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« "...dis, dat, and toder" : Constructing a Nation/al Creole Language in Jamaica during Slavery »

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Résumé

La société jamaïcaine, émergée des histoires conjointes de la colonisation européenne, laquelle a conduit à l'effondrement démographique de la communauté indigène, et de la réduction en esclavage des populations africaines qui ont peiné devant une multitude de problèmes économiques, la plupart associés à l'agriculture commerciale, a plusieurs fois été caractérisée telle que définie par la domination de plantation, comme « plurielle » et singulièrement « créole ». En utilisant comme point de départ quelques références historiques des patrons de langage des communautés résidants dans cette île, ce texte postule que le créole jamaïcain (le jamaïcain ou le patois ? *patwa*) était déjà un système de langage perceptible pendant la période de l'esclavage, ayant promulgué les principaux moyens de communication, et qu'il a pu se dédoubler en tant que source d'érudition et/ou de violence parmi les individus et les groupes sur l'île. Que le langage qui continue de dominer les vies quotidiennes du peuple jamaïcain aurait sa genèse au sein d'une brutale hyper-exploitation à laquelle une majorité de la population soumise en esclavage était assujettie et à laquelle beaucoup ont résisté, parle au pouvoir de la créativité culturelle et de l'impact sur quelques-unes des personnes les plus marginalisées dans l'histoire de l'île.

Abstract

The Jamaican society that emerged out of the conjoined histories of European colonisation, which resulted in the demographic collapse of the aboriginal community, and the enslavement of African peoples who toiled in a variety of economic concerns, most of them associated with commercial agriculture, has been variously characterised as defined by the dominance of plantations, as 'plural' and as distinctively 'creole'. Using historical references to the language patterns of the communities resident in the island as its point of departure, the paper argues that Jamaican Creole (Jamaican/Patwa) was already discernable language system during the period of slavery, that it provided the main means of communication in the island, and that it could be deployed as a source of erudition and/or violence among individuals and groups. That the language which continues to dominate the daily lives of the Jamaican people should have its genesis within the brutal hyper-exploitation to which the majority enslaved population was subjected and which many resisted, speaks to the power of cultural creativity and performance and highlights the continued socio-cultural influence of some of the island's most subjugated and marginalised persons.

Resumo

A sociedade jamaicana que surgiu das historias conjuntas da colonização europeia, a qual resultou no colapso demográfico das sociedades indígenas, e da escravização das populações africanas que labutaram frente a vários problemas econômicos, a maioria associados a agricultura comercial, foi várias vezes caracterizada como definida pela dominação de plantação, "plural" e distintivamente "crioula". Usando como ponto de partida diferentes referentes históricos dos padrões de linguagem das comunidades residentes na ilha, o texto argumenta que o crioulo jamaicano (o jamaicano/*patwa*) já era perceptível enquanto sistema de linguagem durante o período da escravatura, e que providenciou os principais meios de comunicação e podia se desdobrar em fonte de erudição e/ou violência entre os indivíduos e os grupos

na ilha. Que a linguagem que continua dominando as vidas cotidianas da população jamaicana tem sua gênese na brutal hiper-exploração a qual foi assujeitada mas também resistiu a maioria da população escravizada, fala em nome do poder da criatividade cultural e seu impacto sobre algumas das pessoas as mais marginalizadas na historia da ilha.

At the end of the fifteenth century Jamaica and other Caribbean territories, which had been marked by the migrations and settlements of aboriginal peoples such as the Tainos, Kalinagos and Ciboneys, were irrevocably changed by the accidental "discovery" of the region by Europeans. Initially mistaken for one of territories on the edges of lucrative Asian markets (which were the real targets of the European "adventurers" (Pietschmann, 1999)) and then as possible sources of significant mineral wealth, the value of Jamaica and the rest of the Caribbean was eventually to be measured primarily as sites for profitable commercial agriculture. In the process, the aboriginal residents (who were expected to provide the labour for these ventures in exchange for the supposed benefits of exposure to Christianity and European "civilization") suffered from a demographic collapse due to overwork, unbearable pressures on their subsistence agriculture and contact with new diseases to which they had no immunities (1). As a means of replacing the devastated aboriginal population as well as addressing the problems of underemployment, unemployment and poverty in Europe, poorer Europeans were recruited into contracts by which they offered their labour for a set number of years in exchange for their passages, food, shelter and clothing during their indentureships as well as a small piece of land and sometimes some money at the end of their contracts (2). Always insufficient in their numbers, the European indentured workers were believed to be unable to cope with the demands of expanded commercial agriculture, especially when the focus of the region turned to the production of staples, such as sugar.

The economic changes that would result from the "sugar revolution" were accompanied by enormous demographic, socio-political and cultural changes : primary among these was the incredible expansion of the foul system of labour which utilised the toil of enslaved Africans whose efforts would generate enormous profits for their enslavers as well as colonial and imperial investors and authorities. Jamaica and the rest of the Caribbean became marked and defined by a hyper-exploitative, violent and relentless labour regime where millions of ethnically and culturally diverse Africans were wrested from their home/lands, enslaved, transported across the yawning chasm of the Atlantic and deployed as chattel, primarily within the plantation complex.

The society that developed as a result of the combination of colonialism and enslavement within the plantation framework has been analysed from a variety of perspectives. For some scholars, there was an identifiable "plantation society" which, among others things, focused on the production of a single staple for export, was characterised by a rigidly applied set of hierarchies where race/colour, class and gender determined one's place in the society and became a crucial site for the conflation of the economic, political and cultural imperatives of the colonial enterprise. For these scholars, according to Nigel Bolland, the plantation was seen as "a microcosm of the whole society" (Bolland, 1998 :5) and could operate as the model for explaining the economic focus as well as the naked power that a small segment of colonial enslavers in the society exercised over the (enslaved) majority. For Orlando Patterson, the plantation did not merely reflect the socio-economic and political structures of the society, but the structures on each plantation were so complete that during the period of slavery, "Jamaica is best seen as a collection of autonomous plantations, each a self-contained community with internal mechanisms of power, than as a total social system" (Patterson, 1967 :70). Other scholars like George Beckford (1972), however, used the plantation model differently, to analyse the entire slave society and its legacy and argued, says Bolland, that

[i]ndividual plantations, though relatively isolated as social units, w[ere] integrated through their connections with the political economy of the metropolis and intra-imperial system as a whole. The model suggests three distinct but interrelated levels of social analysis : the plantation as an oppressive local institution, the plantation society as a weak and dependent aggregation of plantations, and the imperial system that [wa]s bound up with the world economy. (1998 :6)

While plantations and plantation society were central to and influential in the region, Bolland argues that the "plantation society model" emphasised the power of the enslaving classes and said little of "the ability of the victims to influence the system". As the agency of the enslaved was lost in the focus on structures of power and containment, analyses remained concentrated on colonial and imperial institutions and the role of culture was largely absent (Bolland, 1998 :6).

This absence was addressed by scholars such as M.G. Smith who argued that it was the cultural

differences between the enslavers and the enslaved that best explained the structure of Caribbean societies which Smith labelled as "plural" (Smith, 1965). According to Bolland, Smith argued that these societies should be characterised as "plural" because "there was never a consensus of cultural values between Europeans and Africans, and... there is a 'cultural pluralism' among the diverse people in these Caribbean societies." (Bolland, 1998 :7). These were "culturally split societies governed by dominant demographic minorities whose peculiar social structures and political conditions set them apart," (Smith 1984 :29) particularly in the public domain. However, as Bolland argues, while the "plural society model" draws attention to the importance of "the cultural and institutional differentiation and complexity of Caribbean societies", it conflated "the racial, cultural and class categories" into a "simple social hierarchy" without enough of a consideration of social classes and power (Bolland, 1998 : 8).

While some scholars accepted or refined the explanatory model of the plural society, others advanced the "creole society" model. Although proponents of the creole society joined those of the plural society model in their focus on the importance of culture in analysing Caribbean society, they also emphasised what Bolland called "an evolving cultural unity" as well as social and cultural change through the process of "creolisation" (Bolland, 1998 :9-10). Shaped through a variety of scholarly contributions, including that of Sidney Mintz and Richard Price (Mintz & Price, 1992) about rapid creolisation of transported Africans, scholars like John Thornton (1998) who have focused on the importance of African ethnicities in the development of various cultures in the Americas, the critique of the Mintz and Price position which de-centres Africa by historians like Paul Lovejoy (1997) or anthropologists like David Scott (1991) this paper enters the discussion of the construction of one aspect of "creolity" in Jamaican society.

According to Kamau Brathwaite (1971 ; 1974), a major advocate of the creole society model, the process of creolisation defined Jamaican society in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Says Bolland,

acknowledges the existence of internal cleavages and conflict in the slave society, but also stresses the processes of interaction and mutual adjustment between the major cultural traditions of Europe and Africa. The central argument of the creole-society model is that the Europeans and Africans who settled in the Americas contributed to the development of a distinctive society and culture that was neither European nor African, but Creole. (Bolland, 1998 :10)

For Brathwaite, creolisation was/is 'inter-cultural', a two-way process of cultural change among and between the culturally diverse groups that took/takes place in spite of the power imbalance in the society. For him, the resulting Euro-Creole, Afro-Creole and Creo-Creole cultures spoke to different points and strengths of engagement and to the potential for a national Creole culture, unified through the creative strengths of its people (Brathwaite, 1971 ; 1974).

According to Bolland, scholars like Rex Nettleford, Mervyn Alleyne and Orlando Patterson have entered into a dialogue about the concept of creolisation and have challenged, strengthened and taken the idea further. For Nettleford (1988 :194), the process of creolisation has been skewed in favour of the European contributions to the process and he calls for greater acknowledgement of the African side of the equation [(3)]. After all, as he put it, "The Africanisation of the European was no less important to the creolisation process than the Europeanisation of the African" (Bolland, 1998 :14). Patterson's analysis (1995) of the creolisation process distinguishes between the early period of cultural engagement (which he labels 'segmentary'), where he says that the process was underdeveloped and the much later process (which he labels 'synthetic'), beginning in the mid-twentieth century where there was a reliance on Euro-Caribbean components as well as Afro-Caribbean Creole sources "for its expressive institutions and symbols" (Bolland, 1998 :16).

In Alleyne's view, the process of creolisation can be viewed in the emergence of creole languages around the region, which he says, resulted from the long struggle between enslavers and enslaved over the medium of communication. As Bolland points out, Alleyne (1988) concludes that "[t]he outcome of this struggle reflects the metropolitan hegemony, and becomes a further means of maintaining social inequalities" (Bolland, 1998 : 14), as the nation-languages of the people continue/d to be devalued and defined as deficient, corrupt and mutilated versions of European originals. As the colonised accept those assessments of their cultural product, they play their part in the hegemonic dance and remain relatively powerless. For Alleyne, then, creolisation in Jamaica is at heart a political process where "Black people constantly struggled to maintain their African heritage in the teeth of slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and imperialism in the guise of modernisation." (Bolland, 1998 :15, quoting Alleyne, 1988 : 152).

Whatever its process or outcome, Bolland argues that while the creole-society thesis "offers an approach

to national integration by seeking to unite people of diverse origins in an over-arching ethnicity based on the recognition and creation of a developing creole culture" (1998 : 17), it needs to be firmly anchored in the dialectical view of social dynamics and cultural change. He urges scholars to ground the debate about the usefulness, process and outcome of creolisation in the idea that the actors in the process assumed social roles that were/are "mutually constitutive and defined by their relationship" (1998 : 17). Far too often, Bolland argues, creolisation is portrayed as "a 'blending' process, a mixing of cultures that occurs without reference to structural contradiction and social conflicts" (1998 : 17). Rather, he calls for the insertion of "dialectic theory" into the discussions which would focus on the role of conflicts as the chief sources of social change in the social system and which would pay sufficient attention to the power dynamics between the dominant and the subordinate in the society.

Drawing on the scholarship of Antonio Gramsci about hegemonic ideologies and practices and Michel de Certeau (1984) about the importance of analysing the 'practice of everyday life', Bolland points out that the use of dialectic theory would help to explain how dominated people (such as the enslaved) shaped their own culture and influenced that of those who would dominate them. Indeed, he points forcefully to de Certeau's argument that "those people whose status in society is that of 'dominee' are neither passive nor docile but, on the contrary, their actions frequently subvert the goals and structures of the dominators" and posits that this formulation "is appropriate to the study of the historical process of culture formation during the period of slavery and colonialism in the Caribbean" (1998 : 19-20). Building on Brathwaite's analyses of the development of Jamaican creole society and paying attention to Bolland's insistence on importance of dialectics in the formation of such a society, this paper uses Alleyne's focus on creole languages to examine the construction of "creolity" in Jamaica.

Based on the demographic and socio-cultural composition of the island, it is possible to argue that the Jamaican society that emerged during and after centuries of the enslavement of Africans was not merely creole, it was Afro-creole. According to estimates available through the TransAtlantic Slave Trade Database, between 1501-1838, individuals, companies and the authorities within the British imperial empire enslaved and forcibly transported 3,259,441 Africans into the Americas ; of that number, 1,212,352 disembarked in Jamaica (4). The demography of the island would be significantly affected as, according to B.W. Higman, there was "a steady increase in the annual average of slaves brought from Africa to Jamaica during the eighteenth century" and up to the official end of the British trade in enslaved Africans in 1807, when he estimates that "Africans comprised roughly 45 per cent of the slave population of Jamaica" (1995 :75). As a result, argues Higman, "it appears that the slave population must have become as heavily Africanized in 1790-1807 as in any other period, with the exception of the late seventeenth century" (1995 :76).

For Higman, this heavy Africanization "has important implications for an understanding of the process of 'creolization' as does the fact that in the period 1792-1807 approximately 83 per cent of the slaves came from the Bight of Biafra (Ibos) and Central Africa (Congos), compared to 46 per cent over the entire history of the slave trade to Jamaica". In addition to these contextual framings, argues Higman, it was "equally important" to note that creolisation was affected by "the rapid decline in the African section after 1807" (1995 :75-76). These large concentrations suggest that the negotiations around which the new society would be formed had strong African bases, with significant regional concentrations, which would heavily influence the culture which would emerge. Although the enslaved and their enslavers were bound together in a tapestry which included threads of exploitation, brutality, control, manipulation, confrontation and resistance, the struggles and compromises which were necessary to establish labour regimes and personal connections led to socio-cultural matrices, products and behaviours which would mark the society well past the end of formal enslavement.

That much was made clear with the emergence of a language system (Jamaican Creole, alternately called patois/patwa, and more recently, simply 'Jamaican') which was shared by the enslaved and their (creole) enslavers and which continued to flourish through the post-slavery period, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, into the present. As a major cultural product in the island, that language operated (and operates) as a zone of convergence, conflict and negotiation between and among the many and varied "arrivants" (Brathwaite, 2000) in the colony (and nation), combining the people in a cultural milieu, even as some among them denied and rejected that process.

According to Natalie Zemon Davis (5),

Caribbean creole languages are especially instructive for the historical study of communication. These creoles were created by people wrenched from their own language communities and by the children of such uprooted parents ; by people eager to have a language in which to conduct their lives amidst a surrounding babel of tongues and in lands far away from those of their progenitors. They illustrate the ingenuity of human populations in difficult straits and the wide range of situations and subjects they wanted to be able to talk about in relatively short order. (2009 :268)

As was the case in Suriname, the focus of Zemon Davis' analysis, during the period of slavery (and well beyond the formal demise of the system), the Jamaican "nation language" proved to be a creole creation, born out of the contact and struggles among the indigenous (later decimated) Tainos, enslaved West and Central Africans and their descendants, and European (primarily British) colonisers. Later, the language would be infused by contributions from the Asian (Indian and Chinese), Middle Eastern (Lebanese or 'Syrian') and other groups of immigrants [(6)].

Given the long-extant, colonially shaped and racially driven prejudices against enslaved Africans and their descendants, not surprisingly, for much of the island's history, their language forms were described as broken, improper and vulgar. As was the case in Suriname where, according to Zemon Davis, "[l]inguists took their time to decide that colonial creoles were not just 'broken' or 'bastard' or 'aberrant' versions of genuine languages, but were new languages in their own right and worthy of study" (2009 :268) Jamaicans' creole language construction was given short shrift. Those circumstances would change only in the second half of the twentieth century where, with the emergence of local scholars and institutions, as well as what Zemon Davis refers to as an "explosion" of international scholarship in the last forty years, creoles have gained the interest of linguists who have been involved in a range of debates [(7)].

In the case of Jamaican Creole, according to linguists Barbara Lalla and Jean D'Costa, while it is very difficult to point to a moment by which an identifiable Jamaican language form had emerged, it is clear that by 1700 distinctive patterns of speech were noticeable and by the late eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it had become the *lingua franca* of the people resident in the island. Jamaican Creole used many English-derived words (as well as words from other languages), but according to linguists, it was (and is) heavily influenced in structure and syntax by languages from the West African Coast (including Kru, Mandingo and Kwa) [(8)].

The influence of West/Central African languages on the emerging language system can be ascertained from some contemporary observers. Edward Long, historian, member of the enslaving class and contemporary commentator, described a distinct (if in his view, regrettable) language system which was already evident in the island by the second half of the eighteenth century. According to him, the language of the population was "larded with the *Guiney dialect*, owing to their adopting the *African words*, in order to make themselves understood by the imported slaves ; which they find much easier than teaching these strangers to learn English" (Long, 2002 :426, emphasis added) [(9)]. Further, said Long, "Many of the plantation Blacks call their children by the African name for the day of the week on which they are born ; and these names are of two genders, male and female" (Long, 2002 :427).

Male.	Female.	Day.

Cudjoe	Juba	Monday.
Cubbenah	Beneba	Tuesday.
Quâco	Cuba	Wednesday.
Quao	Abba	Thursday.
Cuffee	Phibba	Friday.
Quamin	Mimba	Saturday.
Quashee	Quasheba	Sunday.

That the enslaved and subjected people were able to retain enough control over their naming practices for this to be observed as 'norm' for Long is interesting and, for our purposes, it is instructive that he mentioned one naming system and one set of names for males and females. If this was the only or dominant naming system among the "Blacks" in the period, this suggests that a negotiation had taken place, or at least was under way, among the many cultural groups of enslaved Africans and their descendants which had resulted in the appearance of consensus and perhaps a growing homogenization of culture in Jamaican plantation society. Perhaps the majority had previously shared this system ; perhaps it was imposed by the most powerful among the enslaved ; but either way, it was wide spread enough to be recorded by this contemporary observer.

Where the influence of "African words" on the speech observed in the island was concerned, Long provided some further intriguing information. According to him, "[t]he Africans speak their respective dialects, with some mixture of broken English" and (Long, 2002 :426-427) :

There are some other words, that are remarkable for the different senses in which they are used :

	Original Import.	**Common Import.**
Mungo	Bread,	Negroe's name,
Bumbo	Alligator,	*Pudendum muliebre,*
Coffee	Goodmorrow,	{Name of a plant, the berries of which yield an agreeable morning repast
Guinnay	Devil,	Name of the slave country,
Guinee		
Sangara	Brandy,	Sangree, or Strong Negus,
Tate	The Posteriors,	Tête, the head in French,
Kénne-kénne	Small-sand,	Kéne, Græc. *Cinis,* Lat.
Buaw	Devil,	Bullock (Negroe phrase),

Not only had these words been "imported", but they were in frequent and reportedly in "common" use. If Long's attribution of the words to "Mundingo", "Fûli" and "Jaloff" "dialects" was accurate then it might be possible to speak to issues of ethnicity through the signals from the language, which is an intriguing prospect. Further, these attributions suggest a variety in the contributions to what would become 'Jamaican', and an intra-African process of creolisation : the means by which the people of Jamaica constructed their language system involved many layers of complex linguistic negotiations as well as an ability to accommodate and create, all of which are worthy of note. For the Jamaicans in the twentieth-first century who continue to use some of the words recorded by Long, this serves to confirm

the resilience of the people's culture ; that one of these words has morphed into a 'nasty' swear word makes its genesis, for those who use it, even more powerful.

If one important part of the creole language which developed in Jamaica was tied directly to the languages of the enslaved Africans who formed the majority, another fundamental contribution came from the Europeans whose colonial project largely shaped the trajectory of the island's under-development. By the second half of the eighteenth century, after more than a century of English colonialism, the language of the colonisers was in evidence : there were some remnants of the Spanish colonial period (such as in place names like Ocho Rios and Rio Bueno), and some French introductions but, by and large, the island (then as now) was labeled as "English speaking". However, according to Long, this was not the *King's* English ; indeed, whereas he claimed that the Africans spoke primarily in "their respective dialects", he attributed another dominant speech pattern to those born in the island, declaring that insofar as it was English at all, "[t]he language of the Creoles is *bad* English" (Long, 2002 :426, emphasis added). For him, not only was the English below an 'acceptable' standard, but it was made almost impenetrable by the penchant of the island's residents to introduce English words into their language in what might be called an *ad hoc* fashion. According to Long, among the general population,

[t]he better sort are very fond of improving their language, by catching at any hard word that the Whites happen to let fall in their hearing ; and they alter and misapply it in a strange manner ; but a tolerable collection of them gives an air of knowledge and importance in the eyes of their brethren, which tickles their vanity, and makes them more assiduous in stocking themselves with this unintelligible jargon. (2002 :426-427)

What Long portrayed as an attraction to and inclusion of these "hard" words which together created an "unintelligible jargon" might otherwise be read as a love of words which scholars, such as Roger Abrahams (1983), have identified in Caribbean culture ; among the people, the words were attractive simply due to their sounds, cadence and perceived power. They might have ascribed new and "strange" meanings to English words, but this might have been seen as being less important than speaking the words, creating the language. According to Kamau Brathwaite, "Within the folk tradition, language was (and is) a creative act in itself ; the word was held to contain a secret power" (1971 :237). Further, it is highly possible that among the people, these moments of 'speaking words to power' did not result in "unintelligible jargon" but were deliberate acts of creativity ; while prejudiced observers like Long saw this as yet another confirmation of the inferiority of enslaved, non-white and creole people, they were busy creating their means of communication.

Given Long's cultural myopia, it should not be surprising that he labeled the language which emerged from this process of linguistic negotiation and creation as so much "gibberish".

The Negroes seem very fond of reduplications, to express a greater or less quantity of any thing ; as walky-walky, talky-talky, washy-washy, nappy-nappy, tie-tie, lilly-lilly, fum-fum : so bug-a-bugs (wood-ants) ; dab-a-dab (an olio, made with maize, herrings, and pepper) ; bra-bra (another of their dishes) ; grande-grande (augmentative size, or grandeur), and so forth. In their conversation, they confound all the moods, tenses, cases, and conjugations, without mercy : for example ; I surprize (for I am surprized) [sic] ; me glad for see you (pro, I am glad to see you) ; how you do (for, how d'ye do ?) ; me tank you ; me ver well ; &c. (Long 2002 : 427)

For Long, this was little more than a garbled attempt by a sub-standard group to speak English "properly". It certainly did not enter his consciousness that the people were not, in fact, speaking "bad English" ; rather they were constructing a spoken system which bound them together. Long may well have been surprised to find that the rules of grammar and the vocabulary that he identified persisted through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and became the subject of scholarly engagement.

Rather than applying a label of "gibberish," in her seminal work in the 1960s Beryl Bailey not only identified the language system, which was still extant in the island, but through her analyses of phonology, morphology, word classes, sentence structure, morpheme variants and morphophonemics, argued that there are nine main rules of grammar that distinguish Jamaican Creole from English [(10)]. Similarly, through an examination of phonological processes including nasalization, vowel epenthesis, final vowel insertion, vowel coalescence, glide formation, lengthening, final consonant deletion, initial consonant deletion, 'h' deletion, and 'r' deletion, linguistic scholar Glenn Akers (1981) examined the grammatical structure and demonstrated the linguistic distinctiveness of Jamaican Creole. They and other scholars, including Mervyn Alleyne (1980), Barbara Lalla, Velma Pollard and Lawrence Carrington (1988), Pauline Christie (2001), Frederick G. Cassidy (2007), Hubert Devonish (1986), Hazel

Simmons-McDonald and Ian Robertson (2006), Barbara Lalla and Jean D'Costa (1990), Mervyn Morris (1999), Gordon Collier and Ulrich Fleischmann (2003), would have rejected Long's interpretation. For them, the Jamaican Creole was/is not simply a broken or bastardised version of English but rather a communication system worthy of recognition, study and even celebration. That it emanated largely from the creative energies of the oppressed majority and had its roots in the midst of the slave system makes the Jamaican Creole both a testament to the power of cultural collaboration and production as well as to the resilience of the human spirit.

Moving beyond the language into some of its uses, contemporary observers like John Stewart managed to offer both a negative portrayal of the people and a grudgingly positive recognition of aspects of their cultural lives. According to him :

The ideas of the negroes cannot be expected to extend to abstract and metaphysical subjects. Of the existence and attributes of a Deity, of a future state, and of duration and space, they have but imperfect notions... yet they will often express, in their own way, a wonderfully acute conception of things. These conceptions they sometimes compress into short and pithy sentences, something like the sententious proverbs of the Europeans (1808 :247).

These were, in fact, not merely "something like" proverbs but would be identified, recorded and analysed as the poignant and often philosophical lessons which emerged from the collective consciousness of the people. Even Stewart had to admit that "These sayings often convey an astonishing force and meaning ; and would, if clothed in a more courtly dress, make no despicable figure even among those precepts of wisdom which are ascribed to the wisest of men" (1808 :247). Like many engaged in the mental contortions of explaining the 'inferiority' of the enslaved and yet acknowledging their unmistakable humanity and complexity, Stewart found it possible to dismiss the possibility that the enslaved could generate ideas about "abstract and metaphysical subjects" and yet to claim that they were capable of wisdom akin to that offered by "the wisest of men". It is all but certain that the people who created these 'sayings' would not have agreed that they need to be "clothed in a more courtly dress" ; the "dress" they provided was quite sufficient. Stewart then proceeded to offer illustrations of that wisdom :

When they wish to imply, that a peaceable man is often wise and provident in his conduct, they say, "Softly water run deep": when they would express the oblivion and disregard which follows us after death, they say, "when man dead grass grow in him door ;" and when they would express the humility which is the usual accompaniment of poverty, they say, "Poor man never vex" (1808 :247-248).

Often descriptive, prescriptive and witty, the proverbs not only captured the socio-cultural concerns of the people and their economic circumstances, but also the philosophical and moral lessons of life as they affected them. The proverbs were condensed in highly illustrative metaphors which relied on easily remembered maxims, many of which were tied to the material culture and environment of the island.

So pervasive were the proverbs that it was clear that they had lost none of their influence in the post-slavery society where they were recorded in increasingly systematic ways. Among the 227 proverbs recorded by Charles Rampini in the 1870s, people were warned that things were not always as they appeared to be : "Alligator lay egg, but him no fowl". They were cautioned against overindulgence : "Greedy choke puppy", that familiarity did, in fact, breed contempt : "Play wi' [with] puppy, puppy lick you face" and that people only attacked those whom they were confident they could subdue : "Duppy (ghost) know who him frighten" (11). Perhaps due to Martha Beckwith's anthropological gaze, in the 1920s she attempted to translate, explain, and identify the provenance of an alphabetized list of 972 Jamaican proverbs (12). She also recognized a direct link between some Jamaican proverbs and African tradition, and since the majority who had links to the continent were the descendants of enslaved persons, the connections between the Jamaican proverbs and the institution of slavery were clear. According to Beckwith :

African wit and philosophy are more justly summed up in the proverb or aphorism than in any other form of folk art, and the proverbial sayings collected from negro settlements in [...] the Americas or the West Indies give a truer picture of the mental life of the negro than even story or song reveals. In them he expresses his justification of the vicissitudes of life. They are his consolation for impotence, the weapon of the weak against the provocations of the strong, in argument, an apt proverb will often win conviction. As a veiled threat, it carries almost the efficacy of a curse. Proverbs enter constantly into the life of the folk ; borrowed sayings undergo a process of remolding [sic] under the influence of native conditions, being interpreted to meet the emergencies of native life, and new sayings pattern upon the old. There is no other art so thoroughly assimilated to the life of the people of Jamaica... as this of the aphorism, and none employed so constantly in everyday experience. (1970 :5)

That many of these proverbs had their genesis in the period of slavery, and would survive generations into the 'modern' period speaks volumes about the power and creativity of the Jamaican creole language.

While the proverbs were noted and sometimes reluctantly acknowledged, the almost automatically critical stance of the cultural elite towards the cultural production of the (enslaved) majority soon overtook their observations. According to John Stewart :

Although the proverbial sayings of the negroes have often much point and meaning, they, however, no sooner begin to expatiate, and enter more minutely into particulars, than they become tedious, verbose, and circumlocutive, beginning their speeches with a tiresome exordium, mingling with them much extraneous matter, and frequently traversing over and over the same ground, and cautioning the hearer to be attentive, as if fearful that some of the particulars and points on which their meaning and argument hinged, should escape his attention. So that by the time they arrive at the peroration of their harangue, the listener is heartily fatigued with it, and perceives that the whole which has been said, though it may have taken up to half an hour, could have been comprised in a dozen of words. (1808 :248)

If Stewart was critical of their delivery, he also made reference to the 'quaint' ways in which they spoke and which came to characterise the speech patterns of the (emerging) nation.

Instead of short familiar names, they give sometimes whole sentences as names to their dogs and other domestic animals, as, "Keep what you have ; take care of yourself, &c. and those who have been baptized, give a sort of pious appellation to these animals, as God give, God send, bless the Lord, tell God tankee." These latter names are exactly of a piece with the epithets assumed by the puritans in Oliver Cromwell's day...."Be faithful ;" "Fly debate ;" "Stand fast on high ;" "God reward ;" "Faint not ;" "Fight the good fight of faith". (Stewart, 1808 :248)

Often unable to control many aspects of their lives (sometimes including the naming process within their families which would have affected them most intimately), it is possible that the naming of an animal presented an opportunity for a statement. The non-Christian names seemed to take on the additional role of living reminders of life lessons, while the religious names (which even Stewart recognised might be a pattern among Christian converts) could have operated both as reminders to the enslaved and as assurances to those in the religious community who were anxious about the authenticity of their conversion experiences. Of course, the fact that these were colourfully named animals might have suggested an air of foolishness and/or ridicule to the whole enterprise ; but, this was no less the case for the names (Pompey, Cesar, Venus) that some enslavers called their slaves. Even if it was inadvertent, the irony implicit in the naming/language systems is interesting.

Other contemporary observers, like Alexander Barclay, also made references to the 'curious' turns of phrase which appeared in the Jamaican Creole. In an 1827 publication, Barclay described the surprise expressed by a group of enslaved "African negroes", who were ship-builders, at the ability of (European) sailors for "'*finding pass*' (finding their way) in the ocean from Guinea to Buckra Country, as they call Jamaica". According to Barclay, the enslaved workers were also "struck with... admiration of the first 'steam engine,' or '*smoke-mill*,' as they call it, that was set to work in the neighbourhood where [he] resided, and which they came from all quarters to see." Barclay further offered both a 'quotation' and his translation of how the enslaved ship-builders spoke : "The common exclamation was, 'Massa-nigger ! Wharra dem 'Buckra no savi ? Wharra dem no can do ?' (Fellow-servant ! What is it the white people do not know ? What is it they cannot do ?)" (Barclay, 1827 :239). While the translation is mostly accurate, one wonders at the sanitization of the exclamation "Massa-nigger" (master's nigger) to read "Fellow-servant" ; "Massa-nigger" was much more complex than its (alleged) translation. Taking that caution about "recorded" speech further, it is important to remember that any commentary on the island's language in this period is reliant on records made by persons other than the enslaved majority and is

therefore subject to high possibilities of filters and biases to mis/represent, de/construct, sensationalize and sanitize the oral culture. Even so, it is possible to discern characteristics, patterns and cadences that would be recorded throughout the period, in post-slavery society, through the twentieth century and into the present.

Not surprisingly, for the most part, the speech recorded for enslaved persons referred to their interactions with the enslaving classes, who were among the recorders of the encounters. This was certainly the case for Matthew (Monk) Lewis whose *Journal of a West India Proprietor* made mention of some of these moments of personal and cultural connection. According to him, in the intimacy of his Jamaican plantation home, "[...] many a time my delicacy has been put to the blush by the ill-timed civility of some old [enslaved] woman or other, who, wandering that way, and happening to cast her eye to the left, has stopped her course to curtsy very gravely, and pay me the passing compliment of an 'Ah massa ! Bless you massa ! How day ?'" (Lewis, 1969 :150). While the message to the "massa" and the blessings heaped upon him could detain us, it is useful to point to the 'contracted' speech patterns of the "old woman" before whom Lewis blushed. Although some English speakers used the colloquial greeting of "Howdy", others would have criticised the old woman's speech as 'broken English' due to a missing verb ("How day ?") ; instead linguists and others have referred to an 'economy of speech'. For the latter group, the English verb was/is simply a superfluous part of speech in the Jamaican creole language ? "How day ?" was/is enough.

If some observers were interested in the exoticized speech patterns of the enslaved majority, in the sources examined they rarely if ever recorded the speech between and among the enslaved. It is not clear if this was because they only recorded the incidents and events by which they were affected, or if they were simply not privy to the speech patterns among the enslaved. Whatever the case may have been when the speech patterns associated with the enslaved majority were observed among *other* (white and/or enslaving and/or free) groups, there was consternation rather than bemusement.

According to Edward Long, the language system that was evident in the island in the eighteenth century made its mark among the enslaved *and* the (creole) enslaving classes. Among the latter group, as far as Long was concerned, this was one "misfortune" of their reliance on enslaved domestic servants who had influenced the behaviour and speech of the island's white residents, particularly its women, who had closest contact with them. According to Long, the Jamaican born (creole) white women were affected by "[...] the constant intercourse from their birth with Negroe [sic] domestics, whose *drawling, dissonant gibberish* they insensibly adopt, and with it no small tincture of their aukward [sic] carriage and vulgar manners ; all which they do not easily get rid of, even after an English education, unless sent away extremely young" (Long, 2002 :278, emphasis added) (13). While being "sent away" (to Britain) was an ideal solution for Long, he also envisaged that the arrest of the slide into Jamaican Creole (and the "backward culture" of which it was a part) was also possible through the importation of British governesses who were expected to isolate the plantocracy's children from the influence of the language and culture of the enslaved. Failing that, he advocated the establishment of a seminary which would take the children away from the creole language and culture and perhaps 'save' them from the barbarity with which he associated both. For Long, without one or another of these interventions, the sad state of affairs was unlikely to change because of a culture of dependence on enslaved domestic labour, and slavery more generally, and the cultural interchange and influence that resulted from that dependence.

Long had little patience for the "gibberish" that was evident among the local whites, including the women, whose speech patterns he disparaged : after all, although Jamaican born, they were expected to maintain 'proper' English language, one of the most important symbols of 'civilization', civility, and English-ness. The fact that they might never have left the island did not absolve them, in Long's mind, from the responsibility of maintaining the distinction of language so that they could more properly claim an elevated cultural status over those they claimed to own and control. The "drawling" accent that he found disturbing, when partnered with their "aukward carriage and vulgar manners", resulted in Long's stinging critique and while the prescription of an "English education" might provide a remedy, he was convinced that this would only be effective if the young ladies were "sent away extremely young." In the context of eighteenth century Jamaica, the possibility of childhood anxiety, dislocation and trauma were perhaps believed to be secondary to the desirability of ridding the colony's women and children of Black-induced 'vulgarity' and 'poor' language skills.

Given the gendered association between cultural production, maintenance and transmission (as part of the socialization process "inherent" in child-rearing), perhaps not surprisingly, Long blamed the erosion of the culture of the local whites, as was evidenced through the "dissonant gibberish" that he described, on the creole *mothers* in Jamaica. According to him :

[...] a mother, who has been trained in the accustomed mode among a herd of Negroe-domestics [sic], adopts the same plan, for the most part, with her own children, having no idea of the impropriety of it, because she does not discern those singularities, in speech or deportment, which are so apt to strike the ears and eyes of well-educated persons on a first introduction to them. (Long, 2002 :278, emphasis added)

In his estimation, those "singularities in speech and deportment", which were due to an over-exposure to the enslaved and the intermingling of cultures that these connections encouraged, were nothing short of distressing.

We may see . . . a very fine young woman aukwardly [sic] dangling her arms with the air of a Negroe-servant [sic], lolling almost the whole day upon beds or settees, her head muffled up with two or three handkerchiefs, her dress loose, and without stays. At noon, we find her employed in gobbling pepper-pot, seated on the floor, with her sable hand-maids around her. In the afternoon, she takes her siesto as usual ; while two of these damsels refresh her face with the gentle breathings of the fan ; and a third provokes the drowsy powers of Morpheus by delicious scratchings on the sole of either foot. (Long, 2002 :279)

For him, the Jamaican Creole which was spoken by the white creoles was only a part of a larger 'sub-standard culture' which increasingly defined the island ; for the 'fine young women' who were the focus of his critique, whether they knew and admitted it or not, were part of a creole culture which they shared with the enslaved "sable hand-maids" who catered to their every need.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, when Lady Maria Nugent, self-described "Governor's lady to the *blackies*" (Wright, 2002 : 2, emphasis in original), recorded her impressions of Jamaican slave society in her journal, she made reference to the 'peculiarities' of the language of the island's residents. Among her descriptions of the people she met and who spent time with her within the privileged domestic space of the governor's mansion, she included "Mrs. S. [...] a fat, good-humoured Creole woman, saying dis, dat, and toder..." (Wright, 2002, 76). If Nugent meant to mock Mrs. S's pronunciation of "this, that, and the other", she also assisted in the preservation of early renditions of Jamaican Creole, although, it is important to note once again, that these were filtered through her observations and records.

As Long had intimated in the previous century, Nugent corroborated, in a journal entry for 1802, that

The Creole language is not confined to the negroes. Many of the ladies, who have not been educated in England, speak a sort of broken English, with an indolent drawling out of the words, that is very tiresome if not disgusting. I stood next to a lady one night near a window, and, by way of saying something, remarked that the air was much cooler than usual ; to which she answered, "Yes, ma-am, him rail-ly too fra-ish". (Wright, 2002 : 98) [(14)]

It is possible to argue that the so-called "broken English" that the creole ladies spoke was neither "broken" nor "English", but was in fact a Jamaican Creole which indicated some of the features that would persist in the language through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, into the present. The ascription of the masculine gender to just about everything (whether animate or inanimate, and in this case, the "air" which the creole lady said was 'really too fresh'), as well as its delivery, in what Nugent described as "an indolent drawling out of the words" were/are quintessential characteristics of Jamaican Creole. That the class of persons considered elevated enough to spend time in the governor's household and in the intimate setting of Lady Nugent's private chambers would be speakers of the island's nation language is indicative of how pervasive and influential the speech patterns had become by 1801-1805 (the period of Nugent's sojourn in Jamaica).

While it is clear that major contributions to the creole language had been made by the enslaved Africans and their descendants, who constituted the majority of persons in the island, observers seemed to be most concerned about what they believed to be the transmission of the language to the Europeans and their descendants in the society. Like Long and Nugent, John Stewart claimed in his 1808 publication that due to early exposure to "the very manners and barbarous dialect of the negroes", many of the local white ladies were engaged in "involuntary imitation" so that they displayed "an aukward [sic] and ungraceful sort of affectation in their language and manner". Indeed, he said, "to use an expression in common use here, many of them . . . exhibit much of the *Quashiba*" (1808 :159-160). The ascription of the appellation of "Quashiba", that 'generic' name often inscribed upon the persons of enslaved women in Jamaican slave society, upon the women of the enslaving classes tells us a great deal about the creole culture that was

already evident in the early nineteenth century. By "their language and manner" the "ladies" of the island were speaking and behaving like 'Quashibas', and if they were to claim cultural superiority to accompany their socio-economic, political and personal dominance, this would not do.

In Jamaican slave society, the often intimate intercourse between (largely) European enslavers and enslaved Africans and their descendants that occurred in the domestic spaces of enslavers was only reinforced by all of the moments of contact between the main groups : in the fields, the sugar mills, the markets, indeed wherever Europeans went, they were almost always bound to be surrounded by the enslaved (and free/d) majority. That the language for all to communicate (as well as the larger culture that marked the society) would emerge from those confluence of cultures should be an indicator of the construction of a creole society with many and varied layers of 'creole-ness'. If Long and others blamed the mothers of the planter class for continuing to expose their children to the 'corrupting' forces of the enslaved Africans and their descendants, they also inadvertently pointed to the subversive power of the oppressed whose cadence, carriage and mannerisms so infused the society that the elite and middling classes who participated in the creole culture could no longer discern that influence upon themselves. Commentators like Long were clearly troubled that Jamaican elite society, especially its women, was limited in their ideas to the plantations, the "tittle-tattle of the parish" and "the tricks, superstitions, diversions, and profligate discourses, of black servants, equally illiterate and unpolished" (Long, 2002 :279). And they must have been painfully aware that it was the society's dependence on enslaved persons of African descent which opened the potential for the latter's significant influence on those who claimed to own them. Observers may have cast that influence in a negative light but for those whose lives were shaped by these encounters this was nothing less than the construction of 'creolity' (15).

Lest any should think that the creation of the Jamaican Creole out of the many cultural influences in the island occurred within or was indicative of a harmonious, multicultural society where consensus had been reached about what constituted a national cultural identity, let us remember that this confluence of cultures took place within the context of the hyperexploitation, brutality and attempts at the dehumanization of the majority. This was, after all, a Caribbean slave society, dominated by the demands of the plantation model of production. So, it should not be surprising that as one of the points of contact between and among the groups which were oppressed/oppressive, the language should be one of the means by which the relationships of domination, including the moments of confrontation and the dance of negotiation, were unveiled.

In 1827, when Alexander Barclay issued his pro-slavery publication, *A practical view of the present state of slavery in the West Indies*, he outlined both the 'inevitability' of the harshness of slavery (due primarily to the temperament of the enslaved) and the hypocrisy of the anti-slavery forces through an examination of the experiences of Unitarian minister, Rev. Mr. Cooper. According to Barclay, Rev. Cooper reported that while he was resident on Georgia estate in Jamaica, after initially receiving good service from his enslaved servants, he soon ran into trouble with "a boy named John Harding", who was unwilling to work, recalcitrant and aggressive (16). Said Cooper, "Again and again I called him to account [...] I spoke to my neighbours upon the subject" ; he was advised to whip the defiant slave, but Cooper was initially reluctant to do so and the situation deteriorated further (Barclay, 1827 :407). According to Cooper, "Many times I saw Mrs. C. insulted, and did myself put up with *language* from the domestics, which I should not think of submitting to in this country [England], no, not for an hour" (Barclay, 1827 :408, emphasis added). It was at this point, when "John was so extremely outrageous," that Cooper turned the enslaved man over to the overseer and "John was, in consequence, sadly overpunished [sic]"(1827 :408). While this incident did not mean the end of Harding's insubordinate behaviour, of interest for us is Cooper's reference to *language* as one of the sources of abuse to which he claimed he was subjected by the enslaved man. While the details of those verbal encounters are lost to us, there is every reason to assume that Harding addressed Cooper (and his wife) with words that emanated from somewhere along the creole language continuum since there was little likelihood that he spoke in the King's English ; still, he spoke in terms that Cooper could understand quite clearly and by which he was offended. Further, as Zemon Davis argues for Suriname, there is little doubt since "owners and their spouses" as well as "the estate manager and any proprietor who managed his own estate had to be at least conversant in creole" (Zemon Davis, 2009 :279), that "massa" Cooper and all other enslavers found that they had to use Jamaican Creole to communicate with those they enslaved. There was a shared language system in operation and the possibility that the (emerging) nation language could operate as a possible zone of confrontation between enslavers and the enslaved.

That the nation/al language was in general use and that its confrontational potential was apparent could be ascertained from its appearance in cultural products. In the anonymously published novel (17), *Marly ; or, The Life of a Planter in Jamaica*, the writer reported that one Monday morning Marly went to the field of his estate to find that the overseer was in the midst of punishing the entire group of enslaved workers

because " [...] several of the negroes were behind their time."

? As they came in, the overseer ordered them to be laid down, and each received either nine or ten lashes... none were pardoned ? all received the same punishment, without distinction of sex or age. The negroes said very little, but the moment the Busha's back was turned to go away, the whole line commenced singing in a general chorus, as if they regarded him not, "I don't care a damn, oh ! I don't care a damn, oh !" and this must have sounded in his ears for at least five minutes, before he could get beyond the reach of hearing. (1828 : 104)

The defiance of the fictionalized enslaved workers, who risked another round of punishment for their declarations that they didn't "care a damn," is clear. While there is little doubt that Marly and his proxy (the overseer) wielded incredible power over the labour and bodies of the enslaved, they were unable to silence the disaffection which marked occasions such as these and which were marked by the language of resistance. And this was not, by any means, limited to contemporary literature.

Early in June 1831, Mr. A.L. Palmer, a magistrate in Port Royal parish contacted the Governor of Jamaica, the Earl of Belmore, with news about a recently completed proceeding in which an enslaved mother (Catherine Whitfield) and her enslaved daughter (Ann Amelia King) were brought before him in a case against the Honourable Mr. J.R. Jackson, the Custos of Port Royal, and his wife for "improper severity" in their punishment of the two women [(18)]. As the evidence connected to the case indicated, the source of the altercation, confrontation and the severe and extended punishment that the two women suffered had to do with allegations of "insolence". When Ann King got into an argument with Mrs. Palmer, the latter hit her repeatedly with a short heavy stick, whereupon her mother, Catherine Whitfield (called Kate) "now interfered, and with some warmth declared that her daughter did not deserve such treatment." According to Palmer, as the levels of confrontation escalated, "A violent altercation took place between Kate and her mistress, during which Kate used some expressions too indecent for me to repeat in this letter" [(19)]. As punishment for their violent use of language (and use of violent language), their insolence and defiance, both women were punished by being 'demoted' from the house to the fields and confined in the stocks at some point in every day for more than three months. It was this latter action that was judged to be excessive by some for the violations were 'only' in language, which brought the case to the attention of the colonial and later, the imperial authorities. The cases of Kate Whitfield and Ann King allow us some access, filtered and mitigated though it is, into the language world of Jamaican slave society, where verbal confrontations between enslavers and the enslaved were regular occurrences. Even Magistrate Palmer, who was concerned enough about the case to bring it to the attention of the governor, reported that Kate was "habitually insolent to her mistress" and that on occasions she resorted to "language so grossly abusive and indecent as to render correction indispensable". One wonders what she and her daughter could have said that would result in their being shackled for three months.

These concerns about the possibility of 'language as violence and violation' came out even more clearly in the record of evidence taken from the two enslaved women who were summoned by the Council of Protection [(20)]. While we will never know the extent of interpretation and editing carried out by the minute-taker, the document reported moments of confrontation between the women and their enslavers within the privacy of households ; and the women's reported testimonies reveal the power of language, especially within the context of a culture of animosity and violence that marked slave societies such as these.

According to the testimony attributed to the enslaved mother, Catherine/Kate Whitfield, after the initial beating and whipping of her daughter, she "got into a rage" to which Mrs. Jackson and *her* mother (Mrs. Strupar) responded forcefully. According to Whitfield's recorded testimony, "Then mistress said, hold your tongue you infamous wretch, hold your tongue you wretch. Old mistress (Mrs. Strupar) was in the next room. Old mistress said, Betsy, Betsy, (meaning Mrs. Jackson,) how can you jaw with that wretch" [(21)]. And when Mrs. Jackson threatened to flog her again, Kate reportedly testified, "I said to mistress, there is no occasion for you to take and flog me, you wanted to suck the little blood out of me, as my [previous] flogging was not well yet" [(22)]. Although there is every likelihood that the report included not a little translation and/or interpretation of what Kate actually said, the connections between the language and the material context of Jamaican slave society to which it was related were apparent. From "old mistress's" admonition of her daughter by asking how she could "jaw" (argue) with Catherine/Kate, "that wretch", to the graphic imageries evoked by the reference to the corporal punishment inflicted on the enslaved woman's body as well as Kate's declaration that Mrs. Jackson "wanted to suck the little blood out of [her]", it was clear that the milieu of violence, exploitation and brutality which were often the hallmarks of Jamaican slave society found their way into the colourful speech of the island's residents.

While the testimony 'recorded' for the legal proceedings against Custos Jackson and his wife may well

have been edited for the sake of 'clarity', to make it appear more like 'English', there is little doubt that the enslavers and those they claimed to own shared a language system which could be brutally unleashed, reflecting the acrimony which often marked relationships defined by enslavement. The creolised language system used in Jamaica during the period of slavery may well have indicated a confluence of cultures, but it was also one of the main vehicles by which enslavers and the enslaved confronted each other across the chasm of severely hierarchical and uneven power relations; and while the enslavers had the institutions of authority of their side, inside of these contexts of a shared understanding of language, enslaved persons could (if only momentarily) challenge the assumptions about their subjection by, from time to time, calling upon the power of the word. It was in moments such as those, and indeed in their major contributions to the speech patterns (and larger culture) of the majority of the island's residents, that they invoked a humanity, creativity and influence that their enslavers would have been loath to recognize.

Conclusion

The strength and influence of the Jamaican language system are easily discerned by the fact that, according to observers in post-slavery society, through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries into the present, Jamaican Creole (has) remained one of the main hallmarks of the society : after all, the cultural constructions which had their genesis in slavery did not magically end with "full freedom" in 1838. Within the Jamaican context, the creole language and its power were creations of the people who lived in that place and who responded to the connections and contexts which defined everyday life. Born out of the contact among West/Central African cultural and language groups and European languages (primarily English), the Jamaican Creole language that was created was functional, colourful and dynamic, represented a confluence of cultures and was/is an important symbol of "creolity". Armed with the power of that language, Jamaicans, enslaved and free, during slavery and after its demise, continued to add new layers of complexity to their "nation language", as well as to the expressions of their proverbs and other forms of oral culture (such as story-telling and ring games) that it facilitated. While the economic/material circumstances as well as the social and political positions of many persons in the island did not change significantly in the generations after the end of slavery, they were empowered by their ability to contribute to the construction and development of Jamaican culture.

The old debates about the use and worth of Jamaican Creole would surface repeatedly in cultural history of Jamaica. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while a few social and cultural anthropologists (or otherwise curious folk) began to record the language more systematically, some members of the cultural elite became preoccupied with the question (23). And more recently, controversy was sparked by the news in June 2008 that the Bible Society of the West Indies was sponsoring the translation of the Bible into "patois" (Jamaican Creole). The often outraged and dismissive responses (24) were endorsed by the island's then Prime Minister, Bruce Golding, who referred to English as "the accepted language" of Jamaica (25). These distant echoes of a long-extant discourse of discomfort around Jamaica Creole are often ignored by its speakers, who like their fore-parents recognise that in the language, in the power of words, even the most marginalised and exploited could/can gain some measure of personhood.

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Notes :

1. See (Rouse, 1992) and (Boucher, 1992).

2. The European labour force in the Caribbean included persons who had run afoul of the law/state and whose punishment was 'transportation', as well vagrants and other 'undesirables'. While the migratory flow of indentured servants ("*engagés*",in the French territories) and other involuntary migrants was dominated by men and the enterprise was ultimately for the benefit of élite men, there were poor, indentured European women who worked (alongside men) in tobacco fields or who were employed as domestic servants in harsh frontier conditions. See (McD. Beckles, 2000) and (McD. Beckles, 1989).

3. See also (Nettleford, 1970).

4. http://www.slavevoyages.org/assessment/estimates

5. I wish to thank Natalie Zemon Davis for directing me to this superb article.

6. For some of these discussions see (Brathwaite, 1971 ; 1974), (Alleyne, 1988) ; (Mintz, 1971), (Bolland, 1998) and (Besson, 2003)

7. Zemon Davis (2009 :269). According to Zemon Davis, the debates have included discussions about whether the similar forms found in the Atlantic creoles can be explained solely by "universal properties of language inborn in all of us" ; or are "similarities in phonology and syntax to be explained by substrate influences, that is, influences from west African languages" ; there are debates about whether "creole languages created in a single generation by slave children who are born in the Americas and who take the pidgin of their displaced parents... turn it into a real 'nativized' language" ; or, rather, if the creoles are "created over several generations, with the influx of new speakers from Africa making a difference".

8. Linguists have relied on the records of seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth-century observers such as Hans Sloane, J.B. Moreton and Matthew G. Lewis among others as well as a process by which the roots/routes of the languages have been traced. See (Lalla & D'Costa, 1990 :23, 100), (Bryan, 1998 :100). See also (Dalphinis, 1985 :2). See also (Alleyne, 2003, pp. 29-42).

9. First published in London : T. Lowndes, 1774 ; in Montreal : McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003.

10. See (Bailey, 1966 :146). According to Bailey these rules are : i) There is no subject-verb concord in Creole ; the English verb must agree in number with its subject nominal ; ii) The tense system in Creole is limited to the unmarked verb for general purposes, and a particle specifying 'past' ; English has a more

fully developed tense system ; iii) The Creole verb does not have a distinct passive form ; iv) The English verb 'be' bifurcates in Creole into an equating verb and a locating verb, with no reflex for adjectival predication ; v) The Creole adjective, like the verb, predicates without use of copula ; vi) The Creole nouns and pronouns have both an aggregate and an associative plural ; English has the associative plural in the first and second person pronouns only ; vii) In the generic phrase the Creole noun has no article ; English nouns require either the singular form with definite article (the horse) or the plural form without article (horses) ; viii) There is no case system in either noun or pronoun in Creole, and no indication of sex in third person pronouns and ix) The inverted sentence type is basic in Creole ; its use for emphasis in English is much more limited.

11. Charles Rampini, *Letters from Jamaica*. Edinburgh : Edmonston & Douglas, 1873, pp. 175-182.

12. Beckwith (1970 : 5-6) noted that versions of many of the proverbs she collected had previously been published by T. Banbury, *Jamaica Superstitions, or the Obeah Book* (Jamaica, 1894), 39-43 ; William C. Bates, "Creole Folk-lore from Jamaica. I. Proverbs," *Journal of American Folk-lore* 9 (1895) : 38-42 ; Frank Cundall (with Izett Anderson), *Jamaica Negro Proverbs and Sayings* (Kingston : Institute of Jamaica, 1910) ; Harry A. Franck, "Jamaica Proverbs," *Dialect Notes* 5 : 4 (1921) : 98-108 ; Cyril F. Grant, "Negro Proverbs collected in Jamaica, 1887," *Folk-lore* 28 (1917) : 315-317 ; Rampini, 175-182. See Beckwith (1969) and (Beckwith,1970).

13. For a similar description in the context of Suriname, see Zemon Davis (2009 :280).

14. "Yes, ma'am, it is really fresh" (Wright, 2002 : 98).

15. For an exhaustive discussion of this phenomenon as it appeared at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see (Moore & Johnson, 2004) and (Moore & Johnson, 2011).

16. See (Barclay, 1827 :406-416). Barclay makes reference to Thomas Cooper, Letter to Robert Hibbert, Jun. Esq. in reply to his pamphlet entitled 'Fact verified upon Oath, in contradiction of the report of the Rev. Thomas Cooper, concerning the general condition of the Slaves in Jamaica,' &c. &c.; Letter from Mrs. Cooper to R. Hibbert, Jun. Esq. and an Appendix, containing an exposure of the falsehoods and calamities of that gentleman's affidavit-men, 1824. See also Thomas Cooper, *Facts Illustrative of the Conditions of the Negro Slaves in Jamaica, with Notes and an Appendix*. London : G. Smallfield, 1824.

17. Anon., *Marly, or, The Life of a Planter in Jamaica : Comprehending Characteristic Sketches of the Present State of Society and Manners in the British West Indies and an impartial Review of the Leading Questions Relative to Colonial Policy*, Second Edition, Glasgow : Printed for Richard Griffin & Co., G. & J. Robinson, Liverpool ? W. Hunter, Edinburgh and Hunt and Clarke, London, 1828.

18. Earl of Belmore, Copy of a Despatch from the Earl of Belmore to Viscount Goderich, King's House, Jamaica, 8 July 1831, in R.W. Hay, *Jamaica : Return to an Address to His Majesty, dated 25th July 1832 ; for, Copy of all Correspondence relative to the Punishment of Two Female Slaves belonging to Mr. Jackson, Custos of Port Royal, and the Proceedings held theron*, Colonial Department, Downing-street, 15 August 1832 (Mr. Burge), Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed, 16 August 1832, pp. 3-40.

19. A.L. Palmer, Flamstead House, Port Royal to Earl of Belmore (William Bullock, Esq.), 2 June 1831 in in R.W. Hay, *Jamaica : Return to an Address to His Majesty, dated 25th July 1832 ; for, Copy of all Correspondence relative to the Punishment of Two Female Slaves belonging to Mr. Jackson, Custos of Port Royal, and the Proceedings held theron*, Colonial Department, Downing-street, 15 August 1832 (Mr. Burge), Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed, 16 August 1832, p. 4.

20. See Edward B. Warren, Senior Magistrate and Chairman, Copy of the Minutes taken at the Council of Protection, 11 June 1831 in R.W. Hay, *Jamaica : Return to an Address to His Majesty, dated 25th July 1832 ; for, Copy of all Correspondence relative to the Punishment of Two Female Slaves belonging to Mr. Jackson, Custos of Port Royal, and the Proceedings held theron*, Colonial Department, Downing-street, 15 August 1832 (Mr. Burge), Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed, 16 August 1832, pp. 15-23.

21. Warren, Copy of the Minutes taken at the Council of Protection, 11 June 1831, p. 15. Here to "jaw" meant to talk or argue.

22. Warren, Copy of the Minutes taken at the Council of Protection, 11 June 1831.

23. *Daily Gleaner,* 11 January 1915 ; *Jamaica Times,* 23 January 1915 ; *Daily Gleaner*, 29 January 1915 ; *Jamaica Times,* 23 January 1915 ; *Daily Gleaner,* 11 January 1915 ; H.S. Bunbury to editor, *Daily Gleaner,* 3 February 1915 ; U. Theo. McKay to editor, *Daily Gleaner*, 28 January 1915. See Brian L. Moore and Michele A. Johnson, *"They do as they please" : The Jamaican Struggle for Cultural Freedom after Morant Bay*, Kingston : University of the West Indies Press, 2011, pp. 81-107.

24. See for example, letters to the editor of *the Jamaica Gleaner* by Winnie Anderson-Brown, 15 July 2008 ; Verona Wilson, 26 February 2008 ; Antonn Brown, 15 July 2008 ; and the following articles in the same newspaper : "Golding questions purpose of Patois Bible", 30 June 2008 ; and R. Antony Lewis, "Patois, Bible and translation", 22 June 2008. See Anthony G. Gumbs to the editor, *Jamaica Observer*, 16 July 2008 ; and the following articles in this newspaper : "Patois Bible debate rages", 24 June 2008 ; Franklin Johnston, "Patois, English and the blood of Christ", 31 July 2008 ; Mark Wignall, "Is the Patois Bible a joke ?" 22 June 2008 ; and Lance Robinson, "Patois must have no place over English", 28 August 2008.

25. *Jamaica Gleaner*, 30 June 2008.

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