

## Departmentalization and the Logic of Decolonization

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WHEN THE FRENCH ELECTED THEIR FIRST postwar government in October 1945, this First Constituent Assembly was constituted by a majority government of socialist and communist representatives. Destined to be short-lived, this left-wing government pushed through a number of progressive laws related to colonial government before its dissolution in May, 1946. Primary among these were the Houphouët Boigny Act, which abolished forced labor in France's colonies, and the Lamine Gueye Act, which made citizens of France's colonial subjects. No sooner were new elections held in June 1946, than the communist/socialist/radical majority evaporated, and progress in this spirit of the early postwar period became infinitely more difficult to obtain. In this brief window of opportunity, however, Gaston Monnerville and Aimé Césaire had managed to push through the French Assembly on March 19, 1946 the law proclaiming the "departmentalization" of France's "*vieilles colonies*," including Martinique, Guadeloupe, French Guiana, and Réunion. Though it was the culmination of a tendency toward the progressive integration of these colonies that extended back beyond 1848 to 1789, it was undoubtedly the destruction of France's empire in the upheaval of the war that made possible this brief window of opportunity.

When France capitulated to Germany in 1940 and became divided between the Vichy- and German-occupied sectors, the Metropole was suddenly cut off from its colonies. Administrators in each colony were forced to take sides, with or against the occupiers. Initially, only the governors of Chad and the New Hebrides (jointly controlled at the time by Britain and France) sided with De Gaulle. In the French Antilles, a population that had been citizens of France since 1848 and colonial subjects since the seventeenth century was suddenly set economically adrift. Inhabitants were forced to subsist autonomously with the scarce local resources that remained after centuries of economic underdevelopment. One result was a newly awakened political sensibility, one particularly attuned to the dynamics of concrete, day to day situations. At the same time, this development of quotidian political acumen was coupled with the moral imperative of the concrete choices, for or against Vichy, which had been the stuff of daily existence during the years of the Occupation.

The Communist Party benefited greatly from its role in the fight against Nazism, and spearheaded the call for full integration of the *vieilles colonies* after the expulsion of the Nazis. It was Césaire, as deputy of the French Communist Party, who was primarily responsible for articulating the demands of the new law. Though prior to 1947 it was commonly referred to as a law promoting “assimilation,” this was highly misleading since its primary goal was never to socialize Antilleans within metropolitan French communal and behavioral norms, but instead to democratize colonial political structures. The citizenship extended to the inhabitants of the *vieilles colonies* in 1848 had always been, and remained in 1945, partial and subaltern. While the rights of citizens in the metropolitan French Republic were assured by the direct accountability of its representatives to their electorate, this had never been the case in the colonies. Since 1854, it was instead the executive head of state (first Napoleon III, later the president of the Republic) who had promulgated all laws in the colonies.

Departmentalization was expressly intended by Césaire to eliminate this quasi-feudalistic juridical relic. “These departments,” Césaire stated at the time, “no longer leave [lawmaking] to the ministers, but give it to Parliament and thus wish to have accepted the principle that assimilation should be the rule and derogation the exception.”<sup>1</sup> The result of departmentalization was to replace the particularistic institutions of Third Republic colonialism such as the colonial *gouverneur* with structures systematically equivalent to those of the Metropole: the *préfet*, *conseil général*, and an identical legal code and judicial system. Though Article 73 of the Fourth Republic constitution allowed for “exceptions determined by law” to be applied in the Départements d’Outre-Mer, the colonial order of attribution had effectively been reversed: if previously all colonial laws, decreed by the executive, had been exceptions to French laws by their very nature, and might only coincide with those laws contingently, now the opposite was true. Exceptions, though admissible, were henceforth precisely that, exceptions to the systematic application of all French laws to all of its departments, overseas or not.

While Césaire worked energetically and unhesitatingly to enact departmentalization, it was not only the white *béké* elite of Martinique who stood opposed to the process. Surprisingly, given the received image of 1930s-era Negritude as a relatively homogenous movement of cultural critique, not all the thinkers of the Negritude movement shared Césaire’s optimism that it was the proper path for the *vieilles colonies* in their struggle for decolonization. Nowhere is the contrast to Césaire’s defense of departmentalization stronger than in the diametrically opposed recommendations of Léon-

Gontran Damas, contained in his 1937 journalistic polemic against “assimilation,” *Retour de Guyane*.

Damas had been in Paris as a student since 1928, far longer than his colleagues Césaire and Senghor. As a relatively poor colonial student, he had led a highly precarious existence, at the mercy of bureaucrats who could at any moment draw the purse strings of his small *bourse d'études*. To support his studies in ethnology, Damas worked at various times as bartender, dock-worker, and dishwasher. He was intimately involved with the left-wing politics of the Popular Front period, and his close contacts with Emmanuel Mounier (publisher of *Esprit*), Robert Desnos, Louis Aragon, and Michel Leiris directly led to Damas's being invited in 1934, on behalf of the Musée de l'Homme and the French Ministry of Public Education, to undertake an ethnographic mission to French Guiana. The result of this invitation, *Retour de Guyane*, is a highly conflicted text that reveals most clearly the compromised position of its author, caught between an array of antagonistic imperatives: a nascent critical, racialist self-awareness (Negritude), the economic insecurity of a young colonial student (Damas was only twenty-five at the time), the will to scientific thoroughness and objectivity of a precocious ethnologist, and the somewhat superficial critique of the journalist, attempting to influence contemporary public opinion regarding colonial policy.

In accord with its position at the epicenter of such intensive existential contradictions, *Retour de Guyane* exercises its full critical force in a penetrating analysis of the structural contradictions of Guyanese colonialism, contradictions that Gary Wilder has insightfully summarized as those obtaining between “metropolitan-parliamentary and colonial arbitrary forms of government in the French empire.”<sup>2</sup> A decade before Césaire's parliamentary initiative to eliminate the juridical distinctions between metropolitan France and its *vieilles colonies*, Damas locates the origins of Guyanese underdevelopment in the 1854 law of *sénatus-consulte* that institutionalized the decree-form of authoritarian colonial governance. Damas concludes from this analysis, as Césaire would in 1946, that the power of legislative decision should be devolved to Guyanese citizens themselves. “Éloignée comme elle l'est de la Métropole, il est inadmissible que son administration soit toute entière concentrée entre les mains du Ministre des Colonies.”<sup>3</sup> In Damas's analysis, the contradictions of Guyanese colonialism arose from a coexistence of Republican universalism and a prejudicial colonial regime of distinction: “Two present regimes [are] opposed to one another; [...] one of them is abusively maintained from a constitutional point of view [insofar as ...] democratic France, the France of the Third Republic, persists in applying to the colony disposi-

tions that correspond to a state of affairs that has now disappeared [i.e., the imperialism of Napoleon III]" (cited in Wilder 220). "Aujourd'hui où le Pouvoir Législatif appartient à une assemblée élue," Damas concludes, "il est inadmissible que la Guyane qui y est représentée tienne ses lois du Président de la République" (Damas 43).

Rather than conclude from this penetrating analysis, however, that Guiana should be non-discriminately integrated within the French legal system, Damas instead goes on to develop a diametrically opposite argument against "assimilation." He accomplishes this sleight of hand by critiquing the inegalitarianism of French colonial *policy* while interpreting the call for "assimilation" in purely *cultural* terms. He rejects the call for the "assimilation" of Guiana by referring not to legal norms, but instead to the putatively ineradicable African cultural retentions persisting in black cultures throughout the Americas. To grant "assimilation" would amount to asking the colonized "to pay a price that the other cannot pay: they both agree to try to whiten the *nègre*, but that cannot happen" (cited in Wilder 223). Instead, Damas offers a single touchstone for all his region's problems: the "rational exploitation of Guyana's gold deposits. [...] Everything for gold and gold for everything" (cited in Wilder 230). Despite Damas's Negritude credentials as a cultural critic of French colonialism (as in the contemporary *Pigments* [1937]), in *Retour de Guyane* the colonial subject deploys his formidable powers of analysis to illuminate the contradictions of French colonialism to the colonizers themselves, and this explicitly in the interest of a stronger, better colonialist practice. Damas systematically analyzes the shortcomings of French colonialism not to strengthen a nascent decolonization, but in order to convince his Metropolitan readers of the (economic) interest they have in further developing their colony. "Il est dangereux qu'une puissance comme la France, presque spécifiquement coloniale, outillée comme elle l'est, possédant des capitaux, n'y ait encore rien créé qu'une bagne" (Damas 28).

The Negritude critique of cultural alienation, though present, is thoroughly inconsequential for Damas's recommendations, and *Retour de Guyane* is more properly characterized as a piece of pro-colonial propaganda offered up by the native informant with a spicy side dish of cultural critique for the delectation of the oppressed. On page after page, Damas offers his colonial sponsors recommendations for an improved, more rational "exploitation" of their long-neglected colony. While Damas's analysis of Guyanese alienation is complex and multi-dimensional, his recommendations uniformly neglect to address the question of who, precisely, would benefit from Damas's economic miracle (the total "exploitation of Guyana's gold deposits"), should it ever

come about. While his solution is no less technocratic than that of the 1946 departmentalization law, the profound difference between them lies in the fact that the latter was systematically addressed to the benefit of the colonized.

Damas makes no such distinction. While he invokes economic development in the name of the oppressed (“Quand on aura fait de six cent mille nègres des assimilés français, on n’aura pas fait rentrer ceux qui s’exilent, on n’aura pas ressuscité ceux qui meurent de faim, on n’aura même pas vêtu décemment les futurs assimilés” [133]), aside from some nebulous and distant trickle-down effect, one is hard-pressed to see how the uninhibited resource exploitation he recommends would benefit anyone but a few rich (and presumably non-Guyanese) investors. Damas rejects cultural assimilation as impossible, and political assimilation as beside the point, and instead reduces the transformation of colonialism to its purely economic dimension: “avant de songer à l’assimilation politique, il faudrait peut-être que les esprits généreux de la Métropole voulussent bien s’attacher à réaliser l’intégration économique” (130). In virtual bad faith, Damas appends the hollow outrage of the intellectual avant-garde to a program of resource exploitation worthy of the most cynical World Bank official. Again and again, Damas bows down before the objective ‘facts’ of French colonialism, to invoke a nebulous “common sense” that “commands” us not to imagine a decolonized political future for Guyana, but instead to “essayer d’abord d’appliquer rationnellement un système déjà existant” (140).

In the end, only one criterion interests Damas: “il faut effectuer, avec le moins de frais possible, des travaux qui rapportent le plus possible, le plus vite possible” (144). With all criteria of welfare—most obviously that of the biosphere—strictly subordinated, the conclusion is entirely predictable, and Damas has the honesty to state it categorically and unambiguously: “il faut violer ce sol et en extraire de la vie humaine” (152). Whether Stalinist, Negritudist or capitalist in shading, this is a pure logic of productionist violence that defers decolonization while seeking to rationalize and justify murderous sacrifice of colonial subjects in the name of (economic) progress: “Ceux qui travaillent à discipliner le Niger savent ce que le monstre dévore d’os chaque année,” Damas concludes with all the coldness of a Stalinist prosecutor (153). Not to worry, Damas reminds us in his final, horrific paragraphs; the Africans and their descendents are a hardy bunch who will resist such exploitation, to the greater glory of the bottom line: “L’africain peut résister à n’importe quelle condition de vie, à cause, sinon encore de sa constitution physique, qu’à cause de son mépris de l’individu et de sa cohésion sociale” (154).

In stark contrast to Damas's rejection of "assimilation" for an unbridled economic "exploitation" of the French colonies' natural resources, departmentalization was to an important degree a movement of dissidence on the part of the black intellectual class.<sup>4</sup> Its call for objective juridical equality of the *vieilles colonies* was primarily aimed against the domination of the white *béké* elites. As Césaire recalled in 1985,

En 1945, quand il s'est agi de transformer la Martinique en département français, les Békés martiniquais étaient contre. C'étaient surtout les fonctionnaires locaux qui étaient pour, car ils voulaient les mêmes traitements et les mêmes avantages que les fonctionnaires d'origine métropolitaine. Les ouvriers espéraient de meilleurs salaires et bénéficier des mêmes lois sociales qu'en métropole. Les seuls qui étaient contre l'assimilation étaient les Békés et ils se réfugiaient alors derrière des arguments économiques, mais ils n'osèrent pas s'opposer au mouvement en faveur de la départementalisation, car c'était un mouvement très général (cited in William 319).

Departmentalization strove to weaken the economic domination of the *béké* landowners by subjecting the arbitrariness of their actions to a more objective, egalitarian rule of law. Both at the time and up to the present, insofar as actual practice has lagged behind the strict egalitarianism of the law of March 19, 1946, departmentalization has offered a lever of intervention for overseas French subjects, a strict and objective measure that has allowed these citizens effectively to force, however reticently and slowly, the French government to play by the rules of its own constitution.<sup>5</sup>

The common feature of all modern dissidence is the focus on universal human rights and the rule of law. Its efficacy depends upon the demonstration of the incongruity between the discriminatory actions of a state and the universal norm of a right to freedom under the rule of law. The constitutions of the Third and Fourth Republics, founded upon the inherited norms of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, offered such a universal norm not as a distant abstraction, but as the immanent content and normative structure of the political system that discriminated against its overseas citizens. Such a rule-based critique is the common currency of modern dissidence. As Václav Havel observed in his 1974 essay "Power of the Powerless," "Because the system cannot do without the law, because it is hopelessly tied down by pretending the laws are observed, [...] demanding that the laws be upheld is precisely an act of living within the truth that threatens the whole structure of lies precisely in its point of maximum mendacity."<sup>6</sup> The inspired perversity of dissidence is that its practitioners do not *invent* a moral code that they then hold up against a purely evil system, but instead turn the system's own code against itself. It is the system itself that authorizes its own critique. Dissidence in its

distinctly modern sense became possible only when a *political* system based upon the divine right of kings and its legal manifestation in the Code Noir (rather than, say, the *moral* system of the Old Testament) was replaced by a system founded upon the Rights of Man.

Departmentalization thus invoked the radical egalitarianism of 1789 and 1848 that founded the French Republic, in order successfully to force the latter to observe more closely the rules of its own political game. Though we would not normally call a member of a majority parliamentary party a dissident, Césaire's dissidence nonetheless functioned in the same manner as any other. Dissidence is not determined by the social status of dissidents, whether they are rich or poor, black or white, or active participants in a political elite or the excluded and colonized of a society. It is not defined by whether the dissidents resort to bloodshed or subscribes to a philosophy of non-violence and participatory political gradualism. Dissidence is defined, above all, by an individual's or group's critical political activity under the guidance of some universalizable norm that allows the dissident to bypass the contingent limitations of a given situation. For Césaire in 1946, as for generations of economically marginalized Martinicans since 1848, this meant appealing to the norms of the French Republic in order to bypass the particularist, anti-democratic dimensions of French colonial policy.

In this sense, departmentalization must be understood not in opposition to decolonization, but instead as one of the earliest and purest forms of this twentieth-century historical sequence. The architects of departmentalization addressed colonization through neither the psychological/culturalist process of dis-alienation, nor the Manichean vilification of some hypostatized 'colonizer'. Instead, they worked to enact decolonization immanently, striving to counteract the quasi-universal structural tendency toward the concentration of political power in the hands of an oligarchy. A colony is to be identified not by vagaries such as a mythical confrontation with an evil 'Other', the momentary nominal status of a geographic terrain (whether referred to as 'colony', 'territory', 'dependency' or 'independent state'), nor finally by its geographic distance from a metropole. Instead, the term colony refers to the failure of a population to bring to fruition the process of democratization. Taken in this sense, the subjects of Louis XVI were eminently colonized by their government, insofar as they were arbitrarily subject to, and alienated from, the actions of the state that claimed to include them. Every ministerial decree enacted without consultation and accountability further reinforced this colonization of the social sphere.<sup>7</sup>

The measure of decolonization, in turn, would therefore be the degree to which it managed to eliminate the juridical arbitrariness of the decree, and to

replace this alienation of sovereignty with democratic social structures that more fully realized the Rousseauian ideal of an unmediated identity of citizen and state. Whether or not a geographic area is called independent has no importance for the process of decolonization understood in this sense; in fact, in most cases, the struggle for such ‘independence’ should more accurately be understood as mere demagoguery, nationalistic distraction that diverts public attention from the real problem of affirming the constituent power of all citizens, no matter what name they give themselves.<sup>8</sup> As we all know, many, perhaps the majority, of the so-called ‘decolonized’ areas have since the 1960s become far more colonized—by global capital, by North Atlantic military hegemony, by endemic indebtedness to the World Bank—than they ever were before their nominal ‘decolonization’.

Departmentalization, no matter what its failures and incomplete processes, was an act of decolonization if and only if it brought the societies of the *vieilles colonies* demonstrably and materially further within the purview of a universal (as opposed to ethnically or racially particular) human-rights based law. Departmentalization was a process of decolonization if it instituted a rule of law oriented, in other words, to the cultivation (as opposed to the inherently antiquarian and tendentially reactionary *protectionism* of any *Créolité*) of human and social singularity.<sup>9</sup> “C’est la création continue des hommes,” Césaire proclaimed in 1972, “qui constitue la nation, création dont la cristallisation, toujours provisoire tant que la culture est vivante, permet l’identification d’une personnalité collective différenciée.”<sup>10</sup> From his very earliest public writings, Césaire always affirmed that the singularity of the colonized was to be attained not through the erasure of local particularism in a pseudo- (i.e. French) universal. Nor, however, did such singularity lie in some specious, neo-mythical nativist patrimony awaiting its cultural consumption. Instead, Césaire understood singularity from the very start as “à venir,” to be constructed through the complex mediation of universal norms and the existential, situational contingencies of the colonized life-sphere. “To be yourself requires action,” he wrote in his very first published piece, the 1935 article “Nègreries.” The goal of any immersion in the particularity of colonized experience is not for Césaire the retreat into the blinded interiority of localism, but instead to allow the colonized to develop their singularity beyond mere inwardness and to “contribute to universal life, the humanization of humanity” (cited in Wilder 188).

Césaire never varied in his defense of departmentalization as a legalistic promotion of Antillean singularization, a process made possible through the historical extension of normative universal rights since 1789. As he declared



to de Gaulle's Minister of Information André Malraux in 1958, "Dans un monde [...] où les collectivités s'accrochent à tout ce qui peut les particulariser, les personnifier, les authentifier à leurs propres yeux, notre souci est de faire en sorte que notre peuple martiniquais ne soit pas le simple témoin de sa propre histoire" (cited in William 326). The partial decentralization of legislative processes enacted under Mitterand in 1982 constituted in this view not a rejection of departmentalization, but a further step in the development of this Antillean process of decolonization begun in 1802 (with the anti-Napoleonic insurgency of Louis Delgrès) and 1848.

In its essence, departmentalization was an attempt to structure society better so as to affirm the constituent power and rights of its subjects, such that all human subjects would retain their self-moving constituent power (*Natura naturans*). Whether they were to be called "French" or "Martinicans" could only be a point of demagoguery within the context of a politics of constituent power. The guiding impulse of departmentalization as Césaire understood it thus follows in clear continuity from the great theoreticians of universal sovereignty, beginning with Spinoza and his disciple Rousseau,<sup>11</sup> through Robespierre and Césaire's direct points of inspiration in these years, Toussaint Louverture and Victor Schoelcher. In this historical movement, the Spinozian axiom of the immanent self-moving and self-defining capacity of beings (*Natura naturans*), first postulated philosophically, increasingly came to animate the political sphere in an ongoing struggle for democratization, as the effort socially to construct regimes that would maintain and maximize the unalienable sovereignty of all subjects in line with the dictates of reason.

In consonance with his political predecessors, Césaire's call for departmentalization was a call for democratization as the universal extension of right as constituent power. A true democracy is for Spinoza, as for his direct and indirect political followers, the organization of society such that "tous les habitants, sans exception, jouissent du droit."<sup>12</sup> Like Spinoza before him, Robespierre believed that only one form of government is capable of realizing this rule of law: democracy. Robespierre defined democracy in perfectly Spinozian terms: democracy is simply "un état où le peuple souverain, guidé par des lois qui sont son ouvrage, fait par lui-même tout ce qu'il peut bien faire."<sup>13</sup> Robespierre's extraordinary formulation renders all questions of form and nomination (from monarchy to democracy, colony to independent state) secondary; democracy is whatever form of government humans can imagine and implement that allows a "people" to preserve their full sovereignty. Above all, Robespierre's definition makes the analytic of democracy a matter

of Spinozian *potentia*. A democracy is in this sense not a parliamentary structure, but whatever political form allows individuals to realize or *do* “all that they can.” Democracy is simply a social structure that allows the full development and expression, without division, subtraction or alienation, of what Spinoza called the “essence” of any singular being.

Similarly, the process of departmentalization was deductive in its procedure. Césaire’s approach was Robespierriste, insofar as it proceeded from the application of universal norms of democratic participation and representation to deduce the political actions and forms most likely to realize that participation in a given context (Martinique, 1946). From a small number of premises, Robespierre had proceeded to explore the “grandes conséquences à tirer des principes” (292). These principles offer the citizens he is addressing of his democracy-to-come

une boussole qui peut vous diriger au milieu des orages de toutes les passions [...], la pierre de touche par laquelle vous pouvez essayer toutes vos lois, toutes les propositions qui vous sont faites. En les comparant sans cesse avec ce principe [...] vous pouvez donner à toutes vos opérations l’ensemble, l’unité, la sagesse et la dignité [required of a true democracy] (293).

Likewise for Césaire, the experience that he had baptized Negritude offered a universal criterion for political action that was grounded by necessarily particular, historical experiences of exploitation, an action oriented in the famous lines of the *Cahier* “au compas de la souffrance.” Departmentalization answers not the question “how do we assimilate or become more ‘French,’” but instead “what political form best allows the development and flourishing of our singular capacities of expression?”

The process of departmentalization, as a pure initiative of political decolonization, proposed that the rule of law can only occur in a society in which sovereignty has become universally distributed, such that all, universally, can give the law unto themselves.<sup>14</sup> Since the concept of sovereignty has traditionally been linked to the power of a *state* to command its subjects (Beaud), a universal distribution of sovereignty would imply: 1) the reappropriation of the power to legislate and construct social existence from the state to social actors (individuals, collectives,), i.e. a maximum coincidence of the multitude and the unalienated power of political decision-making, with no discernible difference inhering between rulers and the ruled; 2) consequently, the desublimation of the state as transcendent law-giving apparatus, the destruction of its monopoly on legislation, and the reappropriation of this power by the multitude; 3) the politicization of so-called civil life and the erasure of the public/private distinction upon which the modern state founds its powers; 4)

the multiplication of what has traditionally been conceived of as an *indivisible* (state-centered) power, and the consequent reappropriation of legislative or “constituent” power (as well as the powers of judgment and execution) by a multitude of subjects. While the 1946 departmentalization law fully achieved none of these goals, to the extent that it managed to decentralize political power, invest political power in popularly elected representatives such as Césaire, and rationalize the legislative process under a universal and generalized rule of law, it constituted on each of these counts a concrete step forward toward a decolonization *à venir*, properly understood as the universal process of the democratization of political power.

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### Notes

1. Cited in Robert Aldrich and John Connell, *France's Overseas Frontier: Départements et Territoires d'Outre-Mer* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1992), 74.
2. Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2005), 219.
3. Léon-Gontran Damas, *Retour de Guyane* (Paris: Jean Michel Place, 2003), 42.
4. Here, I strongly disagree with Wilder's claim that the “Negritude members did not translate [their] vision of radical alliance [between a black cultural elite and culturally authentic rural masses] into a concrete political program” (227). Strictly and unfortunately limited to the pre-war period, Wilder's otherwise magisterial study draws together for the first time the complex constellation of historical, cultural, and theoretical forces that in fact culminated in the 1946 process of departmentalization. Wilder's argument leads one in fact to draw precisely the opposite conclusion from the author's (that “the Negritude critique was notable precisely because it promised a way into rather than out of the imperial nation-state”), if only one looks beyond 1939 (204).
5. The rapidly perceived failure of departmentalization did not lay with the law itself, but was quite simply a failure on the part of Paris to departmentalize the *vieilles colonies* in conformity with the law of March 19, 1946: “Quel est le grand fait qui domine la politique martiniquaise depuis 1946?”, asked Césaire in 1949. “C'est le refus du gouvernement français de traiter la Martinique en département français et sa volonté de continuer à nous imposer fondé sur le colonialisme” (cited in William 322).
6. Václav Havel, “Power of the Powerless,” *Open Letters: Selected Prose, 1965-1990*, Paul Wilson, ed. (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1991), 190, translation modified. “Dovolávání se zákona je totiž přesně tím aktem ‘života v pravdě,’ který potenciálně ohrožuje celou proslanou stavbu právě v její prolnosti.” *Eseje a jiné texty z let, 1970-1989: Dálkový Výslech*, vol. 4 (Prague: Torst, 1989), 300.
7. Similarly, as citizens of globalization, we are every day more ‘colonized’ by what used to be called the culture industry, with its tendency to reduce the sphere of autonomous creativity to a range of preconstructed products for consumerist consumption.
8. Of course, as everyone from Hegel to Césaire has remarked, to baptize oneself is itself inherently an act of constituent subjectivity, particularly in the historical context of slavery and imperialism.
9. To what degree departmentalization may or may not have accomplished this process is of course a highly complex and contentious question that is beyond the scope of this article to address. A highly nuanced overview of the question is offered by the articles in Fred Constant and Daniel Justin, eds., *1956-1996: cinquante ans de départementalisation outre-mer* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997).

10. Emmanuel Jos, "Identité culturelle et identité politique: le cas martiniquais," in Constant and Justin, 349.
11. Vernière elaborates in detail the profound similarities (to the point of virtual plagiarism in some passages of the *Contrat social*) between the political philosophies of Rousseau and Spinoza, whom Rousseau still dared not cite affirmatively, a century after his death. The differences between Spinoza and Rousseau lay elsewhere: in Rousseau's steadfast, dualist faith in a transcendent divinity and in his refusal of Spinoza's systematic natural determinism, a critique formulated by Rousseau in his doctrine of perfectibility.
12. Benedict de Spinoza, *Traité de l'autorité politique*, Madeleine Francès, trans. (Paris: Gallimard, 1956), 230.
13. Maximilien de Robespierre, *Pour le bonheur et pour la liberté: Discours* (Paris: La Fabrique-Éditions, 2000), 291.
14. Again, I wish to insist that I am not claiming that departmentalization actually accomplished this universal devolution of sovereignty, but rather that it was a legalistic initiative entirely devoted to this goal (and not some specious cultural 'assimilation' or Frenchification), and that its failure was a failure to implement structural norms of universal equivalency specified in the law of March 19, 1946.