

Hybridity And Ethnicity In New Orleans Literature

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Abstract:

Hybridization is the union of two distinct races, organisms, or cultures. A hybrid is a mixed entity, and hybridity is merely the act of mixing. Hybridization is not a recent cultural or historical occurrence. It has been a characteristic of all civilizations, from the Sumerians to the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans, to the present day. Both ancient and modern civilizations have borrowed foreign ideas, philosophies, and sciences through trade and conquest, creating composite cultures and societies. An ethnicity or ethnic group is a collection of individuals who identify with one another based on distinguishing characteristics that set them apart from other groups. These characteristics may include shared traditions, ancestry, language, history, society, nation, religion, or social treatment in their region of residence. New Orleans has long been an essential city in the American psyche, renowned for its rich colonial and cultural heritage. The geography of New Orleans is characterised by transnational crosscurrents and intense meteorological activity. An economically and politically strategic port city, New Orleans is a below-sea-level city that is perpetually prone to environmental catastrophe. The present paper tries to explore the hybridity and ethnicity in New Orleans Literature.

Keywords: Hybridity, Ethnicity, New Orleans, Transnational crosscurrents and Environmental catastrophe.

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, the establishment of La Nouvelle-Orléans, which subsequently came to be known as New Orleans, was attributed to the efforts of Jean- Baptiste Le Moyne and Sieur de Bienville in the year 1718. Between 1718 and 1803, a protracted conflict ensued between French and Spanish colonisers over the domination of the region, which was centred around the commercial hub of New Orleans situated on the Atlantic coast of the Gulf of Mexico. The Mississippi River served as a means of transportation for premium furs originating from the Mississippi Valley and the uncharted regions of the continent, which were then expeditiously shipped to Europe via New Orleans. New Orleans underwent rapid development and emerged as a thriving port city that facilitated the transportation of a diverse range of commodities, including timber, minerals, agricultural products, and notably, premium furs. New Orleans is host to indigenous French, Spanish, German, African, British, and Indian populations, as a result.

New Orleans attracted individuals from diverse regions of the world, resulting in the emergence of a multicultural society. Dixon's research demonstrates that individuals residing in New Orleans were subject to capital punishment for the mere act of speaking French. Despite being under Spanish rule, they exhibited reluctance to assimilate and harboured apprehension towards speaking English. Following the acquisition of Louisiana, the options available to them were limited. The decision was made to abstain from utilising the British common law system, which is the prevailing legal framework in the remainder of the nation. (Dixon 11)

The etymology of the term creole can be traced back to the Spanish word *criollo*. The Spanish conquistadors utilised it as a means to divide the land of native Spanish inhabitants from that of white European-born individuals who were born in the Americas. The term "creole" was bestowed upon the region of Louisiana under Spanish dominion in the year 1763. Subsequently, the term "Creole" was coined by the French and employed in French colonies such as Saint Domingue during the 17th and 18th centuries to denote individuals who were of unmixed native birth. Empirical evidence was obtained by colonial Louisiana through the examination of New Orleans church records and correspondence between Louisiana and royal officials, in order to determine its origin prior to the Spanish takeover.

New Orleans reports that the inaugural group of Creoles, hailing from the provinces, assumed the mantle of leadership from the colony's progenitors upon the establishment of the city in 1718. Starting from 1719, the initial African children born into slavery who were brought to Louisiana were identified as Black Creoles or Creole slaves. Historically, Creole has been identified as an ethnicity that is primarily based on geographical location and has a slightly multiracial composition. The defining feature of this group has been their connection to a specific place of birth. Individuals hailing from this particular geographic area were predominantly comprised of individuals who fell into one or more of the following categories: immigrants, refugees, travellers, transients, or victims of the slave trade. This stands in contrast to individuals originating from other regions. A limited number of individuals during the 18th century employed a persistent need to ascertain that the preponderance of inhabitants in New Orleans were of Creole descent. Following the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the city of New Orleans underwent significant social and cultural changes as a result of the influx of English-speaking Anglo-Americans and various immigrant groups from diverse backgrounds. New Orleans reports that

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As per Sybil Kein's poetic exposition, white creoles are distinguished from other creoles solely on the basis of race, whereas a certain group of individuals are united by their shared creole culture. The individuals were united by a shared affection for their kin and a strong devotion to their country, with a predominant adherence to the Catholic faith. Individuals who self-identify as Creole in the city of New Orleans are commonly characterised by a mixed racial heritage, a deep connection to the locality, familial adherence to the Catholic faith, and surnames that exhibit French phonetics, indicating a Franco-African American lineage. A significant population of Black Creoles resides in the vicinity of the Seventh Ward, in proximity to the former Creole localities surrounding the French Quarter. Nonetheless, a considerable number of elderly residents of New Orleans, irrespective of their racial background, can recollect their grandparents who were proficient in speaking French even during the 20th century. The predominant self-identification among them was that of Creoles.

The city of New Orleans is commonly known as the "city that cares forgot." The location in question has consistently been a highly sought-after destination for hosting social gatherings. The individuals derive pleasure from engaging in activities such as dancing, singing, and leisurely visits to amusement parks on Sundays. The Vieux Carre, the French Quarter, and the Old World charm of Spanish-French architecture are considered to be the three most notable tourist destinations. During the period spanning from the 1880s to World War I, the city's status as the origin of jazz was reinforced by the city's neglectful disregard of its Carnival and Mardi Gras festivities. The Vieux Carré, commonly referred to as the French Quarter, is a highly desirable destination for tourists.

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, a pandemic is defined as a medical condition that is present in a significant proportion of a particular geographic region or a large group of individuals. The term "pandemic" has predominantly been utilised to denote the emergence of diseases. This terminology can also be employed to depict the manifestation of hitherto unfamiliar variations of an organism, for instance, antigenic transformations in infectious viruses or HIV/AIDS. During the same period, specifically in the early 1980s, there was a resurgence of some historically significant epidemics, including yellow fever. The anthology curated by Chelsea Haith, comprising of both past and present literature on pandemics, provides some solace and a framework for future events. The Decameron, authored by Giovanni Boccaccio in 1353, is a brief narrative that highlights the potency of storytelling amidst adversity, set against the backdrop of the Black Death. The literary works of authors from New Orleans are often shaped by the historical tragedies that have occurred within the city. The setting of John Dimitry's (1805-1901) narrative "Le Tombeau Blanc" (1894) is Lafourche Parish, situated to the south of New Orleans during the 19th century. The narrative effectively engages readers by providing a precise portrayal of the severity of leprosy and drawing historical analogies. The author Dimitry highlights this point in his work titled "Le Tombeau Blanc" in the following manner:

Look at this, doctor. This may help you to a conclusion.

While saying this, he first threw open his shirt, revealing a small white-reddish sore slowly eating into his brawny chest. Dr. Tousage knew his young friend's courage. He did for him what he would not have done for a weaker soul. He took refuge in that truth, which is more often a kindness shown by this world's healers than they are given credit for. "This," he replied slowly, represents leprosy already developed. (Dimitry-153)

Fernand Torres, the main character, voices his concerns regarding his dermatological issues to the physician, however, the medical practitioner opts to withhold information pertaining to Fernand's ailment. Fernand exhibits a steadfast reluctance to postpone his visit to the medical practitioner, and subsequently proceeds to disrobe his upper garment to disclose his medical concerns. The medical practitioner discloses that Fernand is afflicted with leprosy and acknowledges his bravery. The aforementioned leprosy facts were presumably known to the reader, thus rendering Fernand's prognosis all the more startling. The theme conveyed by the author to the protagonist necessitates readers to explore the historical calamity. Furthermore, readers are informed about the current state of the pandemic in New Orleans through cable, in addition to their educational pursuits. The literary work titled "Tite Poulette," composed in 1906, provides an account of the yellow fever epidemic that occurred in New Orleans. The protagonist Kristian Koppig underscores the peril that this malady poses to individuals by emphasising the significance of yellow fever. According to Cables, the term "Tite Poulette" was characterised as follows:

"Had you the yellow fever-ah! then!

She rolled her eyes to signify the superlative character of the tribulations attending yellow fever.

I had a lady and gentlemen once- a Spanish lady and gentlemen, just off the ship; both sick at once with a fever- delirious- could not tell their names. Nobody to help me but sometimes Monsieur John! I never had such a time, - never before, never since, - as that time. Four days and nights this head touched not a pillow. And they died!" said Kristian Koppig.

The third night the gentlemen went. Poor Senor! 'Sieur John, - he did not know the harm, gave him some coffee and toast! The fourth night it rained and turned cool, and just before day the poor lady. (190)

The protagonist inquires about the ill-fated voyage of Madame John, which transported individuals afflicted with yellow fever. The passenger and their spouse board the vessel. Following the contraction of yellow fever, both individuals succumbed to the illness. John occasionally provides sustenance to him, while no one else does. John succumbed to yellow fever after contracting the disease. Koppig recounts his harrowing encounter with yellow fever to Madam John. The author utilised his written works to apprise his readership of his lamentable encounters with leprosy and the outbreak of yellow fever in New Orleans. The text presents data pertaining to leprosy, yellow fever, and the survivor narrative of the New Orleans disaster.

According to Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Ethnography refers to a descriptive investigation of a specific human society or the act of conducting such an investigation. The practise of contemporary ethnography is predominantly founded upon the methodology of conducting fieldwork". For an anthropologist to conduct a thorough study, it is necessary for them to fully immerse themselves in the culture and daily routines of the individuals being observed, with the focus of their research being on factual information. The New Orleans literature authors were significantly impacted by this particular theme, as evidenced by their consistent references to the city's geographical conditions. The individuals possessed sufficient fortitude to document the cultural aspects, populace, customary edifices, and festivities of their locality. Short story writers, such as Sallie Rhett Roman, are known to preserve their culture and depict their people in their literary works. For instance, Roman's "Bastien: A X-mas in the Great Salt Marshes of Louisiana" (1899) is a prime example of this practise.

It was on the evening of May 31, the chapel is just completed and Monsieur le Cure had service there for the first time. Everyone had brought flowers for the Virgin's altar, and it was Paul who had swung the bell for Vespers. Then they had had a dance on the beach by the water, and Paul had helped fishermen their boats and tackle, and long before daybreak, they all had set sail for the Chandeleur Islands. (Roman-177)

The author outlined the elation of the indigenous fishermen upon the opening of the chapel's doors. The administration of the chapel is initially under the purview of the Parish Priest, while the fisherman recollects its dedication. Following the act of donating flowers to the Virgin Altar, the local inhabitants engaged in a dance ritual on the shoreline. The author provided a natural depiction of the festivities observed by the fishing community, which serve as a means of establishing communication with the indigenous deity. Therefore, the author's work provides an effective description of the ethnography of the text. George Washington Cable's literary works feature detailed descriptions of buildings, which serve to highlight their significant historical value, while also providing insight into the traditional architectural structures of the city of New Orleans. According to Cable's work titled "Tite Poulette" published in 1906, it can be inferred that:

He made his home in a room with one dormer window looking out, and somewhat down, upon a building opposite, which still stands, flush with the street, a century old. Its big, round-arched windows in a long, second-story row, are walled up, and two or three from time to time smaller windows let into them again, with odd little latticed peep-holes in their batten shutters. This had already been done when Kristian Koppig first began to look at them from his solitary dormer window. (Cable 179-180)

The author skillfully depicted the visual characteristics of the antiquated edifices in New Orleans. The Spanish Barracks, a significant historical edifice, were sold by the government and subsequently acquired by private individuals. The architectural layout of the area is significantly influenced by French infrastructure as the byproduct of French colonialism. The doors are constructed from timber, while the expansive, circular-arched fenestrations are two to three times greater in size than their smaller counterparts.

The narratives pertaining to New Orleans predominantly revolve around the audience's comprehension of the conventional edifices in New Orleans and their respective histories. The authors demonstrate an understanding of the significance of incorporating details pertaining to

New Orleans' historical and cultural background, unique architectural landmarks, indigenous celebrations, and ecological conditions within their written works.

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