can misleadingly suggest that they did something less than inaugurate a new moment of a project that Marx shared.² The results have enabled thinkers grappling with the central problematics of that political tradition to rework them in light of empire and race, among other twentieth- and twenty-first-century phenomena.

If these contributors to the Black Radical Tradition first encountered Hegel and Marx because both were European and canonical and, in Hegel's case, consequentially Eurocentric and racist, that was not why they continued to wrangle with them. They argued with these men because all had an orientating preoccupation with the master-slave dialectic or the centrality of the concretizing and broadening of freedom to propelling the movement of history. These were concerns that predated Hegel and Marx, even if both contributed to their understanding, and will continue long after any of us.³ Much of the most generative work in the history of philosophy was undertaken in precisely this spirit: rather than in the role of disciple, simply applying or elaborating existing theories, authors took up questions that they thought were vital but incompletely or wrongly pursued. In so doing, as Jensen contends, the efforts of members of the Black Radical Tradition may be likened to how the Bible has been used against missionaries (and slave masters), or how the aspirations of the French Revolution were radicalized in the context of Haiti, or how the US Declaration of Independence is mobilized to broaden the intended scope of its beneficiaries (Jensen 2020: 112). I couldn't agree more with Jensen that all of these examples challenge Audre Lorde's admonition about not being able to use the master's tools to dismantle the master's house, since as Du Bois, Fanon, Rodney, James, Nkrumah, and Davis

write, they challenge the masters' self-deception (which many non-masters have also imbibed) that thinking and theorizing were ever *theirs* to begin with.⁴

But, I could imagine a reader objecting, the Black Radical Tradition still emerged in the western or American hemisphere, even if as a radical challenge to its fundamental coordinates. Is creolizing only about such societies and their racial fixations?

Informed by both the larger movement to build Caribbean philosophy and by scholars who used the language of creolizing to describe processes on both sides of the Atlantic and along the Indian Ocean, as well as in the Roman Empire, I have emphasized the concept's Caribbean origins and its more global applicability.⁵ In Édouard Glissant's highly influential account of creolizing, cited by Perina, creolization was a form of life specific to the southern region of the Americas. At the same time, in other writings, he reflected that Caribbean "laboratories of disorder" positively anticipated both the character of global cities now and the world of the future. If plantations have largely vanished, Glissant argued that creolization marks all megapolises "where the inferno of cement slums is merely an extension of the inferno of the sugarcane or cotton fields" (Glissant 2008: 88). Put differently, in Stephan Palmié's formulation, as much of the world now experiences the colliding (rather than mediated meeting) of center and periphery, it is becoming more Caribbean (Palmié 2006).

As I am using it, creolizing thought and theory involves centering forms of knowing that have been denigrated precisely because of the people who were or are their source. In that sense, because racialized enslavement was practiced in the settler colonial societies of the Caribbean, it became a context fixated on race and color. That is why the term for illicit mixture coined by occupants of such societies and then by scholars was an Iberian one for people of mixed blood.⁶ Color and race were central implements for rationalizing these forms of oppression that required trying to discredit, in advance, the points of view of the people implicated. That is why creolizing thought, in these circumstances, centers on African and racialized peoples. In cases where the majority of unfree labor was Indigenous or Indian or Chinese, similar attempts at justification were elaborated, with similar implications for creolizing projects. In other settings, religious differences or those of caste would be more significant, since it would be those categories that would overdetermine the modes of life and crucial insights linked to political situations of foundational exclusion.

In *Creolizing Political Theory*, I considered the implicit disagreement between Mimi Sheller and Ulf Hannerz about the transcultural usefulness of the word *creolizing*, which the latter considers alongside words like *mafia* or *apartheid*, *democratization* or *legitimization*.⁷ Each word-concept travels to the extent that one pays equal attention to the similarities it allows one to discern as well as the distinctiveness that it risks obscuring. In response to Guru and Sarukkai's question, I would be surprised if there were not multiple words for describing the process of creolizing. However, in identifying them, it is essential to remember that creolizing is not portraying just any cultural mixing. After all, the term emerged to describe evidence of multidirectional relations of influence of those people thought to occupy different rungs of a hierarchically ordered humanity. These were not, in Walter Mignolo's words, blendings across imperial but instead colonial differences (Mignolo 2000). For this reason, based on their account of it, "sanskritization" does not seem appropriate, since it names unilateral assimilation of lower castes of people into hegemonic cultures. More apt would be if there were a term for instances where it is indisputable that a Brahmin domain of life had been palpably influenced by Dalit ideas and practices. As that example suggests, typically, if such a relationship of influence is acknowledged among the powerful seeking radical separation and purity, it is in expressions of disavowal and disgust, in English words like "pollution" and "bastardization." I have used *creolizing* because its emergence expressed surprise at phenomena that challenged hegemonic

thinking. But it would be thoroughly in the spirit of creolizing if there were a multiplicity of names that could be in circulation for distinct instances of these processes.

Just as my aim is not an imperial imposition of the word and language of *creolizing*, the project of *Creolizing the Canon* was certainly not to make Jean-Jacques Rousseau or G.W.F. Hegel (or Rosa Luxemburg) “more globally acceptable” (Guru and Sarukkai 2020: 106). It was in part to document and explore the largely unstudied nature of their more fully global (primarily African, Caribbean, and Latin American) reception.

For many Global Southern intellectuals, their engagements were not primarily with Rousseau or Hegel at all. They were grappling with problems or concepts that these figures also explored. The ideas were more important than either the historical men or their specific texts. Among these themes, for Rousseau, were whether methods of inquiry could be pursued independently of projects of empire and how to articulate what can be defended as a common good. Historical and contemporary Global Southern thinkers therefore used Rousseau and Hegel’s writings as a resource among many others, but not in a project that either man was understood to own, or even really to authorize. In this sense, as Jensen writes, citing Cornel West, one can use Hegel against Hegelianism, putting questions and problems encountered through him to work in contexts that were not his, expressing ideas through projects he might have abhorred. The results are often unpredictable and transformative.

Those who wrote for each of these book projects engaged explicitly with Rousseau and Hegel’s Eurocentrism and racism and their consequences for emancipatory global politics and thought. They did not, in Lewis R. Gordon’s words, engage in *theodician* readings of the relevant texts; they remembered that the relevant writings were authored by human beings, not gods.⁸ Some analyzed the authors’ prejudices as ways to understand how their at times brilliant thinking and imagination were foreclosed by their insulation in a Euromodern worldview; how they explored perennial themes in particular idioms reflective of the limits and possibilities of their relationship to their location. Such reflection usefully returns them to the status of historical people who spoke imperfectly across time.

Michael Monahan (when editing *Creolizing Hegel*, 2017) and Neil Roberts and I (with *Creolizing Rousseau*, 2015) began with these figures because we were interested in the relationship between their profundity and their parochialism and with what we knew Global Southern intellectuals had productively done with and to them; how a Rousseau or a Hegel was made to matter through their transformation in other settings. Crucial was that such contributions not be reduced to or misunderstood as mere application of ideas of European origins rather than as what they were: a global meeting of minds. If Rousseau and Hegel are going to continue being studied, one reason should be as an entry into this more worldly intellectual genealogy.

But even if some have found the work of Rousseau and Hegel indispensable to their own thinking, we are not suggesting that everyone must prioritize attention to it. More valuable is how Global Southern thinkers in the Euromodern period exemplified a mode of transformative engagement distinct from those that more typically just reify or reject.

Since the book series’ editors are located in the US, we have begun with instances of creolizing that speak to this context and its disavowed, neglected, and silenced dimensions. Still, if this is a paradigm that is useful, we hope to broaden and deepen our conversations. Some such work has been undertaken through the Caribbean Philosophical Association’s (CPA’s) *Global Critical Caribbean Thought* series. Among its works are books by Indigenous Colombian (Kamëntšá) and South African writers.⁹ Reading Guru and Sarukkai confirmed my resolve also to move forward with an idea I had been thinking to propose, of a creolizing Ambedkar volume. Given the ongoing exploration of his ideas and the recent increased use of the word *caste* (without the sustained study of work on India that scholars like Du Bois engaged in), such critical exploration seems especially pressing.

Although they are entering their sixth year, we see both *Creolizing the Canon* and *Global Critical Caribbean Thought* as still in their beginning stages, venues that we hope will, with increasing range, contribute to a larger, necessary effort to “populate the reading lists with writers from other societies and experiences” (Guru and Sarukkai 2020: 106). Further creolizing cannot follow from expecting everything worthwhile to arrive at one’s door and in a language that one already reads or speaks. It is for that reason that I have been actively seeking out funds to translate work into English. Much translation goes in the other direction, shoring up the mistaken perception that the most valuable ideas are only written in that tongue.

2 The (Productive?) Tension between Canonizing and Creolizing

Perina’s analysis of canonizing and creolizing is right on multiple fronts. First, that a “non-hegemonic inquiry must take seriously issues of production and reproduction of knowledge-making practices, issues of credibility and authority, and resistance and controversies; it must also examine how new deployments of power and authority are manifested, overtly or not” (Perina 2020: 118). Second, that in the context of his calls for anti-colonial struggle, Frantz Fanon invited a creolizing of intellectual endeavor at the end of *Wretched of the Earth*, when he wrote, “Let us reexamine the question of man. Let us reexamine the question of cerebral reality, the brain mass of humanity in its entirety whose affinities must be increased, whose connections must be diversified and whose communications must be humanized again” (Fanon 2004: 238). Third, the project of bringing creolizing processes into intellectual and political domains that are recognized as authoritative aims to respond constructively to historic and ongoing epistemic colonization. In this sense, I see creolizing work as reflective of Firoze Manji’s reminder that education is “a process by which people gain an authority over their own experience.”¹⁰

Perina is also correct when she describes creolizing as a method that is inspired by, but not reducible to, elements of the social-scientific process to which the word refers (including its conflation with celebrating mixture for its own sake and reifying particular forms of mixtures as new, prescriptive, normative standards), but not reducible to them. An example is in Glissant, for whom, as Perina explains, “creolization” refers to unpredictable byproducts of a particular kind of unprecedented human relation. Although these result from such combination, they are not the mechanical or additive combination of the contributing parts. In addition, for Glissant, one cannot deliberately undertake creolization. It can only be assessed as something that has transpired. As such, creolizing is a counter-assertion to predictive, controlling, imperative, and ordering thinking associated with conquest.

The claim about the ex post facto nature of creolizing is one that I grappled with when writing *Creolizing Political Theory*. Can one prescribe or deliberately undertake creolizing, if guided by its empirical instantiations? No one who contributed to the production of what were later recognized as creolized products undertook to create them as such. I argued that one can insist, especially in the political domain, that one’s thinking is enriched by being accountable to the biggest range of relevant perspectives, where these are not gauged only numerically but according to the political situations they express. In addition, one can assume, absent obstacles and deliberate exclusions, that people would draw from the fullest range of excellent ideas. Many of the failures to do so have resulted from efforts of the Euromodern world to exercise a monopoly on what could emerge as reasonable, intellectual, and worthy of knowing. In that sense, creolizing involves documenting meetings of worlds that were supposedly not possible, but that emerged nonetheless, and imagining and staging such meetings in the hope that other, fuller, less contrived ones can emerge in their wake.

Still, when treated as an approach to canons, canon formation, and canonization, Perina raises crucial questions: even if made plural, do canons, by definition, remain insular and therefore unable to account fully for the creolizing dimensions of individual canonized texts and the creolizing processes of their emergence? Even if undertaken in an expansive spirit, does canonization involve recasting works to “fit traditional disciplines,” especially given “the assimilative power of academia and its various geographies of power” (Perina 2020: 120)? In addition, is there a disjuncture between creolizing as an intentional process and the result of such processes? Is it possible, following Glissant, that conventional forms of canonization could be countered by creolization, but with results that are not guaranteed, especially if creolizing is a process of becoming, while canonization is produced? Might canonizing necessitate foreclosing that creolizing does not; might canonizing require forms of recentering that creolizing rejects?

There are different ways of envisioning what a canon is and how it can function. For instance, what if one engages with a set of texts that represent the way different generations undertook a shared project, agreeing and disagreeing with one another, to address changing circumstances in which the same political aims were sought? What if such a reading list models conversations and debates and is seen as offering tools and concepts for further development and refashioning? I am thinking of the variety of texts one might assemble that make the case for decentralized and ongoing modes of social transformation or writings in Caribbean political thought that, read together, exemplify the variety of genres in which philosophical ideas have been expressed and how the political is understood in relation to a range of other domains.

It is true that, even if organized around a shared aspiration, that aim thereby becomes the criterion for inclusion (and thereby exclusion), magnifying some forms of knowing and not others. At the same time, if the mode of engaging with what emerge as relevant texts emphasizes that they offer one kind of literacy or introduction to one set of concepts, analogies and metaphors, modes of persuasion, and mythic frames, one can emphasize that there are many others. Growing familiarity would enable one to participate in this terrain and to recognize the conversance one lacks in others.

Is it generative, for instance, to ask what a canon for global emancipatory thought could include and to compare the different answers that discrete communities might formulate? One can imagine texts and concepts that might be identified as indispensable, some of which might be shared across contexts, even if the reasons for their engagement would be varied. Some contenders might include efforts to articulate a common good; the notion of the pursuit of freedom as driving history, in a normative sense, forward; ideas about the kinds of relations that cannot emerge among those who dominate and those they seek to dominate; how to forge modes of collective life that minimize predation; the tenacious destructiveness of insatiability and self-deception; the extent to which people can think beyond their circumstances and remain legible to their contemporaries.

But, even in such circumstances, I agree with Perina that if one undertakes the project of canon formation, understood in these terms, it is helpful constantly to consider what is being left out and to imagine that, as a perpetual student, one will become aware of interlocutors of those already included who have been wrongfully left out. Similarly, as circumstances in which particular projects are undertaken shift, one can imagine some authors becoming more or less relevant. In other words, it is highly productive to retain an active tension between canonizing, on the one hand, and creolizing, on the other. We can avoid reifying and sedimenting canons as we remember that they are constructed, can be reconstructed, and might be constructed otherwise. This is especially crucial if we want to be sure that we are not collapsing into treating our organizing aim, which determines the content of the canon, as one that we have understood once and for all.¹¹

Still, even when cultivating this dialectical disposition, it is true that the results of such endeavors—how others ascribe authoritativeness to a figure in increased circulation, for example—may be in ways unintended by those who have pushed for wider readership. For all of his arguments for people engaged in anti- and decolonial struggle thinking creatively for themselves in the face of emergent challenges, for example, many may come to read Fanon as a source of pithy slogans, with none of the irony and dialectical character that saturates his writing. Even if the aim of including a figure is to encounter a context of generative debate through them, they may instead be plucked out of the world to which they are referring.

3 Building Institutional Homes for Creolizing

Perina is on target in her observation that creolizing the canon involves taking responsibility for the past and the future. To paraphrase her: History matters to creolizing thinking as neglected, misjudged, or disallowed ideas get re-presented; ideas are generated for the present and for the construction of a no longer colonial future.

My reflection regarding creolizing political theory and philosophy began as I participated in the CPA's concrete effort to challenge the way that both were being taught in many universities in the Caribbean. As the organization met on different Caribbean islands in the early years of this century, we orchestrated the converging of international communities of scholars whose work was rooted in Caribbean intellectual resources.¹² We hoped our efforts would place pressure on local universities to develop curricula that centered local theoretical contributions. Over time, several did, often hiring African, Caribbean, and East Indian professors to teach these new courses.

We came to understand this work as creolizing a domain that had been almost completely monopolized by the propagation and reproduction of a small set of European thinkers' ideas. Undertaking this shift required deliberate consideration of what constitutes philosophy and theory, what warrants inclusion as examples, and how the resulting works should be organized. Central to this was what Dipesh Chakrabarty described as the provincializing of Europe: its hegemonic mode of conceiving the relationship of philosophy to other forms of reflection and experience emerged as one, contingent way, among others (Chakrabarty 2008). As I hope the CPA example suggests, the question of centering that which is local will be pertinent everywhere. The argument is not that everyone must read Caribbean texts, though they might benefit from doing so! It is that a similar process of re-enfranchising local intellectual resources, those that have been actively discredited as legitimate ways of knowing, is vital.

As referenced earlier, part of my argument was that, if one undertook intellectual endeavors in terrains without commitments to exclusion, creolizing would happen inevitably. People would read freely among designated fields and, if they had the linguistic resources to do so, among language contexts. (Of course, it is those raised in the United States who tend to be least equipped to engage in this intellectual internationalism. It is no surprise that comparative political theory in the US has blossomed with the growth of an intelligentsia that includes increasing numbers of immigrants.) The limited range of ideas encountered in contemporary universities is not due to an absence of good options. It is because there is a commitment to a small community of people and their chosen exceptions maintaining a monopoly over certain kinds of intellectual endeavor.

Guru and Sakkurai are right to emphasize the absence of what I am arguing for in the norms and practices of hegemonic publishing. This is precisely what led to creation of the two CPA book series and, more recently, to the new, open access journal *Philosophy and Global Affairs*.¹³ We must start

somewhere in creating spaces that seek to reflect a fuller range of forms of inquiry relevant to understanding the contemporary world. To equip us to move in such directions, our editorial board includes scholars with a range of linguistic fluencies and whose theoretical work is also rooted in fields that are not conventionally understood as philosophical. Our advisory board is global, including intellectual institution builders. Certain sites are antithetical to creolizing; however, they are not the only ones available for the publishing and circulation of work.

Similarly, in institutional spaces where we are located, we are trying to reflect creolizing practices so that our students don't think they can be considered literate—let alone expert—in political theory or philosophy if they only read a small set of Europeans or Americans. This requires much self-education of faculty and students and continual learning from others about all that we do not know. Since the aim is not a “superficial accommodation of difference,” I hope that forums like this one can lead to exchange about who and what should be studied and how.

As Perina points out, taking cues from Fanon, Glissant, René Ménil, and Aimé Césaire, creolizing texts draw from resources of traditional disciplines while speaking to problems that bridge or transcend them. In so doing, they also enact other ways of expressing insight, opening avenues for how reason and wisdom are articulated. The frequent Caribbean use of poetry is reminiscent of the ways that many West African philosophers centrally engage proverbs. Such works urge readers to reconsider what constitutes theory and the language and resources of and for it. They certainly do not treat English or French ways of defining human nature as self-evident or universal. In fact, in many instances, they begin with the understanding that such conceptions, which include the duality of mind and body, are disastrously bankrupt.

It is true that those antipathetic to creolizing ideas are likely, when evaluating an article or book manuscript or potential job candidate, to see them as illicit or impure or bastardized in ways that the social-scientific frame helps one to anticipate. It is also important to emphasize that, if rooted in insights from social-scientific processes, creolizing in the intellectual domain need not include European or Euro-American or Global Northern ideas at all, unless doing so is necessary or useful. Still, one can rest assured that, for those who have long benefited from a Global South divided, such emergent intellectual-political alliances would, perhaps appropriately, be considered dangerous.

That the academy in the Euromodern world is deeply exclusionary, especially of African, Asian, Caribbean, Indigenous, and Latin American thinkers is very clear. Indeed, the desire for exclusion runs so deep, Peter K.J. Park demonstrates, as to involve pretending that African and Asian influences on European canonical thinkers were not there (Park 2014). This desire to make European intellectual contributions *sui generis* and without any debts to the rest of the globe is reflected in how many scholars are trained, which journals are often prized, and which articles are frequently cited.

Issues of exclusion and hegemony that dominate in the intellectual domain are not absent in the cultural domain, and just as there is not an intrinsic relationship between culture, exclusion, and hegemony, there is no intrinsic relationship between knowledge, exclusion, and hegemony. Not all creolizing is intrinsically progressive, even if it does register a fuller range of ways of undertaking human processes. The results are progressive when they emerge with efforts to challenge unfreedom or expand freedom's reach and meaning. Such processes can never emerge uncreolized. If we are trying to address global challenges in emancipatory ways, we cannot do so with a set of resources emanating from a small set of voices in a small set of predicaments. But calling for such creolizing demands building the institutional conditions for it to occur.

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- 1 See, for example, Gordon (2014); Boatcă (2020); Eriksen (2007).
- 2 This is especially the case if the “Black” in “Black Marxism” is not understood as *political* Blackness.
- 3 My thinking regarding this argument is informed by Thomas Meagher (forthcoming).
- 4 For Lorde’s classic discussion, see Lorde (2018). For critical reconsideration of this argument, see Lewis R. Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon (2005), ix–xii.
- 5 In addition to the citations in note 1, see Webster (2001).
- 6 There is disagreement about the word’s etymology, with Kamau Braithwaite provocatively suggesting that it combines the Spanish word for *criar* (to create, imagine, establish, found) with *colon* (a colonist, founder, settler) into *criollo* or one identified with the area of settlement, localized through blending, though not ancestrally indigenous to it (Braithwaite 1971). Chaudenson observes that creole people “preceded by many years the languages that are identified by the same name.” For discussion of the many different ways that creole people were defined throughout the French colonies, from designating locally born whites, mulattos, or blacks, to identifying specifically those who were not Franco-Mauritian, Indo-Mauritian, or Sino-Mauritian, to a way of referring to those whose primary or only language was Creole as opposed to an immigrant or official tongue, see Chaudenson (2001, chapter 1).
- 7 For Sheller, this can only mean to gut and overextend the concept in a way that she likens to piracy. For Hannerz, the tensions between links to particular regions and generalized notions remain with all theorizing and we can think internationally and constructively while remaining aware of subtleties inevitably lost in translation. See Sheller (2003) and Hannerz (2006).
- 8 For discussion of theodician and non-theodician readings of texts, see Gordon (2021).
- 9 See Chindoy Chindoy (2020); More (2018); and Madlingozi (2021).
- 10 Remarks delivered at the Global Center for Advanced Studies (GCAS) Convocation, October 11, 2020.
- 11 My thinking on this last point has been enriched by Thomas Meagher’s critical engagement with the work of Nelson Maldonado-Torres (in Meagher forthcoming).
- 12 For more information about the CPA, see:
<http://www.caribbeanphilosophicalassociation.org/about.html>.
- 13 For more information regarding these, see:
https://rowman.com/Action/SERIES/_/RLICTC/Creolizing-the-Canon,
https://rowman.com/Action/SERIES/_/RLIGCC/Global-Critical-Caribbean-Thought, and
<https://www.pdcnet.org/pgs/Philosophy-and-Global-Affairs>
 The success of the two series led to “establishment” publishers increasing efforts to sign similar series to their catalogue.

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