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Caribbean Slave Narratives: Creole in Form and Genre

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And so, father and daughter walked through what was once a great house, and they came out into the backyard, where the only signs of a former life were the foundation stones of some of the outbuildings, and faint gullies marking the earth where others had been.

—Michelle Cliff, *Abeng*

In Michelle Cliff's novel *Abeng* (1984), Clare Savage and her father, Boy, spend an afternoon wandering through an abandoned plantation that once belonged to their ancestors, the white, slave-owning Savages. While the main house remains, only "faint gullies" mark the presence of the slaves. Like Clare Savage and author Michelle Cliff, I too am haunted by the shadows of West Indian slavery because, unlike in the United States, relatively few Caribbean slave narratives have come to light. Endeavoring to ventriloquize these "lost" voices, many Caribbean writers throughout the twentieth-century, beginning with Herbert de Lisser in *White Witch of Rose Hall* (1929) and including Jean Rhys in *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), re-created the lives of Caribbean slaves in their creative works. More contemporary Caribbean writers like Michelle Cliff in *Abeng* (1984), Caryl Phillips in *Cambridge* (1993), David Dabydeen in *Turner* (1994), and Fred D'Aguiar in *Feeding the Ghosts* (1997) have also attempted to recuperate the Caribbean slave's perspective, re-write the story of slavery, and contest sanctioned history.

Current research by historians and literary scholars indicates that, albeit not quite as numerous as United States slave narratives—where according to Francis Smith Foster, in the US alone there are "more than 6000 extant works generally labeled slave narratives"—a significant number of African Diaspora slave narratives have survived to the present day.¹ Generally defined as the written testimony of enslaved black human beings, these stories manifest a vital, yet complex presence within the narratives of the global slave-era. In addition to separately published narratives, stories about the lives of slaves were frequently incorporated within other texts such as travel narratives, diaries, and abolitionist newspapers and also appeared in church documents, conversion narratives, legal records, as well as other forms.² Although the majority of these documents exist in the colonial archive and as such are entangled with the politics of colonialism, when read against the grain of singular totalizing history, these narratives provide an important resource for understanding the experience of slavery and its aftermath in the African Diaspora. The global nature of the slave narrative is a vital component of mapping African Diaspora literary history, of "reclaim[ing] as [its] own, and as [its] subject, a history sunk under the sea, or scattered as potash in the canefields, or gone to bush" (Michelle Cliff, "Journey Into Speech" 59).

Slavery in the Caribbean and West Indian Colonies

According to Orlando Patterson, “Since Eric Williams, scholars have agreed that the Caribbean area is unique in world history in that it represents one of the rare cases of human society being artificially created for capitalistic purposes” (*Sociology* 37). Unlike the United States, the West Indian colonies were not intended to become permanent settlements by investors, for instance, on the island of Jamaica fully “9/10 of all the land under cultivation by plantations on the island before emancipation was owned by absentees” (Patterson, *Sociology* 37). Furthermore, slaves in the West Indies were more likely to live on large plantations. In fact, “three-quarters of slaves in Jamaica were located on plantations of 50 or more slaves, whereas in the United States less than one-quarter of slaves were located on such plantations” (Engerman 265). Additionally,

Slaves in the US had more extensive contact with white society in their daily lives. Moreover, in the US, even in the South, the slaves were basically in a white society: even in those states with the heaviest concentrations of slaves, whites represented one-half of the population. In the West Indies, the share of whites was generally on the order of 10%. (265)

These distinctions, including the fact that more US slaves were native-born than were West Indian slaves (90% in US, versus less than 75% in Jamaica), make clear the marked differences in the conditions of slaves in the New World (265).³

Yet, one of the most important distinctions was the Caribbean itself: “an island bridge . . . connect[ing] North and South America as well as the various traces of Old World points of departure,” the Caribbean developed as “a series of artificially created societies aimed primarily at production of resources as opposed to permanent settler societies, a meta-archipelago” (Murray 177). Caribbean societies are marked by their nature as islands—foregrounding fragmentation, instability, uprootedness, cultural heterogeneity, contingency, impermanence, and syncretism (Benítez-Rojo 1). Numerous critics and writers agree that there is a connection between the geography and cultural context of the Caribbean and the writing that is produced there.⁴ Benítez-Rojo has argued, “the Caribbean text shows the specific features of the supersyncretic culture from which it emerges” (29). He goes on to explain, “Caribbean literature cannot free itself of the multi-ethnic society upon which it floats, and it tells us of its fragmentation and instability” (27).⁵ This syncretism of the Caribbean does not imply that all Caribbean cultures are the same.⁶ Indeed, as Benítez-Rojo argues, the “Plantation proliferated in the Caribbean basin in a way that presented different features in each island, each stretch of coastline, and each colonial bloc. Nevertheless, these differences, [do not] negate the existence of a pan-Caribbean society” (72). This experience, writes Benítez-Rojo, includes cultural components that come from all over the globe: “European conquest, the native people’s disappearance or retreat, African slavery, plantation economies, Asian migration, rigid and prolonged colonial domination” (34). This distinctive feature of Caribbean societies developed

into new cultural and social forms often referred to as Creole and had a major impact on cultural production, especially during slavery.⁷ These factors must be seen as contributing to the necessarily distinct publication history of Caribbean slave narratives, which is closely bound to the cultural history of Caribbean societies.

Caribbean and West Indian Slave Narratives

Although most West Indian slave narratives were published in England, they are very much grounded in a Caribbean context. Narratives such as *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave Related by Herself* (1831), *Negro Slavery Described by a Negro: Being the Narrative of Ashton Warner, a Narrative of St. Vincent* (1831), and *A Narrative of Events, Since the First of August, 1834 by James Williams, an Apprenticed Labourer in Jamaica* (1837), are primarily concerned with detailing the experience of slavery and apprenticeship in the British West Indian colonies. This is expressed in the titles of the narratives that draw attention to place by markers like “*West Indian Slave*” (emphasis mine). And although Warner’s title seems to obscure the specificity of place with its appellation of the generic “*Negro Slavery Described by a Negro*,” specificity *is* emphasized through the subtitle “*A Native of St. Vincent*,” which is enhanced by the first few lines of Warner’s narrative in which he details: “I was born in the Island of St. Vincent” (17). More explicitly, the narratives detail the desire of the slave in question to return to the Caribbean. For example, at the conclusion of Warner’s narrative, the editor includes a notes paraphrasing Warner, in which she says he “is anxiously longing to return to his colonial home and connections—and is suffering severely from the effects of exposure to an uncongenial climate” (note 65-6). Similarly, in his Supplement to *The History of Mary Prince*, Pringle comments that during an interview at the offices of the anti-Slavery Society, Prince “expressed in very strong terms, her anxiety to return thither [to Antigua] if she could go as a free person” (95).

In addition to this stated desire to return “home” to the islands, West Indian Slave Narratives share a number of formal and structural characteristics: they are all set in the Caribbean and offer specific descriptions and details of Caribbean slavery (as distinct from the US context); they are all dictated texts; there is an emphasis on orality—slaves spoke in Creole therefore texts needed translation for British readers; formally they share a concern with legal structure and language, with religious discourse and imagery, as well as the question of black slave subjectivity, ethics, and citizenship. Further, most of the narratives relied on first-person narration and were purported to be “by” the slave or free black narrator, and were primarily intended to provide readers with authentic and authoritative evidence about the details of the slave system in the British West Indies. This, of course, was in concert with the principle rhetorical purpose of most slave narratives, which was to persuade readers to support the abolition of slavery. As William Andrews observes, the editors recognized that, “first person narration, with its promise of intimate glimpses into the mind and heart of a . . . slave, would be much more compelling” (5).

Indeed, one could argue that most discussions of slave narratives are about the question of voice, and concomitant questions of identity, subjectivity, and power. Critic Dorothy Hale defines voice as “a subject who is both more and less than an individual and stronger and weaker than a free agent” (445). This definition, which emphasizes the multiplicity and ambiguity of the notion of voice, contradicts how voice has often been understood as an expression of a singular experience. From this perspective, the connection between voice and subjectivity is a direct one—to speak is to be a subject in language and hence to assert agency. As a result, most studies of the slave narrative genre have focused on single-authored narratives, explaining that the impossibility of establishing the authenticity of the narrative voice warrants the exclusion of dictated narratives from in-depth analysis.

The association with voice and singularity becomes a more complex matter when applied to Caribbean narratives. Rather than a single authorial voice, the mediated nature of Caribbean and other early slave narratives foregrounds multiple narrative voices. As Robert Stepto explains, “in their most elementary form, slave narratives are full of other voices, which are frequently just as responsible for articulating a narrative's tale and strategy” (256). The complexity is compounded by the fact that the narratives themselves, while often primarily about single historical individuals (Mary Prince, Ashton Warner, James Williams, etc.) were also intended to be representative. As LeJeune has argued, desire for the singular voice is not just wishful thinking on our part but rather is part of the implied autobiographical contract, which assumes a transparency between narrator and author. The editors of these slave narratives were very aware of this desire for transparency and authenticity, and attempted to inscribe it into the narratives. For example, in most narratives the editors made explicit attempts to downplay the other voices in the narratives. Although each slave author is clearly and fully indicated in the titles of both narratives, the author by-lines identify each editor, such “T. Pringle” and “S. Strickland” respectively, in the case of the Prince and Warner’s narratives. In his preface, Pringle explains that Strickland transcribed Prince’s narrative fully. He then edited and “pruned it into its present shape . . . It is essentially [Mary’s] own, without any material alteration farther than what was required to exclude redundancies and gross grammatical errors so as to render it clearly intelligible” (55). In the preface to Warner’s narrative, Strickland noted, “In writing Ashton’s narrative, I have adhered strictly to . . . his own language, which, for a person in his condition, is remarkably expressive and appropriate” (15). These editorial assurances highlighted the simulated nature of the assumed transparency in all autobiographical narratives.

Yet, throughout the body of these dictated texts, the voice of the editor frequently intruded on the text. More than a matter of the editorial exercise of power over the slave voice, these editorial interruptions were intended to draw attention to the language of the slave by asserting and assuring the slave’s voice. For instance, when Prince describes her second owners, Captain and Mrs. I—, she compares them to their house, explaining that “[t]he stones and the timber were the best things in it; they were not so hard as the hearts of the owners” (64). An editorial note from Pringle claims, “These strong expressions, and all similar characters in this

narrative, are given verbatim as uttered by Mary Prince” (64). Similarly, after Warner has explained his predicament as a free child kidnapped by a disingenuous slave owner, Strickland writes, “This is poor Ashton’s own statement” (21). Throughout the texts, the editors interrupt the narratives to assert the authenticity and authority of the speaking slave. Despite these interventions, the convention of the editorial note clearly and specifically delineates the difference between one voice and the other, enforcing the distinction between the two, and complicating the seamless and unified quality of the slave’s voice.

For a number of critics, one of the primary problems of dictated narratives is the concern that “the slave’s voice does not yet control the imaginative forms which her personal history assumes in print” (Stephens 262). Control of the narrative voice in these dictated texts is interpreted as resting firmly with the editor. Others contend that due to the mediated nature of these narratives, there is no subject or author behind these words. However, critical work on dictated narratives by Beverly, Murray, Krupat, and Sommer, has made it clear that assumptions of all-encompassing editorial power are unsupportable.⁸ These critics argue that dictated narratives are written dialogues, in which both the voice of the narrator and the voice of the transcriber work together to create the text. Although the editor or transcriber might have had the last word in arranging and ordering the final narrative, the oral storytelling of the narrator is a vital component of the written product. The orator also participates in the creative process by choosing and ordering what to narrate to the interlocutor. The narrative could not exist without the participation of the slave narrator.

The oral nature of these narratives is foregrounded by the employment of creole. In the narratives at hand, each editor makes a distinction between the formal English into which the texts have been standardized and the Creole or patois that each slave spoke. Pringle draws attention to the “repetitions and prolixities” that were a hallmark of Prince’s speech patterns, and which necessitated translation for British readers (Preface). Strickland explains that she used Warner’s own language, “adopting [it] wherever it could conveniently be done” (Preface), also implying that Warner’s natural speech or Creole required translation. The editors also supplemented each narrative with notes explaining Creole words and phrases used by Prince and Warner.

These Creole fragments served as the foundation for an illuminating reading by Sandra Pouchet Paquet of Mary Prince’s narrative. Drawing on F.G. Cassidy’s study of Jamaican Creole, Paquet argues that Prince’s Creole is conveyed in part through iteratives, repeated words often used for dramatic emphasis, “a distinctive feature of West Indian speech” (54). Warner’s comment on his “long, long parting” from his mother during his enslavement illustrates this feature (29). In conjunction with the reliance on iteratives, Paquet also draws attention to the customary poetic turns of phrase that are characteristic of West Indian speech, for example the use of *salt water* for tears: “Oh the trials! The trials! They make the salt water come into my eyes when I think of the ways in which I was inflicted” (54, 137). Taken together, the iteratives and turns of phrase, peppered throughout the texts, offer a refracted glimpse of slave Creole.

However, although Creole survives in both narratives in the use of iteratives and turns of phrases, because neither Pringle nor Strickland had spent time in the Caribbean, it might have proven difficult for them to effectively transcribe the Creole of the slave narrators. The results of having a transcriber who actually knew and was familiar with West Indian Creole is manifest in James Williams's *Narrative of Events, Since the First of August, 1834, by James Williams, An Apprenticed Labourer in Jamaica* (1836). The text was edited by the abolitionist, Thomas Price, and transcribed by Dr. Archibald Leighton Palmer, a Scottish medical doctor who had spent time in Jamaica and, most important, could understand Jamaican Creole (xxx). The narrative recounted Williams's experiences as an apprentice in Jamaica and contained descriptions of the extreme cruelty that continued and increased during the period. Although few details are given regarding Williams's life before the apprenticeship period 1834-36, or of his day-to-day life, the narrative provided a richly detailed portrait of the period. One of the most remarkable features of Williams' narrative is its pervasive reliance on Creole (Paton xxxiv). Creole appears not only in descriptions of his own or another slave's speech: "massa me no able! my 'tomach, oh! me da dead, oh!" (15), but also in descriptive sections throughout the narrative:

We know this magistrate come to punish we for nothing, so we go over to Capt. Dillon at Southampton to complain; he write paper next morning to police-station, and policeman take us home. Mr. Rawlinson gone already, and Misses said he left order that we to lock up every night, and keep at work in day-time, till he come back — but police say no, Capt. Dillon order that we not to punish till he try we himself on Thursday, at Brownstown. (7)

Such extensive employment of Creole is unusual. Indeed, most slave narratives like Prince's and Warner's, confined Creole to the speech of slaves.⁹ In narratives by ex-slaves such as Harriet Jacobs or Frederick Douglass, formal English was a means of asserting intelligence. Yet in this passage, the deployment of Creole asserts a sense of agency and intelligence. Although narrated in Creole, Williams and his fellow apprentices were obviously very aware of their "right" under the law and were able to use their "native" language to assert and secure those rights.

Creole also serves another purpose, interrupting the narrative and creating a site of tension with the more formal English that surrounds it. Some critics have argued that Bakhtinian ideas should not be applied to Creole or dialect studies because, "one should not confuse mere reified and externalized speech characterizations with genuine polyphony," and further that Bakhtin rather "specifically withdrew his insights about the dialogic from anything as crude and cosmetic as the surface features of the given language" (Emerson 1). However, because Creole in these narratives is expressive of an alternative worldview, it should be considered within the purview of the dialogic. Moreover, Creole captures and conveys what is distinctive about slave culture, and consequently provides evidence of a different dialogic angle. Bakhtin himself observed in several essays that languages have access to different systems of power. Therefore, translated Creole, as in some of the narratives, can be read as a sign of a different language because the implication is that without translation Creole would be incomprehensible to most

readers. Indeed, both Pringle and Strickland implied in their respective prefatory remarks that translation was necessary in order to ensure readability. Consequently, within these three narratives Creole subverts the consolidating and unifying power of formal English by affirming linguistic diversity. In lieu of a singular voice then, Creole attests to an inherent multiplicity within these narratives.¹⁰

Thus, the narrative collaboration intrinsic to British West Indian slave narratives creates a Creole text emblematic of the dialectical relationships of power in the slave system. The combination of oral and written forms and the number of voices operating in these narratives suggest the need for a similarly multi-layered theory of reading. The frameworks traditionally employed in examining single authored texts cannot adequately contend with the multiplicity inherent in these narratives. Reading for evidence of a dominant singular subjectivity—and for the voice of the historical figure—will necessarily constrict the heterogeneous nature of these narratives, effectively silencing the testimony of Caribbean slaves. Because collaboratively produced narratives are “inevitably multi-voiced, hybrid products in which we can hear in varying degrees the speaking subject” (Murray 179), readings that embrace theories of hybridity are in fact more capable of accounting for the inherent multiplicity of these texts. My goal is not to view these narratives as “corrupted and inferior forms,” but rather to read them against the grain of the colonial archive “as a new form which reflects precisely the cultural limitations and contradictions inherent in a situation where oral and literate cultures meet” (Murray 179).

Slave Narratives as Testimonios

One such multi-layered theory involves reading the narratives through the lens of *testimonios* rather than as autobiographies. Although numerous scholars writing on the slave narrative genre have drawn attention to the narratives’ role and format as testimony, none have made explicit connections to the genre of *testimonio*, which can be defined as:

a novel or novella-length narrative, told in the first person by a narrator who is the actual protagonist or witness of the events she or he recounts. The unit of narration is usually a life or significant life episode (e.g. the experience of being a prisoner). Since in many cases the narrator is someone who is either functionally illiterate or, if literate, not a professional writer or intellectual, the production of the *testimonio* generally involves the recording and/or transcription and editing of an oral account by an interlocutor who is a journalists, writer, or social activist. The word suggests the act of testifying or bearing witness in a legal or religious sense. (Beverly and Zimmerman 173)

Some critics have argued rather forcefully for the connection between *testimonio* and place—as a genre of as-told-to life narratives that developed and flourished in Latin America, especially in the 1960s, beginning with Miguel Barnet’s *Biography of a Runaway Slave*, a transcription of the life of the 105-year-old Cuban ex-slave Esteban Montejo.¹¹ Although Barnet invented the

term *testimonio* with the publication of Montejo's narrative, in fact this format had existed long before the 1960s. Indeed as Raymond Williams has argued, there is a long history of oral autobiography by oppressed people that is not limited to Latin America (qtd. in Beverly 71). Additionally, arguments by Alberto Retamar and Orlando Patterson among others who draw geographic and cultural connections between the Caribbean and Latin America encourage reading these Caribbean slave narratives through a Latin American socio-historical context.

What do we gain by treating these narratives as *testimonios*? For one thing, it addresses the simultaneity of form and voice. As a genre that transgresses the boundaries between the public and the private, *testimonio* is defined as a syncretic form, "it is placed at the intersection of multiple roads: oral vs. literary; authored/authoritarian discourse vs. edited discourse; literature vs. anthropology; autobiography vs. demography" (Gugelberger 10). *Testimonios*—unlike most classic autobiographies—do not simply focus on the inner self, but also draws on communal experience. Furthermore, *testimonio* allows a focus on the multiplicity of subjectivities at work in the text without sacrificing the authority of these narratives. In reading these narratives as *testimonios*, my goal is to emphasize their complex dialogic nature and to move the focus of discussion from the implicit individualism often implied in autobiography.

For example, one important feature of the *testimonio* genre is the floating "I." By this I mean, the "I" has the grammatical status of what linguists call a "shifter," a linguistic function that can be assumed indiscriminately by anyone; it is not just the uniqueness of her self or her experience but its ability to stand for the experience of her community as a whole (Prince 82). This floating "I" is manifest in both narratives. Early in Prince's narrative she details her first experience with slave abuse by her second owners Captain and Mrs. I— who whip another of their slaves, a woman named Hetty. Prince recalls, "This was a sad beginning for me. I sat up upon my blanket, trembling with terror, like a frightened hound, and thinking that my turn would come next" (65). She imagines herself in Hetty's place, their bodies become interchangeable in Prince's mind. Although Prince does not share the same abuse at this time, she does in effect switch places with Hetty after her death. "After Hetty died all her labours fell upon me. . . . There was no end to my toils--no end to my blows. I lay down at night and rose up in the morning in fear and sorrow; and often wished that like poor Hetty I could escape from this cruel bondage and be at rest in the grave (66). Later in Prince's narrative she declares:

Oh the horrors of slavery!—How the thought of it pains my heart! But the truth ought to be told of it; and what my eyes have seen I think it is my duty to relate; for few people in England know what slavery is. I have been a slave—I have felt what a slave feels, and I know what a slave knows; and I would have all the good people in England to know it too that they may break our chains and set us free.
(74)

The “I” of Prince’s specific situation and observation switches to “our” and “us” by the end of the paragraph—highlighting the metonymic function of the narrative voice and its power to stand in for the experiences of the community as a whole.

Although some critics would argue that these metonymic gestures erase individuality, linking the self with the larger community can be interpreted as a strategy of cultural resistance (Restrepo 41), when Prince speaks as an individual, different voices are communicated in the polyphony of *testimonio*. Further, by linking herself with several other collective identities, in addition to her fellow slaves, she effectively contests the pro-slavery ideology that seeks to isolate her. *Testimonio* represents an affirmation of the individual subject by giving voice to the voiceless while emphasizing the connection of that individual voice to a group marked by marginalization, oppression and struggle (Beverly, *Margin* 35). Collective identities allow Prince to appropriate a variety of voices and subject positions and thus provide a strategy for cultural resistance in a society that seeks to constrain her subjectivity. These plural relationships of identification facilitate an understanding of subjectivity as “internally fissured, available simultaneously for different contexts” (Sommer 155), in which the Creole subjects of these narratives—like the collective subjects of *testimonio*—disturb and challenge the “hegemonic autobiographical pose of Western Autobiography” (Sommer 146).

The multiplicity signaled by the polyvocality of the Creole testimony of Caribbean slaves illuminates the complexity of the slave narrative form. Far from a rigid or unchanging genre, it incorporates numerous rhetorical and narrative strategies that develop out of each narrative’s particular cultural context. Plantation slavery was a complex and varied system of power relationships. I try to embrace this complexity by attending to the various ways in which slaves communicated their stories. Although the dictated narratives do not provide easy interpretative access, they do have so much to communicate and to ignore them is to silence once again the voices of Caribbean slaves.

Notes

¹It is quite possible that additional narratives are languishing in libraries and archives waiting to be rediscovered. Indeed in April 1999 in a lecture at Harvard's DuBois Institute, Dr. Selwyn Cudjoe announced that he had rediscovered two "new" West Indian slave narratives in the British Library. Here is just a brief sampling of narratives of West Indian slavery: *The History of Mary Prince* (1831); *A Narrative of Events Since the first of August, 1834 by James Williams, and Apprenticed Labourer in Jamaica* (1836); *Negro Slavery Described by A Negro: Being the Narrative of Ashton Warner, A Native of St. Vincent* (1831); *Memoir of the Life of the Negro-Assistant SALOME CUTHBERT* (1831); *Archibald Monteith: Native Helper & Assistant in the Jamaica Mission at New Carmel* (1853) (ed. Geissler/Kummer); *The History of Abon Becr Sadika* (1835); in Robert Madden's *A Twelvemonths residence in the West Indies*, *A Dreadful Account of a Negro who for Killing the Overseer of a Plantation in Jamaica Was Placed in an Iron Cage Where He was Left to Expire* (1834); *Autobiography of a Cuban Slave: Juan Francisco Manzano* (n.d. 1830-50s); *Autobiography of a Runaway Slave: Esteban Montejo* (1963); *Seven Slaves and Slavery: Trinidad 1777-1838: Firmin, Jonas, Daaga, Jaquet, Laurence, Charles* (Ed. De Verteuil 1992).

²For example, J.B. Moreton, *West India Customs and Manners* (1793); Thomas Thistlewood, *In Miserable Slavery: The Diaries of Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica 1750-1786*; Robert Madden, *A Twelvemonths Residence in the West Indies* (1835); Lady Maria Nugent, *Journal of a voyage to and residence in, the island of Jamaica from 1801-05* (1839); Matthew 'Monk' Lewis, *Journal of a West Indian Proprietor 1815-17* (1834); Rev. Weeden Butler (trans), *Zimao, the African* (1800); Sarah Stickney Ellis, *The Negro Slave: A Tale Addressed to the Women of Great Britain* (1830); Christopher E. Lefroy, *Outalissi: A Tale of Dutch Guiana* (1823); Elizabeth Charlotte, *The System: A Tale of the West Indies* (1827); Mary Ann Hedge, *Samboe, or The African Boy* (1823).

³Scholars such as Stanley Engerman, Sidney Mintz, Barbara Bush, Verene Shepherd and others agree that there are distinctions between slavery in the United States and other parts of the globe.

⁴For example, Kenneth Ramchand, "West Indian Literary History: Literariness, Orality, and Periodization," *Callaloo* 2.11 (1988): 95-110; Edouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. J. Michael Dash (Charlottesville: U of Virginia Press, 1989); Michael Dash, "Textual Error and Cultural Crossing: A Caribbean Poetics of Creolization," *Research in African Literatures* 25.2 (1994): 159-168; Sylvia Wynter, "Beyond Miranda's Meanings: Unsilencing the 'Demonic Ground' of Caliban's 'Woman,'" *Out of the Kumbla: Caribbean Women Writers and Literature*, ed. Carol Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1990), and Wilson Harris, "The Limbo Gateway," *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 1995), 378-382.

⁵The connection between place and literature is not a new one. Indeed, Philip Fisher has detailed the specific connection between the American novel and the American landscape in *Hard Fact: Setting and Form in the American Novel* (1985).

⁶I acknowledge the difficult history of the term syncretism. However, it is the most specific term to describe this process. My goal is to recuperate this term because it captures the simultaneity that is not addressed by the terms multiplicity and hybridity.

⁷For my use of Creole I draw on the definition developed by Kathleen Balutansky and Marie-Agnès Sourieau: "Creolization is thus defined as a syncretic process of transverse dynamics that endlessly reworks and transforms the cultural patterns of varied social and historical experiences and identities. The cultural patterns that result from this 'crossbreeding' (or crossweaving) undermine any academic or political aspiration for unitary origins or authenticity" (3).

⁸John Beverley, *Against Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Arnold Krupat, "Native American Autobiography and the Synecdochic Self," *American Autobiography: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Paul Eakins (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991): 171-194; David Murray, "Authenticity and Text in American Indian, Hispanic and Asian American Autobiography," *First Person Singular: Studies in American Autobiography*, ed. Robert A. Lee (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988): 177-197; Doris Sommer, "No Secrets," *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*, ed. Georg M. Gugelberger (Durham: Duke UP, 1996): 130-157 and "Sacred Secrets: A Strategy for Survival," *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader*, ed. Sidonie Smith, and Julia Watson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995): 197-207.

⁹This is common in other slave narratives as well, such as Harriet Jacobs's, Douglass's, the Crafts *Running a 1000 Miles to Freedom*, and others.

¹⁰Indeed, DaCosta explains that the singularity of creole is a continuing argument with Caribbean linguistics.

¹¹John Beverly *Against Literature* (1993), Barbara Harlow *Resistance Literature* (1987)

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