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BRIEF NOTE ON VALDMAN (2005)

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A review article by Valdman in *SSLA* 27, pp. 441–463, contains the following paragraph:

> For example, Parkvall (2000) attributed compounds such as *caca nez* "snot" (nose dirt) and *caca yeux* "rheum" (eye dirt) to African languages, yet these also occur in the IO [= Indian Ocean]. The choice of *doigt de pied* "toe" (finger of the foot) and *trou de nez* "nostril" (hole of the nose) is even less felicitous given that these are widely used in vernacular French. (p. 452)

Valdman (2005) does not provide a page reference, but the only passage in Parkvall (2000) where *caca nez* is mentioned is on page 113, where I say the following (emphasis added):

> Much of what *may look* African in Creole semantics may [. . .] well be but an indirect manifestation of former Pidginhood, which may *coincide* with the semantics of the input languages. Thus, the concept of 'toe' is expressed as *foot-finger* or *fingerfoot* in [a few creoles], but although this is also the case of [some African languages], *foot-finger* is also a way of saying 'toe' that could predictably be *invented on the spot* by anybody not knowing any other word. The same applies to the compounds *mouth water* 'saliva' and *eye water* 'tears' (both extremely common both in Atlantic Creoles and in West African languages), and perhaps also to the charming *caca nez* 'snot', *caca yeux* 'rheum, dirt in the eyes', *caca z'oreilles* 'ear wax' and *caca les dents* 'food stuck between the teeth after a meal', found in several FCs [= French Creoles].

Admittedly, I was not aware at the time that *doigt de pied* was common in French; however, I cannot see any way of interpreting the preceding quote in the way that Valdman does. On the contrary, what it does say is precisely the opposite of what Valdman attributes to me—namely, that there is no reason to see these constructions as calques on African languages. Additionally, my book contains no mention of Valdman's last example, *trou de nez*. I have not claimed this Creole phrase to be the result of African influence in any of my other works, nor would I ever dream of doing so.

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RESPONSE TO PARKVALL

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I apologize for the overkill in ascribing the calque *trou de nez* "nostril" to Parkvall (2000). This confusion stems from my failure to check carefully the original sources cited in Chaudenson (2003, pp. 227–228). The African origin of Haitian Creole (HC) *twou nen* (misspelled *twou-ne*) is claimed by Lefebvre (1998, p. 335). Chaudenson is more thorough than I am, given that he cites the precise page numbers for the data he adduces. My comments about Parkvall's failure to consider the potential French origin for the various calques he cites still hold. There appears to be convergence of compounding strategies in the substrate languages and the French target.[1] An analogous convergence also exists in the case of the postposed definite determiner (HC *chat la* "cat the"), in which models from French vernaculars and child language (Chaudenson 2003, pp. 280–286) no doubt served as filters for speakers whose languages had postposed nominal determiners.

My reference to Parkvall's (2000) discussion of presumed substrate-influenced calques was within the context of my support for the important methodological requirement proposed by Chaudenson concerning research on the genesis of French-based creoles—namely, the comparison of Indian Ocean and New World creoles. Because the African influence is generally excluded in the Indian Ocean creoles, any shared features between these and their American congeners must be attributed to their Colonial French target (Chaudenson's and my position) or to the pidginization process. The latter is an alternative to direct substrate influence that Parkvall also considers: "Much of what may look African in Creole semantics may therefore well be an indirect manifestation of former Pidginhood" (p. 113). Concerning this alternative theory, the burden of proof in creole studies lies with those who posit a pidgin origin in the genesis of creoles, inasmuch as the criterion of economy

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favors substrate or target language influence or a combination of both. So far, no convincing evidence has been advanced by proponents of the theory that assumes the existence of a prior pidgin, either a pidgin transported from Africa or one developed in situ as a means of communication for a highly linguistically diverse servile population. As I stressed in my review of Chaudenson (2003), that author presents convincing demographic evidence for an early stage in the development of French plantation colonies in which numerically inferior or equal incoming slaves had access to the vernacular of the European settlers: Colonial French. Thus, no need existed for a stabilized pidginized variety of that linguistic target. It might well be that with massive importation of slaves within a relatively short period of time at a later stage of colonization, the acculturated or native-born speakers of the modified target—the newly arrived slaves (the bossals)—initially pidginized it. To account for the continuous restructuring that has led to the current forms of French-based creoles, I join Chaudenson in positing the second language acquisition of a target that had become highly variable.

Concerning the calques that form the subject of Parkvall's rejoinder, our positions do not differ markedly. I am prepared to accept, as I did in my review article and elsewhere (Valdman, 2000), the influence of African languages. Indeed, the other calques cited in his book, namely, *eye of the foot* for ankle (*je pye* in HC) and the extension of the term for foot (*pye*) to the lower leg are probably better examples of unequivocal reflexes of African calques. The point that Chaudenson makes, and that I support, is that before ascribing these calques to relexification on the model of substrate languages, one needs to examine the putative target of the creators of French-based creole—namely, Colonial French—as well as other vernacular varieties of the language. Note that in my review I identify another area in which substratal influence might be more probable: prosodics and intonation. In the absence of solid research in this underdeveloped area of the structure of creoles in general and French-based creoles in particular, this claim still remains speculative.

NOTE

1. To the unfelicitous and misleading term *superstrate*, I prefer that of target language. In historical linguistics, a superstrate language is one that is introduced after the establishment of a stabilized form of a target language modified by a substrate language or substrate languages. In the case of French, for instance, Germanic languages constitute superstrates that affected the structure of Vulgar (vernacular) Latin after this language had been restructured by its contact with Celtic varieties spoken by conquered or acculturated Gauls.

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