THE "REAL" HAITIAN CREOLE: METALINGUISTICS AND ORTHOGRAPHIC CHOICE

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1. Introduction

Language can be examined as a rich resource for understanding the ways in which speakers represent themselves, how they represent others, and how they are represented by others. In this paper we explore a set of language beliefs in conjunction with language practices of Kreyòl speakers. We are interested in how metalinguistic terms used by Haitians regarding varieties of spoken Kreyòl manifest themselves in debates regarding which orthography best represents the language. This is followed by an analysis of competing orthographies in terms of how they make the language look and which sounds are given graphic representation. We view the process of creating an orthography for Kreyòl not as a neutral activity which simply reduces an oral language to written form, but as an important symbolic vehicle for representing its speakers in terms of national and international identity. We propose that contested orthographies be viewed as sites of contested identities rather than as neutral academic or linguistic arguments without political, social or educational consequences. We suggest that the debates regarding the sounds of Kreyòl as well as how those sounds should be written are about different representations of its speakers. These different arguments and the

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1 We refer to the language in the title of the article in the form that is most familiar to an English speaking audience, Haitian Creole. However, in the body of the text we refer to the language as Kreyòl, the way it is referred to by Haitians, and we have chosen to write it and our own transcriptions using the official orthography (IPN). We have, of course, maintained the original orthographies used in published sources.

This collaborative project grew out of an investigation of Kreyòl language use in New York City, which was then extended to Port-au-Prince. During the course of transcribing audiotaped family interaction data with native speakers, the issue of orthographic conventions arose frequently. This in conjunction with native speakers' metalinguistic commentaries about the participants' speech led us to investigate the relationships between varieties of speaking and orthography. Research methods include the use of historical, sociolinguistic and ethnographic data. We would like to thank the many Haitians who participated in our project and freely shared their views about Kreyòl and other topics with us; the Spencer Foundation and New York University (Research Challenge Fund) for supporting this research; and Michel Degraff, Paul Garrett and John Singler who provided helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper.
The metalinguistic terms of a speech communities can serve as a starting point for investigating attitudes toward language varieties and the speakers associated with them. Haitians maintain complicated attitudes toward both French and Kreyòl, many of which become apparent when examining the metalinguistic terms used both popularly and scientifically to refer to varieties of spoken Kreyòl. Kreyòl swa 'smooth Kreyòl', Kreyòl rék 'rough Kreyòl', Kreyòl fransize 'Frenchified Kreyòl', and gwo Kreyòl 'vulgar Kreyòl' are metalinguistic terms central to the debates about orthography.²

Kreyòl fransize is a term used to refer to the variety of Kreyòl spoken by educated urban bilinguals (Vernet 1989: 20). They contrast their Kreyòl fransize with gwo Kreyòl 'rough, vulgar Kreyòl', which they say is spoken by uneducated urban people and peasants. Both terms refer not only to the phonology, vocabulary and intonational contours of the speech itself, but also to the nonverbal gestures used by speakers of each variety. Uneducated speakers, however, prefer the term bon Kreyòl 'good Kreyòl' to refer to the variety that they themselves use, though they know the other terms. Depending on their own language socialization experiences and social networks, educated speakers can recognize Kreyòl rék, but are not always able to produce it.

² See Ludwig 1989 and Schieffelin and Doucet ms for a comparison of similar metalinguistic terms in Haiti, Martinique, Guadaloupe, Mauritius and the Seychelles.
Uneducated speakers can recognize *Kreyòl fransize*, but not speak it spontaneously.

Fattier-Thomas distinguishes between *Kreyòl swa* 'smooth Kreyòl', the sociolect of the bilingual educated minority, and *Kreyòl ròk* 'rough Kreyòl', the variety spoken by the monolingual masses (1984: 39). Lofficial also uses the term *Kreyòl ròk*, which he describes as "*le niveau ressenti comme le plus rude de la langue*" (1979: 118) [the level felt to be the roughest of the language]. While these metalinguistic terms are mentioned in the sociolinguistic literature on Kreyòl (Valdman 1988, 1989a, b, 1991), and are commonly known by Haitians in a variety of social classes, the words *ròk*, *swa*, and *gwo* are not listed in the various Kreyòl dictionaries in their metalinguistic usage. It is informative for later discussions of the orthography to elaborate on the semantics of these expressions because they carry important cultural meanings.

*Swa* 'smooth' (Fr. soie) as a single lexical item is primarily used as an adjectival modifier of *cheve* 'hair' and refers to fine, straight hair. The opposite of *cheve swa* in this referential sense is *cheve grenn* 'tightly curled, kinky hair' (Fr. crépu). Men are also said to be *swa* 'smooth' if they are well-mannered, educated, emotionally even and are pleasing to women (*nèg sa a swa* 'that guy is smooth'), a positive description. *Swa* as an adverbial modifier refers to the smooth manner in which some action is carried out. For example, one says of a car which runs smoothly and is problem free, *macchin sa a mache swa*. Yet another example, *pale swa* 'speak smoothly and persuasively', describes speech which is flowing, regardless of the social or educational background of the speaker.

*Kreyòl ròk* is not strictly opposed to *Kreyòl swa*, though these two terms are often contrasted (Fattier-Thomas 1984; Valdman 1989a, b, 1991). Outside of its reference to speech, the primary meaning of the word *ròk* is agricultural and refers to fruit or vegetables which are not yet ripe but ready to pick. When referring to persons, *ròk* is often applied to a child in the sense of appearing older than he or she actually is. Additionally, *ròk* refers to strength, particularly in men. Unlike *swa*, which can modify a range of actions, *ròk* is only used to describe a manner of speaking: *pale ròk* 'speak roughly', is the opposite of *pale swa* 'speak smoothly'. *Pale ròk* also indexes a verbal style of directness, in contrast to the more indirect style of *pale swa*.

Yet another way to refer to styles of indirection is the Kreyòl expression *pale franse* 'speaking French'. The cultural meaning of this expression is somewhat different from *pale swa*. *Pale franse* emphasizes speaking indirectly (in either French or Kreyòl), with the implication of tricking someone through the use of beautiful sounds, obfuscated speech, or irrelevant arguments. The result may be confusion for the listener. Depending on the speakers and the context, what sounds good (*pale swa* or *pale franse*) can be viewed as potentially deceptive.

The differences between *Kreyòl swa* and *Kreyòl ròk* that are most relevant in the orthographic debates lie in the degrees of similarities to French phonetic characteristics (Fattier-Thomas 1984: 40-41). *Kreyòl swa* can be most generally characterized as retaining the front-rounded vowels /ɔ/, /œ/, /œ/ where *Kreyòl ròk* would use the non-rounded vowels /e/ and /i/. Another marker of *Kreyòl swa* is the use of postvocalic /t/
at the ends of words, absent in the rèk variety.\(^3\) Also relevant is the prevocalic Haitian /r/ and its possible realization as a more labialized /w/ in three main contexts: /ɔ/, /ɔː/, /u/. Since 1986, with the liberation of the press and increased access of the masses to the media, there has been a shift in values associated with these speech varieties. Monolinguals try to imitate the prestigious form, Kreyòl swa. Fattier-Thomas (1987) remarks that some bilinguals, in particular politicians, try to modify their usual Kreyòl swa to sound more like the popular variety Kreyòl rèk in an attempt to identify with the masses. For both categories of speakers, this is met with little success. Whereas previously Kreyòl swa and Kreyòl fransize were both considered desirable modes of speaking, Kreyòl rèk and gwo Kreyòl are now given value in some progressive circles where claims of authenticity and rootedness in cultural identity are asserted. As this is happening, the term bon Kreyòl is becoming an alternative to Kreyòl rèk and gwo Kreyòl, because the latter two have long standing negative connotations. Bon Kreyòl is now the term used in Haiti to refer to the genuine Kreyòl spoken by the masses.

While these metalinguistic notions are worth considering on their own, it is useful to investigate their pragmatic implications and links to other symbolic systems. Many Haitians and non-Haitians view Kreyòl as a simplified form of French, at best. Others claim it is not a real language at all, but a mixture of languages without a grammar. It has been characterized as lacking in abstract terms, inadequate for scientific, philosophical or logical thought. For most of its history Kreyòl has not been considered adequate for government, schooling or Western religious services. These ideas about Kreyòl have not only had important repercussions for the ways in which monolingual Kreyòl speakers have been viewed, but have also had important consequences for the codification and functions of written Kreyòl. As we will see, the question of the nature and meaning of these language varieties in Haiti and who speaks them is at the core of the orthography debates that have been going on in Haiti for more than sixty years, and which, despite the claims of many linguists that the question is closed, provokes reactions among linguists and educators. The debate on the use of Kreyòl itself, and particularly on the use of Kreyòl in schools, is broader and is taken up by parents and teachers in addition to writers and media people. The issues of orthography and use, we will argue, are connected through broader ideological tenets.

3. Writing Kreyòl

The first accounts of written Kreyòl date back to the late eighteenth century, when Kreyòl was used for both official and literary purposes. One of the earliest records of written Kreyòl was issued by a French delegate from Bonapart’s regime, Sonthonax. It is an abstract (from the French) of the proclamation to the slaves abolishing slavery in 1794. This, and other documents at the time, were read to the nonliterate population.

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\(^{3}\) The exception is in the Northern dialect, which has this postvocalic feature throughout (Hyppolite 1949; Orjala 1970).
and did not circulate as written documents. The orthography used in this document and others resembles a simplified French spelling in use at the time and is best viewed as invented ad hoc as it had no basis in any systematic conventions for representing the sounds of Kreyòl. This approach, representing Kreyòl as a diminished or simplified version of French, persisted well into the 1930s and reflected many ideas about the nature of Kreyòl and its speakers.4

Orthographic debates began in Haiti in the late 1920s and have involved many different positions (Déjean 1980a; Pressoir 1947). As of 1980 eleven proposed spelling systems could be identified. Nonetheless, despite apparent diversity, three main kinds of proposals can be identified: (1) Those who take a pro-etymological or anti-phonemic view; (2) those who support a pro-phonemic approach; (3) those in an intermediary camp, proposing a phonemic orthography but with some concessions to French spelling.5

The first widely recognized system was proposed in 1940 by a Protestant missionary, Ormonde McConnell, who had done work in adult literacy in rural Haiti. It used 33 symbols and was phonemic (Déjean 1980a: 19-20):

| oral vowels: | a é è i o û |
| nasal vowels: | â é ô |
| semi-vowels: | i/y w u (in the diphthong ui) |
| consonants: | b d f g h j k l m n p r s t v z |
| digraphs: | sh gn |

In 1943 McConnell was joined by an American literacy expert, Frank Laubach, who was not familiar with Kreyòl, and together they revised McConnell’s original spelling system. The second version, called McConnell-Laubach, was also a phonemic orthography. It used the same alphabet as McConnell’s with the following differences: the ou instead of u to represent the sound /û/ as in Kreyòl dou (Fr. doux); and ch instead of sh to represent the sound /ʃ/ as in Kreyòl chante (Fr. chanter). This spelling system was used in the literacy campaign sponsored by the government of Elie Lescot. The materials, almost all inspired from Protestant religious texts, were designed to bring salvation and light to the Haitian rural masses.

The Haitian scholar Pressoir (1947) strongly criticized the McConnell-Laubach orthography mainly because of the absence of the front-rounded vowels /u/, /ø/, /ɛ/, /æ/; the broad use of the "Anglo-Saxon" letters w and y; and the use of the circumflex to mark the nasalized vowels. As French uses the letter n to indicate nasalization, a French diacritic was used but with a different application.

This system was called by some Kreyòl bwa-nan-nen ‘Kreyòl with a wooden stick on its nose’ because of the abundance of circumflexes. The term bwa-nan-nen refers to putting a small wooden pincer, like a clothes pin, on the face or ear of someone who

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4 Hoffman (1989) reviews the development of literary works in Haiti.

5 Debates regarding orthography in Mauritius and Martinique show similar divisions between those advocating a phonemic basis and those arguing for an etymological one.
loses at each round of dominoes or cards and is still done today in urban as well as rural areas of Haiti. *Kreyòl bwa-nan-nen* refers both to the way the words look in their written form and to how they were to be pronounced when read. Pompilus (1973: 25) suggested that the appellation *bwa-nan-nen* was suggested by the literacy instructors to help their students remember that the circumflex represented nasalization. Pressoir claimed (1947) that this new orthography was good for "savages" who spoke a *gros créole* 'rough creole'. One characteristic generally admitted of rural Kreyòl is extended nasalization (Lofficial 1979: 118).

Although systematic, the McConnell-Laubach orthography was contested by many educated Haitians because of its association with Protestantism and its "American" look - a sensitive political issue, since Americans had occupied Haiti from 1915-1934 (Pressoir 1947). Those Haitians did not want any reminders of this American presence, not even in the writing system. They were not happy about the novel representation of nasalized vowels through the use of the circumflex, which treated these nasal sounds differently from the ways in which they are represented in French. This made the representation of Kreyòl appear strange and foreign, and in particular, far from French. Arguments were made that this orthography would inhibit learning French, a goal in educational circles.

Pressoir, who was the leader of the opposition against McConnell-Laubach's system but was himself in favor of a pro-phonemic orthography, introduced a number of changes. He eliminated the circumflex to indicate nasalization and introduced the letter n in its place. In spite of the fact that the "Anglo-Saxon" letters k, y, and w looked "too American", he nonetheless retained the letter k instead of choosing the letter c (as in French) to represent the sound /k/, and also kept the letter y together with the letter i to represent the semi-consonant /j/ (Déjean 1980a: 185), as in for example, *ayè* 'yesterday'. Instead of the letter w, however, he used the digraph ou to represent both the vocalic sound /u/ and the semivocalic sound /w/, thus adopting the French orthographic convention for representing those sounds. Pressoir also introduced the hyphen to distinguish between the nasalized vowels as in /pã/ and (non-nasalized) vowels which are followed by the nasal consonant /n/, as for example in *pa-n* (Fr. *panne* 'mechanical breakdown'). Pressoir's system used the following alphabet of 30 symbols (Déjean 1980a: 183):

- **oral vowels:** a é è i o ò u
- **nasal vowels:** an in on
- **semi-vowels:** i/y ou u (in the diphthong ui)
- **consonants:** b d f g j k l m n p r s t v z
- **digraphs:** ch gn

Pressoir's orthography was adopted with some modifications. It has been used primarily by government agencies for more than 30 years in adult literacy programs and was considered quite satisfactory (Déjean 1980a: 182; Fèrère 1977: 59; Pompilus 1985: 163). American missionaries, however, used a modified McConnell-Laubach orthography for Bible translation and instruction. In literary circles, independent writers wishing to write in Kreyòl created their own orthographic systems, more or less close to French etymology and orthography, thus contesting the Pressoir system. There was
no consensus about orthography.

In the 1970s there was increasing social and political pressure to change the social order of the nation and change the language of instruction and literacy in schools from French to Kreyòl. Once Kreyòl was officially introduced by law in the schools in 1979, it was vital that the Haitian government unify Kreyòl orthography. To do so, it established as the official orthography a system developed by Haitian linguists from the Institut Pédagogique National (IPN) in collaboration with French linguists from the Université René Descartes. The official orthography has an alphabet of 32 symbols:

- **oral vowels**: a e è i o ò ou
- **nasalized vowels**: an en on oun
- **semi-vowels**: w y u (in the diphthong ui)
- **consonants**: b, ch, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, ng, p, r, s, t, v, z

In this orthography the sound /ɛ/ is represented by en. It retains only one accent mark, the grave for /ɔ/ and /ɛ/. The letter y is used to represent the sound /j/. For the back-rounded vowel /u/ the representation is ou. The use of hyphens and apostrophe are optional, as is the representation of the prevocalic /w/ as either the letter w or the letter r before the vowels /ɔ/, /ɔ/, /o/, /u/ (for example, gwo or gro). In 1980 this orthography, called étograf/IPN or étograf ofisyel or more simply étograf Kreyòl, was made official on a trial basis by a communiqué of the Ministry of Education on January 30, 1980. After four years of experimentation, the government was supposed to take a definitive decision. The four years have long since passed, but no official document as yet has either endorsed or discredited the official orthography. The system is still contested by some linguists and provokes passionate reactions among the public for reasons to be discussed below.

One of the major goals of the McConnell-Laubach orthography was that it be easy to learn and use by the monolingual masses. For Pressoir the major ideological concern was that the orthography not look American and function as a bridge to literacy in French. When the étograf Kreyòl was introduced in 1979, the linguistic ideology regarding Kreyòl itself had changed significantly, and this affected the attitudes people held toward the orthography as a representational system. Unlike the periods of adult literacy campaigns where Kreyòl was treated simply as a transitional tool to be used for the achievement of other goals, by 1979 Kreyòl was thought about not only in the context of literacy, but more generally as the language of instruction as well as an object of instruction. The image of Kreyòl, both spoken and written, and consequently its role in the social and political life of Haitians, had changed.

### 4. Interpretation of the debates

Why is the issue of the Kreyòl orthography so important to Haitians? The matter is not simply whether to write, for example, the Kreyòl word for bread /ɛ/ with e (pen) or i (pin) or ain (pain) like in French "pain". The underlying issue is about representations of self and representations of the nation.
Pro-etymologists argue that Kreyòl must stay as close as possible to the French orthographic system. The reasoning that underlies this position is that French and Kreyòl will always coexist in Haiti and thus it is logical to facilitate the learning of French through Kreyòl. This idea is usually expressed by the image of an "orthographic bridge" which will help avoid the confusion which might result for Kreyòl monolinguals as well as the bilinguals from the use of two totally different systems for languages which, they think, are quite similar. Kreyòl orthography, they assert, must also reflect Kreyòl's origin - the French language. Those who aligned themselves with the pro-etymologist position include mainly literary people and members of the intelligentsia, primary and secondary school teachers, and many parents from the middle classes as well as the lower classes who were concerned about the introduction of Kreyòl in schools.

Pro-phonemicists insist that Kreyòl must be written in a coherent, systematic, and logical way. A Kreyòl orthography must be easy to learn as well as completely independent from the French orthographic system. Since the target groups are monolingual Kreyòl speakers who do not read French, theoretically they can learn any orthography, and the most straightforward Kreyòl system is the easiest for the not-yet-literate monolinguals because the only relevant facts are Kreyòl facts. The orthography should represent the sounds of their Kreyòl. The pro-phonemicists are comprised of those who adopted and used, even if with slight variations, Pressoir's orthographic system and, since 1980, the dtograf Kreyòl. Most who adopt this approach are people involved in adult literacy and/or children's literacy programs in Haiti and in the United States. Representatives of this camp are the Haitian government; the Catholic and Protestant Churches; linguists including Vernet and Déjean; and also independent writers. The opinions of this group are not homogeneous, and Déjean, for example, in order to put an end to "useless" discussions, accepted the official orthography, though with reservations (1980 a,b,c).

A third position, which advocates an intermediate solution, is represented by the Haitian linguists and educators Pompilus (1973) and Lofficial (1979). From their perspective the orthography should be phonemic but whenever possible should use the same conventions as the French orthography to represent sounds similar in French and Kreyòl. Their reasoning is that French and Kreyòl coexist in Haiti, and one day the country will be totally bilingual. Their main goal is to include the front-rounded vowels (usually associated with the speech of bilinguals) in the phonetic description of Kreyòl and to provide a graphic representation for each of them. Pompilus's reasons for this are that many non-educated people also pronounce those vowels in their everyday speech, and eliminating the vowels will result in the rejection by many people of the orthography itself and of the use of Kreyòl for instruction (1973: 30).

It is difficult to reconcile Pompilus's proposal for an intermediate orthography which should integrate the front-rounded vowels with his declaration that it would be illusory to take the variety of the urban educated as the standard (cited by Déjean 1980a: 170). This contradiction reveals the tension of creating a bridge between the past (etymology) and the future (when Haiti will be totally bilingual) at a time when the present itself is so full of conflict. Lofficial argues that it is better to prevent
potential problems since it is likely that with the influence of schools and the media the occurrence of the front-rounded vowels will increase (1979: 118). Thus it is better to anticipate the difficulties that could arise from two totally different systems and integrate the front-rounded vowels now. The Haitian linguist Fétrèrè advocates something quite similar with his proposal of an "ethno-orthography" (1974: 23), that is, an orthography culturally and socially acceptable - an orthography which must include the front-rounded vowels, which are not just marginal sounds (Ibid: 50).

5. Discussion of the arguments

The status of Kreyòl and the orthographic debates are closely related to questions of representation at both the national and international levels. Orthographic issues can be included within a broader framework of language ideologies - the cultural beliefs that underlie language practices, choices and attitudes of a people. Most of the discussions that have taken place in Haiti from 1930 to 1990 can be traced to ideologies about the inherent superiority of the French language and are connected to ideologies about the superiority and refinement of French culture based on the achievements of the great French writers of two past centuries: the Century of Reason (17th century) and the Century of the Enlightenment (18th century). Ideas of the clarity, exactness, logic, rationality, natural order, and richness of the French language as contributing to the greatness of French civilization (Grillo 1989; Swiggers 1990) were echoed and defended by many Haitian writers.

The notion that the French language is superior to all others was transmitted to the French colonies and survived in the minds and practices of both the ex-colonizers and ex-colonized. Schools in Haiti, which until recently remained exclusively in the hands of the French clergy, played an important role in keeping this idea strong. After its independence Haiti tried to reject anything that was reminiscent of France. Nonetheless the new nation kept the French language and also copied French administrative and organizational structures in order to survive. Since that time, the new ruling classes have maintained two contradictory positions in their relationship to Europe, particularly to France: hatred and fear at one pole, admiration and emulation at the opposite pole.

The same ambivalence is reflected in Haitians' attitudes toward French and Kreyòl, and it is in this light that the importance given to the issue of Kreyòl orthography can best be understood. If we look carefully, we will see that the debate is not purely about how to write Kreyòl, i.e., how to represent graphically the sounds

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6 Hoffman (1984) explains that the Haitians were aware of the paradox inherent in their conscious imitation of those who had caused them so much suffering, the French. "[They] ... attempted to resolve it by asserting that they had been oppressed in colonial times not by the French, but by the colons, a disreputable minority of adventurers recruited from the dregs of French society." (p.59). These were not the same French of the metropole who epitomized culture and civilization. We thank Paul Garrett for pointing this out.
of Kreyòl. It is about the conception of Kreyòl itself as a "language" and as an element of Haitian national identity. It is about how Haitians situate themselves through languages at the national and international levels. It is about the notions of Ayisyenite 'Haitianess', of authenticity, nationalism and legitimacy. The battle over the orthography cannot be understood if we do not situate it in its social context. The dual linguistic system is a manifestation of the dual social system existing in Haiti. From the perspective of the different orthographic positions, all of which have social, political, cultural and symbolic implications, two issues are taken up: the question of the "sounds" and the question of the "look" of Kreyòl.

5.1. The sounds of Kreyòl

The first disagreement is about the sounds that the alphabet should represent, particularly about the existence or non-existence in Kreyòl of four front-rounded vowels, /ü/ as in French tu; /ö/ as in French peu; /œ/ as in French boeuf; /œu/ as in French un. The existence or non-existence of the front-rounded vowels is viewed by many (including Déjean, Lofficial) as the "dividing line" between the educated minority and the masses, between rural and urban. But to this is linked a more profound question of representation and legitimacy. Which variety of the language should be standardized and codified? This technical question has its counterpart in the socio-political arena. It has been answered by another question: Which variety constitutes the "real", "authentic" Kreyòl? Consequently, who is the real Haitian and whose interests must be taken into account and served? Not surprising to anyone, these questions refer to the struggles for power that have gone on between Noirs 'Blacks' and Mulâtres 'Mulattos' since colonial times and the struggles for upward social mobility by the masses.

Whether the front-rounded vowels are the apanage 'exclusive domain' of a minority of educated bilinguals as Déjean argues, or whether they are also used by monolinguals as Fèrèrè, Pompilus and Lofficial assert, what interests us in the debate is the role of prestige marker ascribed to them by the population. Déjean himself documents many cases of hypercorrection in the speech of monolingual Kreyòl speakers (1980a: 124-125). Fattier-Thomas also notes the use of hypercorrections (related to the front-rounded vowels) in commercial advertisements to establish a kind of complicity with the public (1984: 41). This is to say that for both bilinguals and monolinguals the front-rounded vowels have a highly marked and symbolic value. For the educated and non-educated urban dwellers, the front-rounded vowels are associated with the nonrounded vowels which are considered their antithesis, and function as prestige markers, the front-rounded ones being the prestigious forms. For example, consider the following pairs:

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7 Bourdieu's ideas (1975, 1979, 1982) concerning prestige language, and symbolic capital illuminate this argument.
These pairs are not minimal pairs. They are variants which are found in social dialects and they function as social markers. The use of the front-rounded series is associated with educated classes, good manners, and harmonious sounds, whereas the second series is associated with popular usage, rough manners, strident and even vulgar sounds. Metalinguistic terms are used to qualify the second series, the nonrounded vowels, and reflect the low esteem associated with these sounds. To pronounce a nonrounded vowel when a rounded vowel is expected is to make a mistake, and when one makes this error, Haitians will say that one has a bouch su or bouch si 'sour/acidic mouth' or, more elegantly said, bouch surette 'puckered mouth'. This is related to the idea that these nonrounded vowels have intrinsically disagreeable sounds, and these are labeled su or si 'sour/acidic'. Other meanings of si or su in Kreyòl refer to the taste of lemons and other acidic or unripe fruits, and milk or other kinds of food that can turn sour. People can also have a disagreeable sour smell, expressed as nèg sa a santi si 'that man smells sweaty'. These examples show the connection of the words su/si with the idea that something which has been agreeable has turned disagreeable, sour, bad.

The negative attitudes toward the nonrounded vowels also explain the hypercorrections often made by non-educated speakers when they try to affect a certain degree of education and good manners by avoiding the marked sounds even in cases where there are no alternates. The expressions bouch su and bouch si as well as bèk su/si and djèl su/si, of which bèk si and djèl si are the rék variety and have the pejorative sense of 'disgusting trap', are used to describe what speakers do and how they sound when they hypercorrect these vowels in their speech. Those ideas are internalized, it must be stressed, by members of both ends of the social ladder who react with equal vigor against the official decision to eliminate the front-rounded vowels and to generalize the use of the su/si sounds. They do not want their children to acquire "bad habits" (i.e., bouch su), but rather to speak elegantly and as closely to French as possible (Jean-Charles 1987; Zéphir 1990). It is reasonable to suggest that an important assumption underlying the rounded-nonrounded vowel question is that Kreyòl is a deformation of French and that French is the model to imitate. Both the linguists who designed the official orthography and the government which implemented it consider the front-rounded vowels as "marginal sounds". No graphic representation of them is included in the alphabet because, says Vernet for example, "Il ne faut pas apprendre à l'enfant des sons qu'il ne prononce pas quotidiennement dans sa langue maternelle" (1980: 43-44). [One need not teach a child sounds that he does not pronounce in his mother tongue everyday.] Déjean has expressed a similar idea: "Choisir un système graphique qui intègre les voyelles antérieures arrondies, c'est augmenter sa difficulté d'apprentissage pour l'immense majorité des Haïtiens" (1980a: 172-173). [To choose a graphic system

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that includes the front-rounded vowels is to increase the difficulty of its learning for the majority of Haitians.] This implies that the front-rounded vowels sounds are difficult, (if not impossible), to pronounce for monolinguals. Thus, those sounds should not figure in the alphabet in order not to embarrass and marginalize the majority of speakers. By advocating the use of the front-rounded vowels, Déjean expresses his socio-political militantism: anyone who proposes to include them is "réactionnaire et elitiste" 'reactionary and elitist' and aims at promulgating a class and cultural imperialism (1980a: 175).

To a lesser extent, the same prestige issue holds for the use of certain nasalized forms. For many words, there is a choice between a less nasalized form and a more nasalized form; for example agronom 'agronomist' (educated variety) versus agronóm (non-educated variety). The double n marks the pronunciation as extended nasalization which has rural connotations. "Excessive nasalization" is considered a characteristic of rural speech and is felt to be vulgar (rèk) (Lofficial 1979: 118). The ti diksyonnè kreyòl-franse (Bentolila 1976) chose the nasalized forms as "characteristic" of Kreyòl, as indicated by the spelling of the word "diksyonnè". The dictionary has been controversial in Haiti and largely rejected.

A set of implicit oppositions and contradictions emerges from the debates about the sociolects and standardization of Kreyòl. The educated are characterized as being urban, of the higher social classes, elegant, civilized and speaking Kreyòl swa, all of which is desirable for both bilinguals and monolinguals. The uneducated are characterized as rural (habitan) from the lower classes, speaking Kreyòl rèk, bouch su/si, all of which is undesirable (for both bilinguals and urban monolinguals) but desirable for many nationalists and progressives (linguists, intellectuals and politicians).

The sound system leads directly into the core of the debate about social classes, legitimacy and authenticity. If we push the idea of authenticity to its limits, the following question emerges: What sounds are those of the real, authentic Kreyòl? What is the real, authentic Kreyòl? Thus, who is the real, authentic Haitian? The dominated "Africanized" masses or the dominant "Frenchified" elites? Is there a "pure" Kreyòl? We see that the ideological basis of such questions can lead to a vicious circle.

While question of the sounds of Kreyòl lead us to issues located primarily at the national level, questions about the "look" of Kreyòl can be situated at an international level and involve the relationship of Haiti with other countries. Here the focus is on issues of nationality, independence and autonomy.

### 5.2. The look of Kreyòl

The pro-etymologists center their arguments around the issue of the roots of Kreyòl. According to them, Kreyòl, derived from French, must reflect its origin, and should be easily classified by its appearance into a world language family, that of the romance languages (Archer 1987). An etymologic orthography will be helpful for learning French later, since French will always be spoken in Haiti. Haiti must not forget its membership in the francophonie 'French speaking community'. To adopt an "Anglo-Saxon look"
represented by the "non-Latin" letters w, k, and y is to deny that membership (Archer 1987). According to the most fervent pro-etymologists, the use of the three above mentioned letters gives Kreyòl a weird aspect, and even worse, will prevent the easy learning of French for both bilinguals and monolinguals. The most zealous pro-etymologists, who also present themselves as zealous nationalists, think that the Anglo-Saxon orthography has been imposed upon the Haitian people by imperialist powers. This idea, expressed in 1947, pointed to McConnell and Laubach as agents of the United States, the first imperialist power. As later echoed by Archer (1987), the purpose of the United States was clear: to eliminate French in order to introduce English, a task that would be accomplished through the anglicization of Kreyòl. The United States also wanted to substitute Protestant religion for the Catholic faith and Vodou religions. Their interest in literacy is only based on their desire to sell Bibles and convert Haitians to their own religion.

Still, according to Archer, the aim of the French, the second imperialist power, in this endeavour is not very clear, but it is still worthwhile to raise the question: why the sudden interest of the Western powers in the vernaculars, in the Caribbean as well as in other parts of the world? Why this insistence in using the vernaculars in education? Archer calls for vigilance and the retention of French and an "etymological Kreyòl system". Not everyone who is pro-etymological expresses such extreme ideas as Archer, but there is clearly a defensive reaction or a discomfort about foreign intervention in matters that Haitians consider strictly domestic. The same rejection (Déjean 1980a) or mistrust (Lofficial 1979) is also found in the other camps.

Among the most contested letters is the k, which not only represents the danger of United States imperialism but has even been claimed to represent the threat of communism. Déjean (1980a) reports that the literacy activists have been accused of being disguised communist agents by a government official under F. Duvalier's regime. Here is revealed a fear of a sudden "wake up" of the masses. Déjean also reports that a militant communist accused the same orthography of being "bourgeois, réactionaire et macoute" (1980a: 55).

The underlying assumption of the pro-etymologists is that the orthographic system of the language must be linked to a culture, to a tradition. The most extreme assumption is that Kreyòl needs French to rely on and that French must be given credit for its contribution. On the contrary, answers the opposite pro-phonemic group, no nationality, religion, culture or political allegiance can be ascribed to single letters like w, k, y. An orthography is just an arbitrary and conventional system, and from a linguistic point of view a writing system should be neutral (Déjean 1980a). Thus, the pro-phonemic group advocates an orthography totally new and independent for Kreyòl. From their perspective, the choice of a phonemic system is scientifically justified; it is the more rational and the simpler way of writing Kreyòl, which should avoid the errors.

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8 It is interesting to note that the letter k is ascribed another value in the development of Papiamentu, the creole language spoken in Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao, to mark "African ancestry" (Winer 1990:266 fn 1), while in the United States it is used by black power movements and other groups as a marker of social protest against undemocratic practices, as in "Amerika".
and aberrations of the French orthography. It is just a conventional system, and the use of w, k, y has nothing to do with Anglo-Saxon or Protestant, Russian or communism. The underlying assumption is that Kreyòl is a language that can stand by itself and does not need someone else's tradition to rely on. Consequently, the pro-phonemic group argues that the teaching of Kreyòl must be independent from the teaching of French. For the militants of that group who are the most involved in literacy (Déjean, Vernet), the target is the monolingual masses, not the educated elites. It is interesting to note that the two most extreme camps, the pro-phonemic and the pro-etymologists, advocate the authority and neutrality of "science" for their arguments. But we have seen that there are no neutral positions, only ideological stances.

6. Conclusions

These arguments reveal the complexity and ambivalence of cultural definitions of Ayisyenite 'Haitianess'. As Haiti is still in the process of integrating its dual African/European heritage, there are numerous arenas where cultural duality is continually negotiated. Religion (voudou and western religion) is one important locus of this negotiation process, and language (French and Kreyòl) is another. The debates about language also illustrate the extent to which an issue can be politicized - in this case orthography - where intolerance is the dominant note.

With few exceptions, throughout the 19th century, the elites have defined themselves as "colored French" and have spoken of Haiti as the "fille aînée de la France" [the oldest daughter of France] or as France Noire "Black France". Although acknowledging their African roots, the elites also claimed their affiliation with Latin culture. The Indigenist School and Haitian Ethnology School affirmed that Haitian culture was Afro-Latin but with a predominance of African elements. African elements are associated with blackness, vodou, the masses. Kreyòl, the only element that the educated claim to share with the masses, is the enduring symbol of Haitian identity. But we have seen an ambivalence in the values attached to Kreyòl: the rèk variety is used for nationalist discourse on authenticity and pride, but at the same time is associated with negative connotations about these same masses. This ambivalence is reflected in the orthography quarrel itself as well as in the wish on the part of the pro-etymological camp for a Kreyòl orthographic "bridge" between the past (French) and the future (when French and Kreyòl will co-exist peacefully) but with no solid foundations in an ever changing present.

It is noteworthy that Haiti is not the only country where language issues and orthography issues in particular provoke emotional reactions. Examples abound of orthographic quarrels in industrialized societies as well as in the so-called third and fourth worlds. The recent arguments regarding the implementation of the reform of the French orthography are a good example of how a country can stick to its
orthographic icons as symbols of its identity. When a language is codified and an orthography is officially adopted, this is usually interpreted to mean that there is one correct way to spell and write the language, and that all others are simply wrong. To design and implement an orthography is neither a simple nor neutral endeavor. It establishes norms of pronunciation as well as norms for writing. The main reason for reaction is that the elaboration of an orthography implies the choice and standardization of one dialect over the others. And when a variety through its officialization is given the status of a standard, the users of the other varieties sometimes react with a surprising virulence because they feel that their language variety is not being represented.

The latest dtograf Kreyol is implicitly positioning the Kreyol spoken by the masses as the standard. This has created resistance both to the adoption of the orthography and to the use of Kreyol as a medium of instruction in school. The double resistance comes from both the masses and the educated elite minority. The masses see the officialization of written and spoken Kreyol in school as limiting their access to French and consequently social and economic mobility. The elites, who already know Kreyol, don't see the point of teaching it, in any form, in school. They also hold the view that Kreyol rık and gwo Kreyol are directed toward the lowest common denominator, bringing them down instead of elevating the masses.

As we have seen, the debate around the orthography takes on issues of legitimacy and authenticity. Who is meant to be represented by this otograf Kreyol, whose speech, values, cultural identity? Which version of Kreyol can be said to be genuinely Haitian? Is it the Kreyol swa or Kreyol fransiz of the educated minority, or the Kreyol rık, the gwo Kreyol, or the bon Kreyol, the "real Kreyol" of the masses? So we raise this as a rhetorical question as a way of questioning the question: what is the real Kreyol? This can only be answered after addressing the question, who is the real Haitian?

Any linguistic policy that would be exclusively based on "purely linguistic facts" takes the risk of going the wrong way, since language is not only an instrument of communication: language also carries symbolic values that condition social, political, and economic spheres. The main question to raise, in the Haitian case, is how to give the currently marginalized variety of Kreyol spoken by the majority of the population, as well as that majority itself, the effective means to reverse the present situation. Such means are not limited to the linguistic sphere, but necessarily overlap and will have consequences for all aspects of social life.

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