We have never been Cajun:
créolization and whitened identity at the margins of memory

by

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Abstract

In restaurants, dance halls, and travel brochures around the world, the word "Cajun" brings to mind a plethora of significations related to flavorful foods, exotic language, and geographical affiliation with South Louisiana— but what exactly is "Cajun" anyway? How has "Cajun" emerged as a community, culture, and identity? Who are the Cajuns today? This thesis rereads "Cajun history" in the larger context of Créole Louisiana, tracing issues of class, language, colonization, racialization, and modernization from Colonial Louisiana through 2020. This is accomplished with the aid of literary analyses, including authors such as Cable, Chopin, de la Houssaye, and Arceneaux, films such as *Louisiana Story,* and folk stereotype humor in the form of Boudreaux and Thibodeaux jokes. The thesis introduces postcolonial theoretical frameworks of mimicry, fixity, hybridity and créolization as methods for understanding the oft-forgotten historical relationality of identities, cultures, and languages in Southern Louisiana. In the 1970s Caribbean writers such as Édouard Glissant put forward the unfinished and unpredictable creativity of the historical, geographical, and anthropological space of Creole society and culture from the Antillean point of view. In a similar move, my introduction of the theory of creolization to Louisiana history seeks to wrestle back the power of Acadie or even France as the fundamental matrix of non-Anglophone culture, history, and identity in Louisiana. Instead, the complex perspective of Creolité threatens the stability of these origin myths, revitalizing our concept of history, culture, and identity in the localized touchstone of South Louisiana, while understanding that this localized perspective is always already an ongoing production at the borders of culture(s) in contact. Ultimately, I argue that Southern Louisiana since colonization has consistently been a site of créolization, destabilizing claims of Acadianness as the sole figurehead for francophone or franco-créolophone identity in the region.

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Dedication

To Clifford Fontenot Sr. *et nous-autres Créoles* in Cajun masks.

Introduction

> On est Français, mais pas Français d'la France,
> on est,
> mais on est pas tout à fait
> tout en étant *American*,
> mais pas Américain
>
> Nous autres, on est les Cadjins et les Cadjinnes toujours,
> on dit,
> on écrit les Cadiens et les Cadiennes,
> quand on écrit,
> on est «kai-djeunes» si tu parles pas français,
> mais on est Cajun jamais jamais.
> -Kirby Jambon, "Qui'c'qu'on est" (ll. 1-11)

Enunciation of Position

In restaurants, dance halls, and travel brochures around the world, the word "Cajun" brings to mind a plethora of significations related to flavorful foods, exotic language, and geographical affiliation with South Louisiana— but what exactly is "Cajun" anyway? How has "Cajun" emerged as a community, culture, and identity? Who are the Cajuns today?

I have been told all my life that I am Cajun, though like many Cajuns my heritage is certainly mixed. I have Acadian ancestry (Gauthier), Créole ancestry (Fontenot, DeVille, Bordelon), and Anglo-American ancestry with some Polish background (Delbridge, Nowak). My patrilineal background follows the familiar three generation pattern of assimilation: my great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers were all monolingual francophones. My grandparents were raised in French but learned English at school and became deeply Americanized. My father was raised almost completely in English. I was raised in English, but I have begun to come to terms with the phantom language and culture that still structures our speech in English, our cultural tendencies, and our relationships with the land. I remember repeatedly being told that Louisiana French languages were broken, dying out, and useless to learn. During my undergraduate studies at Louisiana State University, I realized that these beliefs come from a process of Americanization, and that today there is a Louisiana francophone resurgence movement whose existence is an act of resistance to this ideology. When I began studying cultural, social, and political thought in graduate school at the University of Victoria, I became changed by Gramsci's formulation of the "organic intellectual," who works creatively as part of the society they live in (Gramsci 134-161). Seeing that most scholarship on francophone Louisiana focuses on either Cajun history as a monolith or Créole history separately, I realized that the intensely hybrid nature of these still changing identities in relation has not been vigorously addressed with the theoretical arsenal now available. Thus, I embarked on a scholarly adventure wherein I have studied the historical formation of these identities and simultaneously attempted to introduce the kind of theoretical apparatuses I believe are needed to understand the past in order to build the future.

Introduction

From time to time, the myths that have been built around the "Cajun" are so intense that Cajuns are spoken of as though autochthonous to Southern Louisiana (Jones and Ells 1)— a myth

that clearly clashes with the narrative that Cajuns are direct descendants of the Acadian settlers exiled from the Canadian Maritime Provinces (Acadie) in the mid-eighteenth century. The word "Cajun" is an Anglo-American bastardization of a Louisiana French pronunciation "'Cadien," and it lives primarily as an anglophone concept (Brasseaux, *Acadian to Cajun* 150). If we are *Acadian* or *Cadien*, we have never been *Cajun*.

However, many who identify as Cajun today have little or no Acadian ancestry. After over 250 years of settlement, cultural borrowing and mixing, and Americanization in Louisiana, Cajun culture can no longer be addressed as purely Acadian. My first chapter uses historical scholarship from the past thirty years (Ancelet, Brasseaux, Bankston and Henry, Hebert-Leider, Landry, Trépanier) along with Louisiana literature of the late nineteenth century (Cable, Chopin, de la Houssaye) to show how Acadians, phenotypically white Créoles, Foreign French, and others underwent a two-part process of post-bellum downward mobility and racialization that created the "Cajun" as an ethno-class (Bankston and Henry 69) in the late nineteenth century. This new Cajun category omitted people of color with Acadian heritage and expanded the Cajun label to phenotypically white people without Acadian heritage (Brasseaux *Acadian to Cajun* 89-111). As the binary Anglo-American concept of race continued to influence francophone Louisiana and harden into a discourse that saw race as a scientific fact, Créoles of phenotypically non-white skin tone all became "Colored" or "Black," while those who were phenotypically white became part of the "Cajun race," or at times, for white purity's sake, the "Acadian race" (Rabalais 10:30-15:00). I argue that this "Cajunization of Louisiana" (Trépanier 161-171) set up a false dichotomy between Cajuns and Créoles, foreclosing a franco-créolophone[1] future by artificially dividing people, culture, and politics along racial lines. If we are Cajun, we have never been only Acadian.

The first chapter ends as Anglo-Americans rush into Southern Louisiana during Reconstruction. In this period, stigmatization of the Cajun solidifies with stereotypes of laziness, drunkenness, and stupidity. The second chapter begins with a movement that arose in the early twentieth century to rectify the image of Acadian heritage with the noble-exile-become-American narrative of *Evangeline* (Rabalais 10:30-21:20)(Longfellow 1). With this movement, however, the Evangelinized origin story became a surrogate narrative in place of the history of poverty, folk culture, slaveholding, and exogamy from which generations of Cajuns had come (Rabalais 10:30-12:00). This problem has become pertinent in the scholarly discourse within the past few decades, and it is covered in Brasseaux's *In Search of Evangeline*, Landry's *A Creole Melting Pot*, Hebert-Leiter's, *Becoming Cajun, Becoming American* and in Rabalais' film, *Finding Cajun* (Brasseaux 2-89, Landry 94-95, Hebert-Leiter 84-85, 125, Rabalais 10:30-21:20). Acknowledging these works, I argue that the Evangelinized origin myth implies pure whiteness while reinforcing the benevolent settlement and assimilation myth of a settler-colonial nation-state. I go on to argue that this movement signals a process of whitening the Cajun identity, and that it was intricately linked to the "Americanization of the Cajuns" (Bernard 1). Over the course of the twentieth century, the idea that all francophone culture in Louisiana was based on the Acadians was cemented, though the stigma around being Cajun continued until at least the late 1960s (Bernard 120-145). Performances of these stereotypes and their political and psychological consequences are discussed in chapter three. Several scholars have pointed out Cajun stereotypes in literature and film (Hebert-Leiter 1-127)(Ancelet "Cajuns in Film" 1-12), and others have begun to analyze the symbolic quality of these stereotypes (Bankston and Henry "Ethnic Self-identification and Symbolic Stereotyping" 1-26) (Bankston and Henry *Blue Collar Bayou* 64-85). However, no scholarship has rigorously theorized the effects of Cajun stereotypes, especially through a postcolonial lens, so I will do so here through Homi K. Bhabha's theories outlined in *The Location of Culture*.

[1] By franco-créolophone, I mean speakers of all local heritage languages, particularly Louisiana French, Kouri Vini (the standardized form of Louisiana Créole), and dialects thereof.

Back in chapter two, from the First World War until the 1960s, a process of Americanization occurred among the francophones and créolophones of Louisiana that so changed the lifeworld of French Louisiana that the Créole world of the past had become nearly inconceivable. Bernard's *The Cajuns: Americanization of a People*, Bankston and Henry's *Blue Collar Bayou*, and others argue that this Americanization has drastically changed the Cajuns, but Americanization has not yet been rigorously analyzed as a process through the dual lenses of class (except Bankston and Henry to an extent) and postcolonial theory. Thus, I use Louis Althusser's theoretical framework of the ideological state apparatus to understand the assimilatory aims of this Americanization project through schools, the military, and the family apparatus, intended to produce a white anglophone working class that could succeed in the wider nation, or at least in the oil fields. Likewise, I discuss Jean Arceneaux's poetry to understand a Cadien perspective that sees anglo-Americanization of the Cajuns as an act of colonization. I then argue that if we are going to lament the "Americanization of the Cajuns" (Bernard 1), we must understand this authentic event as the process whereby a race or whitened ethno-class was constructed. In this context, I discuss the commodification of Cajun culture over Créole culture, Cajun culture's hybrid nature, and the Council on the Development of French in Louisiana's work to promote francophonie in Louisiana.

As Bruno Latour's book, *We Have Never Been Modern*, deconstructs the false binary that modernity sets up between nature and human, I use the phrase "we have never been Cajun" to deconstruct the strict binaries set up between black and white, Cajun and Créole, and Créole and American. Moreover, I argue that if Cajun is going to continue to exist as an identity, Cajuns must also take responsibility for the process the Cajun identity has undergone to arrive in its current place as a créole, post-Americanized, whitened identity. Scholarship on créoleness as a descriptive property or créolization as a cultural process in Louisiana has been scant, with the exception of a nascent outline in Jacques Henry's short article, "Toward a Structuralist Analysis of Creolism" (Henry 558-565).

This thesis follows the maxim that "creoleness is an annihilation of false universality, of monolingualism, and of purity," put forth by authors of the Créolité movement (Bernabé, Chamoiseau, Confiant, & Khyar 892). Créolité (creoleness is English) is a descriptive term, and we must recognize its distinction from Édouard Glissant's term, "créolization," which instead signifies a process that is a diachronic "poetics of relation" (Glissant 11), or "a limitless *métissage*" (34). In this framing, we are able to see créolization not as a finished product, but as an endless procedure, constantly producing new forms at the unstable boundaries between cultures. Both Créolité and créolization will become pertinent concepts for this analysis. Because the Créolité movement was based in the Antilles in the 1980s, the geohistorical particularity of the term "Créole" differs from the Louisiana context. While the Antillean Créole identity is still set in opposition to colonial European power, in Louisiana, Créole identity is specifically set in opposition to the United States. This is due to the fact that Louisiana became a U.S. state in 1812, whereas most Antillean nations are much more recently bound up in decolonial struggles. Whereas definitions of créolité between Louisiana and the Antilles may have been very similar in the late eighteenth century, for example, definitions of "Créole" now differ after two centuries of U.S. statehood and over a century of binary racial segregation that nearly destroyed Créole as an identity. My hope, therefore, is to base my study in historical Louisiana concepts of the Créole, then to use the theoretical power of these more recent, Glissantian and Chamoiseauean concepts of créolization to successfully build a framework for understanding that Créolité and créolization never stopped in Louisiana, not least among "Cajuns."

Thus, in the fourth chapter, I use Édouard Glissant's theory of créolization to reopen the question of Americanization in Louisiana. I argue that Americanization was wrought by the hegemonic goal of assimilation, but that the Americanized Cajun has emerged as another iteration of a créolized subject. From this point, I argue toward this work's main thesis: for créolization to be successful (as opposed to what Glissant calls globalization)(Glissant 6-21), the unique overlapping

histories and geographies that make up a créolized subject must be addressed and given voice. This is an argument in defense of créolité (creoleness is English) in Louisiana (Bernabé, Chamoiseau, Confiant, & Khyar 892). In Louisiana, this means promoting multilingualism and multiculturalism, and looking with scorn upon the forces of racism, capitalism, and anglophone dominance that have kept Louisianians divided for so long. I address Arlie Hochschild's *Strangers in Their Own Land*, arguing that the Tea Party Cajuns interviewed in the book represent the problems that have arisen from americanism disrupting créole memory. I argue that assimilating in the American model without recognizing the créolization that creates us as subjects leads us falsely to blame immigrants, people of color, and the poor rather than corporations, divisive rhetoric, and chauvinism.

In Louisiana, Cajun heritage is now a proud moniker, though still heavily bogged down in stereotypes by the rest of America. Today, use of the "Cajun" label continues to emerge as a global industry, and Cajuns have a responsibility to consider how this word circulates in a local, national, and global discourse. We have a responsibility to reconcile the mythical value of the Cajun with the roots of settler-colonialism and slavery, the wounds of segregation and linguistic suppression carved by the same blade, and the new growth on the still breathing tree of Créole Louisiana. These issues have not yet been addressed simultaneously in academic writing about the Cajuns. Thus, this thesis will address these issues through historical analysis, and aim to build a concept of créolization for Louisiana that pushes back against these searches for purity of origin, the erasure of assimilation, and other structures that have kept Cajuns from addressing themselves as créolized subjects.

Why do this work?

This approach toward the study of Cajun identity is needed because 1)it will inject a theoretical vocabulary and understanding into the field of Cajun and Créole Studies, which I hope will be taken up by others in the future 2) it will firmly establish the place of Louisiana Cajun and Créole culture in discussions on postcolonial identity and 3) it will offer a comparative reading of divergent views of Cajunness (monocultural vs. multicultural and commodified Cajunness vs. Cadien and Créole self-representation through writing) that outlines the contemporary relationship between the Cajun, the Créole, and the American.

Treatment of terms: Acadian? Cajun? Créole?

The word "Cajun" was coined as an Americanized derivation of the French word *Acadien*. While the word Cajun is commonly used to signify the people and culture of eighteenth century Acadia transported to Louisiana, recent scholarship has stressed that "Cajun" has also come to signify the culture(s) produced by large bands of ethno-historically diverse peoples in Southern Louisiana. The term Acadian signifies a diasporic group of settler-colonists (and their descendants) who embarked from France[2] to establish settlements in Acadie, a colonial territory of New France centered around what are now Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, beginning in 1604-05 (Bernard 43). In the first half of the eighteenth century, competition between the British and French Empires intensified in the area and territory frequently changed hands. As British authorities anticipated the imperial conflict that would become known as the French and Indian War, the acting governor of Nova Scotia, Charles Lawrence, devised a plan to deport the Acadians, who he anxiously assumed would aid the French Empire (Laxer 55). In August of 1755, after a century and a half of Acadian settlement[3], British warships began arriving in Acadian villages to

[2] The Acadians settlers came mostly from the Poitou, Brittany, and Normandy regions of France.

[3] Between 1605 and 1755, the Acadians developed a society of small settlements centered around aboiteau agriculture, fishing, and trade with the Indigenous Mí'kmaq people (Bernard 44). Through this century and a half of settlement, these settlers developed a strong local identity that drew on their French Catholic roots

begin the event known as Le Grand Dérangement (The Great Upheaval) or the Acadian Expulsion[4]. Acadian men were locked inside their own churches until deported, and many families were separated during the deportation process— a tactic explicitly intended to break down the cohesion of the Acadian ethnic identity and political body (Laxer 57). This divide-and-assimilate tactic did not work as planned; instead the hardships the Acadians endured strengthened the Acadian identity that persists in both the Canadian Maritimes and Louisiana today[5] (Plank 145). However, as this thesis shows, over time the social conditions inside Louisiana have created a disproportionate emphasis of this Acadian diaspora narrative while omitting the fluid network of relations of which Acadians were a substantive part in Créole Louisiana. What is Créole Louisiana? Chapter one will seek to answer this question by means of a history of relations and events in Louisiana. While this work is ostensibly an analysis of the Cajun identity, one of the purposes of this analysis may serve is to decenter the omnipotence the term currently exerts over Louisiana in favor of a recognition of the Créolité common to many of the identities that haunt the discourse (Bernabé, Chamoiseau, Confiant, & Khyar 1).

Part of the issue with writerly consistency in a diachronic analysis is that terms for identity change over time and depend upon who is being asked, especially in Louisiana. Therefore, I try to use the terms as they would be used within their temporal contexts to the best of my ability, explaining changes to the use of these terms over time. When discussing the work of a specific author, I use that author's terminology as written in the text. Otherwise, I generally use Franco-Louisianais (Louisiana French) to refer to all of the following historical groups of people: French Créoles, Acadians, Cajuns, landed French-speaking immigrants, and Louisiana's francophone Indigenous peoples (e.g. United Houma Nation). Naturally, only peoples who are autochthonous to Louisiana (not French, Cajuns, or Créoles) will be referred to as Indigenous.

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and post-Poitou patois, which evolved and solidified as uniquely Acadian due to the strong sense of community developed through years of proximity and hard work toward mutual survival in an isolated and often harsh locale. Trade, cultural exchange, and intermarriage with their Mí'kmaq neighbors also played an undeniable role in the formation and survival of the Acadian people (Plank 31). Little material support from or cultural exchange with the French marked the Acadian identity, in contrast to French Imperial identity. Cooperative defense against repeated attacks by the British empire, who wanted to settle their own colonists on the prime farming land which the Acadians occupied finally solidified the Acadian identity (Plank 31). This is the process by which these subjects became signified as Acadian rather than French.

[4] Though this initial deportation centered around Nova Scotia was sizeable, the expulsion of the Acadians was not a single event. Over the course of the war, a total of between ten and fifteen thousand Acadians were expelled from throughout Acadia, and roughly one third of the population died from either disease, malnourishment, or drowning during the process (Laxer 45). Many of the Acadians who were deported straight to France and Britain during a second wave of expulsions in 1758 make up the population that later settled in Louisiana, then under colonial Spanish administration.

[5] After the war, some of the dispersed Acadians were permitted to return to remote areas of the Maritimes, but the damage of diasporification was already done (Laxer 50).

Chapter 1: A (prelude to) Cadien

> In restaging the past [it] introduces other, incommensurable cultural temporalities into the invention of tradition. This process estranges any immediate access to an originary identity or a 'received' tradition. The borderline engagements of cultural difference may as often be consensual as conflictual; they may confound our definitions of tradition and modernity; realign the customary boundaries between the private and the public, high and low; and challenge normative expectations of development and progress (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 3).

In this chapter, I draw on Foucault's method of tracing a genealogy of power relations to expose how concepts of "Cajun" or "Cajunness" were formed through relations of power as well as through networks of historical kinship, geography, and language. Instead of telling History, the genealogical method "rejects the metahistorical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies. It opposes itself to the search for 'origins'" (Foucault 2). While what follows is obviously a genealogy of the Cajun (as Créole), it is also a genealogy of the American: what it means for one's identity to be part of the American project, what attributes are written upon bodies in order for these bodies to emerge as American subjects, and how a process of repetition and difference keeps certain things within the American signification and others without. With the enunciation of every signifier, however, as Saussure tells us and Derrida reminds us, comes the trace of its opposite (Derrida *OG* 1-5). To provide a stabilizing concept of the American self, the discourse of "America" has relied upon systems of self and otherness, even and especially within a single American subject. Through this chapter, we shall see how the Cajun has been constructed by concepts of self and otherness in Louisiana.

A Spectre is Haunting "Evangeline" Country

We shall soon turn to the history at hand, but first I should explain why pieces of this Acadian story may sound familiar. While contemporary Acadians did not produce and distribute a written account of this narrative, much of the Western world encountered a version of their story in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries through Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's 1847 epic poem, *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie*. The poem begins by eulogizing the life of the Acadians before expulsion, focusing on the lives of a fictional young Acadian, Evangeline, her beloved Gabriel, and their fathers, along with several other village people living peacefully in "the forest primeval" (Longfellow 1). While this arcadian idealization is a tempting vision of Acadie in 1755, the area was certainly not the harmonious, uncultivated land Longfellow had his readers believe (Laxer 50-55). By the time of Le Grand Dérangement, Acadie was a land that had already been settled by Europeans for over a century and by metal, blood, and sweat converted into dyked farmland, then repeatedly ravaged by imperial warfare (Laxer 50-55). *Evangeline,* however, is written for an American nation physically and perhaps psychologically unsettled by its increasing industrialization and urban migration in the mid-nineteenth century, for whom a romantic pastoral by a fireside poet provided hearty nostalgia.

First, an emotionally wrenching account of the young lovers' separation on their wedding day during the 1755 expulsion from Grand Pré romanticizes Le Dérangement. The poem's second half then narrates Evangeline's lifelong search for Gabriel down the Mississippi river[6], into Louisiana, and across the American West, marking Louisiana as a piece of the American Frontier and making the couple an embodiment of Manifest Destiny. At the poem's end, however, Evangeline

[6] Historically, the Acadians arrived in Louisiana from their temporary hostels in the Caribbean, France, and elsewhere along the American eastern seaboard, not down the Mississippi River as in *Evangeline*.

finds Gabriel as an old and dying man in a hospice in Philadelphia, but just as they recognize one another Gabriel fades into death in her arms, thickening the romantic tragedy and completing the immigrant's journey to a modern American metropolis (forgoing the equally populous but Créole city of New Orleans).

Longfellow's poem and the figure of Evangeline have had an enormous effect on the web of signifieds associated with the Acadian signifier in Acadie (Canada), in Louisiana, in America, and around the world[7]. From its publication through the twentieth century, public schools in North America and Europe often required students to read the poem, which thrust Longfellow's narrative deep into the Western mind (Seelye 40). By writing the Acadian story for Anglo-American readers, Longfellow provided the American public an a priori knowledge of the Acadians (Calhoun 258-261). Hebert-Leiter writes, "at a time in American literary history when authors represented slaves and American Indians as Other in order to establish American identity as white, Longfellow represented Acadians as possible Americans, complete with English-language usage and nationalistic impulses toward geographical expansion and settlement" (Hebert-Leiter *Evangeline* 3). Longfellow's positioning of the Acadians therefore prescribed their assimilation into Anglo-America, and this Americanized, Evangelinized vision of the Acadians would later be reintegrated into the self-images of both Acadians in the Maritimes and Cajuns in Louisiana (Brasseaux, *Acadian to Cajun* xi).

The character of Evangeline has the somewhat unique quality of being lifted out of the poem from whence she came and coming to signify several things in her own right, such as when early 20th century politician Dudley Leblanc used the narrative of Evangeline to signify the Acadian/Cajun as an American figure who could be assimilated (Rabalais 10:30-21:20). For many Acadians and Cajuns, she came to signify the trauma of oppression, melancholy, and steadfast fidelity to her beloved Gabriel, a character who, establishing himself anew in a strange land, stands in as the sign of the immigrant to America (Rabalais 10:30-21:20)(Seelye 5). Some late twentieth century artists have rejected *Evangeline* as a false representation of Acadians, as in New Brunswick Acadian Antoinine Maillet's *Evangeline Deusse* and Louisiana musician and activist Zachary Richard's *Feu* (Maillet 1-10) (Richard 71)(Weisse 180)(Paparone 5-6). For John Seelye, "Evangeline does haunt us, a vague ghost adrift on the Mississippi in company with Uncle Tom and Huck Finn, those other refugee symbols of exile and disarray" (Seelye 5). The world has since relished the myth of Evangeline as a pure and pastoral soul searching for her love in the Wild West, including Louisiana. As Eve is at the genesis of Christian mythology, Evangeline is at the genesis of modern Acadian mythology, and through careful verse Longfellow firmly places her at the genesis of American mythology. In the twentieth century, we will see renewed interest in *Evangeline,* that haunting femme of Acadie nearly-wed to America; but first, we must continue to trace the relevant signifiers diachronically by reviewing the social conditions of Créole Louisiana.

Créole Louisiana: Settler-colonialism, slavery, and créolization

European settlement in Southern Louisiana began in 1699, with competing colonial administrations unfolding over time between the French and Spanish Empires (Brasseaux, *French, Cajun, Creole, Houma* 2). While a majority of the area's inhabitants were descended from settlers from several different regions of francophone Europe and Senegambian descended slaves, the population also consisted of many Indigenous peoples, a substantial population of Spanish-, German-, and English-descended settlers, and large numbers of descendents from manumitted slaves, whose free multiracial children (*gens de couleur libres)* came to compose a significant part of the population and economy (Brasseaux, *French, Cajun, Creole, Houma* 12-13).

[7] In his time, Longfellow was possibly the most widely read American poet, and *Evangeline* his most famous work. Within the first decade of its publication alone, *Evangeline* had sold 35,850 copies worldwide (Irmscher 53)

Then, between 1764 and 1788, about 3,000 exiled and dispersed Acadians sought refuge in Southwest Louisiana (Bernard xvii)(Brasseaux, *French, Cajun, Creole, Houma* 17). The inhabitants of the bayous, prairies, and riverbanks where the Acadians settled have certainly taken strong, arguably dominant, cultural influence from the Acadians. What has now lost focus in public memory, however, is that at the time the 3,000 Acadians arrived in Southern Louisiana, the area was already inhabited by well over 10,000 settlers and slaves from myriad backgrounds, as well as untold thousands of Indigenous people (Brasseaux, *French, Cajun, Creole, Houma* 12)[8]. Countless waves of immigrants who continued to settle the area after the arrival of the Acadians also painted great strokes into the area's cultural landscape.

In colonial and antebellum Louisiana, people of any of the aforementioned groups were considered Créole if they had been born in the Americas and had some European or African lineage (typically opposed to amérindien) following the basic signifying system for Créole identity across the Caribbean (Stewart 3)(Landry 5). To that effect, any born speakers of French, Spanish, and Créole languages in the Deep South could have described themselves as Créole in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as an enunciation of difference from newly arriving Europeans and especially Anglo-Americans; to operate as Créole signified that they were not anglophone, nor nouveau European immigrants. The Créole is a Latin product of the Americas[9]. By this logic, the Cajun signifier has always been Créole. At the same time, Acadians have historically referred to themselves as a distinct set of Créoles, nominally sectioned off within Créolité, while living often within the same habitus as other Créoles (Landry 13). Hence, the term Acadian-Créole often arises in eighteenth and nineteenth century literature from Louisiana. Furthermore, the Cadian/Cadien/Cajun designation has long been an enunciated discursive category within the Créole umbrella. Picture an Acadian nation within a Créole nation both within the Americas.

Perhaps most importantly, the Cajun/Cadien designation may fundamentally be considered a subset of Créolité as the culture has been under a process of *créolization* (Glissant 6-21). This arrangement of culture consists not of an unchanging repetition of a singular tradition, but of a process that continually (re)produces recognizable local culture(s) by intergroup contact and performance. In créolization, features of multiple cultures overlap, redrawing the boundaries by which claims to authenticity may be staked, under relationships of proximity, power, and adaptation to the social and natural environment (Glissant 3). The process by which pieces of the Créole, African, Caribbean, Indigenous, and eventually American culture within Louisiana have mixed and continue to mix with the Acadian culture transported from Acadie continues to créolize the culture(s). However, because Acadian, Cajun, and Créole have had specific, divergent meanings in the context of Louisiana at least since the nineteenth century, I will treat the divergent significations of each diachronically to show the crisis of Créole signifiers and identities in the nineteenth century and the emergence of the Cajun signifier and identity through this.

Purchased: Cajun/Créole divergences through statehood, la guerre de confédérés, and Reconstruction

One of the significant structural differences between what have been called Acadian and Créole life during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is that the dominant members of Créole society (who were the ones privileged enough to write their own version of Créole history) were either plantation owners or urban dwellers who prided themselves on being much more connected

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[8] Because the history of the manifold migrations to Louisiana is long and incredibly complex, it cannot all be discussed in a project of this scope. For further detail I suggest Carl Brasseaux's *French, Cajun, Creole, Houma: A Primer on Francophone Louisiana*, Brasseaux's *Creoles of Color in the Bayou Country*, Christophe Landry's *A Creole Melting Pot: The Politics of Language, Race, and Identity in Southwest Louisiana 1918-1945*, and Cécyle Trépanier's "Cajunization of French Louisiana: Forging a Regional Identity."

[9] Créole is not exclusively a descriptor for humans. In the same vein, locally developed varieties of tomatoes, onions, mustard, and even donkeys were Créole donkeys, Créole mustard, etc.

to bourgeois French colonial culture than the Acadian dominated communities of subsistence farmers (Bankston and Henry, *Blue Collar Bayou* 39). However, it should be acknowledged that a not insignificant number of landed Acadians began purchasing slaves and operating larger scale sugar plantations in the early nineteenth century, launching a few families into the upper class Créole lifestyle and créolizing Acadian culture with that of slaves, free people of color, and immigrants around them (Brasseaux, *Acadian to Cajun* 68). Nevertheless, plenty of non-Acadian Créole families without means found themselves near the Acadians in Central and South Louisiana, and intermarriages between Acadians, recent immigrants, and Créoles of any race were not uncommon, especially in the latter half of the nineteenth century (Brasseaux, *French, Cajun, Creole, Houma* 17).

It is paramount to note that in colonial Louisiana and in nineteenth century pockets of Créole Louisiana as in other parts of the Latin Caribbean, complex systems of family connections, Christian faith, literacy[10] and the presentation of education, manners, and wealth often dictated social standing in a manner alongside but not always dependent on race. The mission of spreading Western civilization underpinning the logic of colonization serves as a lens for understanding the ability for landed Créoles of color to occupy a higher social standing than Acadians. Unlike much of the American South, a sizable upper class of black and mixed-race Créole society enjoyed the bourgeois life of cosmopolitan elites by owning plantations outside the city, worked by slaves, other *gens de couleur libre,* and, at times, unlanded immigrants and impoverished Acadians (Henry and Bankston and Henry *Blue Collar Bayou* 40). Free Créoles of color composed a large population of Louisiana in the nineteenth century, occupying a respected middle spot between the plantation owning white Créoles and the black slaves in Louisiana's three-tiered social system. Pairing Brasseaux's historical work with literary representations from the 19th century (Cable, Chopin, de la Houssaye), I argue throughout this chapter that the Acadians (and others), who became working class Cajuns, emerged as an ambivalent fourth tier, apparently lower than the Créoles of color in social class struggle (*Brasseaux, Acadian to Cajun* 1-19). It would not be until after the end of the Civil War that the imposition of an Anglo-American binary racial system in Louisiana would erase this history from mainstream memory.

The nineteenth century in Louisiana brought immigration, cultural interfusion, class stratification, and racial discourses that precipitated the proliferation of Cajun identity today. First, the turn of the nineteenth century saw an influx of over 11,000 Créole refugees from Saint-Domingue due to the Haitian revolution, including whites, slaves, and free people of color (Brasseaux, *French, Cajun, Creole, Houma* 23). Then, following the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and Louisiana statehood in 1812, an initial wave of young wealthy Anglo-Americans from New York, New England, and along the Eastern seaboard arrived in New Orleans to capitalize on the city's booming economy by investing in real estate, introducing American common law, and taking governmental posts in the new state's regime (Brasseaux, *Anglo-Americans* 1). Waves of European (especially French) immigration to the area continued during this time as well; New Orleans happened to be the second-leading port of entry to the United States for most of the antebellum period (Brasseaux, *Anglo-Americans* 26). While many of the European immigrants assimilated into the dominant language and lifestyles of local francophone communities, often wealthy anglophone Americans felt no such impetus, and the language of business and law increasingly turned to English, the language of the nation to which Louisiana now belonged (Brasseaux, *Acadian to Cajun* 93). Through these waves of immigration, the omnipresent feeling of growing Anglo-American dominance, and the need for a desirable signifier for personal and social identity, the nineteenth century saw massive rearrangements in the makeup of Créole and Acadian communities. The use of signifiers like French, Créole, or Acadian began drastically changing, and these transformations in

[10]In New Orleans, a group of Paris-educated Créoles of color named Les Cenelles, led by Armand Lanusse, published the first known book of poetry by African American writers, *Les Cenelles* (1845).

the significations of identity in Southern Louisiana occurred, as one would suspect, along class, racial, linguistic, and geographical lines.

The creeping influence of the binary Anglo-American system of racialization drove a wedge into the cracks already expanding in the established Créole/Cajun society. Reconstruction era novels such as George Washington Cable's *The Grandissimes: A Story of Creole Life* (1880) and short stories such as Kate Chopin's "Désirée's Baby" (1893) provided the English reading nation with an enticing and exotic picture of the wealthy Créole habitus in post-statehood Antebellum Louisiana, while critically depicting the violent struggle for white supremacy in Créoledom, the practice of plaçage[11], and the already anxious discourse around Créole as an identity (Brasseaux *Acadian to Cajun* 89-111). This anxiety was immensely aggravated by the Civil War, after which the agricultural lands and the local economies they sustained were in ruins. Because Creoledom consisted of many *gens de couleur libre* who had been free long before the Emancipation Proclamation, postbellum integration into an Anglo-American social and legal system built around racial binaries[12] left these Créoles of color in a fight to maintain their previously self-evident social status and legal rights[13]. This made identitarian confrontation between white Créoles and Créoles of color imminent. In terms of deconstruction, the tension between the black and white binary

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[11] Plaçage, derived from the French *placer*, to place, was the extralegal union of a white man and a black slave, an Indigenous woman, or perhaps most commonly a free woman of color. Plaçage was practiced in several pockets of the Spanish and French colonial Carribbean, though recent historical scholarship contends that it was less common than novels such as Cable's would have us presume (Aslakson 1-9)(Clark 1-14).

[12] Through Reconstruction, the implementation of strict binary racial classifications went through a difficult to trace semiotic dialectic in the formerly multitiered Louisiana society, which was decidedly synthesized in the American model pervasive elsewhere in the American South. In *Black Reconstruction,* W.E.B. Dubois discovers this as the reason why writing a history of Reconstruction in Louisiana is so difficult, noting of the Louisiana Créoles: "They differed in origin and education. Some looked white, some black, some born free and rich, the recipients of good education; some were ex-slaves, with no formal training. They were faced with an intricate social tangle among the whites. Economic and social differences were, in Louisiana, more complicated than in any other American state, and this makes the history of Reconstruction more difficult to follow" (Dubois 470).

[13] The monumental Supreme Court decision, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), represents a telling example of the American binary racial system problematizing postbellum Créole identity, and it also constitutes an event in Créole signification that should be noted. For America writ large, *Plessy v. Ferguson* was a case wherein a "black man" boarded the "whites only car" of a train, was arrested for doing so, wound up losing a Supreme Court case, which legalized a "separate but equal" America, and set the stage for Jim Crow Laws nationwide. While this conceptualization correctly marks the case in the general American context, it misses the fact that the case that made it to the Supreme Court, appealed by Plessy and the Comité des Citoyens in New Orleans, began in the context of Louisiana in 1896. Plessy was an urban Créole man who was baffled to find that his "one-eighth African heritage" placed him in a lower stratum than even the most uncivilized "whites." Homer Adolph Plessy, born Homère Patris Plessy, was a Créole man whose white French father had fled Haiti during the Revolution and married a Louisiana free woman of color with one parent of European descent and one of African descent (Medley 12). While Plessy was phenotypically white, postbellum Louisiana Law imposed a one-drop racial separation policy, enforceable through the Separate Car Act (1890). When Plessy presented his heritage to a detective who had been arranged by the Comité des Citoyens, he was arrested as expected for refusing to sit in the "colored car" (Medley 14). While Plessy and the Comité had staged the arrest believing that it would show the absurdity of enforcing binary racial separation in a créolized society, Plessy was unexpectedly convicted by a local judge, John H. Ferguson (Darden 8). After an appeal to the Louisiana Supreme Court wherein Ferguson's decision was upheld, Plessy appealed to the Federal Supreme Court, where the decision was upheld again, and thus *Plessy v. Ferguson* entered the American legal canon. Through this event, the public equation of Louisiana Créoles with blackness was bolstered, whereby the strict separation between black and white had clearly overrun the multiracial Créole past of Louisiana in the public discourse. With this event, the discourse of racism had definitively intruded upon and surpassed the discourse of civilizationism in Louisiana.

opposition exacerbated the already existing contradiction internal to the Créole signifier for identity, exposing a deconstructive event. With so many Créoles of color clinging to their Créole identity, many white-presenting Créoles covered up their familial connections in order to maintain power through social status amid waves of newly arriving Americans[14], which the English reading public was exposed to in Chopin's and Cable's novels. Meanwhile the Acadian, bogged down with stereotypes, was left in a nonspace. Because the cultures surrounding them (Créole and Anglo-American) thought their culture to be backward, and because they often found themselves in the same manual labor occupations as those labelled black, the Acadian was not automatically coded as white, American, etc. For pedagogical purposes, we may compare the Cajun's racialized position in late nineteenth and early twentieth century America to that of the Irish in the mid- to late-nineteenth century (Ignatiev 2). Both represent groups whose marginality to the Anglo-American mainstream codified them as a separate "race," yet white skin gave both a path toward assimilating, or, becoming white (Ignatiev 39). One difference is that Cajuns lived primarily in rural areas, whereas the Irish primarily congregated in cities in America (Ignatiev 86). Another is that Cajuns were already rooted in the area and Anglo-Americans were the new arrivals. Beleaguered with a plethora of stereotypes and scorn from Anglo-Americans, both working class peoples were pressured to assimilate if they hoped to be considered viable members of the white American mainstream (Ignatiev 86).

Chopin's fiction in particular portrays the interstitial racial space her "'Cadians" move through toward the end of the nineteenth century. While stories such as "At the 'Cadian Ball" (1892) and "In Sabine," (1894) foreground the oppression of women and depictions of female desire, these stories take place in a multicultural Louisiana that attentively recounts the social shifts and ambiguities of the place and time. Chopin's narratives use the ambiguous social and racial position of the Cadians to showcase individual characters' desires, both women's sexual desires and the desire to achieve an acceptable place in the broader society (Hebert-Leiter 57-78). Ultimately, her impoverished Acadian characters are positioned such that the only avenue to a better life is through staking a claim to whiteness and thereby Americanness. As Chopin's stories suggest, the increasing imposition of a class system fixated on the binary of race rather than the gradients of civilizationism, accompanied by the economic threats of the Civil War and increasing Anglo-American presence, spurred the fragmentation of Créole identity.

Civilizationism: Acadian (et al.) to Cajun

While tensions between Créole identities fragmented through the prominence of a discourse around racial supremacy, the older guiding discourse of colonization, civilizationism, was not dying but preparing for a new surge. As American presence increased and English continued to expand as the language of business and law after the Civil War, poor Acadians were increasingly labelled Cajuns, an English derivation of the local pronunciation of the self-descriptor: 'Cadien (Brasseaux, *Acadian to Cajun* 66). The term Cajun was increasingly used to distinguish between all impoverished rural francophones and the upper class francophones who claimed the Créole moniker only for themselves. With little access to education, low rates of literacy, and a culture built around fishing, hunting, and family farming in bare feet or handmade moccasins, the Cajuns were widely portrayed as lower on the social ladder than their wealthy Créole neighbors (Faragher 14).

Yet, we must remember that many who identified as Créoles were not plantation owners, but either slaves or low-wage plantation workers through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries[15]. True to the concept of creolization, professor and Acadian activist Barry Jean Ancelet

[14]Over time, many dropped the Créole self-signifier altogether, afforded by their own ability to pass and prosper as American instead (Brasseaux).

[15]As Christophe Landry has it, "indeed, elite and bourgeois Creoles enjoyed contact with the outside world through economic and cultural interests, while the large sugar cane plantations trapped the majority of their

formulates: "in the nineteenth century, Cajun culture was a blend of ethnic traditions thriving in a self-sufficient community" (Ancelet, "The Cajun Who Went to Harvard" 106). Because Acadians often lived and worked with downwardly mobile Créoles of all stripes, wealth gaps dividing both of these groups from other, persistently wealthy Créole planters became wider (Brasseaux, *Acadian to Cajun* 74-88). Toward the end of the nineteenth century working white-presenting Créoles and more recent working class French immigrants were eventually labelled Cajun as an enunciative act of downward social comparison (Brasseaux, *Acadian to Cajun* 68).

Because upper class Créoles had access to English education and needed English to do business with the arriving Anglo-Americans, many Créoles became multilingual long before the mandatory English education of the twentieth century; this accelerated the ability of wealthy Créoles to function within and eventually assimilate into the American mainstream even in the nineteenth century. By the same class paradigm, wealthier, plantation owning Acadians began mimicking the aristocratic Créole lifestyle, and some wealthy Acadians began calling themselves (non-Acadian) Créole in order to avoid the stereotypes increasingly associated with the Cajun (Brasseaux AtC 69). Other voices of this small Acadian upper-class doubled down on the origin story attached to the Acadian signifier in opposition to the contemporary stereotypes tied to the Cajun signifier; they learned English and assimilated to the American mainstream, but advertised their Acadian history with the noble exile-become-American narratives, like *Evangeline*. This need for an ennobling heritage narrative coincided with the 1888 publication of *Pouponne et Balthazar*, a novel written in French by Créole writer and friend of Cable, Sidonie de la Houssaye. The novel tells the exile story of the Acadians, reiterating Longfellow's vision of two lovers separated by Le Grand Dérangment. However, de la Houssaye's novel is drenched in contemporary Créole notions of superiority, as the exiled Acadian Pouponne finds success in Louisiana only after being taken in by a Créole woman who teaches her to act like a sophisticated Créole madame. When Balthazar finally reunites with Pouponne in Louisiana, both happily discard their Acadian ways in favor of the Créole lifestyle. While de la Houssaye's writings represent significant contributions to written representations of francophone Louisiana from the inside, *Pouponne et Balthazar* ultimately reinscribes the notion of Acadian culture as backward, dying, and unfit for the world in which it finds itself.

As the nineteenth century pressed on, however, anglophone Americans continued to have more and more economic and political power in Louisiana, and middle to upper class Créoles, Acadians, and others began more aggressively mimicking the lifestyles, ideologies, and architectural styles of the Anglo-Americans around them. Meanwhile, impoverished white-identified rural francophones all came to be referred to as Cajun by anglophones, and from 1880 through the 1930s, the stereotypes of Cajuns we see today were formed and fine-tuned (Bankston and Henry *Blue Collar Bayou* 69).

> As the negative inference of the term suggests, Cajun was used by Anglos to refer to all persons of French descent and low economic standing, regardless of their ethnic affiliation. By the end of the nineteenth century this class alone retained its linguistic heritage. Hence poor Creoles of the prairies and bayou regions came to be permanently identified as Cajun, joining the Acadian ever poor and *nouveau pauvre.* Eventually swelling their ranks were significant numbers of chronically poor and downwardly mobile Anglos and Foreign French immigrants. Like the Acadians, the Creoles and Foreign French- the other major element of the local white population- generally existed on an economic plane separate and distinct from the Anglo elite… The term *Cajun* thus became a socioeconomic classification for the

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poor, illiterate and non-Anglophone Creole kinsmen and women in a much more isolated world in southwest Louisiana" (Landry 3).

> multicultural amalgam of several culturally and linguistically distinct groups. (Brasseaux *Acadian to Cajun* 105)

Through the split of Créoles, and in deference to both, the Cajun had become an *ethno-class* (Bankston and Henry *Blue Collar Bayou* 69). This process led Cajun to be solidified as a separate identity from Créole. Meanwhile, due to the racially mixed nature of what remained of Créole society, the word Créole came to connote blackness. These semantic reconfigurations along race and class lines would set the stage for the bourgeois-driven white-centric Acadian revival in the early twentieth century, the embrace of Jim Crow ideology in the region, and ultimately the inability for the francolouisianais to overcome perceived racial differences to unite francophonie as a political force against the Anglo-American tide.

The American fold: Late nineteenth century prescriptions for a "better future"

Another novel by Cable, *Bonaventure: A Prose Pastoral of Acadian Louisiana* (1887), showcases the social tensions, stereotypes, and changing significations for identity that the people of rural Southern Louisiana faced. Though the novel was written at a time when many authors writing in English would have used the word Cajun, Cable uses "Acadian," "Creole," and "negro" to highlight his characters' heritages. While Cable's portrayal of the Acadian is well intentioned and appears to be positive, the dichotomy the narrative sets up between the Confederacy-supporting, Acadian-loathing Créoles and the simple, good Acadians begets a troublesome claim to knowledge of the Acadian plight. Like Longfellow's *Evangeline*, Cable's Acadian tale depicts its eponymous protagonist and his kin in an exoticized pastoral setting, living through the consequences of a war "that was really none of theirs, simple, non-slaveholding peasants" (Cable 9). *Bonaventure* attempts to reject the stereotypes of Acadians as stupid, lazy, and backward, but, like *Evangeline,* ends up casting the Acadian in a noble savage stereotype, "around whom the entire world's thought had swirled and tumbled for four hundred years without once touching them" (Cable 101)(Haspel 116)[16]. The author presents to the American public an image that simultaneously entrenches the Acadian position as Other and asserts an authority of knowledge over these people who did not have the adequate means to represent themselves to the Anglo-American public. With that authority, *Bonaventure* clearly champions the position that Acadians must be taught English so that they may transcend their lowly state to become future model Americans. Bonaventure's role as teacher and champion of English education complicates the otherwise fixed idea of Acadians eternally caught in the past. *Bonaventure* plots a path to take the Acadian into the American fold, suggesting that if the Acadians learn English they can begin to take part in the national economies, eventually raising themselves to the high standard of the modern Anglo-American. Cable either neglected to realize or care that the process of modernizing the Acadian in the Anglo-American model would be a process of assimilation in which many of the cultural practices he lovingly attributed to these people would be lost.

By the close of the nineteenth century, the increasing presence of Anglo-Americans from both the North and elsewhere in the South, and the 1880 completion of the Western-Louisiana Railroad line from New Orleans to Houston, straight through Southern Louisiana, provided the access to goods and people of the area and brought *la Louisiane* closer to the Anglo-American eye and pocket (Dorman 61). As towns along the railroad flooded with Anglo-American travelers and

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[16] At the same time, *Bonaventure* stands at least in small part as an attempt in representing Louisiana French. As the narrator tells us, most of the Acadian French dialect is represented by translations into a written vernacular English. However, Cable's affinity for phonetic renderings of vernacular English seem to cross over into his treatment of the Acadian character's French as well. Indeed, the young Confederate conscript 'Thanase calling his uncle "n'onc Sosthène" points to the author knowing at least some of the local French dialect, and, attempting to render the oral dialect into writing, he inserts it into a story framed in English.

businesses to support them, old Cajun villages quickly transformed into business centers with grocery stores, bars, restaurants, and eventually gas stations in the American model (Dorman 65) (Hebert 3). All this is to say: the American gaze, with its binary racial system, modernization, and ideology of Anglo supremacy, exerted a tremendous force on the systems of signification to which local people attached their identities long before the twentieth century's Americanization of the Cajuns (Bernard 1). While the cultures of Créole Louisiana were in a process of créolization, the anxious discourse of power (manifested through racism, civilizationism, and class stratification), precipitated by the presence of Anglo-American newcomers, resulted in the breakdown and reconfiguration of cultural and personal signifiers for identity in an increasingly Anglo-leaning Louisiana.

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CHAPTER 2: The twentieth century in Louisiana: structural transformation and the ethnic stage

> "Am I sorry the Cajun have been discovered? I'm even sorrier they discovered themselves!" (Marc Savoy quoted, Ancelet 6)

Understanding the class and racial contexts just discussed is paramount for understanding the Cajun situation today, but much more pertinent are a series of events in the twentieth century that brought drastic structural change to the lives of Cajuns, Créoles, and other ethnic minorities in Louisiana. The accelerated transformation toward Americanization begins with the emergence of the oil industry, moves through Louisiana's role in the two World Wars and the way nationalism during this period suppressed minoritarian ethnicities in Louisiana, and closes with a movement toward ethnic and linguistic resurgence which has been in progress since the late 1960s.

Make Louisiana Acadian Again: Dudley LeBlanc, White America, and the haunting of Evangeline

As the end of the century left Cajun people in an ambivalent space of otherness (basically white, but foreign to the Anglo-American norm), upper-class Franco-Louisianians in the early twentieth century reinvigorated the foundational narrative of Evangeline to provide a solid backstory for themselves as white European descendants unfairly exiled and now uniquely American. While *Evangeline* was previously widely accepted as fiction, the 1907 publication of Judge Felix Voorhies's *Acadian Reminiscences: The True Story of Evangeline* presented the "true story" of Emmaline Labiche, reported to be the real Acadian girl married on the day of expulsion and separated from her husband, Louis Arceneaux, until the couple was reunited on the Bayou Têche. Over the next dozen years, four Evangeline films were made (1908, 1911, 1914, 1919), with a fifth, the most famous, in 1929, starring Dolores del Rio as Evangeline[17]. These films were consumed widely throughout the U.S., which contributed to a growing public fascination with the idea of an Acadian Louisiana.

In the 1920s, Louisiana Senator Dudley (Couzin Dud) Leblanc promoted his vision of Acadians as the true inheritors of francophone culture in Louisiana. His 1927 book, *The True Story of the Acadians,* is still sold widely as "the first non-fiction book about the Acadian Deportation by a direct descendent of Acadian survivors in both maternal and paternal lines" (Acadian.org). Couzin Dud first rose to national attention as the founder of the drug manufacturer that made HADACOL, a miracle drug that LeBlanc promoted as he travelled around the country in one of the last incarnations of the infamous nineteenth century medicine show. HADACOL wasn't the only thing LeBlanc brought on tour around America— as a Senator, Leblanc brought tours of Cajun girls dressed in eighteenth century Acadian settler regalia up the Eastern seaboard to represent Louisiana in Washington D.C., and to marry among Acadians when they reached the Maritimes in Canada (Rabalais 10:00-18:00). Setting aside the Créole culture they came from, only the pure white Acadian descendancy was put on display for the world.

Yet, as Créole scholar Christophe Landry has remarked, "modernization produced the very Evangeline myth itself: highways transported tourists to the Acadian parks while Hollywood mythologized the Acadian story and politicians employed Acadianness in elections" (Landry 95). With increasing opportunities for representation on the American stage, the 1920s-30s discourse around Cajun was marked by "rediscoveries" of the Acadians as a founding people of Southern Louisiana, which in effect re-emphasized the Acadian narrative as the baseline for all white French

[17] After the success of *Evangeline* (film 1929), Dolores del Rio had a statue of herself as Evangeline made, which was eventually donated to St. Martin de Tours Catholic Church in St. Martinville, LA. The statue still stands outside the church, where it is often revered as an icon of the Acadians, while few visitors, locals or tourists, realize that the statue of an Acadian princess is actually a statue of a Mexican actress.

speakers' genealogies. This fixation on family foundational myths may be understandable– the need for an identity and story– but it is consequential. As the icon of Evangeline appealed to newly middle and upper-middle class Cajuns who began to occupy more mainstream American professions, these arriviste "Acadians" looked unfavorably upon previous generations of poor, monolingual francophones. In order to overcome the internal contradiction of coming from subsistence farmers, fishers, and trappers, while wanting to present themselves as model minorities in industrial twentieth century America, white francophones of all heritages fixated upon the surrogate Acadian narrative of Evangeline, the humble but fidelitous immigrant to America. Bankston and Henry's ethno-class-based conceptualization of the "Cajun" helps us to understand why the term persisted into the twentieth century as a label with negative connotations of stupidity, peasantry, and drunkenness while politicians and professionals could brandish the label "Acadian" to look to Acadia, connoting a sense of racial purity, pastoral gentility, and labor-toward-Americanization reflected in *Evangeline*. The irony in this appeal to Acadianness is that it comes in such a late stage of both marital and cultural exogamy from the Acadian core. The epistemologically violent piece of this quest for an Acadian origin is that it de-emphasizes the kind of historical creolization that makes "finding" the point of origin irrelevant. Cajun identity continues to expand, territorializing other Louisianian identities at the same time as the discourse seeks to prove Acadian purity, and again we arrive at the realization that we have never really been Cajun.

Thus, the baseline of structural change in the twentieth century consists of upper-class bilinguals of francophone heritage identifying as Acadians, such as Leblanc, trading on the value of the Evangeline heritage narrative, while promoting the allure of an Americanized lifeworld to the more traditionally-occupied Cajuns and Créoles they had convinced themselves were backward. Therefore, the vanguard of Cajun Anglo-Americanization became not the Anglo-Americans, but the educated, professional, English-speaking Acadian-identifying elite. Here, the driving force is capital, while the logic of capital requires Cajun subjects to be interpellated ideologically into the American model.

In the image of the nation: Toward a structuralist interpretation of the Americanization of the Cajuns

Louis Althusser's formulation of interpellation through ideological state apparatuses will serve as an initial framework for understanding the totalizing structural transformations imposed upon Louisiana's twentieth century francophones, especially rural Cajuns and Créoles. Often people without familial ties to the area, even and especially academic researchers, lack an understanding of the totalizing ideological transformation wrought in the early to mid-twentieth century on the collective understanding of self deeply ingrained in locals. For Althusser, "ideology represents the imaginary relationships of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (1340). I argue that the ideologically and materially transformative process of Americanizing the Franco-Louisianais is fueled by a transformation in the ideology of the Cajuns and Creoles wrought through interpellation in what Althusser famously called "ideological state apparatuses" (ISA) and "repressive state apparatuses" (RSA)(1340).

In his seminal text, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, Althusser describes the repressive state apparatus and introduces the RSA's civil counterpart, the ideological state apparatus. The repressive state apparatuses consist of those state institutions which function by violence: the legal apparatus (along with its vehicles of interpretation and enforcement, the courts and police force), the army, the prisons etc. (Althusser 1341). Unlike the RSA, which primarily functions by the threat and execution of state violence, ideological state apparatuses consist of the institutions that produce and reproduce the subjects needed for the economic system desired by the powers that control them- embodied by the ruling class, the State, and/or the logic of capital. Unlike the RSAs, which consist of a hierarchy of State authorities all working as one unified apparatus of the State, the ISAs are several distinct and specialized institutions (1341). Ideological State Apparatuses are institutions such as the system of

churches, the school, the family, the legal apparatus (belonging to both ISA and RSA), the political system, communication methods and the media, and cultural institutions such as art, literature, and music, that operate in tandem with the RSAs to sustain ideology within a population.

Within these ISAs and RSAs, a subject is created by being called, or interpellated. In Althusser's example of a policeman (RSA) on the street who calls "Hey! You there!" the individual who is being called upon is at once interpellated and created as a subject of the Law, of the State, of the ideology at the moment they turn to answer this address. By the same token, the individual is created as subject by ISAs such as:

1. the family ISA - i.e. the framework of a family heritage, i.e. "being Cajun" - or, being taught that certain practices, ways of thinking, ways of speaking make a subject Cajun.
2. the legal ISA- the immediate establishment of citizenship in the nation of birth and the personal identity as a national attached; i.e. "Ouais j'sus 'Cadien, mais, I am American."
3. the religious ISA- sectarian identity; i.e. "Papists!"
4. the school ISA- language learning, reproduction of normative ideology; i.e. "I will not speak French on the school grounds."

What I mean to spotlight here are the institutional methods by which a young ethno-class of Cajuns as well as Créoles in early twentieth century Louisiana arrived in a system of ideological state apparatuses that were structured to interpellate them into Americanized subjects. Althusser's thesis that mature capitalist formations are marked by a shift in the dominant ISAs from the church and family to the school and family rings especially true with the Cajun and Créole situation. Where the church and family could be proven to have been the primary ISAs of pre-Americanized Acadian and Créole societies, the twentieth century intrusion of American capitalism came with a shift to the school ISA and trickled through the family ISA. While the family ISA may have created Cajun or Creole children as francophone subjects inculcated with the community-oriented, thrifty, farming and fishing ideology of a rural francophone family, the school ISA confronted these young subjects with an English only model-American ideology of individualism, consumerism, and being-toward-occupations that serve a nationally and globally networked system of industrial capital. However, as subsequent generations were subjected to the same American interpellation and these subjects reproduced American ideology in their own children, previously fundamental pieces of the Cajun family ISA were also recast into the American model.

The Marxian roots of Althusser's critique make the model particularly apt for analyzing the Cajun situation in the early twentieth century as this was the era wherein American industrial capitalism secured its domination over the economy of south Louisiana through advanced industrialization of local textile, fishing, and agricultural industries, the omnipresent intrusion of the oil industry, and eventually the demands of the American war effort. For Althusser, ISAs and RSAs exist in a capitalist society to reproduce the workforce needed for advancing the interests of capitalism. As the reader will recall from Henry and Bankston's thesis discussed in the previous chapter, by the turn of the twentieth century the group of subjects called "the Cajuns" was essentially boiled down to an ethno-class of economically depressed workers. Likewise, the fragmentation of Créolité through racial bifurcation had decimated possibilities of linguistic and cultural solidarity with the now similarly impoverished class of Créoles of color, who simultaneously went through a separate and doubly layered oppressive assimilatory process. "The Cajun people" could therefore be hegemonically bent into the model of an industrial American white working class.

Coon-ass at Conoco: Oil and education

As much as twentieth century history in Louisiana is prefigured by the racial tensions of Reconstruction and Jim Crow, the major changes in culture that would pervade the farthest reaches of the state begin with a hole in the ground: the discovery of oil in the town of Evangeline, in Acadia Parish, Louisiana, 1901. Rural francophones, especially those who would call themselves Cajuns, began moving around Southwest Louisiana and Southeast Texas chasing the American dollar and mingling with anglophone Texans along with other Americans who found themselves in the area working in the industry. While the introduction of the oil industry was a welcome economic force to an area broken by an increasingly unstable sugarcane, fishing, and otherwise agriculturally based economy, the geographical mobilization of people that the new industry called for also spurred a confrontation of cultures attached to the mixing of *coon-asses* and *Americains*[18] in the fields and refineries. While the origin of the word "coon-ass" is hazy, use of the word as a descriptor for Cajuns spiked in the 1920s in the oilfields of western Louisiana and Texas (Henry and Bankston 73). Coon-ass was used as a derogatory stereotype for uneducated Cajun from the backwoods throughout the twentieth century. Likewise, "americain" has been the Louisiana French word associated with stereotypes of the Anglo-American as untrustworthy, arrogant, and money-hungry. However, like derogatory phrases in other minoritized communities, many who identify as Cajuns eventually reappropriated "coon-ass" as a self-identifier, as can be seen today in the "Registered Coonass" stickers on the tailgates of many pickup trucks throughout Louisiana and the Gulf South.

The oil industry's incursion into Cajun life is captured in Robert Flaherty's 1948 film, *Louisiana Story*, a hallmark representation of the Cajuns. Although the film's depiction of an exotic young Cajun protagonist living an idyllic life with his pet racoon is typical of media representations of Cajuns, the film's subplot features an oil company striking a deal with the protagonist's elderly father for land usage rights, portraying the company's role in their lives as a saving force that leaves the poor Cajun family wealthy. *Louisiana Story* delivered to local and national consciousness a persistent image of fascinating swamp-dwelling Cajuns mixed with the altruistic presence of the oil industry, while denying the reality of lifestyle changes the oil industry brought to local people. Of course, the film was commissioned by the Standard Oil Company to promote its drilling ventures as an improvement to the lives of Cajuns. Meanwhile, the tide of cultural confrontation and assimilation, environmental destruction, and the confusion of rapid industrialization imparted upon local cultures are neatly left out of the film. Through railroads, blacktop, and oil, the influx of Anglo-American dominated industry hastened the perceived need for a rapid transition to English. Lawmakers saw an economic advantage to promoting English education in order for the citizens of Louisiana to labor under American capitalism. I will argue, therefore, that the legal and educational ISAs of Louisiana were structurally configured to produce Anglo-Americanized subjects out of the Cajuns, coinciding with capitalism's need for a working class that could serve as an industrial labor force.

Re-education (for labor)

Following the Progressive Era pursuit of education reform nationwide, the Louisiana Compulsory Education Act was passed in 1916, requiring children between the ages of 7 and 14 across Louisiana to attend school (Jones 97). Five years later, a new Louisiana State Constitution was ratified, including a mandate that all public education be conducted in English (LA Const. Article XII, Section 12). Although some French language and bilingual schools existed in the state previously, a large population of rural francophones had never had access to education in written

[18]While "americain" is literally just American in both Louisiana and Standard French, many Franco-Louisianais would use the term specifically to mean Anglo-American. In "Qui c'qu'on est?" for example, poet Kirby Jambon plays with the language used to characterise Cadien identity: "tout en étant American, mais pas Américain" belies the quality of Cajuns as American much in the same way they might once have more widely identified as Créoles- as in "from the Americas."

French. Even before 1921 most of Louisiana's children only ever learned to write in English if they learned to write at all. After the establishment of the 1921 Constitution, the use of English in Louisiana classrooms was strictly enforced, especially in the rural reaches of Southwest Louisiana.

The ideologically Anglo-American educational administration built an apparatus that significantly contributed to Cajuns believing they were being asked to replace all signifiers of their Cajun identity with signifiers of Anglo-American identity. Accounts from students during this period report regular corporal punishment for speaking French (Strandberg 103-106), though it should be said Louisiana's schools have certainly been liberal with corporal punishment for any number of offenses. The story of chastisement and shaming in Louisiana's school system is well circulated among Franco-Louisianian circles, with varying degrees of physical and psychological abuse reported(Strandberg 103-109). Of course, we must remember that the law affected the status of all heritage (deemed "foreign") languages, including local Kouri Vini, German and Spanish Créoles, and Indigenous languages (e.g. Coushatta, Choctaw, Houma). Through interviews and sociological studies, several scholars have concluded that the experience of heritage language speakers in English-only schools in Louisiana was rife with both individual and collective trauma (Bernard 1-2, Sexton 23-30, Strandberg 103-106)[19]. The message spread by school authorities follows a now familiar line: Cajun, Créole, and Indigenous cultures and languages are outdated, backwards, ignorant, and dying. On the other hand, American culture was billed as the arrival of progress, material security, and success into the future. The forceful change in language as well as ideology that was implemented through school systems statewide meant that systems of enforcement were decentralized but proliferated throughout the state. Some of these students continued to speak French at home with their families, but the victims' feeling of an anti-Cajun hegemony propagated through the schools would be long lasting.

The most telling piece of the argument that these changes were socio-ideological as well as linguistic may be that, despite the law stipulating only that public *education* itself be required to be in English, the rules reportedly pushed in the schools were that no language but English should be used anywhere on the school grounds at all. This experience is memorialized in the most famous Cajun French poem, "Schizophrénie Linguistique," by Jean Arceneaux[20]. The poem was first published in *Cris Sur le Bayou: Naissance d'une poésie acadienne en Louisiane (1979)*:

> I will not speak French on the school grounds.
> I will not speak French on the school grounds.
> I will not speak French...
> I will not speak French...
> I will not speak French...
> Hé! Ils sont pas bêtes, ces salauds.
> Après mille fois, ça commence à pénétrer
> Dans n'importe quel esprit.
> Ça fait mal; ça fait honte.
> Puis là, ça fait plus mal.
> Ça devient automatique.
> Et on ne speak pas French on the school grounds
> Et ni anywhere else non plus...
> (*excerpted lines 1-13)*

[19] These findings have only been addressed by scholarship surprisingly recently, though the silence that long surrounded these experiences is a well known phenomenon in cases of collective trauma.

[20] Jean Arceneaux is the poetic and musical alias of activist and University of Louisiana French Professor Emeritus Barry Jean Ancelet

The shame over the French language was widely internalized, and its usage rapidly receded among the younger generations. This is a feat that could only have been accomplished by the "civilizing mission" of bringing standard Anglo-American education to even the farthest reaches of Louisiana's habitations. As "Schizophrénie Linguistique" suggests, the repeated discouragement from speaking heritage languages within an ideologically monolinguistic nationalist framework results in an event of psycho-ideological reconfiguration of the speaking self. For heritage language speakers in Louisiana this was a major event wherein shame and embarrassment gave way to a psychological and behavioral shift into identifying as, embodying, and speaking American.

World War, Accelerated Nationalism, and the American Empire

By the time those who were children in the 1920s became parents during and after WWII, many were already gripped by the relinquishment of heritage languages to the back door. This began the rising trend of Franco-Louisianians not teaching heritage languages to their children. As state-backed linguistic repression continued to dominate in the 1940s and 50s, the possibility of a franco-future for Louisiana appeared both undesirable and increasingly impossible to much of the public. While identification with an idea of Cajun heritage and the legacy of Evangeline remained deep rooted, mid-century francophones across Louisiana saw the use of languages other than English primarily as a potential impediment to social and economic development. During the Second World War, America saw the rise of drastic nationalist pressure, and the francophones and créolophones of Louisiana were among the list of non-English speakers who were targeted by ethnic slurs and were given the now familiar performative choice to "speak English or go home." Likewise on the home front, record numbers of rural francophones left their occupations as fieldhands and fisherman, relocating to New Orleans Lake Charles, Beaumont, and Orange, Texas to take part in the oil, chemical, and shipbuilding industries there. Thousands of Louisiana francophones who had participated in the war effort returned home with a deep internalization of skepticism about the place of their culture and language in the national framework to which they were inculcated. They returned home reformed as subjects socialized within the American military ideological framework- an experience that follows Frantz Fanon's formulation: "the army is never a school for war but a school for civics" (Fanon 17)[21].

While schools and employment pumped the English language and American ideologies into the country, the spread of English language newspapers, radio, and television reterritorialized the Cajun home with the American voice. Over a million residents of Louisiana in the 1940s, roughly half the state's population, still spoke Louisiana Franco-Créolophone languages (Census 1950). However, the material currency of Louisiana heritage languages had become impoverished. Meanwhile, English continued to flourish as the language of capital, the language of business, the language of oil. Thus, endowed with the belief that they must become model Americans to fit within the American model around them, those in power in Southern Louisiana supported and enforced legislation to kill unsatisfactory features of the culture. Arceneaux's poem "Colonihilisme" displays a bitterness toward not only the Anglo-Americans pushing Americanization in the mid-century, but particularly toward the *Cadiens* who were complicit in the process:

> Il y a rien de plus dégoûtant que du colonialisme
> Qui vient de l'intérieur même de la colonie.
> C'était pas seulement les Américains
> Qui nous ont imposé l'anglais de l'extérieur.
> Pensez bien.

[21] Ironically, many Cajuns (like my great-uncle Edison Fontenot) served as translators between the American military and the Free French Forces and locals on the western front, all while being told paradoxically that their language was "not real French" (Bernard 47).

Les schools boards étaient composés
De Babineaux, d'Arceneaux et de Leblanc.
C'est-tu des noms américains, ça ?
Pour les quelques Américains impliqués, ok,
Ils sont coupables d'avoir comploté
Pour assassiner un peuple,
Pour étouffer sa langue et sa culture.
Mais les Cadiens, c'était quoi leur complot ?
Le génosuicide par les mêmes moyens ?
C'est difficile de regarder l'ennemi dans les yeux.
Il faut souvent trouver un miroir.

The title and the first two lines of this poem clearly conceive of Southern Louisiana as a colony of the United States, while the rest asks: why have we been so complicit in this colonization of ourselves? At this point we should address whether, and, if so, how Southern Louisiana can be read as a colony of the U.S. One of the key features of colonialism consists of a country seeking to exercise control of a separate land and the people occupying that land, as well as extracting resources from both. Often, the colonizing power uses local populations as labor power to fuel the enterprise, losing as little capital as possible to these populations. Of course, this is the original history of Louisiana's original colonization by the Europeans, using black slave labor, and the horrors of that period are incomparable to the relationship between (especially white) Franco-Louisianais and America in the twentieth century. However, this is the language used in this poem, and it is worth letting the poet who feels themself to be a colonized subject speak for themself.

CODOFIL: Francophone resurgence and intergenerational alienation

In the 1960s, Louisiana began to experience a resurgence of linguistic and ethnic pride, dovetailing with the ideals of the Civil Rights Movement across America. In 1968, the Council on the Development of French in Louisiana, or CODOFIL, was founded by James Domengeaux, lawyer and former U.S. congressman from Lafayette and sponsored by the state government. While the establishment of a government agency to promote this francophone resurgence was certainly a necessary feature of the shifting tide, the context of its implementation has left some locals with a bad taste in their mouths. Frankly, early CODOFIL's white Cajun-centric constituency, arguably elitist non-Cajun leadership, and long standing beliefs about the contemporary brokenness of "Cajun French" and Kouri Vini (Louisiana's standardized Créole language) throw the efficacy of the agency's nascent iteration into question.

First, in order to begin rebuilding an ecosystem within which the French language could survive, the French language would have to be reintroduced to Louisiana's youth through the same schools that had been accomplices in its suffocation barely a generation before. As part of the agency's charter to "accomplish the development, utilization, and preservation of the French language for the cultural, economic, and tourist benefit of the state of Louisiana," CODOFIL under Domengeaux's direction focused on bilingual education largely as a method of reestablishing economic avenues through the French language locally, but also particularly internationally (CODOFIL Charter 1968). Seeking economic and cultural communion with the French, Quebecois, and the Acadians of Canada, Domengeaux's vision seemed to be to establish Louisiana's place at the international table by building a body of language speakers who could parlay with the international francophone business community, rather than to support the needs of local populace. Unfortunately, for the government of Louisiana in the 1960s, local vernacular variations of French were still thought of as broken languages, useless to the mission of connecting Louisiana to the international francophone economy. Due to this internationally minded impulse and the perceived lack of "proper French" teachers within Louisiana, when French immersion programs were being

set up in Louisiana schools, the overwhelming majority of teachers were brought in from elsewhere- largely Quebec, France, and Belgium. This led to prolonged confrontation between Standard French teachers and Louisiana French families, whose children would return home telling their parents their own lexicon or syntax was not just different but wrong. According to Henry and Bankston, "they argued with what they called CODOFIL's top-heavy approach, its standard French imperialism, narrow focus on formal education, and general disdain of genuine Cajun culture" (177). Thus, long after the French Empire abandoned its colony in Louisiana to the American Empire, CODOFIL seemed in the eyes of the public to be bourgeois revivalists of a defunct colonial mindset, attempting to lead them toward an out of touch vision of the future, rather than reaching out to the public where it stood at the time. Accordingly, the rift between local communities and the authority of CODOFIL, as well as the whole educational ideological state apparatus, persisted.

Then, as more pro-Cajun leadership filled the ranks of CODOFIL in the 1990s, Cajunness was promoted as the region's true historic and cultural identity (Giancarlo 10). If we can temporarily bracket the aforementioned issues of privileging Cajun heritage over broadly Créole heritage, we can at least say that this pro-Cajun ideology opened doors for new generations of students to continue a local language tradition in some part. On the other hand, this is an organization that still risks rearing an element of older beliefs that all the local heritage languages are broken, and focus often continues to be serving only its Cajun contingencies. Nevertheless, some recent directors of CODOFIL tend to embrace a dramatically different ideology on language acquisition, such as former director Joseph Dunn's take: "En Louisiane, ce n'est pas notre langue française qui est cassée, c'est notre relation à la langue."

Though still chronically underfunded and often mistrusted for its past blunders, CODOFIL today has done some reforming of its mission toward a balanced approach to heritage language preservation (though Kouri Vini education remains an important sore spot) and international connections, with immersion programs expanding slowly. The class division inherent between those active in language preservation movements (from Dudley LeBlanc and the Evangeline girls to the "elites" of CODOFIL), and those who are not, however, continues to split the heritage language political community. Then, there is the fact that the rise of the culture of the self coinciding with late consumer capitalism made narrativizing one's own history not only possible but purchasable.

Tourism: Cultural practice and profit motives

Tourism in Southern Louisiana has been ongoing since European arrival, but since the turn of the twentieth century tourism has grown incessantly. Concomitant with the resurgence of Louisiana French culture and a certain reduction of stigma, Cajun tourism also became a pervasive presence throughout Southern Louisiana. The Cajun tourism industry boomed amid the major oil crisis in the 80s, a welcome way of diversifying the local economy in a downturn. Since the 80s, the academic community has held fierce debate over the value and effects of Cajun tourism.

Amid the tourist boom in the 80s, Marjorie Esman argued that tourism was good for Cajuns because it encourages practicing Cajun customs, such as speaking French. Rebutting in 1991, Cécile Trépanier argued against Cajun tourism, believing it merely reproduces an already Americanized, commodified, inauthentic culture. Synthesizing these arguments, Sara Le Menestral (1999) argued that, while festivals commodify the culture, potentially warping its ability to organically develop, they also play a valuable role in actively encouraging participation in the culture— the proliferation of Cajun tourism plays a vital role in the re-emergence of the group's self-awareness (102). Bankston and Henry (2002) echoed and popularized this idea, adding that tourism is part of the changing ethnic landscape of the United States, "in that most ethnicities are living within the shared American culture, but hold onto some elements of their ethnic pasts through consumption of ethnic goods, perpetuation of ethnic practices, and maintenance of shared ethnic memory" (9).

Acknowledging the history of this debate and the economic benefits of Cajun tourism, I would like to introduce two theories of the structure of experiencing "the culture."

1. As modernity has deterritorialized the Créole environment, formalized places of experience (festivals, museums, classrooms, restaurants) replace the environments in which experience previously took place (Nora 2-10).

2. The personal and community identity formed by putting on the performance of the Cajun place of experience induces a temporal separation within a single person or subject. I contend that the function of Cajun identification in this process also solidified the notion of the Cajun as Other, both to Americans and within the heteroglossic minds of the people of Southern Louisiana. Thus, the Cajun label's function has been inverted and Americans, many Cajuns, and truly the world at large, see only a commodified Cajunness (accents, food, music, etc.), leaving "Cajun" in the crisis state of being a signifier whose signified is more of a commodity than a community.

Commodification of foodways: Tabasco on every table

The work of chef Paul Prudhomme in the 1970s probably did more to spread the Cajun label as the definitive catch-all for Louisiana foodways than anything else. Born in Opelousas, deep in the Franco-Louisianais sphere, Prudhomme brought pieces of rural cooking into the New Orleans kitchen, calling them Cajun. Prudhomme's blackened redfish dish and the onslaught of blackened chicken, shrimp, tofu, etc. sold as Cajun, is a New Orleans invention whose international transmission drove the craze for food labelled Cajun that we see continue today. More importantly, the Cajun label on food emerges as a pure signifier for spicy food, the offense most hated in Cajun and Créole communities today. A quick trip to any restaurant near you, wherever you may be, will validate this statement. Today, the question of authenticity is constantly bubbling up in the Louisiana food world. In 2018, the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry rolled out the Certified Louisiana logo program for authenticated Louisiana products because labels like Louisiana, Cajun, and Créole have been loosely used, fiercely defended, and continue to be highly marketable. While a version of the program had already been in place, the new program saw an upgrade to eligibility requirements for the logos "Certified Louisiana," "Certified Cajun," and "Certified Creole" (LDAF 2018).

Commodification of music: Jambalaya, crawfish pie, filet gumbo

One of postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha's central arguments in *The Location of Culture* is that cultural production is always most productive where it is most ambivalent. Of course, Créole and Cajun cultures were highly "productive" in the days before vehement Americanization, largely due to a blending of cultures already ongoing in the area, but the onset of Americanization also produced a plethora of cultural phenomena or commodities, especially reflected in the proliferation of cookbooks and music in the 1940s, 50s, and onward. If the production of music is, however, a priori chained to the flow of capital, what is the change in character of the cultural production? Perhaps the project was erasure; however, the product is hybridity.

The first commercial recordings of "Cajun music" were waxed not in Cajun Country, but in the Depression-era urban centers of the music industry: New Orleans, Memphis, Atlanta, Chicago, and New York (R. Brasseaux). Ryan Brasseaux's 2004 thesis outlined the transformation of the social function of Cajun music from a folky musical release valve after a hard day of manual labor in the fields and boats to a commodity around which a recording and touring industry may be built. Brasseaux found that "the earliest Cajun recordings were, in essence, an extension of the budding race record market of the 1920s" (R. Brasseaux). As American musicians such as Hank Williams, the Band, Emmylou Harris, and Paul Simon[22] capitalized on the musical traditions and the image of

[22] Hank Williams' Jambalaya (On the Bayou) takes a fiddle melody from an older French Louisiana tune, "Grand Texas." The Band used both Louisiana fiddle melodies and specifically the imagery of Le Grande Dérangement in the songs "Acadian Driftwood" and "Evangeline," which featured Emmylou Harris singing. While these hybrid songs used folky fiddles and a whitened Cajun image, Paul Simon showed more interest in

Cajun and Créole Louisiana, Louisianian musicians were bringing American music into their own productions. Wayne Toups, Lost Bayou Ramblers, and Youtube sensation DJ Rhett are prime examples of the wide-ranging forms possible in this musically hybrid environment. In a very real way, rural Louisianian musicians in the twentieth century were creating new sounds influenced by the francophone folk music they inherited and the new anglophone swing, rock, country, jazz, and pop music flooding the airwaves of newly accessible AM and FM radio.

Perhaps the swamp pop genre stands as a great paradigm of hybridity. In the underlying structure of its formation stands the rejection of a perceived old style, the old "French music" we commonly see in the genre of Cajun or Creole music. The atmosphere inculcated by the Americanization project made generations of young musicians choose between the old Cajun way and the electrified stage of American pop music. Nonetheless, as Bhabha's notion of hybridity suggests, the space between the Cajun and the American proved to be the most fertile ground for the production of culture.

Summation and Conclusion: Structural transformation and the ethnic stage

The people of Southern Louisiana have thus found themselves in a very peculiar situation, because their various identities were washed over and stigmatized by the Cajun signifier, and then this "Cajun" culture suddenly became globally celebrated, marking the beginning of a process of cultural reconstruction. What had passed was the Anglo-American storm, the storm that dismantled the house of language the Franco-Louisianais inhabited. The reconstruction that followed has been a dizzyingly heterogenous mixture of militant-reactionary cultural resurgence (French language programs, development of Louisiana French literature, resurgence of hunting, fishing, and agrarianism etc.) and commodification (musical, culinary, floating exotic signifier) taking place immediately following this resurgence. So now we have an incredibly precarious identity, wracked with the dialectic of shame and celebration, inclusivity and exclusivity, memory and the loss of experience.

In summary, after a long period of poor rural communities remaining resistant to Anglo-American influence, Louisiana's francophones throughout the long first half of the twentieth century were systematically stripped of their French patois, made ashamed of the language, ethnic identity, and culture, and fed the modern American dream of rugged individualism, technological mastery over nature and success within capitalism facilitated by cultural assimilation. Then, in a grand reversal coinciding with global trends lauding multiculturalism in the late 1960s, Franco-Louisiana experienced a resurgence in a movement termed the Cajun Renaissance, spearheaded by CODOFIL (founded 1968). Flawed as it may have been in its early iterations denouncing Cajun French language as a backward, broken, faux French that needed to be replaced by bourgeois standard French, CODOFIL worked to bring back the French language in various capacities (Trépanier 3). However, as previously described, the cultures of the area previously functioning under other ethnic monikers, especially Créole, French, and the Indigenous Houma nation, were over time semiotically flooded over by the proliferation of the Cajun label (3). The commodification and promotion of "Cajun culture" furthered and continues to further the domination of the Cajun signifier. "The romanticization of the Acadian narrative placed them (the Creoles) into the national consciousness, but the pursuit of an idyll, and a racially-defined whitened Acadianness, also undermined the once unified Creole community" (Landry 86).

Through this deep process, the persistence of Cajunness carries cultural and economic weight. Widespread branding in both the public and private spheres with words like Cajun, Acadian, and Acadiana overshadows the contributions of non-Cajun Créoles, falsely marketing a

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the Créole idiom, featuring Rockin' Dopsie and the Twisters in his Zydeco-styled song "That Was Your Mother," on the *Graceland Album*. Dopsie felt Simon had derived the song from Dopsie's song "My Baby, She's Gone," but no lawsuit was filed.

culturally Créole area as Cajun and lending ensuing profits to the Cajun rather than Créole sphere. First, a number of related but distinct and microlocalized cultures were split along racial lines, with virtually all working-class white francophones subsumed under the Cajun label. This process included the actual melding of cultures, but was more prominently the assimilation of several heterogeneous groups of people under one signifier— Cajun. Once nominally unindividuated, the French-speaking people of each of these groups were coerced to adopt Anglo-Americanization, and otherwise convinced by the vestiges of this ideological state apparatus that they were Cajun (backward) and that they had to become American (forward) in order to survive. Meanwhile, Créoles of color were forced to fall into the category of blackness.

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Chapter 3: Stereotype and the precarious performance of aggravated identity

> The Cajun is either depicted as an ignorant, cunning, superstitious swamp dweller, living in squalor in a moss-draped, reptile-infested wilderness which is truly a backwater of American civilization; or, he is interpreted as being a creature of simple virtue, somewhat religious, easily amused by bouree, beer, and quaint music and who occasionally blurts out (in his 'usual patois') unexpected words of wisdom. (Conrad 1)

Is this still the image of the Cajun? What is the Cajun image today, and how does it affect the Cajun community? Since at least the 1970s, cultural carriers of Cajunness have taken on divergent functions. There is a three-way split between the Cajuns who turn Cajun culture outward, in the interest of affirming the idea that Cajun culture is still alive if in the process of recovery and that it's something consumers should desire to experience (Le Menestral 102). This often comes in the form of performing stereotype, which we will discuss soon. Second, there are those who oppose the progressive discourse I have been asserting. They have often already capitulated to the hegemony of Americanism, continuing to use Acadian mythology amid an American presence to assert an Acadian presence as a part of American mythology. Third, there are those who remain unheard and unrepresentable until they give themselves voice, at which point they are often seen as too intelligent, too modern, already too American to be truly Cajun (Ancelet "The Cajun Who Went to Harvard" 106).

At once the two ideas are held that 1) the Cajun spectacle one may be subjected to is real, alive, and authentic and 2) the temporal gap between the image of the Cajun and the lifeworld of the Cajun subject today is immense. If the Cajunized-Americanized subject is caught without the parts that socially signify one as Cajun (family heritage, rural with a deep relationship to the land, working class), are they still Cajun? Out of all this "world" still spinning around the Cajuns came the francophone poets— often proudly identifying as *Cadiens*— who are perhaps the most effective vocalizing representation of these voiceless Cajuns. These poets are often also academics, such as Jean Arceneaux (Barry Jean Ancelet), David Cheramie, Kirby Jambon, and Nathan Rabalais. More than one such poet is clued in to this commodified Cajunness, and many of these Cadien poets capture that sense that the Cajuns are marginalized both *by* their Frenchness and *from* their Frenchness, told forever by Anglo-America, the French, Council on the Development of French in Louisiana, and even the Quebecois that their French is not a real language, it's only Cajun French. But more importantly for this discussion, we will see the differences between the commodified Cajun and the speaking *Cadien*.

Imperial mockery: Stereotype and ambivalence in the Franco-Louisianais context

The word Cajun has long been used to exert power in the form of stereotype. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, non-Acadian Créoles came to be called Cajuns *because of* Cajun stereotypes. Then, in the first half of the twentieth century, the fixity of negative Cajun stereotype was mobilised and pressurized to exert hegemonic control over a minority culture, and moreover, to convince the elites of that minority culture to exert hegemonic control in the name of Americanization over the lower classes. Yet, as entrepreneurs realized they could sell this stereotype, they began listening closely to what was saleable about it. They were already given to the ideology of Americanness, but regurgitating the commodified Cajun for profit within this system of cultural capital was something new.

What I would like to approach now is the overlapping space of postcolonial discourse and the performativity of low culture. I do not intend to say that Cajun culture *is* low culture, but that performances of Cajun stereotypes consistently *present* Cajun culture as low culture. I contend that the repeated stereotypical representations of the Cajun, which we have discussed, stands as an

important example of the meeting of the discourse of power in the postcolonial structure and the affinity for low culture. If we can understand the relationship between Cajuns and the U.S. as a colonial relationship, we may also understand how Cajun stereotypes have been used to justify American corporate, linguistic, epistemological, and political expansion into the Cajun and Créole sphere.

For Bhabha, one aim of the colonial mission is to "reform" and "civilize" the colonized in the image of the colonizer (85). The colonized subject is pressured to mimic the colonizer's image, language, and *mode de vie*, but part of why the colonizer holds so much power is *because* the colonized will never be able to totally do so. Thus, Bhabha writes, "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite"* (85). In this way, the colonized subject is a "partial presence," whose mimicry of the colonizer is both "resemblance and menace" (86). It is in this slippage, where to be Cajun today is to resemble Anglo-Americans... "but not quite," that the difference of the Cajun subject is exploitable. It is in this discursive space that stereotypes are affixed to the Cajun, mocking their otherness, and the Cajun is thus kept in a diminutive position to the American. Or, as Homi K. Bhabha writes, "if colonialism takes power in the name of history, it repeatedly exercises its authority through the figures of farce." (Bhabha 85). This exercise of authority through farce and mockery would have been plainly visible for Cajuns in the the ISAs described in chapter two (military, schools, etc.), but the stranger phenomenon is that the Cajun image that was mocked in these ISAs a century ago continues to be mocked today *by Cajuns* more than anyone else. Thus, the colonial structure between the Anglo-American and the Cajun is continued *by Cajuns* through fixating upon the ambivalence of their mimicry and mocking the difference from Anglo-America exposed therein. In other words, the exaggeration of Cajun stereotypes (exaggerating speech patterns, playing up supposed ignorance, etc.) in performances by Cajuns shows that the imaginary colonial authority has settled in to Cajun psychology well enough for Cajuns to reify the structure of colonized status even outside of the disciplining gaze of Anglo-Americanism.

Being and symbolizing: Thesis on the split subject's symbolic relationship with authenticity

As seen in our analysis of the commodification of food, representation in literature, and the modern image of the Cajun, the separation between being-in-the-world and representing-the-world (art) has become radically wide. While the separation of the signifier Cajun from an easily discernible single identity furthers the twofold colonial process of 1. Othering and 2. inculcating the colonizer's knowledge (a form of colonization)(Said 6-7, 11), the performance of Cajunness today synthesizes the two by maintaining power epistemologically, through repetitive representation. Today, stereotypical performances of the Cajun wrap both into one presentation. This allows people to assume knowledge of the Cajun, but I contend that the embrace of a comedic "laugh-with-us" attitude that refers to the past, may have been erasing the possibility of a future by doing so. By performing Cajun stereotypes that are rooted in the past, "something comes to be repeated, relocated, and translated in the name of tradition, in the guise of a pastness that is not necessarily a faithful sign of historical memory but a strategy of representing authority in terms of the artifice of the archaic" (Bhabha 156)[23]. In each performance of Cajun stereotypes, the epistemological authority that Anglo-Americans have historically asserted over Cajuns is subtly reified in the present. Thus, the fact that these stereotypical performances occur so often between Cajuns stands as evidence for how ambiguous the Cajun's relationship to the pre-Americanized past is. By refusing these stereotypes, a slippage in authority occurs. If Cajuns happily affirm these stereotypes through performing them, these Cajuns prove their own complicity in the authority of the Anglo-American epistemology over them.

[23] Frantz Fanon also writes about the performance of tradition risking the concretization of culture, making cultural development difficult (Fanon 96-97)

Boudreaux and Thibodeaux jokes

Evidence of the mechanically exaggerated nature of Cajun performance comes from a sociological study done by Katie Carmichael (2013). Carmichael's research team interviewed a group of Louisianians and asked them to tell Boudreaux and Thibodeaux jokes. This format of joke usually tells a story about a pair of Cajuns and ends with a punchline that plays on the stupidity of either character, Boudreaux or Thibodeaux. Interestingly, what Carmichael found was that each time these jokes were told, the joker always put on a heavy Cajun English accent through which the characters' stupidity is performed.

> At the end of the interview, speakers were asked if they were putting on an accent while joketelling, and if so, what they were doing that was different from their normal speech. All of the speakers in the current study either stated themselves that they were exaggerating their Cajun English accents or had someone else present (besides the researcher) claim that they heard the joketeller exaggerating their accent while telling the Boudreaux and Thibodeaux jokes. However, many speakers had difficulty explaining exactly what linguistic features they were manipulating when they told the jokes, with most responses involving specific lexical items that are emblematic of Cajunness" (Carmichael 389).

Cajuns perform Boudreaux and Thibodeaux jokes with the same ethnic exaggeration they would perform a joke about lazy Mexicans, flamboyant gays, or greedy Jews. By exaggerating Cajun-ness[24], they cast the otherness in themselves as a simple performance, something that both is and is not really them. For Cajuns performing these jokes, the performance belies a split subject within a single person, and the two parts are certainly not valued equally[25].

Playing the couillon: affinity for stereotype and the politics of aesthetics

What I want here is certainly not to say that if we can understand this as repetition of a fixed stereotype, it allows us free reign to relentlessly love stereotype, redeeming the overinflated performance, nor that an understanding of how Cajuns are stereotyped necessitates a need to stop the performance, condemning every part of stereotype. I believe this would actually have a terrible effect, begetting a feeling they can't even talk about Cajunness, much less feel good about

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[24] I see late chef, comedian, television personality, Justin Wilson, famous for his catchphrases "I guar-aunt-tee it" and "How y'all is?" as the great early fixture of commodified, stereotypical Cajun performance. Wilson was one of the early far-reaching performers of Cajunness, eventually appearing on the Ed Sullivan show and Late Night with David Letterman. Wilson was from Tangipahoa Parish, outside of Acadiana, but he travelled throughout Acadiana performing and talking to people, picking up stereotypical Cajun mannerisms and old jokes. This is worth noting because it already signals his position as outside looking in, while performing insideness, being in on the joke of Cajunness. Wilson released his first comedy album in 1960, just as Louisiana began coming out of the repression of Cajun culture, just before the explosion of the Cajun renaissance. It makes total sense that Wilson's over the top, heavily stereotypical, distorted co-optation of Cajunness comes out at the end of a time marked by extreme repression of Cajunness in every way. Justin Wilson is not the storyteller Benjamin speaks about, but precisely the storyteller after storytelling becomes impossible. Wilson attempts to communicate experience, but he just never had the intergenerational communicable experience of the Cajun storyteller.What he had was commodified stereotype, obvious exaggeration, and in that a path to success within capital.

[25]More recent examples of Cajun stereotype include Adam Sandler as *The Waterboy*. The plot of that movie casts the Cajun in the lowliest role, waterboy, but he becomes successful in the arena of Anglo-American football. Think also of René Lenier from *True Blood*, Gambit from *X-Men*, and the documentary series *Swamp People,* which is camped on by outsiders, but is actually a much less pretentious (more naive) performance by culturally hybridized people of southern Louisiana .

consuming the culture, and would make many Cajuns feel badly about being what they certainly see as part of themselves— in other words, it risks re-facilitating cultural suicide. However, we must understand the paradigm of fixity and fixation (Bhabha 76) that is cemented in the reproduction of this stereotypical Cajun image unless we want to reproduce that feeling of nonbelonging, stupidity, and the alienation of marginality within one's own self.

Stereotype and the precarious performance of aggravated identity: summation and conclusion

Cajuns must realize that they are also Créoles, and that their Franco-Louisianais identity has so much more in common with other Créoles of all skin tones than with Anglo-Americans. They must realize that the impetus to exaggerate and overperform their linguistic identity comes from the same historical system of stereotyping to control knowledge or discourse about a group that exaggerated performances of blackness do. Identity is fluid and heteroglossic. It is not static but performative, and each Franco-Louisianian emerges as a hybrid subject (Bhabha 78). Now that we understand the historical narratives, power relations, and trauma that have set up tensions around the Cajun identity today, we may have a working deconstructive understanding of why people in Southern Louisiana use exaggerated stereotypical performance to display their understanding of the Cajun identity, authenticity, and inclusion to the Cajun group.

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CHAPTER 4: Postcolonial prerogatives, new nativism, and some angry Cajuns

> Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage.... It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled— exactly like the technique of camouflage practised in human warfare."
>
> (Lacan, "The Line and the Light" 1)
> (Quoted in Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 121)

Thus far, we have discussed the oppositional signifying process that has produced the Cajun and Créole. We have seen the historical circumstances from which créolized languages, cultures, and identities (including the Cajun) have emerged in the context of colonialism. Here we have clearly seen the Créole as a hybrid product of the Americas. Then, as contact between Anglo-Americans and Créoles increased, we saw the historical Créole placed in opposition to American identity. We have explored the way in which American domination of the Cajun/Créole space may be seen as a colonial or imperial relationship. In the process of segregation, we have seen the Créole placed in opposition to whiteness while the Cajun underwent a process guaranteeing its identification with whiteness. This was played out as phenotypically white persons were amalgamated by the Cajun label while phenotypically darker persons remain under the Créole label. We have also seen how this created a split Cajun subject, with one foot in the Créole world and one in the whitened American world. Finally, we have seen how the fixity of Cajun stereotype continues to operate as a second symbolic self within this split Cajun subject. Now we must ask: if the Cajun has been so segregated, whitened, and Americanized, has the Cajun been completely assimilated? Did créolization end? I argue, contra such a notion, that the process we refer to as Americanization must be seen as a lifeworld-changing authentic event (Romano 39) that has obscured epistemological access to the actually unending process of créolization. I posit that this obfuscation is manifested in the contemporary trend of the assimilated Cajun embracing Anglo-American nativism, monolingual anglophonie, environmental exploitation, and racism.

We have never been Cajun

I have already argued that a contemporary definition of Cajun identity must include an understanding that the Cajun has been whitened specifically in order to facilitate the national project of assimilation. On the other hand, Cajun identity has been under a process of créolization from the beginning of its inception not just in Louisiana, but including Acadian mixture with Mi'kmaq language, foodways, and exogamy. With Acadian settlement in Louisiana, likewise, the Acadian habitus has all the while been créolizing with myriad surrounding Spanish, French, German, English, Indigenous, African, and Créole culture(s). Despite a history of white supremacist discourse attempting to naturalize a difference between Cajuns and other Créoles based on race, the thread of discourse that has championed Cajunness and spread the label into the national and international discourse made obvious the need to include "non-originally" Acadian traceable pieces of culture within the Cajun identification. In other words, because Southern Louisiana has been labelled "Cajun," rather than Créole, Cajuns need to take responsibility for this situation and recognize the inability to trace a "pure origin" in anything under the Cajun label. Cajun is, not just because of its place under the Louisiana Créole umbrella, but by the definition of the process of its emergence as an identity, créolized. Moreover, to analyze the Cajun as anything other than a hybrid identity would not only miss the fact that Acadian culture was a mixture of Occitan French and Mi'kMaq. It would also undermine the state of the Cajun today— positioned between being a storied hybrid ethnic identity and identification with a prevailing image of white America. We must leave behind the tendency to see identities such as Cajun, Créole, or American as static, instead turning toward a conception of identity that takes into account the fluidity of these identities in an overlapping space. In other words, the Cajun must be recognized as always already Créole.

The irresistible force and the movable subject: is Americanization a new event of créolization?

With all this talk of Créoles and créolization, we are also obliged to ask: is what we refer to as Americanization equivalent to *decréolization*, or must we see Americanization in Louisiana also as a new form of créolization? If créolization denotes the process of becoming a subject of mixed cultures, is the Cajun or Créole watching American sitcoms while eating gumbo in a suburban home in Louisiana or elsewhere not just another phenomenon in a continuous stream of créolization? After all, if the relationship between the United States and French Louisiana is perceived as a colonial relationship, then we must remember that the historical socio-geographic examples of créolized identities from which our concepts of créolization come are also formed under the auspices of colonial regimes (e.g, Haitian, Afro-Cuban, Mauritian, Louisiana Créole).

The glaring counterpoint to this idea is that twentieth century Americanization of Louisiana may be more accurately defined as a nationalization project seeking to create a palimpsest, wherein francolouisianais culture is erased in order to create a blank canvas, a Wild West, an arcadia, upon which Anglo-American culture can be written. This way of looking at the intentions of the Americanization project is certainly not without some truth, mostly because many of the generations that attended Louisiana schools during the early and mid-twentieth century have deeply internalized this narrative. Clearly some type of event has happened, so deeply transforming Créole Louisiana that it could not be reckoned with as it began happening. Instead, it was not until the larger nation had attempted to grapple with the legacy of racism and segregation in the late 1960s that the francolouisianais could have their own "renaissance." Nevertheless, this period of silence amidst the completely transformed environment of Louisiana is one strong piece of what marks the Americanization event as a new créolization.

In his essay, "Édouard Glissant: Creolization and the Event," Lincoln Shlensky traces an understanding of Glissant's concept of the event throughout Glissant's oeuvre. Shlensky draws on Claude Romano's notion of an authentic event, as opposed to normal events that occur within our normal worldview, in order to understand créolization itself as an event (Shlensky 356)(Romano 39). As with other poststructuralist conceptions of the event (Nancy, Derrida, Badiou, Raffoul), the authentic event is seen here as a rupture in being from which truth can only be constructed afterward. Authentic events are so "evental," they so fundamentally change our worldview, that they come to "upend, or even abolish the context that presumably would explain them" (Shlensky 356) (Romano 39). Shlensky posits that Glissant's later writing frames creolization as "an event-like phenomenon similar to a notion of the event, in Romano's sense, as that which abolishes its own presumable contexts in the process of ushering in a new social reality" (Shlensky 356). Causality, reason, and truth can only be reconciled with (or perhaps even invented) post-event. In the Louisiana case, Americanization so forcefully offered itself to the francolouisianais that the process was set in motion without anyone being able to reconcile with how drastically it would change their memory of the world from which they came, changing their relationship to the present and future world in the process. Thus, as the whitened, industrialized, anglophone Cajun emerges from the Americanization event, the Cajun does not any longer register with the old Créole world from whence he arrived. Accordingly, the Cajun loses the memory of those ties to other Louisiana Créoles; instead the Cajun is completely *créolized* within a new American world. Only after the long event of Americanization were Cajuns able to collectively recognize the drastic changes that had occurred in their own lifeworlds, pushing an attempt at francophone resurgence and cementing the narrative of oppression of Cajun culture within the historical pursuit of Americanization.

We must frame Americanization as yet another event of créolization in part because it has not been totally successful in eradicating many pieces of francolouisianais culture, instead creating hybrid forms. Resistance to monocultural ideology and anglophone monolingualism is still embodied in the fact that younger generations continue to have interest in learning and practicing Louisiana heritage languages as a second language. Likewise, resistance to erasure at the cultural

level continues to be shown in new hybrid productions of music, food, and festivals wherein Cajun/Créole culture is played out in relation to the American culture in which it is interfused. That is to say, whether erasure was or is the intention of the Americanization project becomes irrelevant in the face of a coming community of practice, but only if we continue to reach for that community. The hybrid quality of new productions here shows the resistance, adaptability, and therefore longevity of Cajun/Créole cultural practice are so permeable that any project of erasure approaches impossible.

We must finally say that Americanization also created a new border space wherein créolization continues . If créolization consists of the relational process of culture at the borders of different culture(s), then perhaps only the ideologies, structures, or processes that attempt to block this relational process, or décreolize by negation, are décreolization. This would translate to only the features of the Americanization process which have attempted to erase Créole culture being properly categorized as decréolization. This possible view is of great import because it allows us to take into account the resistance of hybridized actors to completely relinquish linguistic or cultural pieces of a pre-existing créolism. This stance cannot gloss over the fact that there are ever-fewer heritage language and even Standard French speakers in Louisiana every year. On the contrary, it means the fight must be continued for access to the tools to represent the Franco-Créolo-Louisianais piece that can make up the hybrid Louisianian subject. Now with our understanding of Americanization in Louisiana as always already a créolizing process, it means all Louisianians, regardless of heritage, should support créolization by learning Louisiana heritage languages along with English.

We cannot escape the advances that modernity through Americanization has given some Louisianians. New ideas, culture, and offers of access have brought us into this hybrid environment of global networked culture, various ideological echo chambers, and the uniquely haunting social struggle on the land today. Perhaps créolization exists as a constant process, not blocked from living on, but forever haunting as a ghost in the machine of culture. As memory and relation are the vital means with which créolization or Americanization play out in the living world, the discourse around Cajuns and Créoles will not die but continue to créolize. What we must fight for is the ability for Créole memory, language, and lifeways to actually be present in new hybrid Louisiana identities. This means at some point the state will need to allocate much more funding for language immersion programs, heritage language media, and the building of an economy that supports bilingual or multilingual life. As the affinity for French and Créole heritage languages continues to be at play in Louisiana, younger generations must have the means to direct access to these resources in order to assert their stake in the process of créolization.

New economy of identity and the foreclosure of solidarity

As Bankston and Henry aptly subtitle their *Blue Collar Bayou: Louisiana Cajuns in the New Economy of Ethnicity* (2002), the postmodern cultural condition of America has translated to an economy of ethnic identity. Bankston and Henry pick up on the way our consumer economy has given Cajuns choices about what to consume. In this view, what Cajuns choose to consume from the Cajun world or the American world brings them closer to being Cajun or closer to being American. Exactly at the moment that Louisiana was a having a reawakening about its difference, as the French language was having a resurgence, as poets and singers began writing confessional lines about their own feelings about their identities, the pieces that signified these identities were becoming solidified as commodities on the national and international markets.

At first glance, this may seem like the ideal future solution to ethnic identity. Louisianians who want to participate in the economy of Cajunness may do so, while those who choose more American identifiers are free to do so as well. However, in this market economy, new stratification occurs, and a new fragmentation in the community forms. As the self is economized, each individual self becomes more isolated from the solidarity of a coming community of créolization. It is not the

ability to consume American culture that is so fragmentary, but the inability for myriad Créoles to exhibit community solidarity amid the overwhelming wave of an enormously productive and available Anglo-American culture. Now hyper-individuated in a contemporary culture of the self, some Cajuns have abandoned the process of créolization that has brought cultures together.

Strangers to their own selves: anger and mourning on the Cajun right

As myriad peoples of Southern Louisiana continue the discourse around the Cajun signifier today, the Cajun is posed as a reformed, recognizable Other. The people of Southern Louisiana then perform a second face, the face of the proud American. If they are able to see this reformed, recognizable other in a part of themselves, they begin to impart many of the same rhetorical tools used against their own difference now against the difference of other identities. The multigenerational acceptance of assimilationist ideology has helped them build the ability to disavow the Other as incompatible to Anglo-American law and way of life. As we come to understand that the modern Cajun was solidified by a process of imperialism, racial segregation, and linguistic repression, we must come to grips with the Cajun as a contemporary political actor in the American arena. Thus, while the image of the Cajun remains nationally conceptualized as an exotic other, an overwhelming majority of Cajun-identifying people today are positioned politically as many other white Southerners are. The Other today often takes the form of typical American and particularly Southern targets of difference: "urban culture," "the Mexicans," "the Muslims," etc. What our understanding of Cajun history has shown is that the process by which the people of South Louisiana have learned to identify the Other in what they see as themselves has also prepared them for a fear of the Other as they are now seen. With the move from twentieth century culture to the twenty-first century comes a shift from the specific characterization of Cadien-ness to the universal and the atemporal. It seems the deeply rooted stereotype of the Cajun was distilled in the nineteenth century, and the main change in the twentieth century is the shift in focus from actively assimilating the Cajun to heightening the Cajun's value as a whitened commodity. In the twenty-first century, however, the Cajun image seems to remain fixed, while the people who call themselves Cajun (or even choose to no longer do so) are increasingly left in an alienated nonspace that leaves many feeling like strangers in their own land (Hochschild 2).

Sociologist Arlie Hochschild tries to understand the worldview of a group of Southwest Louisianians, overwhelmingly Cajuns, in her book *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (2016). The book was a finalist for the National Book Award in Nonfiction, and was widely read following the 2016 presidential election, as much of America was trying to understand the fervid strain of far-right American populism that helped to elect Donald Trump president. Hochschild's study takes place around Lake Charles, Louisiana and several other Southwest Louisiana towns not because she wants to interview Cajuns, but because the area has been a stronghold of Tea Party conservatism in America. To that effect, the book glosses some Cajun history as told by the interviewees, but it focuses on the interviewees as representatives of an American movement rather than in their specificity as Cajun subjects. This in itself is a spectacular historical possibility— that these Cajuns in the 2010s are such reformed American subjects that a sociologist would identify their habitus as a stronghold of an American nationalist, corporatist, xenophobic, white movement. Nevertheless, she is correct to do so, but her revelations about the ideologies her interviewees harbor are desperately in need of further analysis in the context of Southern Louisiana.

One of the major theoretical threads of the book is that we all operate with what Hochschild calls a "deep story." These are the narratives by which we come to know who we are, where we come from, and what our values are. In *Strangers in Their Own Land*, one of the biggest pieces of the Tea-Party-cum-MAGA interviewees' deep story is that white working-class, Christian, heterosexual, conservative Americans believe deeply in the American Dream. They feel they have been working hard, waiting patiently in line to be rewarded with the fruits of this American Dream, but that now

others are cutting in line: immigrants, non-white people, feminists, and environmentalists while simultaneously denigrating them as rednecks, unintelligent, racists, sexists, homophobes, etc.

Hochschild is correct to point to the function of the "deep story" that informs every piece of how her interviewees see their position in the nation, history, and politics. However, she glosses over the highly relevant Cajun ethnic background that pre-structures the deep story in most of the people she interviews. She certainly picks up on some important pieces, such as the linguistic oppression of the Cajuns and the stories of corporal punishment for speaking French in schools (42), but neglects the function of the conservative American deep story that has brought specifically the Cajuns to this point. We must recognize how evential the Americanization of the Cajuns has been in order to faithfully account for their deep story. What is not fully recognized in *Strangers in Their Own Land* is that the people she interviews were so changed by the event of Americanization that they do not realize that Americanization itself has produced their relatively newfound ability to pass as an example of the white, nativist, red-blooded American. I argue that it is pertinent to remember exactly this world-changing event of Americanization brought them to, as she writes, "wait in line for the American Dream" (136). However, most Cajuns will never be millionaires, and the millionaires that control their livelihoods, their land, and their water do not care about any one of these three things.

MAGA Cajuns invest in the economy of the self through the conservative image of America. If they purchase Cajun-ness, they purchase the whitened, *Evangeline*-ized myth of a people who played by the rules and became successful Americans by hard work, and by tossing out their "broken old language." However, as we've seen, the Cajun continues to be represented to the rest of America only in the logic of stereotypes. Today's Make America Great Again nostalgia is, for many Cajuns, a nostalgia for an imaginary past— a past that was never that great for its actual grandfathers, as for many other working class and otherwise marginalized groups in America. For the Cajuns, it's a nostalgia for someone else's ideal past— for an Anglo-American ideal of individualism, upward mobility, and a possible achievement of middle class arrivism that never really existed, either for Acadians or any of the other groups brought into the Cajun fold. This is why "ideology represents the imaginary relationships of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser). Amid the incredible disjuncture of understanding their own history, they seem to foreclose action in their own present. Or, as Frederic Jameson has it, they have "nostalgia for the present."

In the turn to nativism, Cajuns also take a turn toward being ideologically nativized by powerful interests. By giving multibillion-dollar tax breaks to international companies primarily in oil, natural gas, and chemical refinement (as well cinema via the Jindal-era LA entertainment tax credit system), the Louisiana state government encourages a neocolonial and neoliberal model. Under this model, the land and people are exploited, while the corporations "investing" in Louisiana are investing solely for the company, not for the people of the state. Cajuns lament the loss of their natural environment through petrochemical and agrochemical pollution in the soil, water, and air, while desperately latching onto the oil industry as one of few remaining sources of gainful employment. They rail against social programs while they cannot afford the healthcare, education, and regulation of industry they acknowledge is needed. They wait in line for someone else's dream that their parents long ago accepted. Meanwhile, they have become so alienated from the political strife of their own heritage that they instead turn to the complaints that Anglo-Americans not long ago used to convince them to join the line for the American Dream. It is in this way that Americanization of ethnic peoples turns them into the most stalwart nativists. It is in these examples that decréolization seems most clear. We must reject this decréolizing ideology.

Instead, we must treat the margins of race, migrant status, or nation as a site of new créolization. Cajuns have the opportunity to break the recurrent American cycle of an oppressed minority group becoming assimilated only to oppress other minority groups. Cajuns and other whitened Créoles have the opportunity to recognize in their own histories the way racial

segregation, capitalism, and a nationalization that seeks assimilation are not the only possible forms of social relation. These structures were used to divide a society previously speaking in solidarity against exploitation, and that concept of speaking in solidarity could unite different political actors to confront these structures directly. Perhaps in this situation, all those waiting in line for the American Dream will not oppose other poor souls in line but will question why the gates to the American Dream are closing in the first place.

In summary, Louisiana in particular has always been a site where cultures, people, languages, mix and form créolized cultures, people and languages. The introduction of Anglo-American culture, people, and languages is no exception to this ongoing process, though lack of equally rigorous support for the non-Anglo-American pieces to this puzzle has led to a less than ideal picture of créolité. As new global flows of culture, people, and language continue to enter the frame, care must be taken to ensure all pieces of the puzzle are accounted for, not rejected or cut to fit perfectly into place. The process of créolization has always been messy, but we must continue to allow that process, rather than become blind by rejecting the reality of a coming créole society.

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Conclusions:

The rearrangement of a multiracial, multiethnic créole society into a policed racially binary society (with power concentrated in whiteness) has led to an overemphasis of the popular history of the "local white culture," specifically Acadian culture, over the "local black culture." In South Louisiana, this shift in representation happened to take place during the move from a merchant capitalist society (Colonial Louisiana) into an industrial capitalist-adjacent society (nineteenth century Louisiana as a part of the industrial American market). Thus, when the society later became consumer capitalist, the local whitened culture's history as popular myth became so desirable but so internally contradictory that the popular white identity label is sold as a surrogate for all relevant local cultures. Under the conditions of consumer capitalism, the popular label for the whitened culture is the only one both able and forced to circulate in the global market as the solitary sign of cultural commodity, but it is unequipped to do so because it is itself heterogenous, hybrid, and ambivalent to its position as still other than the national culture (American). Thus, it cannot possibly account for everything being ascribed to it, and is therefore only visible as a performance that is at once obviously excessive and self-conscious of that fact.

This leads the popular white culture to register as exotic within the nation, which is marketable, while the non-pure-white cultural signifier, Créole, remains marginalized and not necessarily as valuable as a commodity. This matters because the racial and otherwise class-based gap between these artificially segregated groups continues to widen as one (Cajun) is marketed, with state support, and sold on the global market. However, as some Cajuns risk sinking into a nativist, purist, corporatist American ideology, they risk facilitating the kinds of oppression that the Cajun heritage narrative trades on. Nevertheless, voices from within the contemporary culture(s) commit to practicing what can be resuscitated from their cultures, as well as hybrid forms that speak to the contemporary situation, as acts of resistance to the position to which they have been relegated. These continuing practices include but are not limited to foodways, music and poetry, dance, crafts, traditional and sustainable land- and water-based practices, and most importantly, learning and practicing heritage languages in everyday life.

Today, no one wants to see Louisiana's francophone cultures die. Fortunately, total decimation seems impossible due to two things. First, a stalwart revolving core of Cajun, Créole, and Indigenous communities continue to uphold language and cultural traditions. They have shown themselves to be committed enough to either multigenerational bilingual life and/or cultural traditions to continue the preservation fight for generations. Second, the commodity value of Louisiana heritage culture and language in the tourism, cultural product exports, and music industries will continue to incentivize the continued existence of this ecosystem. However, as the COVID-19 pandemic is now wreaking havoc on the world, Louisiana society will be forced to reboot itself. Louisiana tourism has also basically shut down. We must recognize that as much as the tourism industry is heavily dependent on the culture, the culture is heavily dependent on the tourism industry. Louisiana is going to have to decide how exactly to rebuild in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. I propose that greater emphasis be placed on Créolité and the ongoing process of créolization in Louisiana within the tourism industry.

Given the dwindling number of heritage speakers in Southern Louisiana, heritage language infrastructure must be rebuilt in order to ensure the persistence of Louisiana Cajun and Créole cultures. In terms of building a future for these languages and the cultures they express, the need to participate in the market (for individuals, companies, and the local economic system itself) continues to be the prevailing factor for incentivizing building language learning infrastructure, and thus for what languages individuals learn and practice. As discussed previously, this was a driving ideological force for the state apparatus to impel English throughout twentieth century Louisiana. Ultimately, CODOFIL's goal of boosting a French language learning infrastructure in the state is a goal that will continue to be relevant if these languages are going to continue to have and expand

upon their use value, in both the social and capital markets. In the final analysis, we see that today the Cajun is bound to live with the paradox of a split subjecthood that disavows the structure of otherness and historical oppression inherent in one's own selfhood in order to operate within the national identity (American) and its correlative social, economic, and legal systems. Also, the Cajun faces the choice of reproducing the historical structure of white supremacy unless actively fighting it. One way to conceptualize the deconstruction of this supremacy is to focus on the common historical linguistic identity that people of Franco-Louisianais heritage share regardless of race. Another is to stay with the trouble of créolization, understanding its place as a process that has existed in Louisiana for centuries, and it will not stop any time soon.