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Creolization and coalition in Caribbean feminist cultural production

by

Heather Smyth ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring 2001

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Creolization and coalition in Caribbean feminist cultural production" submitted by Heather Smyth in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation argues that Caribbean women's criticism, fiction-writing, and cultural work offers a re-reading of dominant theories of Caribbean creolization through a feminist politics of difference. By "feminist politics of difference" this dissertation means a feminist critical practice marked both by an integrated analysis of the multiple and interlocking systems of women's oppression and by a sense of the differentiated construction of the feminist subject. The Caribbean feminism exhibited in the body of work studied here prioritizes questions of social equity and cultural identity and the place of heterogeneity in Caribbean community. "Coalition" becomes a significant indicator both of the activist possibilities of Caribbean feminist work on heterogeneity—that is, the creation of alliances across differences of gender, race, class, and sexuality—and of the contradictions and tensions inherent in addressing real differences of power within heterogeneity. Key theories of cultural creolization developed by Wilson Harris, Édouard Glissant, Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphäel Confiant, Kamau Brathwaite, and Antonio Benítez Rojo are examined in Chapter One both for their usefulness as models of diversity, and for their politics of gender and sexuality. Michelle Cliff's *Abeng* and Zee Edgell's *Beka Lamb* are studied in Chapter Two as *Bildungsromane* that complicate the place of individual identity narratives in heterogeneous community. Erna Brodber's *Myal* and Maryse Condé's *Traversée de la mangrove* offer a feminist pedagogy of creolization in Chapter Three. In Chapter Four, Dionne Brand's Canadian documentaries and the work of the Jamaican theatre collective Sistren demonstrate grassroots feminist coalition-building across difference and the strategic use of testimony. The final chapter, on Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here* and Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night*, addresses the exclusion of alternative sexualities from the liberatory scope of theories of creolization and from cultural nationalist discourses. The dissertation concludes by

questioning the potential for creolization, as a dominant structure of representation in Caribbean cultural discourse, to negotiate more fully with feminist and resistant cultural strategies.

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Creolization and coalition in Caribbean feminist cultural production

Introduction

> *The future of our earth may depend upon the ability of all women to identify and develop new definitions of power and new patterns of relating across difference. The old definitions have not served us, nor the earth that supports us. The old patterns, no matter how cleverly rearranged to imitate progress, still condemn us to cosmetically altered repetitions of the same old exchanges, the same old guilt, hatred, recrimination, lamentation, and suspicion.*
>
> *For we have, built into all of us, old blueprints of expectation and response, old structures of oppression, and these must be altered at the same time as we alter the living conditions which are a result of those structures. For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.*
>
> (Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex" 275)

> *The dangers that encompass humanity are undeniable but within them the echo of transformative capacity lives to deepen our responses to inner and outer hazards, inner endangered space, outer endangered space. To convert rooted deprivations into complex parables of freedom and truth is a formidable but not hopeless task. The basis of our enquiry lies . . . in the mystery of innovative imagination that transforms concepts of mutuality and unity, and which needs to appear in ceaseless dialogue between cultures if it is to turn away from a world habituated to the pre-emptive strike of conquistadorial ego.*
>
> (Harris, *The Womb of Space* 137)

The quotations from Audre Lorde and Wilson Harris bear striking resemblance to each other, in their sense of urgency and in the writers' shared belief that communities can only confront monologic structures of oppression with a transformed understanding of difference and cross-cultural potentials. What is also notable, however, especially when one reads further in their critical and creative work is that these two writers articulate this understanding in very different registers and contexts. Audre Lorde represents a feminist tradition of combining theory with practice, of examining differences among women (of race, gender, sexuality, class, and age) and the social repressions and inequities that make these differences meaningful, and working towards feminist coalition across these differences. Wilson Harris's understanding of difference arises from his work with Caribbean creolization or syncretism and refers to a literary-philosophical investigation of both the oppressive possibilities in uniformity and homogeneity, and of the transformative possibilities of the cross-cultural imagination. This dissertation moves across these two registers (and the spaces in between) to explore a cross-section of Caribbean women's writing and cultural production as this work illuminates a Caribbean feminist politics and poetics of creolization. Caribbean women writers and cultural workers are asking urgent questions about social equity and cultural identity, and about the place of heterogeneity in Caribbean communities. Their interventions into often hegemonic discussions of creolization are frequently distinguished by a feminist politics of difference, such as that articulated by Lorde, and by a language (or explicit mandate) of activism. Furthermore, Caribbean feminist critics and writers underscore many of the biases in existing theories of creolization, primarily extended by male Caribbean scholars.

Syncretism, creolization, and hybridity have long been key concerns in post-colonial studies, as well as key descriptors of Caribbean culture and literature.[1] As Shalini Puri notes, "Nowhere are the complexities, contradictions, and multiplicities of cultural hybridity more pressing than in the Caribbean" ("Canonized Hybridities" 14). "Creolization" is both description and ideology: it describes the historical process of cultural mixing in the Caribbean, but also articulates the cross-cultural possibilities of resistance that have developed from a violent history of uprooting and slavery. Theories of creolization, particularly those developed in the Caribbean, can carry with them a revolutionary potential and idealistic vision in that they ostensibly value difference rather than use it for discriminatory ends. The Caribbean illustrates the depth of resources as well as the positive vision of a heterogeneous world.

---

[1] Richard Price and Sally Price, for instance, suggest that the concept of "creolization" has been debated among Caribbean writers and social scientists "from the 1950s onward" (128). J. Michael Dash, however, points out that at the end of the nineteenth century "Caribbean intellectuals began to theorize new interdiscursive notions such as *criollismo*, *antillanismo*, or a new American identity. Hemispheric mappings of identity at this time were based on the belief in the uniquely mestizo nature of Caribbean society" (*Other America* 59-60). Dash further argues that in the early 1800s, the first years of Haitian independence, "[f]ounding the new republic and legitimizing a new culture for many early Haitian intellectuals meant exploring the issue of ethnic hybridity and cultural syncretism" (45).

Although current theories of creolization suggest that cultural syncretism offers a way to see difference as productive and essential to creative, living culture, these theories look primarily to cultural and "racial" difference as the factors significant in creolization, and occasionally turn to class differences in discussions of orality and popular culture. Gender and sexual orientation, however, are key factors in Caribbean heterogeneity that are habitually excluded from the canonical theorization of creolization. Yet these theories implicitly rely for their articulation on "feminine" qualities—such as fluidity, connection, and openness—and figures, such as *mestizaje*'s mulata or Brathwaite's Sycorax, discussed later in Chapter One, even though women as cultural producers are excluded from the purview of many of these theories and their corresponding literary studies. The absence of gender and sexuality as terms in creolization is substantive: theories of creolization are often deeply marked by gender and sexual ideologies, as A. James Arnold notes of the Martiniquan *créolistes* Chamoiseau, Confiant and Bernabé and their reliance on heterosexual eroticism and masculinist images of Antillean culture and history. As well, the "racial" mixing that illustrates the process of creolization has historically been a scene of sexual violence against women, as Vera Kutzinski notes of Cuban *mestizaje* in *Sugar's Secrets*: "*mestizaje* becomes legitimated as an exclusively male project or achievement in which interracial, heterosexual rape can be refigured as a fraternal embrace across color . . . lines and, significantly, across a female body absented by rape" (168).[2] And the fact that "hybridity as a cultural description will always carry with it an implicit politics of heterosexuality" (R. Young 25) draws attention to the exclusion of alternative sexualities from both the popular and theoretical call to diversity in the Caribbean.

---

[2] Nigel Bolland, similarly, points out that when Brathwaite (discussed later in this chapter), looking for signs of creolized resistance in slave culture, suggests that "it was in the intimate area of sexual relationships that the greatest damage was done to white creole apartheid policy and where the most significant—and lasting—interculturation took place" (Brathwaite, *Contradictory Omens* 19), he obscures the fact that "there was an overlap between relationships of domination defined in terms of gender, race, and

This dissertation has several overlapping goals: to critique the gendered and sexualized politics implicit and explicit in canonical theories of creolization; to investigate Caribbean women writers' and cultural workers' contributions to, and critiques of, the study of creolization; to search for bridges between cultural creolization as it is now formulated and the broader implications of diversity articulated in Caribbean feminist writing and politics; and to identify modes of framing creolization that, rather than obscure social inequities, have liberatory agendas. What my dissertation aims to contribute is an understanding of the connection, noted by few writers and scholars, between Caribbean women's literary/critical work on heterogeneity and the wider theories of Caribbean syncretism. Caribbean feminists are concerned with, among other issues, the place of diversity in Caribbean women's collective responses to gender oppression. These writers and cultural workers are clearly committed to articulating the diversity of Caribbean culture by showing the multiple axes of women's subjectivity as they are formed by hierarchies of race, gender, class, and sexuality. Caribbean feminist critics are developing their own body of work on the subject of heterogeneity, even if they are not always bridging to the more hegemonic theories of creolization. I am not arguing for the simple inclusion of the critical terms "gender" and "sexuality" into the field of theories of creolization: on the one hand, I am interested in the extent to which the scope of creolization can be broadened to provide a mode of analysis for discourses of difference (gender, sexuality) not generally included in the idea of creolization; on the other hand, however, this dissertation goes beyond an 'inclusion' model to test the limit

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legal status—or, more bluntly, that black women, whether slave or free, were often raped by white men" (Bolland 69).

cases of creolization's scope, and determine the areas in which creolization's embrace of difference breaks down. The final chapter of the dissertation, "Sexual citizenship and the politics of creolization," draws from the preceding work done by the dissertation to question if creolization is commensurate with alternative sexualities in the Caribbean.

This dissertation argues that Caribbean women's work on diversity in the Caribbean, taking into account social marginalization in its many forms, must be viewed as truly interventionist in the field of theories of creolization, for it expresses creolization, often, through a feminist politics of difference that has social change or critique of the status quo as one of its primary goals. This intervention happens at the level of the theories themselves, which I explore primarily in Chapters One and Three; and it occurs in the texts and activities of writers and cultural workers, discussed in Chapters Two through Five. The discussion focuses primarily on intervention at the level of culture—literature, cultural theory, film, theatre, and cultural activism—although the implications of this work could assist in reading Caribbean feminist work on heterogeneity in the areas of sociology and political and institutional change, for example. Further, the dissertation prioritizes work by women writers, critics and cultural workers (although two male Caribbean writers and a male filmmaker are discussed briefly in Chapter Five), even though their contributions may sometimes line up with those made by male critics and writers.[3]

I have called the writers, theorists and cultural workers in this dissertation "Caribbean" for specific reasons, even though many of them have lived the greater part of their lives outside of the Caribbean region. Patterns of migration throughout the twentieth century have distributed Caribbean workers in general, and artists in particular, in Britain, France, the Netherlands, Canada, the United States, and Africa, to name only a few major diasporic areas. Carole Boyce Davies argues that "the experience of migration was crucially related to the development of Caribbean literary expression" ("Writing Home" 59), and Donnell and Lawson Welsh similarly point out that "[i]t could be argued that in the 1990s Caribbean literature does not have a centre; the majority of the writers are based in diasporic cities" (25). The same could be said of earlier writers: Audre Lorde, for example, born into a Barbadian community in New York by first-generation Barbadian parents, has been incorporated (albeit unequally) into both Caribbean and African American women's writing. Maryse Condé has lived in France, Africa, the United States, and several Caribbean countries, and her novels have reflected this range of geography.[4] Dionne Brand, who moved from Trinidad to Canada at age seventeen, has devoted much of her writing and activist career to the exploration of racism in Canada. Shani Mootoo, the youngest writer discussed in this dissertation, was born in Ireland to Indo-Trinidadian parents, grew up in Trinidad, and currently lives in Vancouver, Canada (Fung, "Bodies" 162). The fact that the field of "Caribbean women's writing" broaches boundaries of nation and distance is itself a marker of the feminist coalition discussed in this dissertation. Moreover, as Chapter Five will argue, it is especially important for gay and lesbian Caribbean writers that the Caribbean diaspora be identified with the genealogy of culture in the Caribbean region: too often the diasporic location of the majority of these writers results in their designation as "outside" Caribbean culture.

---

[3] I do not name this a 'feminist' project simply because of its focus on women writers: critical work on gender is of course not limited to analysis of women's cultural production. Another possible direction for this dissertation would have been a broader study of the work of gender in Caribbean men's and women's texts relating to creolization. However, to the extent that I wish to frame the field of Caribbean women's writing as constituting a sustained feminist treatment of creolization and theories of difference, I have chosen to limit myself primarily to women writers.

---

[4] Wylie points out that Condé "has lived in Guadeloupe, France, Guinea, the Ivory Coast, Ghana, Senegal, Kenya, Jamaica, and Manhattan. Extrapolation from her works indicates that she has probably also spent some time in Mali, Barbados, Panama, South Carolina, Haiti, and Dahomey. She sees no contradiction between being Antillean and a wanderer" (763).

By "feminist politics of difference" I refer to a feminist critical practice that is marked both by an integrated analysis of the multiple and interlocking systems of women's oppression and by a sense of "the feminist subject as . . . highly differentiated" (Hennessy xv). This critical practice is explicit or implicit in a number of traditions of feminist theory and criticism, including black feminist theory, materialist feminism, and third world feminism. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, for example, suggests that "third world women's writings on feminism have consistently focused on . . . the idea of the simultaneity of oppressions as fundamental to the experience of social and political marginality and the grounding of feminist politics in the histories of racism and imperialism" ("Cartographies" 10). Iris Marion Young points out that the "concrete political vision of inexhaustible heterogeneity" of a "politics of difference" derives "in large part from feminism" (301). Young suggests the impetus towards homogeneity in the ideal of unified community, and argues that "[d]iscussions among us of . . . the importance of attending to the specific differences among women, portend the beginnings of a politics beyond community" (301).[5] The issue here, as Michèle Barrett clarifies, is not so much difference as power (Barrett 43). A feminist politics of difference can be experience-based—that is, as in the tradition of black U.S.-based feminist criticism of which Lorde is a central figure, grounded in political identities based on women's experiences of racial, gender-based, class and homophobic oppression—but can also, through a materialist feminist articulation, question representations of an empiricist self and explore the discursive construction of "woman":

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[5] Young notes about 'community,' "[i]n a racist, sexist, homophobic society that has despised and devalued certain groups, it is necessary and desirable for members of those groups to adhere with one another and celebrate a common culture, heritage, and experience. Even with such separatist movements, however, too strong a desire for unity can lead to repressing the differences within the group or forcing some out" (312). Throughout this dissertation I refer to "community" not in terms of an individual/community dichotomy or a unified or 'separatist' group, but rather in the sense of heterogeneous community, groups that are diverse but have shared purposes. Chapter Five, however, does explore Young's sense of "unified" political communities that can exclude or repress differences.

> Conceptualizing discourse as ideology allows us to consider the discursive construction of the subject, "woman," across multiple modalities of difference, but without forfeiting feminism's recognition that the continued success of patriarchy depends upon its systematic operation—the hierarchical social relations it maintains and the other material forces it marshals and is shaped by. (Hennessy xv)

Michèle Barrett argues that one distinction between a strictly deconstructionist notion of "difference" ("a shorthand for a theory of meaning as positional or relational" [41]) and modern feminism's "recognition of diversity" is the former's "tend[ency] towards theoreticism" and the latter's pragmatism: "relying on experience as a guide to both theory and politics" (44). The danger of using the language of difference through a more pragmatic or experience-based model of feminism—that is, the foundational importance given to women's *experiences* of multiple oppressions as "political truth[s]" rather than "texts" to be read (Barrett 45)—can be, as Barrett suggests, the tendency towards pluralism, "the lowest common denominator of contemporary feminism" (Barrett 45). Indeed, as Spivak argues, pluralism "is the method employed by the *central* authorities to neutralize opposition by seeming to accept it. The gesture of pluralism on the part of the *marginal* can only mean capitulation to the center" (qtd. in Barrett 45).

Although this dissertation does acknowledge the relevance of experience-based feminist politics within the field of Caribbean women's writing, my own methodology is more akin to the materialist feminism of Hennessy or Barrett, and I therefore subject the category of "experience" to further scrutiny. In this light, Joan Scott's analysis of "experience" is useful for positioning this dissertation. She points out that "experience is not a word we can do without" (37), but suggests that a focus on experience "as the origin of knowledge" precludes examination of the ways that experience is constructed and "how subjects are constituted as different in the first place" (25). She argues, "we know that difference exists, but we don't understand it as constituted relationally. For that we need to attend to the historical processes that, through discourse, position subjects and produce their experiences" (25). In this dissertation, then, when the discussion focuses on categories of difference and experience, these terms should be taken not as self-evident or transparent but rather as discursively contested:

> How have categories of representation and analysis—such as class, race, gender, relations of production, biology, identity, subjectivity, agency, experience, even culture—achieved their foundational status? What have been the effects of their articulations? What does it mean for historians to study the past in terms of these categories; for individuals to think of themselves in these terms? (J. Scott 36)

Throughout the following discussion, then—and particularly, perhaps, in Chapter Four—experience is taken to be "at once always already an interpretation *and* . . . in need of interpretation. . . . Experience is, in this approach, not the origin of our explanation, but that which we want to explain. This kind of approach does not undercut politics by denying the existence of subjects[;] it instead interrogates the processes of their creation" (J. Scott 38).

To return to Barrett and Spivak, a "feminist politics of difference" is based not on pluralism or simple *acceptance* of differences between women, but rather on addressing issues of privilege and status whereby some women are empowered through others' marginalization. As Kum-Kum Bhavnani and Margaret Coulson note, "it is not only that there are differences between different groups of women but that these differences are often also conflicts of interest" (84). A feminist politics of difference is therefore positioned to emphasize social change.[6] One outcome of this kind of feminist critical practice is the building of coalitions across differences. Bernice Johnson Reagon, for instance, distinguishes between a unified notion of feminist community as "home" and political coalition, which entails both engagement and withdrawal at different times and recognition of conflicts of interest between women, and does not lead to a reconciling of differences: "Coalition work is not work done in your home. Coalition work has to be done in the streets. And it is some of the most dangerous work you can do" (Reagon 359). Barbara Smith also notes black feminism's contribution of "a commitment to principled coalitions, based not upon expediency, but upon our actual need for each other" (xxxiii). Kobena Mercer similarly points out that a key feature of Audre Lorde's emphasis on living with differences is "the *difficulty of recognition* [which] allows for separateness within interdependence because it assumes that the identity of the ego is neither fixed nor omnipotent" ("Decolonisation" 122).

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[6] Mohanty argues that "the challenge of third world feminisms to white, Western feminisms has been precisely this inescapable link between feminist and political liberation movements" ("Cartographies" 10).

The designation, in my title, of "coalition" as a stand-in for a feminist politics and aesthetics of difference might suggest that I am appealing to a notion of separateness between identities based on gender, race, class, and sexual orientation, when I am otherwise promoting an understanding of subjectivity as discursive and multiply marked by such discourses. I risk using the term, however, because it seems well-suited to express a Caribbean feminist mode of theorizing alliances across and within differences. Julia Sudbury, in her study of black women's activism and coalition-building in the UK, discusses her decision to use the term 'coalitions' rather than 'alliances.' She refers to Albrecht and Brewer's statement that "We see coalitions as short-term solutions and alliance formation as ongoing, long-term arrangements for more far-reaching structural change" (Albrecht and Brewer 3; qtd. in Sudbury 180). Sudbury, on the other hand, argues that "[a]lthough building alliances between black women and other groups may not be impossible, it is evident that the creation of such alliances is a massive task which is weakened if it cannot rest on the foundations of black women's autonomous organizations" (181). In Sudbury's formulation, the concept of coalition does not deny a discursive understanding of subjectivity—"Black women are placed at the intersection of racism, sexism and class exploitation" (182)—but rather acknowledges the fact that political actors gravitate to specific social movements.

The term "coalition" also has another function in this dissertation: it offers me a position in relation to the field of Caribbean women's writing. As an outsider to Caribbean culture, whether in the Caribbean proper or the Caribbean diaspora in Canada, I see my role with this dissertation as that of doing coalition work. My own antiracist goals aside, this project puts me in an investigating role of a cultural field in which I do not have an immediate stake or personal connection. I locate my interests in this project in both the antiracist, feminist work that I hope this dissertation can further, and in the insights I may gain for understanding the critical terrain of Canadian multiculturalism which is for me closer to home, and which I discuss more fully in my conclusion.

An understanding of coalition that is not identity-based can be seen in Chandra Talpade Mohanty's suggestion that feminist political alliances can be based not on "color or sex" but rather on "the *way* we think about race, class, and gender—the political links we choose to make among and between struggles" ("Cartographies" 4).[7] As Martin and Mohanty argue, "community . . . is the product of work, of struggle; it is inherently unstable, contextual; it has to be constantly reevaluated in relation to critical political priorities" (210). Chapter Two's discussion of Michelle Cliff's *Abeng* and Chapter Four's analysis of the Jamaican theatre collective Sistren in particular explore feminist activism that takes the form of coalitions across differences among women, coalitions that are marked by tensions of privilege, marginalization, and contradiction. These chapters point out that, in contrast to the utopian leanings of some models of syncretism and creolization, coalition work is fraught with difficulties and failures; further, the juxtaposition of feminist coalition and theories of creolization indicates the need for theories of creolization to attend to the very real differences of power that inhere in cross-cultural contact.

---

[7] Mohanty, in outlining a "third world women's feminist politics" ("Cartographies" 2), calls for "an 'imagined community' of third world oppositional struggles. 'Imagined' not because it is not "real' but because it suggests potential alliances and collaborations across divisive boundaries, and 'community' because in spite of internal hierarchies within third world contexts, it nevertheless suggests a significant, deep commitment to what Benedict Anderson, in referring to the idea of the nation, calls 'horizontal comradeship'" (4).

The use of the term 'feminist' to describe Caribbean women's writing, cultural production, and organization is a source of debate. Some Caribbean women writers and critics are suspicious of the term, arguing that it is inseparable from the traditions of European or U.S.-based feminist theories. Evelyn O'Callaghan, for instance, points out that "Anglo-American and European feminist theories sometimes neglect or make rigid pre-suppositions about cultural, nationalistic and racial concerns that are central to the work of writers in [the Caribbean] region" ("'It's all about ideology'" 36). Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, similarly, suggests "the limited applicability of European or U.S. theories of feminism and gender relations to a reality that may have been influenced by European American cultural patterns but which developed in fairly *local* ways ["i.e., *insular* or creole"] in response to a collision between autochthonous and foreign cultures" (7). Paravisini-Gebert, like other Caribbean critics on the subjects of post-colonial theory and deconstruction, for instance, suggests that this uncritical use of 'outside' feminist theory "comes dangerously close in many cases to continued colonization" (4).

Other critics recognize the exclusion of analysis of race and class from a historically white middle-class women's movement, but find the term "feminism" useful for the ways it can be used critically in the Caribbean. Boyce Davies and Savory Fido, in the Preface to *Out of the Kumbla*, discuss their tendency to move between the terms "feminist" and "womanist" depending on context,[8] or to refer to "international

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feminism," a term that "divorces it from a Western/European or American context and instead addresses women's struggles globally" (xiii). "Womanism" is a concept developed by Alice Walker to emphasize the cultural context of African American women and her "commit[ment] to [the] survival and wholeness of the entire people, male *and* female" rather than separatism (Walker xi). Sylvia Wynter's solution, however, in her Afterword to *Out of the Kumbla*, is to reject both 'feminism' and 'womanism' as contradictory frameworks for Caribbean women's writing: "the very attempt to redefine the term *feminist* with the qualifier 'womanist,' expresses the paradoxical relation of Sameness and Difference which the writers of these essays [in *Out of the Kumbla*], as members of the Caribbean women intelligentsia, bear to their Western European and Euroamerican peers" (356). She argues for the primacy of "race" as a variable in criticism of Caribbean women's writing:

> if we are to understand the necessity for such an *other* term [for feminist] . . . as a term which, whilst developing a fully articulated theoretical/interpretative reading model of its own, nevertheless, serves, diacritically to draw attention to the insufficiency of all existing theoretical interpretative models, both to "voice" the hitherto silenced ground of the experience of "native" Caribbean women and Black American women . . . and to de-code the system of meanings of that other discourse . . . we shall need to translate the variable "race", which now functions as the intra-feminist marker of difference. (364)

Wynter's criticism is an important one, for it expresses the concern that even a reimagined feminism will be premised on the silencing of Caribbean women: she "proposes a 'demonic ground' beyond the now consolidated epistemologies (ways of knowing) of both patriarchal and feminist thought" (Donnell and Lawson Welsh 447).

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[8] Elaine Savory Fido, for instance, sees 'feminist' as "the political agenda of feminism" and 'womanist' as "the cultural manifestation—women's talk, customs, lore" (Boyce Davies and Savory Fido, "Talking it Over" xii).

However, the body of Caribbean women's writing and criticism suggests that gender continues to be an important category of analysis. I use the term "feminist" to denote the writing and criticism by Caribbean women discussed in this dissertation because it is a term that does have a critical history in the context of Caribbean women's organizing and cultural work: Rhoda Reddock, a Caribbean scholar who has extensively studied women's movements in the Anglophone Caribbean, argues,

> whatever the context, feminism has not been a 1960s import into the Caribbean. The modern women's movement in the English-speaking Caribbean is the continuation of a rich struggle for women's emancipation, a struggle fraught with contradictions but one nevertheless firmly based within the sociopolitical and historical context of the region. ("Feminism, Nationalism" 63)[9]

Debates over the place in Caribbean criticism of U.S. or European-based models of feminist theory are therefore part of the negotiation and definition of the priorities of Caribbean feminism. There are, of course, many approaches within feminism, and this dissertation foregrounds materialist methodologies oriented towards critiques of racism and imperialism.

This dissertation, then, takes as its starting point the ways that Caribbean feminist critique, and Caribbean women's literature, rearticulate Caribbean creolization through a feminist politics and poetics of diversity, at times resembling and at times departing from the canonized theories of creolization in the Caribbean region. What distinguishes these feminist strategies of creolization from some of the more hegemonic theories of creolization is their urgency, the activist impulse that makes "differences" of race, gender, sexuality, and class not merely signs of multiplicity but markers of social inequity. Caribbean feminist politics and poetics of difference, therefore, point in different ways to a sense of coalition-building, and the need to work creatively across different struggles (against racism and class oppression, against heterosexism, against misogyny, simultaneously) for change. Chapter One begins a discussion of creolization on four fronts: it develops a context of scholarly studies of creolization as a social/historical phenomenon in the Caribbean; it articulates the main arguments of the most influential Caribbean theorists of creolization, and postcolonial theorists of hybridity; it evaluates these theories on a number of points, including gender and sexual politics, usefulness for materialist social critique, and problems inherent to theories of hybridity and multiculturalism; and it outlines Caribbean feminist theorizing on diversity and creolization. I use the term "creolization" as a general reference point throughout the dissertation as a whole, but clarify in Chapter One the terminology specific to different thinkers and regions. Chapter Two investigates the centrality of the *Bildungsroman* in the corpus of Caribbean women's literature. The genre is widely used in the Caribbean by both male and female writers, but the thematic and ideological features of the genre suggest its incommensurability, in many ways, for the field of Caribbean women's writing. In the Caribbean, the *Bildungsroman* is a creolized form; however, as a genre that looks backwards as well as forwards, it is obsessed with origins. This chapter will investigate, through Michelle Cliff's *Abeng* and Zee Edgell's *Beka Lamb*, how the woman-centred novel of development participates in a Caribbean debate between creolization and roots/identity; but it will also explore how a feminist use of this genre can articulate a politics of diversity, a vision of coalitions across differences within heterogeneous community.

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[9] Reddock's successive analyses of women's movements in different regions and generations in the Caribbean lay the grounds both for the use of the term "feminist" in the Caribbean, and for an understanding of long-term Caribbean feminist organizing (i.e. evidence that "feminism" is not a recent "import" to the Caribbean from North America or Europe). See also "Women's Organizations and Movements in the Commonwealth Caribbean: The Response to Global Economic Crisis in the 1980s," "The Early Women's Movement in Trinidad and Tobago, 1900-1937," "Women's movements and organisations in the process of revolutionary transformation: the case of Grenada," and "The Caribbean Feminist Tradition."

While Chapter Two determines that Cliff and Edgell articulate this diversity by locating the ostensibly individualistic *Bildungsroman* heroine in a profoundly creolized community, Chapter Three moves to a more heteroglossic narrative of community by reading Erna Brodber's *Myal* in juxtaposition with Maryse Condé's *Traversée de la mangrove (Crossing the Mangrove).* Both novels demonstrate creolization in process through narrative ethics of collectivity, dialogue, provisionality, and improvisation. These two novels address existing understandings of creolization more directly than do other texts in this dissertation: *Myal* epitomizes, and yet re-reads, Wilson Harris's ideas of the healing propensities of syncretic resources; *Traversée de la mangrove* critiques and deflates the *créolité* of Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant. The novels seem to differ in their optimism about the potentials for creolized Caribbean culture, but come together in a pedagogical approach to exploring these potentials. Chapter Four functions to clarify the existence of a continuum in the dissertation: this chapter steps further away from "creolization" as a theoretical model and towards a grassroots and more activist Caribbean feminist politics of difference. Dionne Brand's Canadian-based documentaries *Older, Stronger, Wiser* and *Sisters in the Struggle* focus on the multiple axes of women's oppression, and advocate building networks for change across differences of race, gender, sexuality, and class. The Jamaican feminist theatre group Sistren is itself a model of both collectivity and functional coalition-building among women of different social classes and skin-colour privilege. The analysis of Sistren focuses both on the methodology of Sistren's theatre workshops, as they exemplify the strategies demonstrated by other writers in this dissertation, and also on their plays and *Lionheart Gal,* which use testimony and popular culture to expose the contradictions in Caribbean women's lives. Chapter Four, however, complicates the optimism of coalition by outlining the myriad contradictions that trouble feminist coalition. Chapter Five returns to the question of sexuality that has appeared throughout the dissertation, not to isolate sexuality from other forms of "difference" but to address the significant exclusion of sexual diversity from otherwise liberatory Caribbean discourses that value heterogeneity. This chapter points to the process by which a decolonizing politics can construct notions of community that exclude sexual diversity, and reads Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here* and Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night* as claims to Caribbean cultural identity that imagine a home for alternative sexualities in heterogeneous Caribbean space. The difference in strategy between Brand's and Mootoo's novels, however—Brand asserts a clearer sense of black lesbian identity, and Mootoo uses shifting representations of "queerness"—returns the discussion to the question, posed in Chapter Two, of the differences between cultural identities based on "roots" and cultural processes of creolization. Brand's articulation of the importance of political identities draws attention to the potential utility of strategic essentialism.

Throughout the dissertation I work with critical and literary texts primarily from the Anglophone, Francophone, and Hispanophone Caribbean. Although I have attempted to broaden the parameters of the present study to include texts and criticism often absent in analysis of Caribbean literature conducted through the discipline of English studies, this scope is not exhaustive. I have not, for instance, explored writing or criticism from the Dutch-speaking Caribbean, not as a deliberate measure but simply as a result of the critical paths I followed. I read and present French and Spanish texts in English translation. For material not originally written in English I use translated texts, translations provided by critics, and, where indicated, my own translations. In some cases, my reliance on translated material may put me at a disadvantage when attempting a close reading of texts; in other particular cases, English translations have begun circulating as standard versions for scholarship. I am most familiar with the Anglophone region and with the critical debates arising from that context, but have attempted to provide the necessary contexts of literary histories for each of the critical and literary texts referred to here. As an acknowledgement of the regional focus of this dissertation, I will generally use the term “Caribbean,” unless I am following the “West Indian” or “Antillean” cue given by a particular critic or writer.

Chapter One: The work of gender in theories of creolization

Chapters Two through Five will focus on creative work by Caribbean women writers and explore an alternative feminist vision of creolization and difference. This chapter, however, concentrates primarily on theoretical material: laying the groundwork for an understanding of "creolization" as a phenomenon (section I) and investigating through feminist analysis the key literary and cultural theories that have arisen from the creolized nature of the region (II); setting up a broader context of study into the hegemonic uses to which discourses of hybridity and multiculturalism can be put (III); and delineating Caribbean feminist contributions to, and critiques of, theories and models of cultural creolization (IV). It is important here to note that each of the terms under discussion—creolization, hybridity, multiculturalism, syncretism, *Antillanité*, *créolité*, *mestizaje*—has its own genealogy and literary history. For instance, "multiculturalism" has a purchase in discussion of official state policies on cultural diversity, and cannot be used interchangeably with *créolité*, clearly a mode of analysis grounded in the creolization of language and developed within Martiniquan discourse. However, to the extent that this thesis argues for particular common ground among these theories and modes of understanding difference, it is at times necessary to forward arguments about this group of terms as a whole.

A core feature of Caribbean social history on which all cultural theories of creolization rely is its multi-ethnic nature. Moreover, as Richard Burton notes, "Almost all contemporary approaches to Afro-Caribbean culture(s) stress its (their) syncretistic or mosaic character" (*Afro-Creole* 3). "Creole," according to Nigel Bolland, "refers to locally born persons of non-native origin" or "[i]n common Caribbean usage, . . . a local product which is the result of a mixture or blending of various ingredients that originated in the Old World" (50). "Creolization," then, "refers to those processes of cultural change that give rise to such distinctiveness" (Bolland 50). Early studies of Caribbean social history note the heterogeneous composition of the region as a central factor in its social makeup. Burton argues that René Ménil was perhaps the first to clearly formulate, in 1964, a West Indian specificity drawn from its syncretic cultural configuration. French West Indian culture, according to Ménil, is

> neither African, nor Chinese, nor Indian, nor even French, but ultimately West Indian. Our culture is West Indian since, in the course of history, it has brought together and combined in an original syncretism all these elements derived from the four corners of the earth, without being any one of those elements in particular. (qtd. in Burton, "*Ki Moun Nou Ye*?" 14)

In the Anglophone context, Edward Kamau Brathwaite's *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820* studies the growth of creolization in slavery-based Jamaican society. He argues both that "Jamaica was a viable, creative entity" during the slavery era because of creolization (307), and that the Jamaican elite failed to make full use of the society's rich creole and folk culture (308). Brathwaite's study is prompted by contemporary questions of nationalism and independence, and he asserts that "an understanding of the nature and development of interculturation in West Indian slave society must *precede*, since it determines, questions of social and national identity" (vii). He concludes the study with a gesture towards his own future critical preoccupations, suggesting that, if the process of creolization could be resumed with a renewed emphasis on the "little tradition" of folk culture, the resulting "basis for creative reconstruction . . . evolving its own residential 'great' tradition, could well support the development of a new parochial wholeness, a difficult but possible creole authenticity" (311).[10]

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[10] Brathwaite distinguishes between the "Great or Elite Tradition" and its corresponding "Little or Folk Tradition" ("The Love Axe(l)" 22), an adaptation of Robert Redfield's notion of the interdependence of 'Great' and 'Little' traditions in *Peasant society and culture* (U Chicago P, 1956) (see *Contradictory Omens* 71n65). Brathwaite proposes that "[c]ultural homogeneity demands a norm and a residential

M.G. Smith, however, in *The Plural Society in the British West Indies*, derives different conclusions about the place of creole traditions in Caribbean nationalism. Smith also looks at social stratification and differentiation historically, from slavery and emancipation to the 1960s. He examines the West Indies through the concept of the "plural society," a society composed of "disparate parts which owes its existence to external factors, and lacks a common social will" (vii). The plural society model, as Brathwaite has noted, "is based on an apprehension of cultural polarity (expressed specifically as social stratification); on an either/or principle" (*Contradictory Omens* 25). Smith argues that "Creole status hierarchies"—composed primarily of European and African origins—and their "resulting combination of economic, behavioural, [and] cultural differentiation reduces social cohesion and intersectional mobility in creole society to a minimum" (M.G. Smith 308). The common Creole culture, argues Smith, may preclude nationalism, for "it is only with this multiracial Creole complex that West Indians can identify as West Indians" (8-9). Unlike Brathwaite, Smith sees creole culture as an obstacle to creative renewal.[11]

Other social scientists search for the specifically African roots of creolization, to determine if the component parts of cultural creolization can be defined. Mervyn Alleyne, in *Roots of Jamaican Culture*, suggests that although many ethnic groups have "contributed to the Jamaican cultural mosaic," the descendents of African slaves "played a central role in this creative process" so that "Afro-American [and Caribbean] culture is

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correspondence between the 'great' and 'little' traditions within the society" (*Contradictory Omens* 24). He identifies two 'Great' traditions under slavery, one in Europe and the other in Africa, but no local/residential tradition. Creolization, he argues, "provided . . . the conditions for and the possibility of local creative resistance" but "did not provide a norm," and a dichotomy resulted between the culture of the Euro-creole elite and the 'little' tradition of the black majority (24).

[11] Nigel Bolland distinguishes between a plural-society model (like Smith's) and a creole-society model (like Brathwaite's) by noting that the creole-society model "draws attention to an evolving cultural unity" and is "predicated on a concept of social and cultural change" (57). M.G. Smith's *Plural Society*, he argues, "says little about the nature and direction of social change" (57).

largely an extension of African culture" (vii-viii). Alleyne examines African continuities in Jamaican language, religion, and music, arguing that in each case, the "deep structure is African" while the "surface structure is influenced by other cultures with which Africans have been in contact" (149). Sidney Mintz and Richard Price, on the other hand, argue in *The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective* that transported African slaves did not share a common culture—they formed "*crowds*, and very heterogeneous crowds at that" (18) and "became a *community* and began to share a *culture* only insofar as, and as fast as, they themselves created them" (14). Mintz and Price also assert that creolization was multidirectional, affecting white plantation families, black slaves, and indentured workers over time (32). Richard Burton, on the other hand, examining a cross-section of slave culture from 1700 to 1820, argues that "the passage from African to Afro-Creole . . . involved at the same time cultural loss, cultural retention and reinterpretation, cultural imitation and borrowing, and cultural creation. . . . *both* 'continuity' and 'creativity' are involved in creolization" (*Afro-Creole* 5). Significantly, Burton follows Nigel Bolland in his effort to avoid "the portrayal of creolization as a 'blending' process, a mixing of cultures that occurs without reference to structural contradictions and social conflicts" (Bolland 64; qtd. Burton 6). Bolland argues that "[c]reolization . . . is not a homogenizing process, but rather a process of *contention* between people who are members of social formations and carriers of cultures" ("Creolization" 72).

Burton's contribution to the study of creolization is significant in part because he raises the issue of creole culture and cultural resistance. Burton draws from de Certeau and Foucault a distinction between "resistance"—"those forms of contestation of a given system that are conducted from *outside* that system, using weapons and concepts derived from a source or sources other than the system in question"—and "opposition"—contestation "conducted from *within* that system" (*Afro-Creole* 6). Foucault argues that "great radical ruptures" are rare in human history, and that "a plurality of resistances" are always present in the power network (qtd. in Burton 7). In examining such creolized phenomena as Afro-Christianity, Rastafarianism, Vodou, cricket, and carnival, Burton argues that "Afro-Creole cultures . . . tend to be much more *cultures of opposition* than *cultures of resistance*" (7):

> I see cultural opposition in the Caribbean as double-edged to the extent that an (Afro-) Creole culture cannot, by dint of its very creoleness, get entirely outside the dominant system in order to *resist* it (in de Certeau's sense of the word) and so tends unconsciously to reproduce its underlying structures even as it consciously challenges its visible dominance . . . Afro-Creole cultures are themselves a paradoxical amalgam of the radical and the conservative that, to repeat, simultaneously challenges and confirms the dominant order by turning the latter's resources against it in a complex double game of oppositionality . . . that can lead into, but also often militates against, the possibility of actual *resistance.* (8)

Burton notes that although he refers to the question of gender, he does not deal explicitly with "the oppositional culture of West Indian women (often as oppositional to West Indian men as to the dominant "white" power structures) or on specifically female ways of living the processes of creolization and the composite culture they fashion" (11). Burton's analysis of Afro-Creole culture highlights a difference between *descriptive* studies of creolization and those that focus on the potential *uses* and *implications* of this central dynamic in Caribbean cultures. The questions of resistance, oppositionality, and co-optation, which I will take up more fully in section III of this chapter, are key to evaluating the usefulness of theories of creolization for social critique, particularly from the perspective of gender politics. Further, Burton's and Bolland's argument that creolization is characterized more by contention than by blending or homogenization of difference reveals parallels between creolization and feminist coalition.

II

Much of the literary theory and cultural criticism developed in the Caribbean takes as its starting point the Caribbean's legacy of cultural diversity, documented in sociological and historical analyses of which the preceding texts are a small sample. As J. Michael Dash points out, "the very heterogeneity of the region, which, as Michel Rolph Trouillot has suggested, is an obstacle to theorizing about it as a whole, has become the methodological ground that facilitates recent attempts to establish theoretical models of the Caribbean" (*Other America* 7). The articulation of creolization, and trajectories of its study (the focus on linguistic creolization in the French-speaking Caribbean, for example, and emphasis on popular culture forms such as carnival in the English-speaking Caribbean), vary among the different linguistic regions; similarities can productively be studied for a sense of a broader Caribbean field of theories of creolization, but it is important to distinguish between the different contexts for the different literary/cultural histories. The next section of this discussion analyzes several of the most prominent Caribbean theorists of creolization, to provide summaries of their work as well as to offer a short genealogy. The summaries are directed towards outlining their contributions to the study of creolization, but also towards determining the gendered politics of each articulation of Caribbean culture. A feature shared by all these theoretical models, however, is a belief in the liberatory dynamic of creolization;[12] in each model, "creolization becomes a power for reversing the processes of acculturation (or assimilation), deculturation, discontinuity, and marginalization that have affected the entire Caribbean" (Balutansky and Sourieau 5).[13]

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[12] Although I would argue that the intent of each of the following models may be liberatory, creolization as a discourse is certainly not always liberatory or progressive. See the comments in section III of this chapter, for instance, on *mestizaje* and Panameñista.

I introduce Wilson Harris into this study with the knowledge that any summary I give of his comments on syncretism (comments, because, like Glissant, Harris avoids outlining a systematic theory)[14] will necessarily be brief, because of space constraints, but therefore incomplete, because his wide-ranging critical and literary explorations put syncretism in a much broader philosophical context. Harris argues that syncretism describes the heterogeneous imperative that is in all societies and cultures, but that is denied in acts of conquest and the enforcement of homogeneity, whether in military conquests or the authoritarian realist novel. The imagination of the artist can intuitively grasp the cross-cultural potential eclipsed by monolithic narratives. Harris sees in the Caribbean's violent past a wealth of mythologies and resources that carry the seeds of their own transformation into a creative and heterogeneous future: "We are beginning to accept certain possibilities akin to the essential character of space, a phenomenon which subsists upon its very losses, the transubstantiation of consciousness. . . . [S]omething endures at the heart of catastrophe or change which runs to meet one like a feature of unpredictable unity with and through a phenomenal nature one cannot absolutely grasp" ("The Phenomenal Legacy" 45, 47). Catastrophe and conquest must be 'digested' and 'infinitely rehearsed' towards an uncertain but idealistic future of community: "it is arguable that society is approaching in uncertain degree a horizon of sensibility upon which a capacity exists to begin to transform claustrophobic ritual by cross-cultural imaginations that bear upon the future through mutations of the monolithic character of conquistadorial legacies of civilisation" (*Womb* xv). Harris' work is provocative because of the saving role he gives to the "phenomenon of otherness" and the "life of heterogeneity":

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[13] Frank Martinus Arion of Curaçao, however, offers a less optimistic perspective from the Dutch Caribbean. He argues that Creoleness is diminishing across the Caribbean, and that "only one common criterion applies to the whole Caribbean region: complete ignorance of each other's existence. There is more Europeanness than Americanness and practically no Caribbeanness in sight" (449). Martinus Arion suggests that an orientation towards the former European mother countries and linguistic differences prevent both Creoleness and Caribbeanness (449).

[14] Harris pauses in the midst of a discussion of creoleness to state, "I say all this, of course, with caution, without dogma, without a desire in any way to promote a theory" ("Creoleness" 27).

> The paradox of cultural heterogeneity, or cross-cultural capacity, lies in the evolutionary thrust it restores to orders of the imagination, the ceaseless dialogue it inserts between hardened conventions and eclipsed or half-eclipsed otherness, within an intuitive self that moves endlessly into flexible patterns, arcs or bridges of community. (*Womb* xviii)

Harris differs from other Caribbean cultural critics, such as Brathwaite, in that the centrality of colonial violence to his theory does not lead him to advocate a form of protest literature. As Hena Maes-Jelinek notes, Harris argues for the need to "reject all cultural imperatives . . . whether they come from dominating or long suppressed cultures" and warns "against social, racial and political protest that merely leads to another kind of uniformity or authoritarianism" (Introduction 3):

> That the roles of exploiter and exploited breed polarization rather than the hard-won annunciation of new forms of community through self-knowledge is perhaps a failure of imagination to sense within a dynamic concert of energies a capacity which relates to the values of the past but runs counter to those values as static cultural imperatives. ("A Talk on the Subjective Imagination" 45)

Harris' rejection of binaries and Manichean dichotomies does not mean that his articulation of syncretism cannot distinguish between exploiter and exploited, and his often esoteric writing does not indicate a primarily formalist kind of postmodernism. Harris has, in fact, indicated that he sees postmodernism as "synonymous with nihilism allied to scepticism" (Maes-Jelinek, "Teaching" 145). His focus on the imagination and rejection of "exclusive adherence to resistance theories," Maes-Jelinek argues, does not mean he "exclud[es] social and political dimensions from his work," but rather, that "he has greater confidence than the militant intellectual or politician in the capacity of the marginalized individual to develop a literacy of perception and consciousness" (149).[15] Even though his critical writing may sometimes be abstract and wide-ranging, and may not directly refer to the material conditions of heterogeneity and conflicts of differences in the Caribbean, Harris' vision of the "capacity for genuine change" ("Adversarial Contexts" 126) offers a potentially revolutionary way to theorize difference and creolization in the Caribbean.

The question arises, however, of how to read in Harris' syncretism (in his critical and fictional work) a place for feminist critique. Joyce Sparer Adler takes on the task of charting Harris' representation of women in his novels, and argues that his work exhibits "the continuously implied theme of a cross-cultural imagination that crosses sex boundaries as well as cultural ones" (170). She also notes that in *The Womb of Space* Harris expresses a "belief . . . that the status of women in fiction, whether it be Pre-Columbian myth or modern novel, is crucial to humanity"; in his novels, "the female figures in each work have conveyed the fundamental idea that the disadvantaging of women is destructive to both men and women" (170). At the same time, Adler points out that in Harris' work women largely function as "muses," and "are more purely symbolic figures than the male characters are" (171). Moreover, she argues, "the female characters, muses or not, are seen solely, in the pre-1982 novels, as wives, mistresses or prostitutes and especially as mothers, potential mothers or women unable to be mothers" (171).

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[15] Maes-Jelinek also explains, "his cross-culturalism . . . takes root at a much deeper level, in the individual and universal unconscious, which must be explored prior to the renewal of our sense of a genuinely pluralist community. But this is often found embarrassing because it is difficult to translate such a perspective into immediate political terms" ("Teaching" 156).

Adler predicts, at the time of her writing, that Harris' novels after 1985 would show more emphasis on a female creative artist.

Kerry Johnson, on the other hand, although she identifies the tendency in Harris' fiction for women to be muses or representatives of landscape, argues that Harris suggests that "gender . . . is never a closure" ("From Muse to Majesty" 78). Harris, according to Johnson, "re-works some of the tropes of colonization, specifically the landscape as a 'feminine' space, in order to formulate a cross-cultural identity that he represents as distinctly without boundaries" (75). For me, this explanation indicates a potential problem of gender in many theories of creolization: creolization is identified with 'feminine' qualities of openness, renewal and rebirth, intersubjectivity and connection, but women as cultural agents are absent from the theories' scope. Johnson, however, argues that even in Harris' early work, "the only radical transgressions—of consciousness, of racial and sexual boundaries, of national and geographical boundaries—are those that account for gender and empower woman's agency" (78). She suggests, "it is no coincidence that a woman's consciousness arrives in Harris's work [*The Waiting Room*, published in 1967] on the heels of Guyanese independence" (78). In another context, Johnson argues that in Harris' later works he "theorizes the mutability of gender" and "gestures toward more open-ended concepts of gender and the body . . . to formulate an even more inclusive, cross-cultural community" ("Translations" 124). In other words, "while undoing the sex/gender dichotomy has its risks . . . it also has great potential for sowing the seeds of a heterogeneous community that recognizes the 'mutual translation' of Self and Other. Gender is an example of the dichotomous 'contrasting spaces' that need to be undone if true freedom can occur" (128). Further, Johnson suggests, the "simultaneity of genders" in a work like *The Infinite Rehearsal* "allows the breakdown of other binary frames of existence such as victim/victimizer and ancient/modern" (134). Johnson proposes that Harris "grounds his theories of community more than ever in the lived experience of the body, and by doing so, reveals his deep commitment to the socio-political concerns of the day" (135). The discussion of Erna Brodber's *Myal* in Chapter Three suggests ways that Brodber pursues a model of heterogeneous community similar to Harris', and explores the 'contrasting spaces' of gender.

Édouard Glissant's work on *Antillanité* is fascinating both for its specific focus on the minutiae of Martiniquan life and its broad theoretical scope beyond the Caribbean region, similar in range to Wilson Harris' movements from the rainforests of Guyana to Victorian literature. In *Caribbean Discourse*, Glissant asserts, "I still believe in the future of small countries. In such communities, the process of creolization is expressed in moments of identifiable irrationality, is structured in comprehensive attempts at liberation" (3). Glissant looks to Martinique for a model of creolization in the face of a seeming lack of history and collective memory. He laments the assimilation of Martinique as a department of France, and the resulting consumerism and passivity. Glissant identifies specific material grounds for Martinique's alienation—"the erosion of the economic base, the division of the working class, the absence of a national bourgeoisie and the suppression of local self-supporting productivity" (Dash, Introduction xviii)—and "makes a close association between productivity and creativity, labor and language" (xxiii). At the same time, Glissant affirms the creole nature of Caribbean identity and Martiniquans' capacity for resistance.

Glissant bases his idea of creolization on the fluid and centrifugal motions of the Caribbean Sea, hence emphasizing that creolization is a process, rather than a state of being. Although he sees creolization as a global process, the Caribbean is exemplary of creolization's possibilities, for the "exposed nature and intensity of the process of hybridization" (Dash, *Edouard Glissant* 149) make the Caribbean "the necessary stop where [America] gathers together its energy for the journey. In one way or another, the

Caribbean is the outgrowth of America. The part that breaks free of the continent and yet is linked to the whole" (Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 117). *Antillanité*, or Caribbeanness, is characterized by relation, collectivity, and opacity: Glissant proposes, "What is the Caribbean in fact? A multiple series of relationships" (*Caribbean Discourse* 139). His concept of *opacité*, "the recognised impenetrability of a culture" (Dash, *Edouard Glissant* 143), bolsters *Antillanité*, because "*opacité* creates the cultural diversity without which the ideal of *relation* (cultural interrelating) is impossible" (Dash, *Edouard Glissant* 143). The opaque is "not the obscure," but rather "that which cannot be reduced" (Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* 191). For Glissant, the concept of understanding in Western thought requires transparency, reduction, and hierarchy. He suggests, "Agree not merely to the right to difference but, carrying this further, agree also to the right to opacity that is not enclosure within an impenetrable autarchy but subsistence within an irreducible singularity" (*Poetics of Relation* 190). In another context, Glissant writes, "In the struggle of decolonization the concept of the right for difference has been very strong. But this is not enough. I want the right for opacity. It means that it is not necessary for me to understand what I am. . . . Because 'comprendre' means 'prendre' and maybe strangle" ("Dialogue" 25). Against the risk of cultural reductionism, Glissant values opacity for its openness and its resistance to absolute truths (*Poetics of Relation* 192).

As noted above, Glissant sees Caribbean creolization as an intense example of a more universal process. In *Poetics of Relation* he turns towards a global view and towards concepts of chaos and indeterminacy, defining creolization or Relation as "a new and original dimension allowing each person to be there and elsewhere"; "if we posit *métissage* as, generally speaking, the meeting and synthesis of two differences, creolization seems to be a limitless *métissage*, its elements diffracted and its consequences unforeseeable" (34). He clarifies that creolization does not belong solely to the Caribbean: "Creolization as an idea is not primarily the glorification of the composite nature of a people: indeed, no people has been spared the cross-cultural process. The idea of creolization demonstrates that henceforth it is no longer valid to glorify 'unique' origins that the race safeguards and prolongs" (*Caribbean Discourse* 140). Glissant's comments signal his refusal to designate creolization as a specifically and essentially Caribbean characteristic, but they also highlight his resistance to narratives of origin or identity.

Glissant's critique of *Négritude* is one example of this resistance to "the nostalgia for prelapsarian origins" (Dash, *Other America* 11), which Glissant calls a *detour* or "diversion" that is "very quickly surpassed" (*Caribbean Discourse* 24). Glissant values Deleuze and Guattari's metaphor of the rhizome, "an enmeshed root system" (*Poetics of Relation* 11), as an alternative to rootedness. He suggests that "Rhizomatic thought" is the principle behind his Poetics of Relation, "in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other" (11), in contrast to responses to colonization that take a monolithic form, such as *Négritude*: "Most of the nations that gained freedom from colonization have tended to form around an idea of power—the totalitarian drive of a single, unique root—rather than around a fundamental relationship with the Other" (14). Indeed, "*Antillanité* does not stress the static confrontation of cultures that is central to the ideas of negritude" (Dash, Introduction xliii). Although both *Négritude* and *Antillanité* are "assertion[s] of Difference in the face of the encroachments of the Same," as Burton argues, the concept of Difference in *Négritude* is monolithic "because essentially 'African' or 'black' in character," but is, in Glissant's frame, "diverse, complex, heterogeneous . . . made up not of a single substance or essence but of a multiplicity of relations" (Burton, "*Ki Moun*" 14-15).

In his avoidance of prescriptive or systemic models of cultural identity, and emphasis on creolization as a process and not a state of being,[16] Glissant also disagrees

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with the *Éloge* writers and their theory of *créolité*: "for me, *creolization* is a process which diffracts. I do not pretend to propose something as a model for humanity as Western cultures have done for us. We are in a process of *creolization*. We are no definition of being Creole" ("Dialogue" 24). J. Michael Dash argues that Glissant's vision is "an ideological breakthrough" (*Edouard Glissant* 148):

> Glissant's vision is different from earlier nationalisms and counter-discursive ideologies because it not only demystifies their imperialistic myth of universal civilization but also rejects the values of hegemonic systems. In breaking free from the ideas of cultural purity, racial authenticity and ancestral origination, Glissant provides a way out of the temptation to relapse into identitarian thought. (148)

Although many theories of creolization resemble each other in their use of metaphors of fluidity or images of cross-cultural plurality, what perhaps distinguishes Glissant's *Antillanité*, like Wilson Harris' 'infinite rehearsal,' from the theorists discussed below is Glissant's and Harris' emphasis on creolization and syncretism as process rather than identity.

Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant's *créolité* is likely the articulation of hybridity/creolization that is most discussed and debated in current Caribbean criticism. They develop *créolité* largely in *Éloge de la créolité* (originally published in French in 1989 and translated into English as "In Praise of Creoleness" in *Callaloo* in 1990) and *Lettres créoles* (by Chamoiseau and Confiant, 1991). Considered a manifesto of the trio's program of *créolité*, the *Éloge* makes such ground-clearing moves as declaring that "Caribbean literature does not yet exist" ("In Praise of Creoleness" 886). The writers claim that their statements "do not stem from theory, nor do they stem from

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[16] Wilson Harris similarly argues, "*creoleness* is a peculiar term. It may sustain a conservative if not reactionary purist logic" ("Creoleness" 26).

any learned principles. They are, rather, akin to testimony" (886). The document seeks to articulate a more authentic creole Caribbean identity and cultural politics, and proposes that this Creoleness and creole literature will come about by a revaluation of the creole language: "*We did conquer it, this French language* . . . We made the French language ours . . . In short, *we inhabited it.* It was alive in us. In it we built our own language . . . *Our literature must bear witness of this conquest*" (900).[17] Like other critics such as Brathwaite, these three writers turn to the oral Creole culture of the urban underclass, storytellers, "'djobeurs'[18] with uncertain futures, prostitutes and thieves" (Morel 155), to find the missing link between oral Creole and contemporary literate (non-Creole) culture. They valorize the figure of the male *conteur*, the storyteller, as a new hero replacing the maroon of *Négritude*,[19] and thereby suggest "the need to develop more generalized, modest forms of resistance" like the "verbal ruse" (Price and Price 131). Like other critics of creolization, they also see a link between culture and politics, arguing for a "process toward a Caribbean federation or confederation" ("In Praise of Creoleness" 904). They argue that most Martiniquan literature (their focus is implicitly Martinique, but their statements sometimes appear to be directed more broadly to the larger Caribbean field) has historically demonstrated mimeticism, alienation, and exteriority, or seeing with the eyes of the (metropolitan French) other. Even Césaire, to whom they pay homage as a literary father and as an "*ante-Creole*" ("In Praise of Creoleness" 888), is critiqued for *Négritude*'s exteriority, its "fascination of foreign things" that "replaced the illusion of Europe by an African illusion" (889). The *Éloge* writers are more indebted to Glissant than they perhaps admit[20]: they claim that "Glissant himself did not really help us," for "we received his texts like hieroglyphics in which we were able somehow to perceive the quivering of a voice" (890). But they confirm that from Glissant they gleaned the key to Caribbean self-knowledge, "interior vision" (890).

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[17] This dissertation does not fully engage with the question of Creole *languages* to the extent of participating in the important debates on Creole linguistics that often accompany analyses of *créolité* or creolization. I do discuss issues of language either in passing or briefly in the context of *créolité*, Brathwaite's 'nation language,' or Jamaican patwah, however; and Chapter Three's discussion of Condé indicates ways in which *Crossing the Mangrove* challenges the *Éloge* writers' injunction to Martiniquan writers to focus on Creole language and culture.

Interestingly, George Lang points out in a review of Chris Bongie's *Islands and Exiles*, discussed later in Chapter Two, a "paradox" of the connection between cultural creolization and linguistic creolization: although "cultural creolization evokes the terms hybridity, *métissage*, *mestizaje*," "[*l*]*inguistic* creolization, by which I mean the actual genesis *in history* of languages which did not previously exist, has a different logic, since it is not the heterogeneity of the composite creolized bits and pieces which is important, but the unifying and self-organizing identity of a new set of rules. Creoles are identitarian, but in ways more 'modern' than 'post-modern'" (260).

[18] Morel defines *djobeurs* as men who move from the countryside to town to perform odd jobs for market traders (155).

[19] Raphäel Confiant's *Les Maîtres de la parole créole* illustrates, literally, this mythology of an exclusively male tradition of creole storytelling. The glossy, expensively-produced text offers photos and stories of 26 Martiniquan male storytellers, ages 20-80, the men who have maintained "les contes traditionnels." David Damoison's photos of each storyteller heroize the men; the pictures of women in the book are of rapt, listening girls or the occasional woman in the background.

Creoleness, according to Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant, "is the *interactional or transactional aggregate* of Caribbean, European, African, Asian, and Levantine cultural elements, united on the same soil by the yoke of history" (891; italics in original). More polemically, they open their essay with the assertion, "Neither Europeans, nor Africans, nor Asians, we proclaim ourselves Creoles" (886). They advocate an end to "raciological distinctions" in multiracial societies of the Caribbean, and suggest designating all Caribbean people "by the only suitable word: *Creole*" (893). As Burton notes, "Créolité locates the key to West Indianness not in 'race' nor even in 'culture' but in *language*" ("*Ki Moun*" 20). Creoleness is essential to Caribbean poetics and to a collective consciousness, for "[o]ur aesthetics cannot exist (cannot be authentic) without Creoleness" ("In Praise of Creoleness" 892). At the same time, the *Éloge* writers, like other theorists of creolization, argue that Caribbean creolization is a microcosm of a global phenomenon, for "the world is evolving into a state of Creoleness" (902), and "we were the anticipation of the relations of cultures, of the future world whose signs are already showing" (892). Unlike their precursor Glissant, however, they articulate a more hegemonic and fixed conception of creoleness, defining it as "an edifice to be inhabited," "a kaleidoscopic totality," and "a maelstrom of signifieds in a single signifier: a Totality" (892). As Richard Price and Sally Price point out, the *créolistes* "[disregard] Glissant's stricture that 'creolization as an idea is not primarily the glorification of the composite nature of a people' but rather 'a cross-cultural process . . . an unceasing process of transformation'" (Price and Price 129; Glissant *Caribbean Discourse* 25, 52). Despite their claims to the openness of Creoleness, "a nonharmonious (and unfinished therefore nonreductionist) mix" ("In Praise of Creoleness" 893), the *créolistes* lose the self-consciously non-reductionist ethic that Glissant brought to *Antillanité*. As Dash asserts, the *Éloge* turns Glissant's ideas into "ideological dogma":

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[20] Debra L. Anderson, in fact, suggests that the *créolistes* "define Créolité in the same terms as Antillanité by drawing upon and relying on Glissant's theories" and "seem to function by a process of *détour* and *retour*: once given 'insight' into the nature of Créolité in general, in a world view, the authors return to their own specific *créolité antillaise* which, in my opinion, is Antillanité" (52).

> *Créolité* is tempted to produce its own rhetoric, its own approved texts, its own hierarchy of intellectuals and a new heroics of *marronage*, orality and popular discourse. It lacks the ironic self-scrutiny, the insistence on process ('creolisation' and not *créolité*) that is characteristic of Glissant's thought. Indeed, despite its avowed debt to Glissant, *Eloge de la créolité* risks undoing the epistemological break with essentialist thinking that he has always striven to conceptualise. (Dash, *Edouard Glissant* 23)

Chris Bongie, similarly, points out that "the authors' praise [in the *Éloge*] of an 'identité créole' remains . . . trapped within and committed to the very thing they are supposedly contesting: a foundationalist politics of identity grounded in claims of authenticity" (64).

There is much to criticize in "In Praise of Creoleness." The writers contradict their claims to the openness of *créolité*, and also seem uncertain whether their vision of Creoleness is forward-looking and revolutionary, or backward-looking and conservative.

They advocate a "free look," a "new look . . . somewhat like the child's look, questioning in front of everything, having yet no postulates of its own" ("In Praise of Creoleness" 890); Creoleness is "new" and "unknown" (893). Yet this "revolutionary . . . interior vision" involves an attempt "[t]o learn again how to visualize our depths," to "[restore] us to ourselves" (891). They see early writers, particularly those who used Creole in their works, as archaeologists, "the precious keepers . . . of the stones, of the broken statues, of the disarranged pieces of pottery . . . of this ruined city which is our foundation," as figures who can lead contemporary Caribbean writers "to achieve this return *'to the native land'*" (888). Creoleness seems to be a hidden, unchanging, and therefore fragile essence that can be unearthed "[s]omewhat like with the process of archeological excavations: when the field was covered, we had to progress with light strokes of the brush so as not to alter or lose any part of ourselves hidden behind French ways" (890). The Creole language, too, according to Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant, is an artifact from the past that can be "finally recovered" (900).

This conception of an essential creole identity, alive in the past but long buried, makes their *créolité* more nostalgic than critical, differing significantly from Glissant's *Antillanité* and his reading of the political, economic, and cultural causes of the decline of Creole and creole culture. More fundamentally, however, the entire program of *créolité* is open to the charge of being comfortably in line with the status quo of an assimilated Martinique, rather than a revolutionary vision for a diversified future. Richard Price and Sally Price situate the *créolistes*' work in the context of a rapidly modernizing, and rapidly assimilating, Martinique, stating that "France's modernization project has . . . created an avid thirst in Martinique for representations of 'the traditional society we have forgotten in our rush to modernity'" (Price and Price 137). They refer to Glissant, and his argument that the

> cultural symbols of Martiniquan identity—music and dance, the Creole language, local cuisine, carnival—take on remarkable power in such contexts by fostering in people the illusion that they are representing themselves, that they are choosing the terms of their 'difference,' while at the same time obscuring the rapidity and completeness of the assimilationist project. (Price and Price 137)

This suggestion that the symbols of diversity can be managed so as to mask assimilationist or otherwise discriminatory power is an important critique not just of the *créolistes*, but also of other projects of creolization; I will return to this point below. Price and Price argue that "there is a tendency for the literary works of the *créolistes* to be complicitous with the celebration of a museumified Martinique, a diorama'd Martinique, a picturesque and 'pastified' Martinique that promotes a 'feel-good' nostalgia for people who are otherwise busy adjusting to the complexities of a rapidly modernizing lifestyle" (138).

Créolité also, I argue, at times resembles a surprisingly closed form of nationalism in its frequently insular, sometimes xenophobic, focus on Martinique.[21] Moreover, Myriam Rosser notes that "in spite of [a] trajectory towards ethnic inclusiveness and towards internationalism, the manifesto returns repeatedly to 'the black Creole' as the principal referent in its discussions of 'creole' subjectivity; the French Caribbean—and especially Martinique—recurs as the central location of 'creoleness'[;] . . . and the discussion . . . refers only to French/Creole diglossia" (480). Rosser also argues that the *créolistes*' call for an end to "raciological distinctions" ("In Praise of Creoleness" 893) treats ethnic differences as 'superficial': "[i]n assuming that a 'harmony in diversity' will be revealed through the exploration of *créolité*, the authors resort to a metaphysics of presence that forecloses the very praxis of exploration that could expose the processes through which differences materialize, augment, or resolve themselves within mixed cultures" (Rosser 481). As Chapter Three's study of Condé, and this dissertation as a whole, argues, a liberatory theory of creolization must address the differences of social power that make up heterogeneous community. In the *Éloge*, Rosser argues, "the will to create cultural unity by means of the common bond of creole culture deflects a rigorous scrutiny of the multiple contentious and territorial sites of cultural identities in the Caribbean. In the absence of such interrogation, *créolité* turns out to be a category that sublimates differences—of ethnicity as well as of gender and of class—in order to promote an organic vision of a whole, harmonious community" (481).

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[21] For instance, in Chapter Three I cite Chamoiseau's response to Condé's *Traversée de la mangrove*, in which he accuses her of writing for an outside audience rather than for her fellow Martiniquans.

I did not address, in the analysis of Glissant, the prominence of landscape in his understanding of the cultural resources of creolization. His emphasis on the Martiniquan landscape in both his theoretical and literary work can, in a very different manner from the *créolistes* (that is, not xenophobic about outsiders), lead to a form of nationalism. As Rosser notes, "[f]or Glissant, a people's historical awareness of itself as tied to a specific place is absolutely essential to the identity of a community or nation and to the formation of an authentic national culture" (478)—Glissant writes, "the French Caribbean people did not relate even a mythical chronology of this land to their knowledge of this country, and so nature and culture have not formed a dialectical whole that informs a people's consciousness" (*Caribbean Discourse* 63). Although this consciousness is a necessary antidote to the alienation between land and culture that Glissant identifies in departmentalized Martinique, a problem with the emphasis on landscape is, as Rosser points out, that it "foreclosed some questions about creole subjectivity in its current hybrid manifestations, and did not adequately address the diasporic creole subjectivities of migrant communities outside of the French Caribbean" (478).

The *Éloge* can also be faulted for making its claims to scholarly and cultural contribution by obscuring a long history, as well as dynamic present, of debates on creolization, hybridity, and *mestizaje*, among other theories. Richard and Sally Price situate the *créolistes*' literary and theoretical writing in the context of forty years of pan-Caribbean and other postcolonial work on creolization, pointing out the trio's "insularity—their willful nonengagement with both non-French Caribbean and nonfrancophone scholarship" (133). More broadly, "in a more international Caribbean context, the major programmatic claims of the *créolistes*, when first stated, were already widely acknowledged" (129); as for their literary experimentation, "[i]n the anglophone Caribbean, this sort of thing had long been part of the literary program" (151 n6).[22]

Despite the many weaknesses of *créolité* as a theory, I refer to "In Praise of Creoleness" here in part because the *créolistes*' literary and critical writing is central to current debates on Caribbean culture and creolization, particularly in Francophone criticism. According to Dash, the Martiniquan *créolité* movement is "the only dynamic literary movement in the region at the present time" (*Other America* 147). Rosser, similarly, acknowledges that "the manifesto [*Éloge*] did draw particular attention to creole ethnic hybridity and cultural diversity as important objects of study and of representation" and "provoked a critical response" from other scholars that "contributed substantially to the field of Caribbean cultural studies" (479). More specifically for this dissertation, however, Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant, in this document and in other critical and fictional works written collaboratively or individually, reveal more openly than do some other theorists the gendered politics of creolization. Some signs of a sexualization of Creoleness in "In Praise of Creoleness" are fleeting, such as their comment that "[w]e sucked at [*Négritude*] as if it was a breast of Tafia" (889), the phallic association of the Creole language with a "snake which, though it has been chased around the hills, reappears in our huts without warning" (899), and the comment that "culture is a daily lift and thrust" (896). Elsewhere, however, it is abundantly clear which gender is the agent of culture in their program for Creoleness. They envision the return to oral Creole culture as "collect[ing] a new harvest of first-hand seeds": "We may then, through the marriage of our trained senses, inseminate Creole in the new writing. In short, *we shall create a literature*" (896; italics in original). If the male figure is responsible for the insemination/creation of this reborn culture, the female carries the blame for "cultural amputation," for cutting off the male writer from this culture:

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[22] Further specific critique of *créolité* is not indicated here, but I cannot resist noting some of the other criticisms leveled at the *créolistes* and their literary writing. Richard and Sally Price comment on the trio's rewriting of history "to highlight the processual importance of the 'crucible' of the plantation," in which "they deny that 'immigrants'—whether African slaves or indentured Africans, Indians, or Chinese—had experienced any sort of 'diversity' in their own homelands . . . their particular Old World is seen as a cultural monolith" (129-130). They also depict the French Caribbean plantations as "relatively 'gentle' institution[s]" as compared with the Spanish, English, or Dutch (130). By criticizing the early maroons for "having in a sense taken the easy way out by abandoning the plantation hotbed of creolization . . . the *créolistes* obscure the ways in which these maroon communities were, in fact, the most thoroughly (and earliest fully) 'creolized' of *all* New World communities" in the sense of their "inter-African syncretism" (130). Price and Price also point out that the *créolistes* "foster an illusion of diversity by peopling the island [Martinique] with a reified set of categories drawn from cross-cutting kinds of schemata (class, 'race,' national origin, etc)" (132). Richard Burton critiques the *créolistes*' pronouncements on Creole linguistics, pointing out that "[t]heir stance against decreolization, and their commitment to the principle of *déviance maximale* in writing creole, expose[s] them to the charge of wishing to conserve a rigid 'hyperbasilectal' creole that few, if any, French West Indians actually speak any more" ("*Ki Moun*" 22). Bernabé, in particular, in defending "basilectal creole against interlectal corruption appears to run against the open, progressive, innovative quality attributed to Créolité itself" (23).

> Every time a mother, thinking she is favoring the learning of the French language, represses Creole in a child's throat, [she] is in fact bearing a blow to the latter's imagination, repressing his creativity . . . the tragedy lived by many of our writers comes from the castration which, linguistically, they were victims of during their childhood. (899)

The *créolistes* here target mothers who try to ensure their child's social mobility by enforcing the French language, similar to the "[s]chool teachers of the great period of French assimilation [who] were the slave traders of our artistic impulse" (899). It is interesting to note, however, this specific use of a symbolic mother figure not as the guardian of the mother tongue, the Creole language, but rather as the preventer of male Creole creativity.

A. James Arnold has launched the most energetic critique to date of the politics of gender and sexuality in Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant's work; his arguments deserve thorough study. Arnold argues that *créolité*, as articulated in *Éloge de la créolité* and *Lettres créoles* (1991) as well as the trio's literary writing, is "not only masculine but masculinist" ("Erotics" 5). He traces this masculinist tendency through Césaire's rejection of the feminine mother and Fanon's suppression of homoeroticism in *Black Skin, White*

Masks, as well as Glissant's evocation of the male Maroon as Caribbean hero. Arnold suggests that in their turn to sexual stereotypes of different ethnoclasses ("*Creolité*" 45) and "aggressive heterosexual eroticism" ("Erotics" 17) in their fictional writing, as well as their invocation of a male storyteller as the icon of *créolité* (despite a dense cultural history of women as oral storytellers), the *créolistes* engage in a "rewriting of history . . . [that] responds to a dynamic that can only be explained by a particular construction of masculinity" ("Erotics" 13). Arnold also points out that the male *créolistes*, in formal and informal venues, denounce French West Indian women writers for not adequately producing "creole" writing, as they define it. What is particularly interesting for my argument is Arnold's assertion that the women writers "have a clear aversion to theorizing their project" ("Erotics" 16), even though they produce writing that is much more successfully creolized, in Arnold's view, than the male writers' overdetermined, programmatic contributions. Although I will argue at the end of this chapter that this statement about Caribbean women's theory—usefully polemical as it may be in the context of Arnold's critique of the *créolistes*—overlooks a significant body of Caribbean women's critical and scholarly work in each of the linguistic regions, Arnold's point about the presence of creolized dynamics in Caribbean women's writing is a valuable one.

Price and Price defer to Arnold's literary critical analysis of the *créolistes*' sexism, adding to it their reading of the *créolistes* through an ethnography of Martiniquan gender roles. They point out that, given the *Éloge* writers' treatment of women in their novels and critical writing, "it should not be surprising that they tend to deal with living female writers and critics by simply silencing them" (141). The Prices offer a startling appraisal of Chamoiseau and Confiant's reactions to the 1995 visit to Martinique of Annie Lebrun, the metropolitan French author of a work on Aimé Césaire. When Lebrun publicly criticized the *créolité* movement, Chamoiseau and Confiant "sprang into action, donning brass knuckles (figuratively speaking), and leaving her for dead in the gutters of local newspapers" (Price and Price 142).[23] Their responses combined misogyny, homophobia, and cultural essentialism: Confiant challenged her right to speak about a Martiniquan writer, asserting that because her arguments did not come from "an Antillean, an African, or a black American, they are totally intolerable and unbearable coming from you, French woman, Westerner, overblown and wallowing in your colonial smugness" (qtd. in Price and Price 142). He suggested that the male local sponsors of her talk were 'hiding behind her skirts,' and lamented these men's ability, as teachers, to turn male students into "real men, men standing tall in their britches" (qtd. in Price and Price 142). Chamoiseau further suggested that her opposition to the *créolité* movement was the result of "psychiatric disorder," and "evoked with ridicule the 'quivering of her ovaries' upon reading Césaire" (qtd. in Price and Price 142-43). Lebrun responded to these attacks in her 1996 *Statue cou coupé*, a critique of the *Éloge* writers that Bongie calls "paranoid, self-important, hyperbolic, ridiculous, patronizing" (347). Bongie acknowledges the validity of her comments that the *Éloge* writers capitulate to a "new exoticism," that they exhibit a "'Stalinist' intolerance" of variances from their *créolité*, and that their (and Glissant's) "emphasis on creolization, relationality, and chaos . . . serves only to mask . . . the spread of a 'globally generalized Club Méditerranée'" (Lebrun 43; qtd. in Bongie 344-5); but he points out the "highly offensive" manner of her treatment of the *créolistes*, when she speaks of "the insignificance of their arguments and, to say the least, the mediocrity of their novelistic production" (Lebrun 12; qtd. in Bongie 342).

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[23] Inspired perhaps by Lebrun's characterization of *créolité* as "the Club Med of literature" (qtd. in Price and Price 142), Price and Price playfully note, "Every private club in Martinique has its hired bouncer at the door, and the *créolistes* are no exception. In normal times this role seems to fall to Confiant, more visible in the media than Bernabé and more rarely caught smiling than Chamoiseau. Meanwhile Chamoiseau, still basking in the glory of his Prix Goncourt, plays a role more akin to the establishment's friendly owner" (142).

Price and Price further comment on *Lettres créoles*, Chamoiseau and Confiant's canon-defining study of French Antillean literature. They point out that the study ignores Dany Bébel-Gisler, chastizes Ina Césaire because she writes about folktales "without focusing—like them—on the figure of the male *conteur*" (Price and Price 143), and praises Maryse Condé only for "'growing up' and seeing Antillean realities as they do" (qtd. in Price and Price 143). *Lettres créoles* gives more attention to Simone Schwarz-Bart, but it is praise steeped in "naked sexism" (Price and Price 143):

> A meeting with the Guadeloupean novelist Simone Schwarz-Bart is always a pleasure. Beautiful in her inalterable manner, the hair flowing free in the wake of former braids, the blasé look of her eyelids, the wide smile, a simultaneous seductiveness and simplicity. . . . To reread, and reread once more, her *Télumée Miracle* (1972) is to be enriched each time. (Chamoiseau and Confiant 182; qtd. in Price and Price 143)

It seems clear that for the *créolistes*, as for other notable male Caribbean writers, women are useful to Caribbean culture primarily as symbols of culture (and in *créolité*, they rarely even gain this status), but women writers are not to be taken seriously.[24]

In the Anglophone Caribbean, Kamau Brathwaite has developed a body of work on creolization that reproduces this gendering of cultural production. Brathwaite has long investigated how the "rootlessness" endemic to West Indian life is a result of the fragmented culture and lack of wholeness resulting from a plural society ("Timehri" 35-36). If the first phase of West Indian artistic and intellectual life was to identify this pluralism and fragmentation, claims Brathwaite in 1970, the second phase will be "seeking to transcend and heal" this problem ("Timehri" 36). In this article, Brathwaite documents how his years in Ghana brought him an awareness "of community, of cultural wholeness" that helped him find "Africa in the Caribbean" (38). He argues that recognition of ancestral relationships with either Amerindian or African folk culture can offer a language and sensibility to the artist in plural Caribbean society—a resistant sensibility, because "for the Caribbean, as elsewhere, the basis of culture lies in the folk . . . a people who, from the centre of an oppressive system have been able to survive, adapt, recreate" (*Contradictory Omens* 64).

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[24] Ernest Pépin and Raphaël Confiant's 1998 'defence' of the *Éloge* responds to criticisms that *Antillanité* and *Négritude* had already articulated many of their propositions, but do not respond to concerns about their elision of similar work done in the other linguistic regions of the Caribbean, or concerns about their exclusion of women from *créolité* and Antillean cultural production (see Pépin and Confiant). In fact, as Myriam Rosser points out, their article "evokes the struggle for cultural authority as a battle between important male writers, past and present" (475).

Several of Brathwaite's most notable contributions to the discussion of creolization in the Caribbean are *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica*, discussed above, his work on 'nation language,' and *Contradictory Omens: Cultural Diversity and Integration in the Caribbean*. In *History of the Voice*, he distinguishes between imposed English, creole English, and nation language, which he sees as a primarily oral and African-influenced "*submerged* area of . . . dialect" (*History* 2). "Nation language" highlights the pluralistic, communal face of Caribbean poetics: "Above all, *nation language* with all its resources ancient and modern (demonic, demotic, magically surreal, vodouniste) looks always to the future of the nation/language/culture" ("Dialogue" 20). In *Contradictory Omens*, he focuses on creolization in the Caribbean, examining processes of acculturation and interculturation:

> Started as a result of slavery and therefore in the first instance involving black and white, European and African, in a fixed superiority/inferiority relationship, it tended first to the culturation of white and black to the new Caribbean environment; and, at the same time, because of the terms and conditions of slavery, to the acculturation ["the yoking . . . of one culture to another"] of black to white norms. There was at the same time, however, significant interculturation

> ["unplanned, unstructured but osmotic relationship"] going on between these two elements. (6, 11)

Shalini Puri usefully points out that Brathwaite's formulation is important for "its careful attention to the unequal terms of interculturation" ("Canonized" 19)—attention that is sometimes lacking in more celebratory analyses of creolization. Brathwaite suggests that in Jamaican plantation society's bringing together of black and white, "[t]he friction created by this confrontation was cruel, but it was also creative" (*Contradictory* 22). Brathwaite's emphasis on the convergences of African and European cultural elements was, as Chris Bongie notes, "anti-Manichean" in contrast to the work of other historians that emphasized resistance through the "essential apartness of colonizer and colonized" (54).

Brathwaite's version of creolization in *Contradictory Omens*, however, barely includes Asian and South Asian Caribbean culture: he prioritizes the African heritage of the Caribbean over other ethnicities, arguing for "the acceptance of the culture of this black ex-African majority as the paradigm and norm for the entire society" (*Contradictory Omens* 30). Brathwaite sees the black/white confrontation as central to (because 'original' in) creole dynamics; these dynamics become "assaulted (or called upon to respond to) new waves of cultural incursion: the Chinese and East Indians" (6). The "wholeness" of Caribbean society, he argues, depends in part on the "new" groups' responses to "the existing submerged mother of the creole system, Africa" (6). This orientation leads Puri to note that "[u]sing creolization as a figure for Caribbean hybridity thus has its own complex legacy of exclusion" ("Canonized" 20). Bolland argues that Brathwaite's theory of creolization also neglects social class as a factor: "[t]he cultural and political nationalism implied in the creole-society thesis is based on a populist conception of cultural homogeneity that overlooks class distinctions and hostilities... The creole-society thesis does not enable us to see how or why the system of domination in the colonies changed from status inequalities during slavery to class inequalities after legal emancipation" (72-3).

Brathwaite's focus on the African elements in creolization has also tended to draw him away from a representation of creolization as *changing* culture. As Chris Bongie notes, Brathwaite has increasingly moved away from his anti-Manichean stance towards emphasis on "the continued *presence* . . . of the original cultures that one would suppose the creolization process to have utterly transformed" (55; italics in original). In fact, Bongie proposes, there is "a *decreasing* concern with creolization in Brathwaite's later work" (56; italics in original). Brathwaite's appeal to a 'prismatic' model of cultural co-habitation involves "'convergence without merging,' in which 'ancestral heritage' continues to play a foundational role in shaping the dynamics of the creolization process" (Bongie 56). This constitutes, for Bongie, a "politics of *likeness,*" a search for "the 'similarities' and 'continuities' linking Africa and the (African) Caribbean" (58; italics in original). Bolland also notes that Brathwaite's creole-society theory assumes a continuity with African practices that, in many cases, is not valid: with regard to obeah, for example, Bolland points out that "[t]he specific forms of social organization to which magical practices are linked in African societies did not exist in the Caribbean slave societies" (68). Therefore, "[i]n failing to note the links between the activities of obeah-men and specific social organizations, Brathwaite fails to note that obeah has taken on a *whole new meaning* in the societies of the Caribbean, a meaning derived from the power structures, the social oppositions, in these societies" (Bolland 69; italics in original). J. Michael Dash, in fact, notes that Brathwaite's poetic search for "an original coherence" and "foundational rhythmic utterance" belies his historical study of creolization: "[t]he problem is that he is conceptually ill-equipped to deal with the radical openness of the creolist model" (*Other America* 72).

Brathwaite's work on Caribbean culture also demonstrates gendered exclusions. A. James Arnold points out that Brathwaite's Calibanic figure for Caribbean cultural identity, drawn from Césaire's negritude poetry, is a "spiritually transformed Afro-Caribbean hero, black and male" ("Caliban" 237), whereas Caribbean women are relegated to a passive cultural role. In his lecture "An Alternative View of Caribbean History," Brathwaite examines the allegorical roles of the key figures in *The Tempest*, arguing that Miranda is a "broker" of imperialism because she teaches Caliban Prospero's language (45) (making her a compatriot of the *créolistes*' language-castrating mother), and that Sycorax, Caliban's mother, is "an archetype for our protest . . . [and] the kind of woman, that is very common . . . to all parts of the Third World" (44). She is "the carrier, the keeper, the protector of the native culture" (44). Sycorax was banished by Prospero, "but the point about her is that she became submerged . . . Now applied to culture, this woman Sycorax has not been able to contribute to Caribbean culture, but she still carries within herself, she still carries in a submerged manner, the very essence of the native culture" (44). Brathwaite goes on to clarify the connection between Sycorax and contemporary Caribbean women, suggesting that "women of the Third World . . . have not yet, despite all the effort, reached that trigger of visibility which is necessary for a whole society. Most of our women are not given the same kind of natural privileges that men have, and most of our women are not given opportunities to express themselves fully outside of the domestic framework" (44).

Brathwaite's startling suggestion that Caribbean women, in the image of Sycorax, have "not been able to contribute to Caribbean culture" (44) ignores the substantial critical and literary output of Caribbean women even at the time of his writing (1984), as well as their myriad contributions to the oral and folk culture that Brathwaite himself valorizes. As Arnold points out, Brathwaite sees Third World women's role as "communicat[ing] nation language to all her little Calibans through her mother's milk"

(Arnold, "Caliban" 240). In this paradigm, "her role as an agent of cultural change in fact collapses into a purely natural function," which suggests that "within Brathwaite's discourse, the day when she will realize her own *cultural* potential in the Third World may never come" (240; italics in original). Brathwaite's poetry reproduces the image of Caribbean women as passive carriers of submerged culture: in *Mother Poem* he writes, "[t]his poem is about porous limestone: my mother, Barbados" (*Mother Poem* n.p.) and "black sycorax my mother" (47). In this long poem the mother is the island, but the men (specifically males) are the people of the island: the mother's plot of land is threatened by "the fact that the males of her life have become creatures, often agents, of the owner-merchant" (n.p.). Bev Brown also notes that Brathwaite's *Mother Poem* and *Sun Poem* demonstrate "creolization mystified as masculine, creationist theory" (71). His use of sun-god myths, "emphasizing patrilineage and privilege," and of Akan-derived androcentric creation myths allow him to propose a singularly male experience of adaptation and "man/oeuvring" (Brown 70; Brathwaite, *Sun Poem* 93). Brathwaite's critical and poetic work show clearly a gendering of male and female cultural roles in creolization.

Antonio Benítez Rojo, like Harris and Glissant, sees creolization as processual; or, in his formulation, "not merely a process (a word that implies forward movement) but a discontinuous series of recurrences, of happenings, whose sole law is change" ("Three Words" 55). His major work, *The Repeating Island*, may seem to generate a theoretical articulation of creolization that offers a foothold for seeing differences of gender and sexuality as constituent parts of Caribbean hybridity. Resolutely postmodern, Benítez Rojo's Caribbean creolization seems all-encompassing. Because of the diversity of languages in the region, he argues that "[t]he Caribbean space . . . is saturated with messages . . . the spectrum of Caribbean codes is so varied and dense that it holds the region suspended in a soup of signs" (*Repeating Island* 2). Further, he extrapolates from the region's geography as an "island bridge connecting, in 'another way,' North and

South America" to tabulate a "Chaos" of "unstable condensations, turbulences, whirlpools, clumps of bubbles, frayed seaweed, sunken galleons, crashing breakers, flying fish, seagull squawks, downpours, nighttime phosphorescences, eddies and pools, uncertain voyages of signification . . ." (2). The Caribbean, with its "sociocultural fluidity" as well as historical and meteorological "turbulence," is like "an island that 'repeats' itself" and "inspires multidisciplinary maps of unexpected designs" (3): "the Caribbean is . . . a cultural meta-archipelago without center and without limits, a chaos within which there is an island that proliferates endlessly" (9). He brings together Chaos theory, with its emphasis on repetition, process and the "rhythms that show themselves within the marginal, the regional, the incoherent, the heterogeneous" (3), and postmodernism, which gives him a vocabulary for reading differences. Benítez Rojo argues that "[a] syncretic artifact is not a synthesis, but rather a signifier made of differences" (21), and chooses to characterize Caribbean heterogeneity as "supersyncretism" (12). It is Benítez Rojo's constant play with the breadth of this supersyncretism, as well as the fact that his model does not rely on primarily racial and cultural hybridity as the foundation for creolization, that might seem to suggest that the form of creolization discussed in *The Repeating Island* could be used more widely for discussing differences of gender and sexuality.

However, Benítez Rojo's formulation has several weaknesses, some more glaring than others. He argues for the primacy of racial difference over gender and economic differences: he says the Caribbean is "an unpredictable society that originated in the most violent currents and eddies of modern history where sexual and class differences are overlaid with differences of an ethnographic nature" (27). I am not arguing that racial and ethnic differences are not fundamental components of Caribbean social history, but Benítez Rojo's statement that "the concept of 'social class' is usually displaced by 'race,' or in any event by 'skin color'" (200) simplifies the mutual imbrication of color and class in the definition of Caribbean social hierarchies. He also develops his argument in a later chapter in a manner that erases all potential differences but skin colour: "Every Caribbean person, after an attempt has been made to reach his culture's origins, will find himself on a deserted beach, naked and alone, coming out of the water as though shivering and shipwrecked . . . without any identification papers other than the uncertain and turbulent memorandum inscribed in his scars, tattoos, and skin color (217). The 'identification papers' of gender, sexuality and class also mark the "Caribbean person['s] . . . attempt . . . to reach his [sic] culture's origins." Moreover, without suggesting an equivalency between sexual difference, gender, and genitalia, it can be noted that Benítez Rojo's elision of the differences between a (metaphorically) naked male and female Caribbean body seems surprising, given his frequent focus (discussed below) on the workings of the female body.

As well, the breadth of his embrace of syncretism, in fact, makes it too non-specific: an articulation of the Caribbean as "a paradoxical fractal form extending infinitely through a finite world" (270) says nothing about the material conditions that make for paradox, repetition and difference in the Caribbean. He does mention historical precedents for diversity in the Caribbean, but the majority of his theoretical statements in the framing chapters of his monograph are sweeping and therefore diluted. As Shalini Puri notes, Benítez Rojo's designation of the Caribbean's "extremely complex cultural spectrum" (*Repeating Island* 269) as a "soup of signs" (2, 269) "renders these signs opaque and equivalent" ("Canonized" 14). She points out that in ebullient statements such as "[the Caribbean] . . . is a feedback machine with asymmetrical workings, like the sea, the wind, the clouds, the uncanny novel, the food chain, the music of Malaya, Gödel's theorem and fractal mathematics" (*Repeating Island* 11), he engages in "epistemological leveling" (Puri, "Canonized" 15): "[I]n surrendering the ability to distinguish between different signs of cultural hybridity, [his strategy] obscures the inequality among the signs and their imbrication in particular social interests and (in)equalities" (15). Puri offers a necessary intervention into the discussion of creolization and hybridity in the Caribbean, the implications of which extend beyond her critique of *The Repeating Island.* In calling for a "materialist Caribbean cultural studies," she notes that

> formalist celebrations of cultural hybridity in the Caribbean leave us ill equipped to distinguish between the cultural hybridities and border crossings metonymically represented by, say, the slave ships, United States warships, Haitian refugee rafts, and luxury cruise liners. These hybridities, it seems to me, must be read in relation to unequal histories of expansionism, oppression, and creative resistance. Furthermore, *refusing* some of these hybridities and border crossings may have less to do with a modernist nostalgia for secure origins than with a will to physical survival and a struggle for political self-determination. (15)

Puri's comments warn against setting up equivalencies between hybridities, and against a too-celebratory reading of creolization and hybridity in Caribbean cultural and social space.

Benítez Rojo's formulation of Caribbean difference is also problematic, perhaps irreparably so, for reasons of misogyny and racial stereotyping. He takes the conceit of woman/mother = culture/land to a new low:

> Let's be realistic: the Atlantic is the Atlantic (with all its port cities) because it was once engendered by the copulation of Europe—that insatiable solar bull—with the Caribbean archipelago; the Atlantic is today the Atlantic (the navel of capitalism) because Europe, in its mercantilist laboratory, conceived the project of inseminating the Caribbean womb with the blood of Africa; the Atlantic is today the Atlantic (NATO, World Bank, New York Stock Exchange, European Economic Community, etc.) because it was the painfully delivered child of the

> Caribbean, whose vagina was stretched between continental clamps, between the *encomienda* of Indians and the slaveholding plantation . . . After the blood and salt water spurts, quickly sew up torn flesh and apply the antiseptic tinctures, the gauze and surgical plaster; then the febrile wait through the forming of a scar: suppurating, always suppurating. (*Repeating Island* 5)

His fascination with metaphors of bodily and other fluids, female or not, resurfaces again and again. He maintains that "the Caribbean is not an apocalyptic world; it is not a phallic world in pursuit of the vertical desires of ejaculation and castration," but rather, "the culture of the Caribbean . . . is not terrestrial but aquatic" (10-11). Benítez Rojo gives as an example of the chaos of creolization the cult of the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre in Cuba, showing the chain of signifiers from Taino, European, and African goddess figures that makes up the Virgen. Both Oshun and Aphrodite, he notes, "came from the sea and inhabit the marine, fluvial, and vaginal tides" (15); linking the feminine principle and oceanic images, he argues for the "flow of marine foam" that connects Africa and Europe and, by implication, all the "Peoples of the Sea" (16). He also finds in carnival a key example of syncretism (he, of course, was not the first), suggesting that "there is something strongly feminine in this extraordinary *fiesta*: its flux, its diffuse sensuality, its generative force, its capacity to nourish and conserve (juices, spring, pollen, rain, seed, shoot, ritual sacrifice . . .)" (29). However, as Kutzinski points out, Benítez Rojo's description of the carnival scene contains no representations of women—the "feminine" qualities of the *fiesta* refer, rather, to "men dressed and painted as women" (*Repeating Island* 29; Kutzinski 177).

Benítez Rojo also associates these "feminine" principles with Caribbean men and women of colour. First there are the ubiquitous "two old black women" under his balcony during the Cuban missile crisis: these women pass by "in a certain kind of way" that lets him know "that there would be no apocalypse" (*Repeating Island* 10). The essentialism of his 'in a certain kind of way' is accompanied by his continued focus on women's bodies: "there was a kind of ancient and golden powder between their gnarled legs, a scent of basil and mint in their dress, a symbolic, ritual wisdom in their gesture and their gay chatter" (10). As Vera Kutzinski also notes, Benítez Rojo characterizes the women as possessing "feminine 'wisdom'" as opposed to "masculine 'reason'": "it seems as if these female bodies know what it means to be Cuban, even if their minds do not . . . it is apparently up to the male writer to distill ancient knowledge from those inarticulate sounds and gestures" (Kutzinski 175-76). Benítez Rojo also associates polyrhythmic play, 'in a certain kind of way,' with the "copper, black, and yellow rhythms" of "the Peoples of the Sea" (*Repeating Island* 26). White rhythms are "binary" (26), according to Benítez Rojo, but the polyrhythm of Caribbean performance means that "Caribbean people excel more in the spectator sports (boxing, baseball, basketball, cricket, gymnastics, track and field, etc.) than in the more subdued, austere sports," and makes it "no surprise that the people of the Caribbean should be good boxers and also, of course, good musicians, good singers, good dancers, and good writers" (22). Benítez Rojo's *The Repeating Island* brings the possible sexual and racial stereotypes of creolization into high relief.

Before turning to Caribbean feminist critiques of creolization, I will outline briefly here two theorists in postcolonial studies whose reading of creolization may be useful for both Caribbean studies and this dissertation in particular. Theories of cultural hybridity have a significant purchase in postcolonial studies, as indicated by the centrality of the terms hybridity and syncretism in *The Empire Writes Back* (1989).[25] This key text in the creation of the field of postcolonial studies argues that "the strength of post-colonial theory may well lie in its inherently comparative methodology and the hybridized and syncretic view of the modern world which this implies" (Ashcroft et al 37). One example, Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*, which is focused on black diasporic culture but a key resource in larger postcolonial studies, challenges "the fatal junction of the concept of nationality with the concept of culture" (2) and the "unthinking assumption that cultures always flow into patterns congruent with the borders of essentially homogeneous nation states" (5). He examines the double consciousness of people of African descent in diaspora and determines that the terms "creolisation, métissage, mestizaje, and hybridity" are "rather unsatisfactory ways of naming the processes of cultural mutation and restless (dis)continuity that exceed racial discourse and avoid capture by its agents" (2). Gilroy contributes to the discussion a play on the words "roots" and "routes," pointing to the usefulness of seeing identity as "a process of movement and mediation" (routes) rather than as rootedness (19). Gilroy's emphasis on mobility, ships, and routes offers a cogent metaphor for identity in a process of creolization. However, this ship metaphor, while historicizing black subjects' 'crisscrossing movements' through the Atlantic "not only as commodities but engaged in various struggles towards emancipation, autonomy, and citizenship" (16), appears to be developed through a genealogy of exclusively black male sailors (12-13). Such a metaphor does not, of course, on its own disable a theoretical model for use with women writers, but it is notable given the frequency with which theories of creolization are gendered male. Gilroy's distinction between roots and routes indicates an articulation of creolization that will reappear in Chapters Two and Three of this dissertation.

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[25] Ashcroft et al use the terms syncretism and hybridity more or less interchangeably to refer to "the process by which previously distinct linguistic categories, and, by extension, cultural formations, merge into a single new form" (15). The authors further argue that "[s]yncretism is the condition within which post-colonial societies operate" (180).

Homi Bhabha is one of the most significant contributors to the study of hybridity and identity in postcolonial studies. His theories of the 'third space' or 'in-between spaces' are importantly different from theories of hybridity that, as Bart Moore-Gilbert characterizes Bhabha's position, "seek to minimize the challenges posed by cultural difference in order to preserve the 'organicist' mythology of the 'host' community or nation" (Moore-Gilbert 125). Bhabha proposes that

> What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. ("Locations of Culture" 1-2)

Bhabha uses semiotic theory and Lacanian psychoanalysis to offer analogies for how colonial identity works, arguing that cultures function like a language system. In the same way that a self always has an ambivalent relationship with its desired/denied Other, the parts of a sentence work together to create what he identifies as a space between binaries that is profoundly disruptive to the dominant term (self, colonizer) and that constitutes the hybrid space in which dialogue between colonizer and colonized takes place. Bhabha uses the metaphor of language, in part, because "[t]he work of the word impedes the question of the transparent assimilation of cross-cultural meanings in a unitary sign of 'human' culture" (qtd. in Moore-Gilbert 126). He desires a model for difference that admits resistance and intervention without "fixed identifications" ("Locations of Culture" 4).

Bhabha is useful for suggesting an alternative terrain for the articulation of hybridity and for anti-colonial resistance—rather than direct opposition and resistance in more overtly political terms, he reminds us that the psychic and the realm of representations also constitute places where identity is formed and where resistance can take place. His wish for resistance without 'fixed identifications' also links him with Harris and Glissant. However, in many of Bhabha's formulations of this resistance, hybridity and resistance require no agent for their performance, and are therefore arbitrary. His location of resistance in the realm of the semiotic or psychic also becomes problematic when his model cannot translate to material and historical resistances. As Moore-Gilbert points out, this resistance "cannot function for the colonized as the grounds on which to construct a considered counter-discourse, let alone as a means of mobilizing a strategic programme of material and 'public' forms of political action from within the oppressed culture" (133). Given this dissertation's concern that models of creolization take into account the social effects of hierarchies of difference, and offer ways to resist marginalization, Bhabha's model appears to be articulated on a register too abstract to be immediately useful. I am also concerned that his model cannot account for the historical particularities of oppression based on gender, race, class, and sexual orientation: these social differences cannot simply be plugged into an examination of the functioning of difference that is developed through metaphors of semiotics and psychoanalysis. Moore-Gilbert points out that Bhabha's use of "narrow and ahistorical analytic models of affective ambivalence and the discursive disturbance which accompanies it" can result in "homogenization"; he uses similar models to Fanon, but lacks the latter's "insistence that the psychic economy of colonialism mediates material, historically grounded, relations of unequal power" (151, 147). This means, according to Moore-Gilbert, that Bhabha's "presumed 'unisonance' of the cultures or social fractions in question" cannot account for the "internal contradictions and differential histories" posed by gender, race, and class (129).

III

As noted earlier, this dissertation aims to read the gendered and sexualized politics in existing theories of creolization; to develop an argument about Caribbean women writers' and critics' contributions to, and critiques of, the study of creolization; and to investigate more broadly the ways that theories of creolization, as hegemonic discourses, are used to obscure social inequities. I offered critiques of specific theorists in the previous section of this dissertation, but before proceeding to an analysis of Caribbean feminist work on diversity I wish to note more general critiques of theories of hybridity, creolization, and multiculturalism. Despite what I do believe is the transformative vision of many theories of creolization, symbols of difference and diversity can be manipulated to mask present and historical discrimination. Françoise Vergès, for instance, argues that *métissage* can be packaged as a consumer product, "an 'artifact' in the Great French Museum of Human Diversity as long as the historical conditions that gave birth to this diversity—colonial wars, slavery, the construction of the French nation—are denied or swept under the rug" ("Métissage" 81; trans. in Price and Price, 154 n18). The social critique implicit or explicit in work by the writers and cultural workers in this dissertation demands that theories of creolization be employed not to mask but to challenge discrimination and inequity.

In an Australian context, Ghassan Hage has pointed out that "multicultural tolerance should be understood as a mode of spatial management of cultural difference while reproducing the structuring of this difference around a dominant culture" (19); it is "a form of symbolic violence in which a mode of domination is presented as a form of egalitarianism" (28). Moreover, state-sponsored multiculturalism "mystifies the inegalitarian nature of relation[s]," presenting tolerance as if it were truly egalitarian, which "uses the advocacy of [tolerance] to counter the egalitarian struggles aimed at bringing about" egalitarian relations (24). Stratton and Ang concur, and suggest that official multiculturalism tends to "freeze the fluidity of identity by the very fact that it is concerned with synthesizing unruly and unpredictable cultural identities and differences into a harmonious unity-in-diversity . . . not to *foster* cultural differences but, on the contrary, to direct them into safe channels" (157; italics in original).[26] Multiculturalism, according to them, therefore "can be understood as coming out of the same modernist ideological assumptions as those on which the notion of the homogeneous nation-state was based" (158).

A number of critics have suggested that the discourse of *mestizaje* in particular entails not just a management of difference but a valorization of "whitening." Benítez Rojo argues that *mestizaje* "involves . . . an argument that sees in the biological, economic, and cultural whitening of Caribbean society a series of successive steps toward 'progress'" (*Repeating Island* 26). Ileana Rodríguez, in her study of "the intersections of gender, ethnicity, and nation in times of transition to Modernity in Caribbean narratives written by women" (1), similarly points out that "purity of blood is what is referred to by *mestizaje* and it expresses racism, a living ideology of the official nation-state" (17). She further notes, "[i]n mestizo or mulatto republics, ethnicity is always a threat, a lurking phantom, a fluid term shot through with fear and signalled in some cultures, as in Cuba today, without words, simply by rubbing one's right index finger over one's left forearm. The only fixed terms are the extremes, where biology banishes all doubt, as in blacks, whites, and 'true-blooded Indians'" (17). Carlos Guillermo Wilson further discusses the linking, in Panama, of the processes of creolization with racial whitening through the concept of "Panameñista": he "condemn[s] the aspects of creolization that have as their sole goal and intention to erase the African heritage in Caribbean culture and identity . . . [and] denounce[s] the rejection of the African in the process of creolization which initially began with the rape of young African slave girls and which still persists today in the hatred concealed in the edict: 'It is necessary to better or improve the race'" (41-2). The concept of Panameñista, he argues, led to the 1941 Constitution of Panama which encouraged immigration that would 'improve the race' and called for the denationalization of non-Spanish-speaking black West Indians in Panama (41).

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[26] State-sponsored multiculturalism in a settler society may seem a long way from theories of creolization in Caribbean culture; but take, for instance, the example of national mottoes in the Caribbean: Jamaica's "Out of Many, One People"; Guyana's "One People, One Nation, One Destiny"; Trinidad's "Together We Aspire, Together We Achieve"; Haiti's "Unity is Strength" (listed in Puri, "Canonized" 17). Part of this dissertation's project is investigating the possible conservative effects of a celebration of difference (and a championing of creolization as a regional tourist attraction, for example) in the face of continued social tensions, inequalities, and violence. As Puri notes, in the above national slogans the "rhetoric of hybridity displaces the issue of social equality between and within groups" (17).

Shalini Puri, writing of Caribbean hybridity, notes the "liberal multicultural" use of cultural hybridity pointed out by Hage, Stratton, and Ang, arguing that it "has long offered a way of advancing culturalist notions of difference as inclusion or nonconflictual diversity" and "functions . . . as an assimilationist discourse" ("Canonized" 12). Especially significant for her article, however, is the postmodern use of discourses of hybridity in which "border crossing, nomadism, travel, homelessness, and nationlessness have emerged as important tropes for cultural liberation" (13). She argues that both uses of hybridity share "the displacement of the issue of equality, a displacement of the *politics* of hybridity by the *poetics* of hybridity" (13). Rather than disrupting the power of the nation-state, which theorists such as Bhabha argue relies on "homogenizing narratives of the nation," hybridity, argues Puri, and its "discursive displacement of issues of equality . . . can provide a powerful means of *securing* rather than disrupting the status quo" (13-14; italics in original). Discourses of hybridity in the Caribbean, she suggests, "perform several functions": they "provide a basis for national and regional legitimacy" by articulating "a syncretic New World identity"; they "offer a way of balancing or displacing discourses of equality, which has led to their importance in many instances for securing bourgeois nationalist hegemony"; and "they have been implicated in managing racial politics—either by promoting cultural over racial hybridity or by sanctioning racial hybridities that do not threaten the status quo" (23-24). Puri also notes the elision of gender inequality in cultural nationalist discourse that relies on hybridity: she points to prime minister Eric Williams' invocation of creolized "Mother Trinidad" as an example of "the politics of gender, sexuality, and family" underlying cultural nationalist projects (24).

Her distinction between dominant and oppositional invocations of hybridity is crucial for this dissertation. As an example of a conservative use of hybridity, Puri notes the Puerto Rican nationalistic symbol of the Jíbaro or poor mestizo peasant, used to construct a Creole identity in resistance against Spanish colonialism. This symbol had the effect of "nationalizing a whitened Creole identity and symbolically erasing the troubled issues of slavery, black and white racial mixing, and the claims of blacks and mulattoes upon the nation" (18). The Partido Popular Democrático (PPD), the Puerto Rican party that advocated commonwealth status for the country, later adopted the Jíbaro as its emblem, in which case "a Creole-hybrid poetics was appended to the antiegalitarian economic policies of dependent capitalism . . . [a linkage made] possible in part because of the ability of that symbol to gloss over or *stabilize* the contradictions in populist bourgeois nationalism" (18). An example such as this leads Puri to argue that "we need to be able to negotiate analytically between the *epistemic disruption* of the center by the margin . . . and the *economic consolidation* of the center by the margin, which the neocolonial economic dependency of most of the Caribbean makes so painfully clear" (19; italics in original).

Puri offers as an example of oppositional hybridity a feature of Trinidadian popular culture that may prove useful to this dissertation's search for a feminist politics of creolization. She cites the emergence of the musical form 'chutney soca,' combining the conservative Indo-Trinidadian music of chutney with Afro-Trinidadian calypso. Key performers of chutney soca, according to Puri, draw from what she calls "dougla poetics" (26), invoking the disavowed figure of the black/Indian racially mixed dougla. Puri argues that Drupatee Ramgoonai's 1988 chutney soca song "Lick Down Me Nani"—with its verbal play on the confusion between the images of an Indian grandmother being hit by a taxi, an invitation to oral sex, and sexual violence committed on a woman—challenges racial stereotyping as well as Indian patriarchal codes for women's sexuality. She suggests,

> Keeping in mind, then, that the original meaning of the word "dougla" was "bastard" or "illegitimate," I suggest that one might think of a dougla poetics as a means for articulating potentially progressive cultural identities delegitimized by both the Afro-Creole dominant culture and the Indian "mother culture." (32)

"If creolization as a figure for hybridity has exhausted its radicalism in contemporary Trinidad and now serves status quoist class agendas," she claims, and "Indian" and "African" identities are "discursively held apart by a series of stereotypical oppositions," then dougla hybridity "becomes a potential site for the collision of classifications" (32). Additionally, she sees in dougla poetics the possibility for feminist agency: "because constructions of race are gendered in very particular ways, the dougla's potential disruption of dominant racial stereotypes could provide an opportunity for specifically *feminist* contestations of dominant gender and race imagery" (33). She is careful, however, not to make claims for dougla hybridity as paradigmatic of Caribbean culture, mindful of the danger of essentializing cultural hybridity (30).

Vera Kutzinski's *Sugar's Secrets: Race and the Erotics of Cuban Nationalism* offers the fullest feminist critique of Caribbean discourses of creolization that I have yet seen. Her study of sexualized and racialized national discourses in Cuban *mestizaje*, combined with Puri's attempt to find a feminist model for oppositional hybridity, offers a strong base for establishing the analytic categories and political commitments that constitute Caribbean feminist theories of diversity. Kutzinski argues that *mestizaje*, translatable as "miscegenation, racial amalgamation (as in *blanqueamiento*, whitening), creolization, racial mixing, inter- or transculturation," has been since the 1890s "perhaps the principal signifier of Cuba's national cultural identity" (4-5). *Mestizaje*, she argues, finds its fullest symbolic form in the iconic figure of the mulata, a female figure "of racially mixed or uncertain, at least partially African, origin" (203 n13). However, as Vergès, Hage, Stratton and Ang, and Puri have pointed out, and as Kutzinski substantially demonstrates, celebration of hybridity can mask the maintenance of social inequities: the mulata is celebrated as an icon in the figure of Cuba's patron saint (the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre) and in popular culture and literature, but as a social subject she is oppressed sexually and racially. The contradiction of *mestizaje*, suggests Kutzinski, is "the symbolic privileging of a socially underprivileged group defined by its mixed race or phenotype, its gender, and its imputed licentious sexuality. In the case of the mulata, high symbolic or cultural visibility contrasts sharply with social invisibility" (7). Kutzinski's analysis indicates a central feature of the gendered politics of creolization as it appears in the writing of critics such as Brathwaite, Benítez Rojo, and the *créolistes*: regarding Cuban *mestizaje*, she states that "Nowhere in this masculinist paradigm are women, especially nonwhite women, acknowledged as participants in and possible producers of the very culture that inscribes its identity through them" (167).

Moreover, Kutzinski shows that the figure of the mulata, and the absence of 'woman' as active agent in cultural production, enables a homosocial male dynamic of creolization. The mulata, she argues, "becomes *the* site where men of European and of African ancestry rhetorically reconcile their differences and, in the process, give birth to the paternalistic political fiction of a national multiculture in the face of a social system that resisted any real structural pluralism" (12-13). The fiction of national Cuban unity, managing difference and obscuring inequity of gender, race, and class, is a fiction of exclusively male citizenship and cultural production. "Women's work, as an economic and a cultural reality," points out Kutzinski, "is systematically elided" (168). This observation corresponds with Arnold's argument that the Martiniquan *créolistes* can only advance the fiction of an exclusively male creole genealogy through the figure of the *conteur* by ignoring or belittling women as historical figures and contemporary writers. Kutzinski's reading of the mulata in Cuban literature leads her to propose that the mulata is "little more than a body inscribed with and subjected to male desire, sexual and political" (174), and hence a victim of sexual violence as well as the violence of erasure:

> Once the evidence of messy (that is, sexual) female participation in historical processes of racial mixing is eliminated by being made unrepresentable, *mestizaje* becomes legitimated as an exclusively male project or achievement in which interracial, heterosexual rape can be refigured as a fraternal embrace across color (and . . . class) lines and, significantly, across a female body absented by rape. The homoerotic connotations of this embrace and the concomitant appropriation of the female reproductive function in the form of masculine creativity cannot possibly be missed. (168)

Kutzinski's study is invaluable for revealing the use of symbolic cultural hybridity to cover over divisions of race, gender, and class and maintain a fiction of national unity, and for indicating how a specific feminine representation of *mestizaje*, even while eliding women's contributions to cultural identity, can foreground the deep contradictions of discourses of gender, sexuality, and race in ideologies of creolization.

IV

Shalini Puri's and Vera Kutzinski's studies offer relatively rare examples of concentrated feminist critique of Caribbean creolization. It is this dissertation's contention that Caribbean feminist interventions into discourses of creolization happen largely through cultural work (prose fiction, films, theatre) and through a language of feminist "difference." However, although it is true that Caribbean women writers, even while engaging with diversity in their fictional work, have not undertaken large-scale theoretical projects on creolization as have their male contemporaries, they do theorize creolization in a variety of ways. Critics such as Arnold and Burton have argued that Francophone Caribbean women writers have contributed to the study of creolization through their novels, rather than through critical work (as have the *créolistes*). As mentioned above, Arnold suggests that although writers such as Condé, Schwartz-Bart and Bébel-Gisler "have a clear aversion to theorizing their project," they write much more successfully creolized literature than do their *créoliste* male contemporaries ("Erotics" 16). Burton, similarly, points out that "if Guadeloupe has produced no theoretical construct of the subtlety of Antillanité or Créolité, it has, through the writings of women such as Simone Schwarz-Bart, Dany Bébel-Gisler, and Maryse Condé, raised the question of *female* identity in the French Caribbean with a directness and perceptiveness which, thus far, has not been matched in Martinique" (Burton, "*Ki Moun*" 17). It is not accurate to claim that Guadeloupean women writers do not produce theory: Condé is an active literary critic and theorist, and Dany Bébel-Gisler's theoretical work on Creole linguistics and language policy is "scholarly and also activist" (Mesh 32). What can be stated, however, is that these writers, and Caribbean women writers in the other linguistic regions, avoid programmatic theoretical models: as Dash puts it, "the strength of [women writers'] contribution to Caribbean literature lies in their capacity to interrogate and demystify systems of total explanation" (*Other America* 109).

Condé, for one, resists attempts to apply models for Caribbean writing. In an argument about West Indian intellectuals' tendency to issue commands and models for West Indian writing, she points out that "although 'antillanité' has been accepted as a theory perfectly suited to the realities of the islands, the literary model it implies has not been able to impose itself" ("Order" 128). With her characteristically dry wit, Condé outlines six features of the West Indian model for literature, as established by Roumain's *Gouverneurs de la rosée* (*Masters of the Dew*), "a sacred text" ("Order" 126):

> 1. The framework should be the native land.
> 2. The hero should be male, of peasant origin.
> 3. The brave and hardworking woman should be the auxiliary in his struggle for his community.
> 4. Although they produce children, no reference should be made to sex. If any, it will be to male sexuality.
>
> [...]
>
> 5. Of course, heterosexuality is the absolute rule.
> 6. Society should be pitied but never criticized. (126)

As for the *Éloge* writers, Condé points out the continued sexism of their model of Creole literature: "Sexuality . . . is no longer absent, but is exclusively male sexuality" and "women remain confined to stereotypical or negative roles" (129). She negates this reification of the West Indian male hero, pointing to the widespread phenomenon of victimized mothers and absent and irresponsible fathers in the region: "in spite of this sociological reality, we have been fed upon triumphant portrayals of messianic heroes coming back home to revolutionize their societies" (133).

Condé chafes at the overwhelming restrictiveness of the male-authored theories for West Indian literature, indicating the risk that *créolité* could be "transformed into a cultural terrorism within which writers are confined" (Pfaff 114). She notes that, compared with definitions of the process of creolization given by Bolívar, Brathwaite, Martí and others, "[t]he Martiniquan school of Créolité is singular because it presumes to impose law and order. Créolité is alone in reducing the overall expression of creoleness to the use of the Creole language. . . . This implies a notion of 'authenticity,' which inevitably engenders exclusion. . . . Worse yet, the créolité school is terrorizing in its detailed catalogue of acceptable literary themes" ("*Créolité*" 106). She states, "I fear that Creole might become a prison in which the Caribbean writers run the risk of being jailed" (Davis 207). Condé proposes an alternative to their attempts to assert order. She recalls a Bambara creation myth in which "disorder was introduced by a woman"; "disorder meant creativity" ("Order" 130). And she neatly deflates the sexism of the *créolistes*, asserting that "Créolité . . . is the daughter of Antillanité" (Pfaff 114). As a critic, Condé attempts to show a feminist genealogy for creolization by examining the work of Suzanne Césaire that appeared in the magazine *Tropiques* (of which Suzanne Césaire was a founding member) from 1941 to 1945. She argues that Suzanne Césaire was "one of the first intellectuals who tried to piece together the broken fragments of the Antillean identity and restore the shattered Caribbean history" ("Unheard Voice" 62). Suzanne broke from her husband Aimé's canonical *Négritude* early on, rejecting its "simplification and the Manichean rhetoric of colonialism and decolonization" (65). She "emphasizes the notion of diversity," and, argues Condé, "can justly be regarded as the precursor of Glissant's Antillanité and even Créolité" (65). Césaire differs from theorists such as Brathwaite and the followers of *Antillanité* and *créolité*, according to Condé, because of "her deep concern for the sociopolitical realities which are a legacy of the plantation system" and her "sense of the ambivalence of cultural and racial identity" (65-66). Condé's reappraisal of Suzanne Césaire's work offers one starting point for an assessment of Caribbean feminist critical work on diversity.

Although Caribbean feminist responses to women's absence in theories of creolization do not often take the form of extended theoretical arguments or engage directly with the canonized theories of creolization, many feminist critics do situate Caribbean women's writing in the context of creolization and diversity. Evelyn O'Callaghan advocates "theoretical experimentation" as a response to "the multicultural nature of the region, the syncretism of our creole cultures and languages, and the disparate voices and songs of Caribbean women writers" ("'It's all about ideology'" 43). She suggests "the need for synthetic theoretical approaches which can and do take account of the multiplicity, complexity, and the intersection of apparently conflicting orientation" in Caribbean women's writing (43). Her proposal of "woman version" as feminist syncretism is one example of this. Mindful of the need for a theoretical approach to Caribbean women's writing that accounts for multiplicity of perspective and "unity in diversity" (*Woman Version* 10), O'Callaghan offers 'woman version' as "a theory in the best creole tradition, as syncretic and inclusive as the women's literary voices it seeks to elucidate" (10). "Woman version" analogically gives a "self-directed" and "woman-centred" twist to the Caribbean phenomenon of dub version, in which a dj talks over, modifies, parodies, reshapes, and reads against a 'master tape' of music (10-11). Dub version shows how "the roots themselves are in a state of constant flux and change" (Hebdige 10), and "calls into question the whole notion of a hierarchical distinction between original 'substantive creation' and the 'version'" (*Woman Version* 11). "Woman version" describes both what Caribbean women's literature does, and what the theory used to read this literature should do—O'Callaghan "tests the efficacy of various critical and theoretical practices (which [she] deliberately cannibalize[s] and 'mix[es]')," particularly as these practices reveal "an attention to syncretism, multiplicity, adaptability, open-endedness and a refusal of consolidation" (12). O'Callaghan's strategy resembles Chela Sandoval's "differential consciousness," a model for U.S. third world feminism "which shatters the construction of any one of the collective ideologies [of feminism] as the single most correct site where truth can be represented" (Sandoval 14). Sandoval sees "differential consciousness" as "the activity of weaving 'between and among' oppositional ideologies," a "*tactical subjectivity* with the capacity to recenter depending upon the kinds of oppression to be confronted" (14; italics in original).

Vèvè Clark's "*marasa* consciousness" similarly offers both a theory and methodology of syncretic feminist reading practice. According to Clark, the *marasa* is the Haitian peasant-based vodoun sign for the Divine Twins, a "New World deformation of Mawu-Lisa," the female and male gods who generated, among other offspring, Legba, "god of fertility and of the crossroads, the chief linguist" (272-3). The *marasa* sign "plays on uniformity and diversity," and "clarifies the dynamics of social change, the transformation of cultural oppositions within plantation societies" (273, 267). Clark argues that the *marasa* sign operates in a similar manner to creolization, which "as a process of acculturation and imitation in the Caribbean defines [a] 1+1=3 paradigm" (273). The *marasa* indicates "movement beyond double consciousness or the binary nightmare of a psyche divided by memory between Africa and Europe" in that it is "committ[ed] to a creative critical process which illuminates a third or wider field of expression beyond binaries"—the addition of "New World" to the dyad of African/Asian and European (267). Clark's reading/teaching strategy is to set up dyads between women's texts and explore with students the diversity among the texts and the transformation of these binaries. Although it is unclear, from the textual analyses Clark provides, how *marasa* consciousness as a reading strategy differs from a simple commitment to challenging binary oppositions, the cultural origins of her approach make it resonant for Caribbean feminist models of creolization.

Myriam Chancy's two studies of Caribbean women's literature, *Framing Silence: Revolutionary Novels by Haitian Women* and *Searching for Safe Spaces: Afro-Caribbean Women Writers in Exile,* although they do not primarily focus on creolization and diversity, offer useful feminist critiques of creolization and women writers' positioning in the debates. Chancy argues that in literature by male Caribbean writers such as Walcott, Dépestre, Harris, Benítez Rojo, and Césaire, "women appear as elusive figures who represent cultural loss," as "symbols of the feminized Caribbean landscape that has undergone pillage and violence" (*Framing* 107). In their attempts to construct Caribbean identity and "represent a 'whole' culture" (107), she argues, whether this cultural description is of creolization or *Négritude,* the writers "replicate the same hegemonies as those present in colonial thought (the bipolarization of race, sex, class, etc.). Colonial hegemony is constructed as gendered to delineate the colonized (passive, hence female) from the colonizing (active, hence male)" (107). Chancy argues in *Framing Silence* that Haitian women writers are "involved in the articulation of a heterogeneous Caribbean literature of hybridity," and states,

> I want to push the concept of *métissage* beyond its racial or ethnic connotations to encompass a hybridity within a "unified" culture, a nation-state such as Haiti, in which the multiple levels of social existence are brought together in one or more characters and expressed through them as the *métissage* not only of race/culture but also of class and sexuality. (117)

Chancy champions "a pluralistic vision of women's rights" that she terms "*syncretic feminism,*" and that depends on collective action, the recognition of class differences, and "the *dialogic expression* of a feminist agenda articulated by Haitian women as a socio-political group" (38-9; italics in original). Her syncretic feminism aptly describes the priorities of many other Caribbean women writers and cultural workers discussed in this dissertation. Chancy further suggests that in the context of Black feminist criticism, which she modifies into "Afro-Caribbean diasporic feminism," the "principle of *collectivity*" informs "a distinct and recognizable theoretical practice which effectively resists 'monolithism' and makes possible the application of its tenets within an area of recognition and respect for the many differences which exist between and among Black women" (*Searching* 8-9).

Other Caribbean feminists agree that eclectic critical practices, or borrowing from a variety of theoretical models, such as O'Callaghan and Sandoval advocate, is the most appropriate response to creolized women's writing. Elaine Savory Fido, for instance, uses "the image of the crossroads" to indicate a critical position that accounts for the intersections of "race, class, nationality and gender issues" ("Textures" 29) in Caribbean women's lives. The crossroads image counters critical positions that claim objectivity or universality, and reflects the "multi-faceted experience" of the Caribbean writer (30). Pam Mordecai's "prismatic function," similarly, offers an image of "refracting of perception and experience" that can be a way to read the diversity of Caribbean women's literature and its tendency towards "association-in-disparity and capacity-for-being-confounded" (Foreword viii). "Prismatic form" offers "a new critical vocabulary, for irony is the beginning of the prism, the impulse to pluralities [usually] restrained by a manner of knowing essentially linear" (viii). Carole Boyce Davies, in an extended study in *Black Women, Writing and Identity*, proposes that migratory/diasporic subjectivity or "boundary crossing" (4) best describes Black women's writing, and that "critical relationality" (47) ("negotiating, articulating and interrogating simultaneously a variety of resistant discourses") is the best means of theorizing this writing. She wishes to engage with a variety of theoretical positions (feminism, post-modernism, Afrocentrism, Marxism, and others) as a "visitor," going a "piece of the way" with the theorists rather than "going all the way home" with them, which can mean "being installed in a distant place from my communities" (46). Her stance of "critical relationality" is invoked throughout the monograph with the metaphor of 'braiding.' As a statement of a critical stance, like Elaine Savory Fido's "crossroads" position for critique or Pamela Mordecai's "prismatic function," "critical relationality" and 'braiding' indicate a commitment to multiplicity and diversity in reading Caribbean women's literature.

Judith L. Raiskin's *Snow on the Cane Fields: Women's Writing and Creole Subjectivity*, although a study of the writing of creole women in South Africa and the Caribbean, does offer some analysis of the theoretical possibilities of creole identity. As a "categor[y] of difference," the term 'creole' "complicates racial or national binarisms" (4). Raiskin argues that creole identity can be "emancipatory" (5): "Creole . . . can be seen as a form of cultural, national, and psychological resistance" (10). She discusses the tension between conceptions of the Creole as product or as creative agent:

> To the extent that the Creole's identity is formed by a politicized system of human difference that constitutes the backbone of colonial and neocolonial social structures, the Creole exists as an object of scrutiny and suspicion. But to the extent that the Creole expresses a decidedly different perspective than the metropolitan or the colonial, s/he is a creative subject. (14)

Raiskin's sense of creoleness as "a potentially liberatory perspective" is tempting, but also perhaps too easy, given the conflicts of creole identity narrated by a writer like Michelle Cliff and the potential dangers of a celebratory creolization, discussed earlier. Raiskin's repeated suggestion that sexual and racial identities are a matter of "choice" (1, 6, 179, 188, for example) also suggests a simplistic treatment of subjectivity. But what is perhaps most useful about Raiskin's study is her proposal that a creole perspective has a unique take on "myths of difference" (193) and "the fantasies of the dominant discourse" (192), and that the creole writers she examines "recognize the interdependence of colonial taxonomies of difference" (6).

Even when they are not primarily concerned with diversity or creolization, many studies of Caribbean women's literature highlight the importance of creolization to the field. Kathleen J. Renk, in *Caribbean Shadows and Victorian Ghosts: Women's Writing and Decolonization*, states that writers such as Rhys, Cliff, Brodber, Kincaid, and Brand "share with antinationalist writers such as Wilson Harris a view of the Caribbean as a region that . . . has achieved a 'creolized' culture" (11). Renk points out that these writers are also joined by their "global concerns" for gender equity and human rights (12). The editors of *Out of the Kumbla* note the centrality of creoleness to Caribbean literature, arguing that "the feminist lens . . . becomes another way of seeing this complex culture" (Boyce Davies and Savory Fido, "Talking it Over" xvi). They characterize Caribbean women's literature in part by its collectivity, use of orality, and formal experimentation, and suggest that Caribbean feminism offers an approach of "unity-in-diversity" and an "engagement with human rights issues" ("Women and Literature" 15). And, like many other critics of Caribbean or black women's writing, they valorize "process" and a "multiplicity of moves" (19).

Synthetic theoretical approaches, syncretic feminism, *marasa* consciousness, critical relationality—the terms of analysis developed in Caribbean feminist literary criticism share a commitment to a methodology that is flexible, resists monolithism, and can read critically "taxonomies of difference" (Raiskin, *Snow on the Cane Fields* 6). These strategies participate in a feminist politics of difference, the motivation for which is, as Jana Sawicki suggests in an article that seeks a politics of difference for revolutionary feminist theory, "the desire to avoid dogmatism in our categories and politics as well as the elision of difference to which such dogmatism can lead" (33). Many theories of creolization—those of Harris, Glissant, and Bhabha in particular—share this commitment to valorizing process and avoiding dogma and Manichean binaries. The established theories of creolization have many points of connection with Caribbean feminist politics and poetics of diversity, such as a focus on multiplicity and a language of liberation and change; however, Caribbean women's scholarly and creative work identifies a politics of gender and sexuality that runs through many of the major formulations of creolization. Further, as the latter section of this chapter has outlined and as the following chapters on Caribbean women's creative work will suggest, Caribbean feminists have generated an alternative mode of theorizing and representing creolization in the Caribbean.

In much of the work done by the Caribbean feminist critics summarized above, "creolization" is invoked largely because of the ways it describes the multiplicity of experiences of Caribbean women and diversity within the field of Caribbean women's writing. At the risk of generalizing a wide body of writing, one can argue that a common link among the male theorists analyzed earlier in this chapter—Brathwaite is a particularly notable example—is their recognition of the need for Caribbean self-representation that can fill the perceived void of "historylessness" and homelessness experienced particularly acutely within the literary cultures of the region. Despite the efforts of critics such as Harris and Glissant to prevent creolization (syncretism, *Antillanité*) from becoming an identitarian discourse, this void is most often filled by a search for the texture of "Caribbeanness," a quality that is identified with the creolized nature of Caribbean culture. In the search for a model of creolization that can include all in its purview of Caribbeanness, however, some are left out of this "home." The following chapters explore the manipulation of creolization by feminist writers and cultural workers to determine when and where creolization breaks down in its inclusiveness. Chapter Two, in particular, looks at the intersection of creolization and the genre of the *Bildungsroman* in relation to the question of identitarian discourses and "homelessness" in Caribbean culture. Michelle Cliff's *Abeng* and Zee Edgell's *Beka Lamb* explore the extent to which narratives of creolization and national diversity can represent feminist subjectivities constructed by multiple discourses of race, gender, class, and sexuality. These novels' use of the *Bildungsroman* illustrates a tension in Caribbean women's writing between discourses of creolization and discourses of identity. Harris' and Glissant's critique of discourses of identity and nostalgia for origins will be placed alongside arguments suggesting the need for provisional uses of discourses of identity, whether these are wielded at the level of national narratives or within feminist literary production. As the citation from Shalini Puri earlier in this chapter suggested, "*refusing* some of these hybridities and border crossings may have less to do with a modernist nostalgia for secure origins than with a will to physical survival and a struggle for political self-determination" ("Canonized" 15).

Chapter Two: Creolization and the Caribbean feminist *Bildungsroman*

Chapter One undertook an analysis of theories of creolization, including instances where the politics of gender and sexuality were constituent parts of these theories' articulation. I began looking at Caribbean feminist interventions into the question of creolization and diversity in the Caribbean, primarily at the level of theoretical or critical work. This chapter begins a study of how Caribbean women's fiction opens up new space for discussing creolization in the context of a feminist politics of difference, and raises questions about what kinds of feminist work are being done in the Caribbean, and what forms resistance takes in this work, that are important foundational questions for the rest of the dissertation. The analyses of Caribbean women's cultural work that comprise the rest of this dissertation are organized according to the ways that cultural creolization is articulated through representations of community. Michelle Cliff's *Abeng* and Zee Edgell's *Beka Lamb*, discussed in this chapter, focus both on the constitution of the female subject through multiple and often competing discourses of race, gender, sexuality, and class, and also on the dynamics of difference and diversity in national community. The space of the nation is one key site for an investigation of creolization and the material conditions of heterogeneity, and it offers a framework for the two novels' articulation of community. Both texts, and *Beka Lamb* in particular, illustrate the attempts by a post-colonial nation-state to define an identity in a diverse cultural field; and, at the same time, the tendency for exclusion, particularly of ethnicity, class, and gender, in national definitions.

This chapter brings the analysis of creolization to a specific location for Caribbean feminist work: the literary genre of the *Bildungsroman*. The *Bildungsroman* is uniquely positioned as a literary form to prompt both contradictions and unsettling insights when juxtaposed with explorations of diversity and creolization: it becomes creolized during its use by Caribbean women writers, which is not particularly surprising given the tendency of Caribbean writers to "carnivalize" colonial cultural models (Paravisini-Gebert 5); but it also reveals a tension between discourses of identity and of creolization in Caribbean women's writing, for the *Bildungsroman* is a genre that looks backwards as well as forwards, establishing, however provisionally, a sense of identity that does not correspond with the non-identitarian ethos of creolization. Further, as a genre that has historically mapped out narratives of individual progress, the *Bildungsroman* reveals a tension in Caribbean women's narratives of creolization and collectivity. In the two texts discussed, the *Bildungsroman*'s microcosmic narrative of progress and development, and the representation of the interaction between the individual and her community, offer a mode of expression for Cliff's and Edgell's exploration of development and community at the level of the nation.

A potential problem with focusing on the *Bildungsroman* in this chapter is the implied suggestion that what counts as knowledge in Caribbean literature is its value in opposing colonial literary and epistemic forms. This chapter is therefore framed by a larger question or concern about the status of inherited colonial literary forms in Caribbean literatures. What kinds of cultural potency do these forms have; and how do resistant cultural practices negotiate around, or reclaim territory from, these dominant literary forms? This is not an innocent direction from which to approach Caribbean literature, for it risks refocussing attention on Western literary forms and the colonial heritage. For this reason, it is important to keep in mind Ketu Katrak's interrogation, "How can we, within a dominant Eurocentric discourse, make our study of postcolonial texts itself a mode of resistance?" (158). Further, Chandra Mohanty, in the context of Western feminist writings on women in the Third World, draws attention "both to the *explanatory* potential of particular analytic strategies employed by such writing and to their *political effect* in the context of the hegemony of Western scholarship" ("Under Western Eyes" 55; author's italics). These cautions are particularly necessary given the legacy of "First World" uses (through feminist or post-colonial inquiry, for example) of Caribbean texts, reduced of their cultural specificity, as "raw material" for First World theory (see, for example, Tapping 51; Donnell and Lawson Welsh 438-9; Paravisini-Gebert 4-5; Cooper, *Noises in the Blood* 15).

The "political effect[s]" (Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes" 55) of focusing on this genre can include privileging both the novel form (at the expense of underexamined poetry by Caribbean women poets)[27] and the specific form of the novel of development, which in many examples of *Bildungsromane* carries on an intertextual dialogue with European *Bildungsromane*. This orientation focuses on the colonial-postcolonial relationship, perhaps at the expense of cultural work done in the Caribbean that is not directed at anti-colonial resistance.[28] The focus on genre in this chapter also addresses only literary works and, despite the fact that the readings of the texts highlight the material conditions underlying social differences, literary form is the organizing principle of the chapter. This characteristic may set this chapter apart from some of the other work of the dissertation, which takes as its methodology a combined literary and materialist orientation. At the same time, I hope with this chapter to propose some of the material effects of genre, such that this chapter is a useful companion to Chapter Four's discussion of Sistren's activism through popular theatre, for example.

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[27] Some critics suggest, for instance, that women writers in Spanish-speaking Caribbean (or Latin American) countries more often write poetry than novels. Catherine Davies, for instance, claims that "[t]he genre most preferred by Cuban women throughout the [twentieth] century is without doubt poetry" (154). More controversially, Debra A. Castillo argues that "Latin American women do not write. . . . [they] certainly do not write narrative. What little they do write—poetry, mostly—deserves oblivion" (26). Castillo's admittedly "hyperbolic" (26) argument reveals its own bias: she rejects Latin American women's narrative because it "does not stand up to comparison with the work of the great male writers of the Boom and after," and will only look twice at the writing of "Western-trained and European-oriented" Latin American women (26-7).

Along the lines of a discussion of creolization, it is interesting to note J. Michael Dash's use of Bakhtin to argue that "prose fiction does greater justice to the polyglossic nature of social and linguistic experience than the canonical genres of poetry and drama" (*Other America* 104). He suggests, "[t]he gradual shift from poetry to prose, from poetic vision to novelistic discourse, marks the liberation of the substratum of postmodernity in the other America. The turn to prose . . . [suggests] an exploration of the carnal, the ambiguous, and the heterogenous" (108). To the extent that this dissertation maintains a subtextual focus on genre, I will be exploring the ways that creolization in Caribbean women's literature may be articulated differently in different artistic forms.

Dash also argues that Caribbean women writers have "played a vital role" in an emerging Caribbean postmodernity through the novel form: "the contesting of the text as a site for the conjunction of power and knowledge is central to traditions of writing by Caribbean women" (108-9).

[28] Arun Mukherjee, for example, argues that "post-colonial critics, with their centre-margin framework, have overlooked the cultural work that a post-colonial text does on its home ground" (6). This preoccupation leads to an insistence "that the subjectivity of the post-colonial cultures is inextricably tied to their erstwhile occupiers" (6). Alternatively, she suggests, critics must recognize that "our cultural

Ultimately, this chapter is devoted to Caribbean women's *Bildungsromane* because the tension between creolization and this genre is so compelling and troublesome. I will outline below some of the incommensurabilities between form and content in Caribbean women writers' use of this genre, but here will note more generally why creolization and the *Bildungsroman* are such a volatile mix. First, perhaps most obviously, the *Bildungsroman* in the hands of Caribbean women writers is a creolized form: as will be outlined below, these writers have adapted the form to suit their purposes. But more interestingly, though, "creolization" and "the *Bildungsroman*" bring together two aspects of Caribbean criticism that illustrate a productive tension in the field. The *Bildungsroman* is critical in discussions of Caribbean creolization because it is a genre that looks backwards as well as forwards—it is obsessed with origins as well as with future progress, and looks to childhood and youth as symbolic of both individual and

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productions are created in response to our own needs" such as representations of postcolonial societies' "internal centres and peripheries, their own dominants and marginals" (6). Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, similarly, distinguish between terms such as "neocolonial," which they suggest "usefully designates geo-economic hegemony"; "postcolonial," which "subtly downplays contemporary domination"; and "post-independence," which "evokes an achieved history of resistance" (40). The latter term, moreover, "shifts the focus to the emergent nation-state itself, opening up analytical space for such explosive 'internal' issues as religion, gender, and sexual orientation, none of which are reducible to epiphenomena of colonialism or neocolonialism" (40). Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, in a Caribbean context, argues that although anti-colonial struggles have been the focus of much of the Caribbean's political movements, "Caribbean societies . . . have managed to remain profoundly insular," not in the sense of being "unworldly," but in the sense that "they are driven as much, if not more, by internal, local concerns than they are by a persistent, continual, and continuous awareness of a colonial past" (5).

communal beginnings and growth. I argue that the *Bildungsroman* is a constituent part of Caribbean debates around the dual concerns of roots- and identity-oriented criticism on the one hand, and creolization on the other hand, and that it marks a significant intervention of Caribbean women writers into this previously male-dominated debate.

I

One of the central goals of this dissertation is to outline a Caribbean feminist politics and poetics of creolization that offers a position for both critique and practice. Although the myriad potentials of Caribbean criticism should not be construed as limited to two exclusive critical models, the cultural models developed in the Caribbean do often display emphasis on either creolization or a continuity of cultural roots. Critics arguing for either of these emphases cite not just the explanatory potential of the models, but also their utility, the extent to which the models offer a resistant position for critical practice and Caribbean identity. I am arguing in this dissertation for an association between Caribbean women's writing and creolization; however, the prevalence of the *Bildungsroman*—a narrative of origin and identity—in Caribbean women's writing necessitates a closer look at the tensions between these two models.

Chris Bongie's *Islands and Exiles: The Creole Identities of Post/Colonial Literature* can offer to this discussion a useful framework, outlined in part through Glissant's work, for reading the tension between creolization and identity that characterizes debates in postcolonial studies. Bongie argues that the language of identity politics will always compromise discussions of creolization: "no matter how refined our notion of transculturation, it will always fall short of what it points toward. A reliance upon, and a reversion to, fixed and ultimately fictional (ethnic, racial, national, and so on) identities is inescapable, notwithstanding our ever greater immersion in and sensitivity to a creolized and creolizing world" (10). Bongie also warns that creolization itself can become articulated in identitarian ways, which, as Chapter One of this dissertation indicated, is a tendency of the *créolité* movement. His argument is particularly useful for examining this dichotomy in Caribbean criticism between "roots-oriented" cultural criticism and creolization-oriented criticism. The purpose of his book, he states, is to point to the process of creolization and "to promote the ongoing critique of an essentializing, roots-oriented identity politics"; at the same time, he hopes to

> pursue a counterargument generated out of both epistemological and ethical concerns. First, that no matter how much we would like to, we cannot simply do away with the sort of nonrelational, exclusionary thinking that is at the basis of conventional identity politics . . . Second, that the laudable demystification of such identities, which is a necessary tactic of any postessentialist politics, is patently not a sufficient one: provisional affirmations of identity are often politically necessary, notwithstanding the fact that they are theoretically 'unviable' (to echo Gayatri Spivak). (11)[29]

Ella Shohat similarly argues, "[p]ost-colonial theory's celebration of hybridity risks an anti-essentialist condescension toward those communities obliged by circumstances to assert, for their very survival, a lost and even irretrievable past" ("Notes" 110). Shohat usefully points out that "'hybridity' and 'syncretism' allow negotiation of the multiplicity of identities and subject positionings which result from displacements, immigrations and exiles without policing the borders of identity along essentialist and originary lines" (108). However, "at times, the anti-essentialist emphasis on hybrid identities comes dangerously close to dismissing all searches for communitarian origins as an archaeological excavation of an idealized, irretrievable past" (109):

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[29] Bongie refers to Shohat and Stam, who argue that the term "'postcolonial' posits no clear domination and calls for no clear opposition"; the term's "structured ambivalence" makes it "a fragile instrument for critiquing the unequal distribution of global power and resources" (Bongie 14; Shohat and Stam 39). The hybrid condition of postcoloniality, according to this argument, cannot offer the oppositional purchase of identity politics.

> [W]hile avoiding any nostalgia for a prelapsarian community . . . we must also ask whether it is possible to forge a collective resistance without inscribing a communal past. . . . A celebration of syncretism and hybridity per se, if not articulated in conjunction with questions of hegemony and neo-colonial power relations, runs the risk of appearing to sanctify the *fait accompli* of colonial violence. (109)

Shohat and Stam further point out that "as a descriptive catch-all term, 'hybridity' fails to discriminate between the diverse modalities of hybridity: colonial imposition, obligatory assimilation, political cooptation, cultural mimicry, and so forth. . . . Hybridity, in other words, is power-laden and asymetrical (sic)" (*Unthinking Eurocentrism* 43). Bongie's and Shohat and Stam's comments offer a way of understanding the importance of identity politics to cultural resistance and the dangers of indiscriminate privileging of hybridity. This chapter, and Chapter Five, explore the place of narratives of identity in creolized Caribbean women's literature; but at the same time, the dissertation takes on the question of creolization not simply as a "celebration" of hybridity, but as the manifestation of "hegemony and neo-colonial power relations" (Shohat 109).

Caribbean criticism has tended to show a disjunction between forms of historical and cultural work that emphasize a search for roots, as compared with criticism that emphasizes creolization. J. Michael Dash observes that "the appeal of the Caribbean heterocosm does have a powerful effect on those who experience a sense of homelessness in a heterogeneous American collectivity and who consequently, erect a poetic fiction based on both a need to formulate a unique identity and to return to a mythic, organic origin" (*Other America* 73). As Glissant notes,

> The rupture of the slave trade, then the experience of slavery, introduces between blind belief and clear consciousness a gap that we have never finished filling. The absence of representation, of echo, of any sign, makes this emptiness forever yawn under our feet . . . we must articulate the unexpressed while moving beyond it. (*Caribbean Discourse* 201)

Brathwaite, one of the Caribbean writers who most mythologizes this lack of "echo," points out in "Timehri" that "[t]he most significant feature of West Indian life and imagination since Emancipation has been its sense of rootlessness, of not belonging to the landscape" (35). Benítez Rojo similarly argues that "the final measure of Caribbeanness is the search for that which is Caribbean, independently of the port or portal from which this search is undertaken." This is, however, an "impossible search" (*Repeating Island* 234-5). Derek Walcott, in turn, gestures to a contrast between nostalgia for the past and the creative possibilities of creole culture when he recounts watching a performance of *Ramleela* in Trinidad: he expected "some sense of elegy, of loss, even of degenerative mimicry" in this dramatization of the *Ramayana*, but he had "misread the event through a visual echo of history—the cane fields, indenture . . .—when all around me there was quite the opposite" ("The Antilles" 504). Rather than a sense of rootlessness or "evocations of a lost India," he senses "celebrations of a real presence" (505)—the *Ramleela* is performed "not with that desperate resignation of preserving a culture, but with an openness of belief that was as steady as the wind bending the cane lances of the Caroni plain" (505). "We make too much of that long groan which underlines the past," he writes, "[b]reak a vase, and the love that reassembles the fragments is stronger than that love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole" (505-6). This Nobel acceptance speech of Walcott's has become an important contemporary articulation of the connection between creolization and the historical cultural roots of the Caribbean.[30]

"Roots"-oriented criticism seeks origins for Caribbean culture, sometimes pre-colonial or resistant cultural roots that transcend the changes wrought by colonialism in the Caribbean and its attendant forces of transplantation and migration, slavery, and centuries of colour/class-based oppression. *Négritude* is a key example of roots criticism: as J. Michael Dash notes of movements such as *Négritude,* Marxism, and indigenism in the Caribbean,

> a particular phase in Caribbean modernism . . . was driven by nostalgia for a prelapsarian plenitude—the return to an ideal heterocosmic space. At this time, the discourse of ethnogenesis manifests itself in an anxiety for origins, the need for foundational myths, and the lure of the ideal of an organicist fantasy, outside of the contradictions of history. (*Other America* 18)

Dash notes that Césaire advocated a "heterocosm outside of the contradictions of historical change and the plurality of contact and interaction," "a poetics based not on diversity but on invariance" (65-7). Glissant similarly suggests that "most of the nations that gained freedom from colonization have tended to form around an idea of power—the totalitarian drive of a single, unique root—rather than around a fundamental relationship with the Other" (*Poetics* 14). He refers to Deleuze and Guattari's distinction between rooted and rhizomatic conditions, arguing that "the root is unique, a stock taking all upon itself and killing all around it," whereas the rhizome is "an enmeshed root system" that maintains "the idea of rootedness but challenges that of a totalitarian root" (11). Glissant's "poetics of relation" is underwritten by rhizomatic thought "in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other" (11).[31] Chris Bongie notes that for Glissant, "trying to be one's creole, Caribbean self is . . . not a matter of identifying culture-cores but of registering one's distance from any and all points of origin and exploring the historically contingent contours (and detours) of the composite identity that has resulted from the loss of such origins" (Bongie 59). He argues, "[i]f insular thinking is at the root of a traditional identity politics, the relational thinking that emerges out of the cross-culturalizing dynamics of the creolization process puts this insularity into question" (18).

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[30] Dash usefully points out, in terms that echo the two orientations I have outlined here, that Walcott's "The Schooner *Flight*" enacts the futile search for self-definition that is endemic to Caribbean literature: Shabine searches "for one island that heals with its harbour and guiltless horizon," but realizes "[t]here are so many islands as the stars at night" (Walcott, *Star-Apple Kingdom* 19-20; Dash, *Other America* 105). It is also interesting to note that Shabine's hope for one secluded "guiltless" island suggests a link to forms of Caribbean thought that seek a unitary and prelapsarian origin, free of the contradictions and contortions of Caribbean history.

Dash's characterization of "roots" criticism as "a particular phase" among literary movements suggests a historical progress towards criticism oriented towards creolization and relation. He argues that in terms of a search for origins, Caribbean literature has moved from the "innocence" of conceptions of the Caribbean as "primal space" according to a "system of homogeneity, symmetry, and organic harmony," to a recognition of "the dynamic, mestizo identity of the New World, where the journey back to the source is supplanted by a journey inward and outward, backward through time and forward to the present, unceasingly" (*Other America* 83-6). He comments, "the poetics of liminality have taken the place of the pieties of maroonism" (148). Dash's conclusions about the development of these models may describe some of the literary movements in the Caribbean but do not adequately account for the synchronic presence of writers of both roots and creolized orientations, or the momentum of a critic like Brathwaite, discussed in

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[31] It is in response to searches for unitary roots that Benítez Rojo, like Glissant, also proposes Deleuze and Guattari's model of the rhizome: "it is subterranean, but it is not a root. It sends out multiplications in all directions . . . above all, it should be seen as a nonsystemic system of lines of flight and alliance that propagate themselves ad infinitum" (*Repeating Island* 291 n24).

Chapter One, whose orientation moves from creolization to Afrocentrism. As discussed via Bongie and Shohat, there are alternative ways to view roots/identity models that do not rely on Dash's suggestion that these models have been, and should be, left behind. Identity-politics models for Caribbean criticism can be associated with nationalist decolonizing movements, and the perhaps necessary strategies of Manichean opposition, the "Prospero/Caliban dialectic," as Simon Gikandi names it (199), that fuelled these movements. Caribbean women's *Bildungsromane* in particular illustrate a dynamic between insular and relational thinking. The *Bildungsroman* is particularly suited for a narrative of individual or insular identity, and to a certain extent many Caribbean women's novels of development are engaged in the process of consolidating a resistant, voiced, autonomous female identity. It is possible that the mapping of a female genealogy in many Caribbean women's texts, the affirmation of a girl's links with the women in her family and community, represents Caribbean women writers' participation in the search for origins characteristic of "roots" discourse. Yet Caribbean women writers have simultaneously used the genre to explore relational and communal dynamics, in particular the dynamics of difference, as the analysis of *Abeng* and *Beka Lamb* will show.

We can therefore line up some of the qualities of creolization and the *Bildungsroman* that make their juxtaposition both counterintuitive and, in some cases, entirely appropriate. "Creolization" is the prime identifier of the specificity of Caribbean culture, of "Caribbeanness" itself according to some. The novel of development is both a widely-used genre by Caribbean writers, but it is also a symbol of European literary expectations that many of these writers try to resist. In creolization, the many are brought together, but, in Kamau Brathwaite's words, "[t]he unity is submarine" (*Contradictory Omens* 64). Creolization is about community. In the *Bildungsroman*, however, diverse elements are synthesized into a unified, often individualistic self. In the hands of a theorist like Glissant, creolization is a process, not an identity—in fact, it is the transcendence of the nostalgia for unique identity. The novel of development, on the other hand, is a key genre for exploring questions of identity. At the same time, as Bongie points out, "the creative process of education . . . may, after all, be at the etymological heart of the word 'creole,' with its probable connections to the Spanish verb 'criar' (to grow [plants], to breed [animals], to raise and educate [children], itself derived from the Latin 'creare' [to create])" (Bongie 93). And the *Bildungsroman* is, according to Franco Moretti, "the most bastard" of genres, the most "impure," because it is capable of "flexibility and compromise" (10)—perhaps, in some surprising ways, a genre capable of contradiction and of heterogeneity.

II

This chapter thus far has built an argument for the critical possibilities of examining the *Bildungsroman* in the context of Caribbean analyses of creolization, and specifically the modes of engagement chosen by Caribbean feminist writers. Before turning to Cliff's and Edgell's texts, this discussion will explore the complex of issues that trouble the juxtaposition of Caribbean feminist writing and the novel of development. *Abeng* and *Beka Lamb* are only two examples of a large number of *Bildungsromane* written by Caribbean women writers, and, indeed, by many writers in post-colonial countries.[32] This proliferation of post-colonial *Bildungsromane* appears at first glance surprising, given the genre's origins, which are grounded in western European notions of development and the values of "reason," "wholeness," and "progress." In short, the *Bildungsroman* seems to carry with it ideological assumptions that underlie modes of justification for colonialist practice. However, as this chapter has proposed, Caribbean women writers such as Cliff and Edgell use this genre for what I see as radical purposes: to explore questions of feminist subjectivity in its multiple registers, and to expose the material conditions of the hybridity that is a consequence of a "fully global(izing) modernity" (Bongie 14). This chapter does not offer demonstrations of how their transformation of the *Bildungsroman* can enrich genre studies at an aesthetic level. Rather, it prioritizes examination of the ways in which literary texts can be made to perform a range of cultural work. Counter-narratives of the *Bildungsroman* can enable a number of desired effects, and at one end of the spectrum can, to borrow from Caren Kaplan's work on post-colonial autobiography, be "tied to a struggle for cultural survival rather than purely aesthetic experimentation or individual expression" (130). But what Cliff and Edgell do with the *Bildungsroman* can also constitute an oppositional use of a genre to challenge systems of knowledge, and ways of understanding subjectivity and collectivity, that characterize colonial discourses.

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[32] In addition to the two texts examined in this chapter, I provide here some examples of Caribbean women's *Bildungsromane*, a list that is eclectic and by no means complete (for example, most of the texts listed are from Anglophone countries). Some of these texts are also less traditional versions of the genre than others, and some cross the line into autobiography: Phyllis Shand Allfrey *The Orchid House*, Erna Brodber *Myal* and *Jane and Louisa Will Soon Come Home*, Sandra Cisneros *The House on Mango Street*, Merle Collins *Angel*, Maryse Condé *Heremakhonon*, Edwidge Danticat *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, Moira Ferguson, ed. *The History of Mary Prince*, Beryl Gilroy *Boy-Sandwich*, Merle Hodge *Crick Crack, Monkey*, Jamaica Kincaid *Annie John* and *Lucy*, Michèle Lacrosil *Sapotille et le serin d'argile (Sapotille and the Clay Canary)*, Andrea Levy *Every light in the house burnin'* and *Never Far From Nowhere*, Audre Lorde *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*, Paule Marshall *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, Lúcia Miguel Pereira *Maria Luiza*, *Em surdina*, *Amanhecer*, and *Cabra-cega*, Elizabeth Nuñez-Harrell *When Rocks Dance*,

It is difficult to find critical agreement on the genealogy of the *Bildungsroman*; critics disagree on particulars of definition of the genre, on its forms in different national locations, and on exemplary novels; in fact, as Richard Barney notes, ever since Wilhelm Dilthey's formulation of the *Bildungsroman* in 1906 "its generic definition, literary legacy, and conceptual validity have been challenged by writers of all kinds" (359). This

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Judith Ortiz Cofer *Silent Dancing: A Partial Remembrance of a Puerto Rican Childhood,* Lakshmi Persaud *Sastra*, M. Nourbese Philip *Harriet's Daughter*, Jean Rhys *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Joan Riley *The Unbelonging*, Simone Schwarz-Bart *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle (The Bridge of Beyond)*, Jan Shinebourne *The Last English Plantation* and *Timepiece*, Myriam Warner-Vieyra *Le Quimboiseur l'avait dit (As the Sorcerer Said).*

critical disagreement suggests at least two things: first, some characteristics of any definition of the genre given here may be contradicted in some of the existing criticism on the *Bildungsroman*; and second, the genre has clearly been adapted for specific purposes and to address specific cultural needs in each of its national/historical contexts. This analysis is therefore concerned more with the field of criticism itself—what features of the genre are considered most exemplary, and what kinds of work the *Bildungsroman* has done in its various national and historical formations. To build an argument that enables a highlighting of what is unique to Caribbean women's writing, however, requires a certain amount of simplification of what can in many ways be a productively flexible genre.

Essentially, a *Bildungsroman* is a novel of formation or novel of education. Dilthey, the theorist who first elaborated the genre, derived from Goethe's *William Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795) the features that are said to be constitutive of the classic German idealist *Bildungsroman.*[33] It involves a male protagonist who is fairly representative of his community, who has potential but lacks self-awareness. Through various episodes or stages, and with the help of mentors, he begins consciously to fashion himself. The protagonist discovers he must leave home and family, usually in a provincial setting, to search for a vocation in an urban or metropolitan centre. The novel focuses on the "inner-determined self-development" of the protagonist in whom "all aspects of the self are formed so as to fulfill one preconceived goal" (Hirsch 294), and on his eventual attainment of knowledge and assumption of an active role in the world as a social being. As the embodiment of *Aufhebung*, "the ability to absorb and transcend constitutive parts in forming a fully coherent, integral whole" (Barney 360),[34] the *Bildungsroman* narrates a subject's "double task of self-integration and integration into society" (Kontje 140). The necessary condition of the *Bildungsroman*, argues Lukács, is that "a reconciliation between interiority and reality, although problematic, is nevertheless possible" (*Theory of the Novel* 132). The episodic structure of the novel, and its generally affirmative and optimistic ending, suggest a narrative of progress and development as well as "confiden[ce] in the validity of the society it depicts" (Kontje 140).

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[33] Susan Fraiman notes, "in both 1870 and 1906 [Dilthey] yoked the *Bildungsroman* firmly to Goethe's 1795 novel, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*" (3).

[34] One of the key questions of this chapter that deserves to be pointed out at this junction is the extent to which some theories of both the novel of development and of creolization intersect at certain moments of their articulation. Some expressions of creolization would hold that the constitutive cultural "parts" of the

Certainly in its German and English manifestations the *Bildungsroman* articulates key characteristics of Enlightenment thought. Franco Moretti notes that at the turn of the eighteenth century, the "new and destabilizing forces of capitalism impose[d] a hitherto unknown mobility" as youths moved from countryside to city and through uncertain social spaces (4). The *Bildungsroman* came into being, argues Moretti, because Europe had to attach a meaning to modernity; and, given the association of tradition with maturity, "youth" was chosen as "the new epoch's 'specific material sign'" because of its ability to accentuate modernity's dynamism and instability (5). At the same time, as Fritz Martini suggests, the *Bildungsroman* has been a vehicle for such tenets of Enlightenment thought as "harmony of aesthetic, moral, rational, and scientific education," reflective self-cultivation for increase in knowledge, "confidence 'in one's own expression of power and human freedom,'" and a "unifying [of] divided talents and actions" to create a harmonious individual (Martini 5). And the *Bildungsroman* articulates what Jeffrey L. Sammons calls "a sense of evolutionary change within the self, a teleology of individuality" (41). In short, this genre is at the leading edge of that kind of writing that produces a self that rises above historical causality and circumstances. This is why Franco

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community, nation, or region form a "fully coherent, integral whole." Nationalistic slogans are one place to find this connection. However, the work that Caribbean women writers most often perform is to focus on the 'parts' that form a whole primarily in coalition, not in a transcendence of difference, and on the discourses of racism and colourism, misogyny and homophobia that find their articulation at the intersections of these differences.

Moretti, in a memorable phrase, calls the *Bildungsroman* "*the* 'symbolic form' of modernity" (5, emphasis added).

Numerous critics have noted that the *Bildungsroman* has also performed a specific function as a symbolic form of gender ideologies. Susan Fraiman, in "Is There a Female *Bildungsroman*?", argues that the genre, as "invented by critics to specific explanatory ends," has "define[d] development in emphatically masculine terms" (2, 5). She notes that Romantic ideology led to a conceptualizing of the English *Bildungsroman* as a narrative of the "capacity to influence the world in ways socio-historically determined as masculine" (Marlon Ross; qtd. in Fraiman 8). Fraiman goes on to show that women writers have used the genre to "dramatize female development in contradictory ways," to show "the 'feminine' as a site of ideological confusion, struggle, and possibility" (31). Elizabeth Abel et al, Nina Baym, Bonnie Zimmerman, Rachel Blau du Plessis, and Esther Labovitz have all undertaken this revision of the *Bildungsroman* on the basis of gender. John H. Smith, on the other hand, argues that "the strict gender codification at the basis of *Bildung*, taken in its historical context, makes female *Bildung* a contradiction in terms" (220). He notes that "*Bildung*, and its narrativization in the *Bildungsroman* is not an 'organic' but a social phenomenon that leads to the construction of male identity in our sex-gender system by granting men access to self-representation in the patriarchal Symbolic order" (216); *Bildung* is, therefore, "a central form of the institutional cultivation of gender roles" (216).

Clearly, the *Bildungsroman* is a problematic genre for Caribbean women writers, in terms of its ideologies of both gender and development. It is a fundamentally individualistic genre. It is concerned with portraying an individuated, self-present, integrated subject that is also a social being, but in a sense in which the individual subject is clearly distinct from others. The genre is also future-directed, and emphasizes progress, evolution, development, and the possibility that knowledge can result in this progress as well as in freedom and equality. The goal of a *Bildungsroman*, whether fully realized or not, is, as Maria Helena Lima puts it, "the legitimation in narrative of the process of socialization itself," and the integration of subjects into the cultural codes of a society and social order that must appear legitimate (434).[35] In the context of the Caribbean, these precepts bear the weight of colonial history. For not only can colonial discourse be articulated through these ideas, but the *Bildungsroman* itself can be a tool of colonization. The *Bildungsroman* is not only concerned with the cultivation and development of its protagonist, but is also considered the form of novel that most fully cultivates its reader (Karl von Morgenstern; in Martini, 18). A colonial reader, then, is interpellated by the *Bildungsroman* as an individual subject, as well as subject to the cultural codes of the metropolitan centre and the world of the novel. As Gayatri Spivak notes of *Jane Eyre*, what is at stake is "the making of human beings, the constitution and 'interpellation' of the subject not only as individual but as 'individualist'" (799).

Caribbean literature, on the other hand, is noted for its emphasis on communal concerns, but the *Bildungsroman* has nevertheless played an important role in Caribbean literature generally. J. Michael Dash, in "In Search of the Lost Body: Redefining the Subject in Caribbean Literature," suggests that a primary concern of Caribbean writers has been a quest for selfhood, constituting "a tradition built around redefining the subject" (17). A result of the obscurity of origins due to the oppressions of colonial history, as noted earlier in this chapter, has been a preoccupation with recuperating subjectivity and active self-formation, either as an apotheosis of the "self-certain subject" (18), or with a deconstruction of the sovereign subject and the articulation of the collective through the individual. The *Bildungsroman*, as a narrative that, in part, looks to beginnings or origins for an explanation of the present, can enable this recuperation. Likewise, Kenneth Ramchand, in *The West Indian Novel and its Background*, foregrounds "Novels of Childhood" as a constitutive critical category in the formation of West Indian fiction-writing.[36]

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[35] I wish to acknowledge Maria Helena Lima's useful work on Caribbean women writers' *Bildungsromane*, and thank her for providing me with a draft copy of a paper, later published as "Decolonizing Genre: Jamaica Kincaid and the *Bildungsroman*," that was formative of my initial thinking on the question of the *Bildungsroman*. Lima's work, which I continue to find helpful, differs from mine in the sense that, in this article at least, she seems primarily concerned with "decolonizing genre" with a goal of "offering another story about the *Bildungsroman*" (435) and "expand[ing] conventional notions of genre" (455). As I indicated earlier, I am concerned not so much with recuperating the genre for Caribbean women's texts, as with exploring how their use of this quintessentially "colonial" genre enables decolonizing feminist criticism.

Moreover, Caribbean writing throughout the twentieth century, particularly in the midst of nationalist movements and in pre- and post-Independence eras, has often involved a concern with history, with its absences and horrors in the wake of colonialism, and a need to reconstruct this history as a necessary prelude to national consciousness. The *Bildungsroman* has offered a way to personalize this search for history or origins; and many *Bildungsromane* show a protagonist's development of self-consciousness in parallel or in the context of struggles for national consciousness or at moments of national crisis. Simon Gikandi, in *Writing in Limbo*, has noted this phenomenon, and has suggested that the development of self-consciousness in narrative in the Caribbean often corresponds to articulations of national consciousness. Gikandi argues that "the narration of childhood . . . becomes a return to the history that represses selfhood, an attempt to live up to the pressures of those references that dislocate the self from the collective experience" (76). Césaire's *Cahier* and Walcott's *Another Life*, Lamming's *In the Castle*

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[36] If one takes as valid Alejo Carpentier's and Jacques Stephen Alexis' (to give two examples) propositions that Oswald Spengler's theories of Western cultural exhaustion have critical purchase in the Caribbean—that "the West was now in a phase of decadence . . . [in] the cycles of history and the Caribbean was in a state of exuberant youthfulness" (Dash, *Other America* 94)—then the *Bildungsroman*'s central presence in Caribbean literature may seem more understandable. On the other hand, an alignment of geographical regions of the world according to stages of human development can risk reinforcing racist portrayals of the Caribbean, or the "Third World" more generally, as childlike and not fully 'developed.'

of my Skin, and Zobel's *La Rue Cases-Nègres* are merely a few of the poetic and prose works written in the Caribbean that situate their narratives of development in the context of nation. Zee Edgell's *Beka Lamb*, as I will show below, and Merle Collins' *Angel* are also two Caribbean women's *Bildungsromane* that link their protagonists' development with critical political events in their nations' history.

However, the *Bildungsroman* remains troubling. Although this genre can be a valuable tool in Caribbean literature for exploring the possibilities of subjectivity and developing stories about origins; and although it has always shifted and been adapted to various geographical, national and historical locations; still it brings with it embedded into the form a set of assumptions about development and personhood that seem antithetical to the content of what many Caribbean writers are doing. The presuppositions of the genre—progress, development, wholeness, reason—have historically been a part of justifications for colonialist practice. Assertions of humanist subjectivity, some argue, have been built on and supported by opposing assertions of the non-humanness or non-subjectivity of other, excluded peoples.[37] To claim a fully humanist position of subject on the terms of the *Bildungsroman* seems on the one hand a necessary decolonizing stance, but on the other hand leaves intact the apparatus of exclusion.

Caribbean women writers have used this form in a number of ways, and some writers have engaged with the form at the level of critique—their uses of the genre, implicitly or explicitly, show an awareness of this incommensurability between form and content, or between form and the cultural location of its use. Barbara Fister notes this adaptation of the form, suggesting that "unlike the classic European *bildungsroman*, one choice that most heroines of third world coming of age stories must make is a conscious decision about which culture they will claim as their own" (37). The endings of Caribbean women's *Bildungsromane*, for example, rarely result in an apotheosis or attainment of harmonious subjectivity that critics suggest characterize the classic *Bildungsroman*. Rather, the sense of fragmentation and loss, directed social critique, or even dissolution of the self that one finds at the end of many Caribbean women's novels of development represents a rejection of a social order that includes colonialism or neo-colonialism, deep-seated racism and class prejudice, and contradictory social positions for women and the expression of women's sexuality. Novels of development that have more positive endings generally end with the protagonist turning back to her community to find a sense of self, rather than leaving home to find herself, as is the pattern with traditional *Bildungsromane*. As Annie leaves Antigua for England at the end of *Annie John*, she feels "as if a vessel filled with liquid had been placed on its side and now was slowly emptying out" (148); leaving her country results in the dissolution rather than strengthening of her sense of self. Tee, in Merle Hodge's *Crick Crack, Monkey*, is alienated from her community at the end of the novel, and learns that even though her grandmother Ma finally remembers her own grandmother's "true-true name" (19) before she dies, the name she wanted to give Tee as a sign of her matrilineal heritage, Tee's aunt Tantie forgets to give Tee the name. Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* is well-known for the destruction of Antoinette's identity (and eventually her life) when she marries and leaves Dominica for England. Finally, Brodber's *Jane and Louisa Will Soon Come Home* shows the fragmentation of self that Nellie experiences because of racially-inflected sexual oppression; her steps towards healing and wholeness at the end of the novel come about through her tracing her connections to her family.

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[37] Biddy Martin and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, for instance, in "Feminist Politics: What's Home Got to Do With It?", examine a text by Minnie Bruce Pratt that, they argue, "calls into question the notion of a coherent, historically continuous, stable identity and works to expose the political stakes concealed in such equations" (195). When they note how Pratt problematizes the geography of her 'home' by juxtaposing her memories with local histories of exploitation and struggle, Martin and Mohanty point out that "stable notions of self and identity are based on exclusion and secured by terror" (197).

Closer to home, Sidonie Smith notes, via Clare's reading of *Jane Eyre* in Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven*, that "the liminal figure of Bertha is integral to the self-regulatory pressure of Jane's bildung" (53).

Michelle Cliff and Zee Edgell, in particular, assert the individual's continuity with her community, in contrast to the genre's traditional individuality and seeming need for the protagonist's separation from home and projection into a metropolitan space. But rather than allegorize a homogeneous post-colonial nation, both texts consistently bring together the quest for wholeness with an awareness of fragmentation, both within the protagonist as this character is situated at the point of different discourses of race, gender, class, and sexuality, and within the surrounding community or nation, which is shown to be diverse. As Gikandi notes of Caribbean women's post-colonial novels, "it is the emergence of the Caribbean woman writer in the post-independence period which forces us to reconsider the very definition of modernity and its concordant discourse on national identity" (198). Both Cliff and Edgell situate their female protagonists' search for identity in the context of national struggles with both the fragmentation and creolization that are byproducts of colonialism.

III

Michelle Cliff's contribution to Caribbean feminist work on creolization and diversity is particularly significant for her attentiveness to the multiple points of entry of Caribbean women into discourses of race and colour, gender, class, and sexual orientation. Cliff exemplifies the kind of intervention into theories of creolization that this dissertation describes as characterized by a feminist politics of difference—a politics that achieved an early articulation in *The Combahee River Collective Statement*:

> we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking . . . We believe that sexual politics under patriarchy is as pervasive in Black women's lives as are the politics of class and race. We also often find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously. (9, 12)

Myriam Chancy, in *Searching for Safe Spaces: Afro-Caribbean Women Writers in Exile*, adds,

> it is the principle of *collectivity* that differentiates Black feminist criticism from other current modes of criticism (feminist or otherwise), which address issues of race, sex, and class as separate and socially constructed categories that are no more than fictions waiting to be dispelled. . . . Black feminist critics have formed a distinct and recognizable theoretical practice which effectively resists 'monolithism' and makes possible the application of its tenets within an area of recognition and respect for the many differences which exist between and among Black women. (8-9).

Caribbean feminist writers such as Cliff are often concerned with the building of coalitions and alliances between members of differently positioned social groups. Much of Cliff's work explores, as Meryl Schwartz notes of the two Clare Savage novels, "participat[ion] in the struggle to forge imagined communities of political allies" (294). This effort to bridge between communities of interest represents one of the interventions Caribbean feminist writers make into the discourse of creolization.

In *Claiming an Identity They Taught Me to Despise*, Cliff explores issues of differences between women that shape the later *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven*.

Myriam Chancy notes that Cliff's prose poetry in *Claiming an Identity* constitutes an attempt "to reclaim an identity of fragmentation—a fragmentation caused by imperialism and colonialism—through the affirmation of difference and through the power of the erotic" (*Searching* 137). Such differences, however, are not simply celebrated, but are explored for the exclusions and painful histories they mark. In "Passing," for example, Cliff notes that light-skin privilege and racial passing separate her from the darker-skinned girls with whom she grew up:

> I thought it was only the loss of the mother—
> but it was also the loss of others:
> who grew up to work for us
> . . . .
> this division existed even then—
>
> Passing demands a desire to become invisible. A ghost-
> life. An ignorance of connections. (*Claiming* 5)

Passing, or "camouflage" (3), is for protection: "For God's sake don't pile difference upon difference. It's not safe" (7). But passing stands in the way of one's identifying connections across differences. Cliff unravels the meaning of the word "creole," imagining herself as the doomed Bertha Rochester, as H.D. de Lisser's Annie Palmer, the "'white witch'/creole bitch" of Rose Hall, and as "the dark, stout Mulatto Girl, 'Sarah'," named in the same raffle as a horse on a nineteenth-century broadside: "*They name us. They buy us and sell us*" (44-47). Cliff associates creoles with lepers, "people with no place to go" (51). Cliff further explores these issues of the isolation and fragmentation of differences and creolization in *Abeng*.

Clare Savage, the protagonist of *Abeng* (and the later *No Telephone to Heaven*), is a "crossroads character" (Cliff, "Clare Savage" 265) through whom Cliff proposes the diversified society and multiply-constituted subjects that characterize the "post"-colonial situation.[38] She is "fragmented, damaged, incomplete" (265), her name representing a bifurcation (but also a challenging of such binaries) between her light skin and "privilege, civilization, erasure, forgetting" and the "wildness" (used ironically) of her colonized and African/indigenous heritage. Cliff echoes Kutzinski's criticism of the uncritical celebration of creole identity when she points out that "a knowledge of history, the past, has been bleached from her mind, just as the rapes of her grandmothers are bleached from her skin" (265). The semi-autobiographical novel *Abeng* follows the pattern of the *Bildungsroman* to the extent that it narrates Clare's life and 'development' from age ten to twelve. However, *Abeng* interrupts the sense of linear narration of a life, and it does so in ways that also disrupt the individualizing tendencies of the *Bildungsroman*. From the beginning of the novel, it is clear that Cliff is situating Clare's subjectivity in the context of a wider exploration of the diversity of Caribbean community. For instance, the novel begins not with an introduction to Clare, but with a reference to the geological and historical evolution of Jamaica itself: "The island rose and sank. Twice. During periods in which history was recorded by indentations on rock and shell. This is a book about the time which followed on that time. As the island became a place where people lived. Indians. Africans. Europeans" (*Abeng* 3). Indeed, Cliff does not introduce Clare until she has narrated components of the setting.[39] She writes of the profusion and diversity of mangoes eaten by everyone all over Jamaica at the height of the mango season; she notes the class hierarchies in Jamaica and the portraits of Queen Elizabeth, "the whitest woman in the world" (5), that hang in all government buildings; she outlines the histories of the different churches in the region and who goes to which church; she describes a coffin dug up in a churchyard that contains the remains of African plague victims from a slave ship; and she notes the different lives led by the Savages and their darker-skinned housekeeper. In other words, *Abeng* suggests that Clare must be considered within the context of diversity and community, however complicated by class and colour that community may be.

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[38] The use of quotation marks for the "post" in "post-colonial" is here a nod to Cliff's explicit rejection of the term as (she uses Ama Ata Aidoo's words) "disgusting, a sadistic joke" (Raiskin, "The Art of History" 59).

[39] This tactic resembles George Lamming's strategic opening to his *Bildungsroman, In the Castle of My Skin.* Here Lamming does not focus on G, the protagonist, until he has narrated a portrait of the community, notably at a time of crisis after a flood. Lamming privileges the local and primarily oral world of the yard,

The text also moves associationally between details of Clare's life and historical narratives about Christopher Columbus and slavery.[40] Cliff notes elsewhere the "creolism" of combining different literary forms (Raiskin, "The Art of History" 58), and her use of documented and oral history, proverb and quotation, makes her text what Belinda Edmondson calls "a dialectical representation of the West Indian experience" (182). The juxtaposition of *Bildungsroman* narrative and historical narrative also suggests that *Abeng*'s recuperation of lost or whitewashed history must be considered part of the constitution of Clare's identity—that is, Clare is at all times constituted as part of a local community as well as part of the history of Jamaica. She is also more specifically a part of the matrilineal genealogy of her family and nation, for as the narrative progresses, her mother's and grandmother's stories, as well as stories about Nanny, the archetypal leader of the guerrilla ex-slave Maroons, increasingly join and contribute to the narrative of

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and the gossip of G's mother with her neighbours stands out in the early part of the book. G, despite his naked exposure to the yard as he is being washed, is ironically not exposed very early to the reader.

[40] Françoise Lionnet's comments on *Abeng* are cogent here: "When history is recognized to be full of gaps, it is impossible to subscribe to a traditional notion of the subject as theorized by Western humanism" ("Of Mangoes and Maroons" 329).

Clare's development. These features suggest an intervention into the individualism of the conventional *Bildungsroman*, and also, in turn, assert a heterogeneous and matrifocal Jamaican community.

The segmented narrative structure mirrors the issue of identity fragmentation that *Abeng*, like so much of Cliff's work, examines. The novel disrupts the conventions of the *Bildungsroman* by presenting Clare not as a unified, harmonious subject, but rather as a subject multiply constituted along lines of colour, class, gender and sexuality. Born of a light-skinned father who considers himself 'white,' and rejects his African heritage, and a darker-skinned mother who is most at home with rural Jamaicans of African ancestry, Clare is caught between conflicting identities of colonizer and colonized, both in terms of her colour and in terms of her class and social distance from many other Jamaicans. Notably, she articulates this conflict in relation to her reading of a classic *Bildungsroman*, *Great Expectations*:

> Sometimes she felt sure that she would make her own way in the world—would "be" someone, as Pip had wanted for himself. . . .The idea of a benefactor captured her—and she wondered who her benefactor would be. The convict or the unmarried woman. The Black or the white. Both perhaps. . . Who would she choose . . .? She was of both dark and light. Pale and deeply colored. To whom would she turn if she needed assistance? From who would she expect it? . . . Would her alliances shift at any given time. (*Abeng* 36)

Clare's sense that she has a "choice" is itself a mark of both her mobility and her privilege. At this juncture in reading *Abeng* one can link the text as a novel of formation with Meryl Schwartz's reading of Cliff's novels as "political awakening narratives" (288): *Abeng* suggests that Clare's *bildung* lies in her affiliation with anticolonial resistance, and, as Schwartz puts it, "she can only create a home by participating in the struggle to forge imagined communities of political allies" (294). Clare has a moment of insight near the end of the novel when she realizes she is not simply a victim, that she "had switched to the other side [the killers] without meaning to" (*Abeng* 146). Her confrontation with her own contradictory social position of both complicity and resistance, illustrated above as a choice between two benefactors, leads to a resolution of her *bildung* (or lack of resolution) through linking her resistance with that of others, an explicitly political trajectory to her *Bildungsroman* that also entails her recognition of heterogeneity.[41]

An aspect of her identity that Clare only tentatively begins to explore is her nascent lesbianism. However, although she can identify her attraction to her girlfriend Zoe, she cannot name her desire, for her only sexual role models are gay men who die tragic deaths. A neighbour named Clinton, a rumoured "battyman," is left to drown in a swimming hole (63), and Clare's gay Uncle Robert, about whom the family says "there was no room for such people in Jamaica" (126), swims too far out into Kingston Harbor and drowns. The fact that there was "no room" for him underscores the insularity and exclusion of alternative sexualities from the otherwise diverse cultural space of Jamaica as Cliff narrates it. The family speculates that his condition of being "funny" and "off" could have been caused by "inbreeding," or by "the English residents and American tourists—they brought all manner of evil to Jamaica" (126), and could not be indigenous to Jamaica itself. Clare herself has fantasies about her mother—"at twelve Clare wanted to suck her mother's breasts again and again" (54)—and is fascinated by a tabloid story about a disease that turns girls into men: she decides that if either she or Zoe contracts the disease, the one girl could marry the other (103). But if part of the *Bildungsroman* involves learning ways of being in the world from models, Clare lacks models for her lesbianism. She believes that "'funny' people were only battymen," and sees no connection between her Uncle Robert and her feelings for Zoe (126). Of two women from her family history, Inez and Mma Alli, who were lovers on her ancestor's plantation, she knows nothing, but their story is one she needs to hear: Mma Alli teaches women how to take strength from their bodies and "keep their bodies as their own" (35).

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[41] Belinda Edmondson usefully compares *Abeng* with Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*, noting that at the end of *Abeng* Clare dreams of throwing a stone at Zoe, a scene that directly references Tia's throwing of a stone at Antoinette in Rhys' text. Edmondson argues that Cliff's reversal of the roles—the light-skinned Clare hurting the darker-skinned Zoe—suggests she is "rewriting an *historical* relation of black and white West Indian women not only to link their cultural identities but to acknowledge the white woman's relation to power . . . Clare must first understand and acknowledge this unequal power dynamic before she can be (re)integrated with the society, with her history, and consequently her paradoxical identity" (183).

Clare's relationship with Zoe particularly illustrates the unequal social power that accompanies differences of race and class in her society, and the multiple foci of Clare's identity. Through this relationship, Cliff points to the ways creolization affects the individual, and interrupts the *Bildungsroman*'s imperative of unified subjectivity. In one notable scene, Clare borrows her grandmother's rifle and the two girls head for the bush to kill a wild pig. While they are sunbathing nude by a swimming hole, they are surprised by a cane-cutter, and Clare, feeling vulnerable at being caught naked with Zoe by a man, and confused about her desire to kiss Zoe, asserts herself by threatening the man with the rifle and talking in standard English rather than patois, "relying on the privilege she said she did not have" (122). In the confusion, she accidentally shoots her grandmother's bull. What is at stake for Clare in this adventure is her sense of herself as a girl—she wants to kill a pig as she has seen her male cousins do, in defiance of being told by everyone "just who she was to be in this place" (114). She also wants to find a way towards common ground for herself and Zoe, who is poor and rural: she "wanted them to be the same" (118), which, as Myriam Chancy points out, marks the fact that "her vision is clouded by the privileges she does not yet recognize in herself" (*Searching* 148). There is a moment when the sunbathing girls seem able to bridge the distance between them, when "[t]heir bodies stretched against each other" and they "touched hands. Brown and gold beside each other" (*Abeng* 120)—"something had been gained," and Clare hopes that "the two of them could erase difference" (119, 124).

However, Zoe shoots holes in Clare's fantasy. She tells her that the two girls will never be the same, for Clare is a "town gal . . . White smaddy":

> Dis place no matter a wunna a-tall, a-tall. Dis here is fe me territory. Kingston a fe wunna. Me will be here so all me life—me will be marketwoman like fe me mama. Me will have fe beg land fe me and fe me pickney to live pon. Wunna will go a England, den maybe America, to university, and when we meet later we will be different smaddy. But we is different smaddy now. (118)

In fact, Zoe and Clare are friends only because Clare's aunt requested that Miss Ruthie, a squatter on her land, send her daughter Zoe to be Clare's playmate (93); from the beginning, their relationship has involved unequal positions in the class system. Clare believes that "she and Zoe were removed from property as it related to deeds and acreage" and could travel in the rural areas without regard of land ownership, but "she did not realize that it was only *she* who moved across the lines of ownership" (121). Zoe sees that Clare is "limited": "She didn't think Clare had any idea of what being poor really meant. What being dark really meant" (119). Clare slowly starts to realize her privilege and her mobility, for she has acted as if her class and colour would protect her from trouble, but in the process she has put Zoe into a vulnerable position by shooting the bull.

After this incident, Clare feels "split into two parts—white and not white, town and country, scholarship and privilege" (119). As punishment for shooting the bull, Clare is sent to live with a racist white woman, Miss Beatrice, in order to learn how to be a "lady" and "most likely marry a white man and move into a life which would make life easier" (149). But despite her wish to avoid "rocking the boat" (158), she affirms in the end her sense of being "mixed": "[s]he admitted what she had been afraid to admit to Miss Beatrice. Maybe it was becoming time" (164). The novel ends, however, with Clare's statement that "[s]he was not ready to understand her dream" about her conflicts with Zoe (166). This ambiguous ending and Clare's sense of fragmentation, her lack of "wholeness," also reflects Cliff's sense of Jamaica as a place fractured by its colonial history. That is, Clare's *Bildungsroman* does not end with her attainment of harmonious subjectivity, but rather with her provisional sense of understanding her multiple points of entry into colonial and sexual discourses. It is a conflictual understanding, however, as the Clare of *No Telephone to Heaven* demonstrates: she joins, and dies in, a guerrilla attack because "there are many bits and pieces to her . . . she is composed of fragments" (*No Telephone* 87).[42] If *No Telephone to Heaven* represents Cliff's exploration of ways to live within the contradictions of heterogeneous affiliations and histories, for Jamaicans and for Jamaica, *Abeng* is the first step to this exploration, in that it necessitates Clare's identification of these multiple differences and the interlocked privileges and oppressions they represent.

At the same time that *Abeng* leaves Clare unresolved in this insight, it has a rather affirmative ending, even though what is affirmed is Clare's sense of a fragmented rather than unified identity. This may partly be due to the omniscient voice of the narrator that deftly makes all the historical and personal connections that remain invisible to the characters. For instance, the narrator notes repeatedly what the people of the Tabernacle "did not know" (*Abeng* 20): the reasons for the end to the slave trade, the status of

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[42] Myriam Chancy points out that Harry/Harriet, in *No Telephone to Heaven*, is the character in Cliff's novels who most "defies easy characterizations," but he "works toward synthesizing his own fragmentation" by his "acceptance of internal and external conflict" (*Searching* 160). She adds, "In this character, Cliff outlines the possibilities for Clare's own acceptance of plurality in her self. Harry/Harriet is the vessel through which Clare is able to reclaim her homeland and her foremothers": "In her creation of a character like Harry/Harriet, Cliff illustrates the possibility of extracting wholeness from colonial fragmentation" (160-61).

Jamaican slave society as among the most brutal, and the history of Maroon resistance in Jamaica. The narrator brings together the lived experience of the Tabernacle community with their invisible history: "Some of them were called Nanny, because they cared for the children of other women, but they did not know who Nanny had been" (21). This same process occurs with the narration of Clare's family history—she "would never know" that her slave-owning ancestor set fire to the slaves on his property on the eve of Emancipation (40). This narrative voice retains for itself the power of knowing and telling history, and also offers the reader, through the course of the novel, a sense of full understanding of Clare's identity and an articulation of the meaning of her experiences of which Clare herself is not aware, and which belies the otherwise fragmented narrative pattern.[43] In this sense, the novel still, for lack of a better term, "feels" like a conventional *Bildungsroman*, and therefore perhaps does not reach the level of strategic intervention into the genre achieved by some Caribbean women's *Bildungsromane*.[44] It does, however, make clear Cliff's representation of heterogeneous community, and the divisions as well as multiple and often contradictory positions held by subjects in various colonial hierarchies of race, class, gender, and sexuality. *Abeng* sets up Cliff's feminist politics of difference through her mapping of Clare's *Bildungsroman* onto the larger community, and asserts that the building of coalitions across difference is a feminist priority in the creolized Caribbean.

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[43] To return for a moment to the argument made above that the *Bildungsroman* interpellates an individualist reader, it is worth noting that Meryl Schwartz suggests that with the Clare Savage novels Cliff "seeks to effect in the reader an awakening process that will lead her to adopt a political position similar to Clare's. We are invited both to react to the compelling historical information presented in the narrative and to identify with the protagonist . . . The narrative's consistent connection between the personal and the political thus functions simultaneously as political argument and narrative strategy with important implications for reader response" (303).

[44] Erna Brodber's *Myal*, for instance, which I will discuss in the next chapter, can be considered a *Bildungsroman* to the extent that it offers an interwoven narrative of two female characters' *bildung*: Ella's story more closely fits the genre's pattern, but the addition of Anita's story to Ella's works to de-individualize the *Bildungsroman*. As the reading of *Myal* in Chapter Three will suggest, Brodber uses a number of narrative strategies, such as gossip and other information-sharing, to suggest that the community is telling its own story. This is one way that *Myal* embraces dialogue and does not try to tie up its loose ends by means of an omniscient narrative voice, as compared with *Abeng*'s tendency to offer a unified interpretation.

Beka Lamb, the protagonist in Zee Edgell's *Bildungsroman*, follows a path of female development that requires that she, like Clare Savage, negotiate contradictory discourses of femininity and colour/class expectations that leave her feeling more fragmented than whole. The novel, using flashbacks and non-linear time sequences, places Beka's fourteenth year in the context of events that shape her increasing political and personal awareness: her growing understanding of the political conflicts of the colony of Belize as its citizens debate the future shape of their country; her attempts to stop lying and to succeed in school; and more centrally, her friend Toycie's pregnancy, expulsion from school, and death in a hurricane.[45] The sense of individual progress or development, as well as the presence of common markers of female development (such as a growing understanding of sexuality and expectations of women) make this novel a *Bildungsroman*; but it is a Caribbean *Bildungsroman* that, more openly than many other Caribbean women's versions of the form, including *Abeng*, links the individual girl's development or progress with political concepts of the developing nation. *Beka Lamb* makes this link in a way that suggests that the diversity and creolization of Belizean society, features that will affect the political shape of the new country, will also shape

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[45] Miki Flockemann suggests that black women's *Bildungsromane* like *Beka Lamb* subvert the genre in part by using the "dual focus" technique of pairing the protagonist with a friend (like Toycie) or sister, in order to "bridg[e] the uncomfortable and problematic relationship between insider/outsider, self/other in writing by black women in the post-colonial context, where women have been traditionally positioned as object (or native/other)." This strategy allows the presentation of "alternative scenarios": the destruction of selfhood by institutions of assimilation to the colonial order, and the construction of an alternative selfhood linked to a local community (38-39).

Beka's sense of identity.[46] The juxtaposition of individual and national development also draws attention to the contradictions inherent in concepts of progress.

Beka Lamb is set in 1950s Belize during the time immediately prior to political Independence. This context is not mere setting, but is rather an integral feature of Beka's *Bildung*: from the outset, Beka's development is used to explore the volatile political development of her country. As Roger Bromley points out, "[t]he novel is about the growing up of Belize as much as growing up in Belize" (12). The link between individual progress (which often takes the form of education in a *Bildungsroman*) and the progress of a modernizing "post-colonial" nation, a common feature of Caribbean and other post-colonial *Bildungsromane*, is clear here: from the first page of the novel, Beka's personal success in an essay contest gains wider significance from her Granny Ivy's comments that "Befo' time," Beka, as a black creole, would not have won the contest over "bakras, panias or expatriates" (*Beka Lamb* 1).[47] Her grandmother's efforts on behalf of the People's Independence Party mean that Beka can shift "from the washing bowl underneath the house bottom to books in a classroom"; "things can change fi true" (2, 1). And Beka's success or failure in school will affect her citizenship in the new state: her admission to her father that she failed a year of school immediately follows a radio announcement that the new constitution includes universal adult suffrage, pending potential voters' completion of a literacy test (23). Furthermore, Beka's first-place win (narrated at the end of the novel) occurs just before she encounters angry crowds protesting the arrest of two politicians for sedition against the British government. She asks her uncle, "is this the end of everything then," to which he replies, "Belize people are only just beginning!" Beka then becomes excited, "for she had made a beginning too" (167).

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[46] Bev Brown's reading of *Beka Lamb* against Brathwaite's theories of creolization and adaptation is useful as a critique of Brathwaite, and yet is also disappointing for my own questions about Edgell's treatment of creolization. Brown points out the emphasis on male sexual images and mythology in Brathwaite's theoretical and poetic works that develop his theory of adaptation, notably the emphasis on sun/son and male seeds, and then proceeds to use these terms of reference to read Edgell's novel. She determines that "In *Beka Lamb* there is an absence of the Brathwaitian manscape" (76), but does not point out the *presence* of an alternative poetics of creolization in Edgell.

[47] 'Pania' means Spanish-speaking.

Throughout the text, Edgell insists on a link between the personal and the political.[48] Some of these connections are abrupt and almost playful, like Beka's impression that Miss Eila's teeth "gleamed white like the posts that supported Government House gate" (2). Others resonate more significantly. At Grandma Straker's funeral, the narrator notes that the funeral was "a small lesson in community history." The individual life is here linked with Belize's history: "Belizeans did not often articulate what they did know of their history, even amongst themselves . . . But on certain occasions, and especially at the funerals of the very aged, through the use of innuendos and euphemisms, a feeling was communicated, and this was understood" (63). The potential for success of Toycie and Emilio's relationship, between a creole girl and pania boy, is also put into the larger context of race relations in Belize on two occasions: when Toycie first takes Emilio aside at his church to tell him of her pregnancy, Beka witnesses an altercation between a creole parishioner and American priest Father Mullins, in which the parishioner accuses him of having Spanish blood and of wanting to make Belize "one big Keatolic nation" (103) through a link with Guatemala. When the woman lifts her skirts to expose her bottom at him, Father Mullins makes the sign of the cross over her and the Spanish-speaking crowd says, "only the creole, no culture" (103). Later, while Emilio is telling Toycie he cannot marry her, for a complex of reasons that include his lack of respect for Toycie for sleeping with him, and the cultural differences between them, Beka listens to a politician pleading for "National unity . . . that is what we have left" (108). The custom that "[p]anias scarcely ever marry creole" (47) links Toycie's fate with the cultural and political disagreements fracturing the nation.

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[48] In her other novels, *In Times Like These* (1991) and *The Festival of San Joaquin* (1997), Edgell interweaves a fictional plot with explorations of issues such as the building of the Belizean feminist movement during Independence, domestic violence, foreign ownership of Belizean land, and environmentalism.

Beka's creolized and diverse world is suggested by the faces of her schoolmates, "almost every one a different shade of brown, black or white" (88). Edgell's strategy for representing creolization in Belize includes her juxtaposition of different cultural reference points. She gives a sense of the culturally and economically diverse community of Belize City when she describes the variety of Sunday lunches eaten by Belizeans: red kidney beans, pigtails and rice for the poorest; roasted chicken, pork or beef for the wealthier; and relleno soup, hardboiled eggs and tortillas for mestizo families (26). The unequal social power that subtends these differences prevents such descriptions from implying a cultural mosaic. For example, when Toycie and Beka play in the cemetery and attempt to guess which graves belonged to buccaneers, settlers, and slaves, it is the slaves' ghosts who they imagine would be pursuing them (58-9). Despite these juxtapositions, the text makes clear that the different groups exist in a complex of interactions and separations, such that Toycie cannot expect to marry Emilio because of their different cultural backgrounds.[49] The distance between Carib and creole, supported by stereotypes (such as creole suspicions that Caribs practice obeah and sacrifice children), belies the common African heritage of both,[50] but exists, argues Beka's mother, because creole people left Carib ways behind to gain social power. Beka envies the wealthy Blanco family for whom her father works, but "wealth, class, colour and mutual shyness" keep her away from the Blanco children, even though on trips to the caye the Blancos and Lambs "occupied the top and bottom of the same house" (51)—the race/class hierarchies in the 'house' of Belize keep the families in their places. And when Lilla, Beka's mother, comments that "we agreed to give the governors . . . reserve powers in exchange for aid," Granny Ivy snaps, "Don't say 'we' Lilla . . . How many people in this country can vote?" (97).

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[49] Roger Bromley describes Belize as a "'borderland of two quite different worlds'—White-Creole-Carib and Spanish-Mestizo-Indian complexes" (Bromley 13; quoting Cedric H. Grant, *The Making of Modern Belize* [Cambridge, 1976]).

[50] The term "Carib" has different implications in different parts of the Caribbean. In *Beka Lamb*, Beka's teacher tells her class that Caribs were descendents of African slaves who escaped the plantations by paddling to St. Vincent. Their culture blends African traditions with some of the language and cultural traditions of the South American 'Caribans,' with whom they lived in St. Vincent (68).

The character of 'maskman' highlights the anxiety in the text about racial appearance and cultural background. This man wears a dark hood, "never taking it off when anyone could see" (31), and gloves and clothes that hide his body. The townspeople are "mesmerized" by him (31), and tell the story that as punishment for being a creole man in love with a Carib girl, he was obeahed by Carib people so that parts of his black body became "dotted with white speckles" (32). He is not the only masked person in this anecdote: the Carib avengers in the story wear "painted masks" (32), and the flour that spills from Maskman's load as he bicycles a delivery cart around town powders the boys who taunt him, giving them "white masks" (31). Maskman becomes a symbol of the isolation and fragmentation that can characterize Belize's creolized culture, as well as the divisions that can be based on superficial appearance.

Making sense of this diverse community is part of Beka's development, as is her negotiation of traditional, creolized, and 'modern' social values. Beka particularly feels a link between herself and her nation, telling Sister Gabriela, "Sometimes I feel bruk down just like my own country . . . I start all right but then I can't seem to continue" (115). Her feeling of being "bruk down" and of having a "tidal wave" in her head (158) occurs partly because of Toycie's situation, but also, the novel implies, because of her colonial education. Her Granny Ivy, a supporter of the anti-colonial People's Independence Party, particularly critiques Beka's convent education: she tells Beka, "All these schools around here teach children to do is to look outside [their country] instead of in" (147). Beka herself notes that it was easy to avoid thinking of Toycie when she was doing schoolwork, because "the subjects she read had little to do with the world of Cashew Street" (141).

Sister Gabriela offers a mechanical metaphor for Beka's and her country's problems: she tells Beka that she saw some machinery beside the road which had been abandoned because it lacked a part, and remarks, "when a good piece of machinery lacks a part, Beka, you don't give up on it or leave it alongside the road in the swamp, and the rain and the mud. You shelter it and try to find some way to make it work, even if you have to learn to make that part" (115). She urges Beka to take up the challenges of citizenship because of her educational and economic advantages, telling her, "you have an obligation to serve, a responsibility to produce under the most adverse circumstances. . . . Sometimes things are not breaking down at all, sometimes things are taking a different shape. Try to recognise the pattern even if it is one you don't like" (116). Granny Ivy also links Beka's growing up with Belize's development, using the same language for both: "Sometimes, you know, Beka, I feel I'll not live to see Belize get on its feet. I could die happy knowing that you and the boys are growing up in your own country and that it had a chance to become something" (152).

Throughout the text, Edgell reads nationalism and national metaphors through the lens of gender. She critiques the masculine bias in nationalism, pointing up the irony when Toycie sings, "Oh land of the Gods, by the Carib Sea, our manhood we pledge to thy liberte-e-e" (45). Beka is resistant to colonial control: she wishes to be a politician, and when she sees that Toycie's guitar is marked with "Made in Spain," she says, "Guatemala claims Belize from Britain through rights inherited from Spain, and Spain got rights from the Pope, and who are we going to get rights from?" (36). The scene is allegorical: they cannot sell the guitar, so they scratch out the word "Espana"; Beka says "we can . . . write in the name of any country we want" or else leave a name out altogether, but Toycie decides to replace Spain with "Belize" because "if we put a name, we can pretend to forget what was there" (36).

However, despite the fact that she has politically active, strong female role models (Granny Ivy belongs to the Women's Group in the People's Independent Party), it is a given that to grow into a woman she must perform domestic work, for "to be able to work like a woman was an honourable thing" (27). Women's rights are put in a political framework in *Beka Lamb*:[51] when Beka hears the calypso song during a National Day parade—

> Brown skin gial, stay home and mind your baby,
> Brown skin gial, stay home and mind your baby,
> I'm going away in a sailing boat and if I
> don't come back, throw away the damn baby! (148)

—she laughs "till she thought her jawbone would break" and until the men stop singing (148). The juxtaposition of misogynistic beliefs about women's sexuality and national sentiments appears throughout the novel. An example of a resistant use of this juxtaposition occurs when Beka's father tells Sister Virgil she should change the unfair policy of expelling pregnant girls (like Toycie) from school while not punishing the boys: he rhetorically uses civic images, saying, "the woman brave enough to make that change should be crowned Queen of the Bay at Battlefield Park!" (120). In response, Sister Virgil says, "women will have to decide for a change in their lives, otherwise they will remain vulnerable. Under prevailing conditions [the rate of illegitimacy], I cannot see much hope for the long term development of this country" (120). The exchange sets out two conflicting concepts of social change and political/national development: Bill believes greater freedom for women and less moralistic rules will lead towards political change, while Sister Virgil sees women's chastity and control over sexuality as the way to develop as a nation.

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[51] Edgell's novel *In Times Like These* explores the impact of nationalist movements on women and feminist organizing. This second novel could also productively be studied in light of Geraldine Heng's work on the conjunction of Third World feminist movements and nationalist movements.

The tensions between national movements and women's interests in *Beka Lamb* reflect a paradox whereby "the feminine" has a significant role to play in symbolic nationalism (as in nationalist female icons and discourses of womanhood), although women, often key players in nationalist movements, are frequently excluded from the new nation as political agents. Geraldine Heng, for instance, points out that "with few exceptions, women, the feminine, and figures of gender, have traditionally anchored the nationalist imaginary—that undisclosed ideological matrix of nationalist culture" (31). Jean Franco, in a study of the discursive positioning of women in Mexican society, similarly suggests that "Woman (as opposed to women) . . . played an ambiguous role in the construction of [Mexican] national identity" through "the cosmic Virgin of Guadalupe" as "the symbolic icon of criollo nationalism" (xviii). However, as Franco's study points out, "national identity was essentially masculine identity" (xxi), and nationalism required that women symbolize "the bourgeois household" (81). At the same time that "nationalist movements have historically supported women's issues as part of a process of social inclusion, in order to yoke the mass energy of as many community groups as possible to the nationalist cause" (Heng 31), as Heng suggests, this "triumphant nationalism . . . makes its gains and wins its accomplishments at the expense of a subordinated feminism" (31). The pregnancy or chastity of a female subject like Toycie, or the domestic abilities of Beka, in effect symbolize the moral foundation of nationalism.

Belizean nationalism must come to terms, in *Beka Lamb*, with not just ethnic diversity but also gender as a factor. Patrick Taylor, writing of Fanon and Caribbean history, argues that "the nationalist narrative can become the basis for an exclusionary interpretive code which marginalizes specific social categories such as the working class, women, or particular ethnic groups," an "other side" to "the various Western claims about 'progress'" (19). Rhoda Reddock, one of the foremost scholars of Caribbean women's movements, notes that "the violence of imperialist domination and of the revolutionary struggle is often such that national chauvinism emerges and seeks its final fulfilment in control of the nation's women, excluding any idea of their emancipation as 'foreign' or 'imperialist'" (Reddock and Mies, *National Liberation* 12): social control over women is renewed as "the colonized/oppressed male seeks to regain his patriarchal control (manhood) from the colonizer" (13). Donnell and Lawson Welsh offer as evidence of such an interpretation the fact that the 1930s and 40s in the Caribbean, a "moment of changed (national) consciousness" and anti-colonial sentiment (108), was "not a context particularly favourable to women" (118): they cite the mass marriage campaign of the late 1940s and state legislation of women's labour and education options as "a phase of carefully gendered policies" designed to disempower women of all social classes (118). Joan French, focusing on the 1938 labour uprising in Jamaica, similarly notes that post-uprising reforms in social policy—reforms including adult suffrage that led towards self-government and eventual independence—"operated to undermine the material base and the overt power of women" ("Women and Colonial Policy" 144), to "blunt the militancy of women . . . [and] make [them] second-hand beneficiaries of the reforms implemented after '38" ("Colonial Policy" 38), through changes in property ownership and the economic organization of heterosexual unions. With *Beka Lamb*, Edgell remains wary of the kind of citizenship that will be extended to women in the new nation.

With a sense of independence (tempered by her openness to different perspectives), Beka contests the different discourses of femininity and political structure with which she is presented. She resists the 'unifying' pull of a British colonial connection,[52] but also resists the fragmentation that threatens her creolized society, and the cultural and economic borders that are sometimes successfully, at other times disastrously, crossed. Edgell offers no easy solutions or slogans for diversity in this Caribbean society, but rather explores questions of how to reconcile diversity in a national framework. Her feminist intervention into the question of creolization is to explore diversity as a key concern in nationalist organizing, and to do so with an eye to equity and to challenging hierarchies of citizenship that exclude women and the poor and offer unequal power based on colour and ethnicity. She does this through use of the *Bildungsroman* to link individual and national identity, but in the process calls into question the assumption that modernization and the passage of time lead to positive development, for either Beka or Belize. Granny Ivy sees Beka's success in the essay contest as an indication of the positive effects of a modern Belize, but Edgell leaves open the question of where women will fit into Belize's new national order. The essay contest is one of many sites of ambivalence in the text, for it requires Beka to mythologize (albeit, by using oral history) the Sisters of Charity religious order, the nuns who teach her a colonial education and who expel Toycie from school. The fact that Beka's winning of the essay prize appears at both the beginning and end of the novel suggests that it should not be read as a progress narrative or as a comment on the cumulative positive effects of Beka's development throughout the novel. Additionally, Beka's access to fuller knowledge about Belize's colonial past, and hence to the ability to articulate her own progress narrative about Belize's development, is halted in various ways in the text, not least by her education at St. Cecilia's Academy, but also by her Granny Ivy (2) and her father (8), who avoid her questions about the past. The ambiguous ending of the novel therefore leaves posed, but unanswered, questions about both Beka's future as a political and cultural subject in Belize, and about the constitution of Belize itself. Simon Gikandi usefully points out, through Jean Franco's work on gender in Mexican literature, the "'ideological ambiguity'" of endings in narratives of national identity: "[t]his ambiguity is, of course, triggered by the incomplete nature of modernity, the limits of modernization, and the unfulfilled dreams of nationalism in the neocolonial period" (Gikandi 227). It is primarily through her manipulation of the expectations of the *Bildungsroman* that Edgell articulates this ambiguity of the multiply-constructed subject and nation.

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[52] Beka's father notes, "[h]atred of British colonialism unites us now. There are so many races here I wonder what will keep us together once they leave" (*Beka Lamb* 96).

IV

Cliff and Edgell, therefore, use the *Bildungsroman* as a vehicle for representing a feminist politics and poetics of diversity. Their articulations of creolization join those of critics like Harris and Glissant who see in the recognition of heterogeneity and difference the potential for vital re-evaluations of community and consciousness. However, both writers also foreground the schisms, exclusions, and unequal relations of power that mark the heterogeneous (neo)-colonial state. Although the *Bildungsroman* has an accreted history that might make its deliberate use in the Caribbean seem counter-intuitive, Cliff and Edgell use this genre as a place of intervention. These two novels manipulate the *Bildungsroman*'s narrative of progress to critique the narrative of progress in discourses of political development;[53] and they manipulate the individualism of the *Bildungsroman* to propose a feminist vision of heterogeneous community and coalitions across difference. Both texts, in other words, transgress the genre's expectations in ways that draw attention to their writers' anti-colonial projects. Writers like Cliff and Edgell suggest that a decolonizing use of a genre such as the *Bildungsroman* can enact a reversal of values, to articulate the heterogeneous identities constituted by the historical contradictions of colonialism and continuing hierarchies of difference.

Many questions remain, however, about the place of Caribbean women's *Bildungsromane* in discussions of creolization. What, ultimately, can make the genre a feminist tool? Under what circumstances is it not regressive or identity-based, if one takes as valid Dash's suggestion that narratives of origin must be outgrown in Caribbean criticism? On the other hand, Bongie and Shohat argue that there is always a place for narratives of identity in resistant cultural critique—perhaps the *Bildungsroman* is one way to test the possibilities of assertions of identity that are not homogenizing or insular, assertions that are necessary in an uneven field of representations and social power. The *Bildungsroman*—and, I hope to show, other narrative modes discussed in the remainder of this dissertation—is fascinating for the ways it reveals a tension between the resistant possibilities of identity-based and creolized criticism. This discussion, which will be continued throughout the dissertation, asks the question: What is at stake in claiming creolization as a primary mode of cultural resistance? Chapter One discussed, through Benítez Rojo, Rodríguez and Guillermo Wilson, the risk of hybridity becoming tied up with cultural/racial whitening, but there is also a risk of rationalizing the colonial disruption of communities and equalizing different social statuses. Further, claiming creolization can prioritize 'hybrid' writers (such as Cliff, who writes from the borders of different identities and whose work reflects these positions) over writers with a clearer sense of affiliation. It is necessary to distinguish between the colonial imposition of cultural hybridity and adaptive/resistant strategies such as coalition-building. The following chapters continue the exploration of creolization through a feminist framework, and continue to ask how we can gain the opportunity for a resistant position for critique offered by a stance of identity or "Prospero/Caliban dialectic" (Gikandi 199), and also ensure the sustained support for heterogeneity available (with the limits pointed out in this dissertation) within discourses of creolization. Chapter Three takes up the questions of identity and creolization differently, for both Brodber's and Condé's novels are novels of community more than of individual identity. Their focus on community makes them ideally positioned to test the claims of Harris and the *créolistes* regarding heterogeneous community and the possibilities for creative cultural renewal.

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[53] Edgell and Cliff illustrate Ketu Katrak's insight that "the exclusion of women generally from the colonial process of production contribute[s] to the kinds of 'progress' and modernization that ironically entrench women in new modes of oppression where capitalism colludes most happily with patriarchy" (Katrak 164).

Chapter Three: "Roots beyond roots": Heteroglossia and creolization in *Myal* and *Traversée de la mangrove*

The previous chapter explored the articulation of diversity and multiplicity in the form of the *Bildungsroman*, a genre in which one might expect to find a narrative primarily of individual identity, but which Cliff and Edgell manipulate to layer the individual in collective and national frameworks. Chapter Three continues to pursue questions of identity, community, creolization, and hierarchies of diversity, but moves towards forms of narrative that more clearly express community and collectivity. With both *Myal* and *Traversée de la mangrove* (*Crossing the Mangrove*)[54] I will focus most closely on forms of narration and structure, for it is through Brodber's and Condé's representations of multiple narration and community that theories of creolization and diversity are most fully articulated in each text. I will begin with *Myal* as a bridge from the previous chapter because of the ways it knits together *Bildungsroman* narrative and representations of community. Given the focus of the previous chapter, we can perhaps find the text even more interventionary in this respect because it embeds two *Bildungsromane* in the context of a counter-narrative that fundamentally questions the ideology of individualism and of individual development.

Erna Brodber, like many of the Caribbean women writers discussed in this dissertation, seeks to link her work on gender, race, and diversity with movements toward social change. As she states in an essay, "My sociological effort and therefore the fiction that serves it . . . has activist intentions" ("Fiction" 164). *Myal* participates in this project by illustrating how heterogeneous community can provide the cultural and spiritual resources for political revolution. In *Myal*, Brodber illustrates a vision of syncretism that parallels that of Wilson Harris who, as Chapter One indicates, posits that the creative rejuvenation of heterogeneous community rediscovering its own sedimented cultural resources can heal the psychic ruptures of violent and exploitative colonization. Brodber, like Harris, shows that monolithic discourses silence differences and are therefore creatively incapacitated. Syncretic theory demonstrates the need to account for multiple points of view, and avoid the dangerous "totalitarian bias of community—the tactic of fascism which battens on fear of contrasts" (Harris, "The Native Phenomenon" 50). Focusing on differences, however, does not lead in *Myal* to polarized cultural imperatives, to a Manichean opposition of African and European roots and resources, or to a valorizing of "authentic" cultural legacies. Brodber demonstrates what Harris calls an awareness of "roots beyond roots," a sense that "all images (or institutions or rituals) are partial, are ceaselessly unfinished in their openness to other partial images from apparently strange cultures" (Harris, "Some Aspects" 99). Brodber creates in *Myal* a focused demonstration of syncretic resources through an emphasis on partiality, multiplicity, liminal cross-cultural spaces, and a pedagogy of resistance. Moreover, Brodber differs from Harris in that she stages her exploration of syncretism and communal crisis through a representation of the sexual exploitation of women, and in the context of historical political crises in Jamaica.

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[54] Unless otherwise indicated, all references are to the Richard Philcox translation of Condé's text (New York: Doubleday, 1995).

Myal parallels Harris' model of catastrophe and renewal in that it is structured around the crises and community healing of two young Jamaican women named Ella and Anita, both victims of a form of spirit thievery: Anita is the victim of obeah, because Mass Levi steals her spirit to boost his waning potency. Using a "dolly baby" stuck with a nail, he gains control of Anita while she is studying, "the kind that splits the mind from the body and both from the soul and leaves each open to infiltration" (Brodber, *Myal* 74, 28). Ella, a "half black, half white" woman (6), is victimized by her American husband

Selwyn, who sees her as a "doll" that he can "animate" and steal stories (her soul) from for commercial purposes; she becomes a bridge for his imaginative colonization of her community.[55] Ella's violation takes physical form when her belly swells up with smelly gray matter because he gives her nothing with which to replace her stories (47). However, Ella's problem is originally one of hybridity: as a light-skinned mixed-race girl, she cannot resolve the disjunction between her primarily black community and the white world of the books she reads. She does not feel "real" because a "gauze" separates her worlds (11, 80). The theme of spirit thievery extends to other levels, for Ella is zombified by the books she reads: she is, in a sense, possessed by Kipling when she recites his poetry out loud, for "the words were the words of Kipling but the voice was that of Ella O'Grady" (5). Spirit thievery or zombification is also identified at the community level as a symbol of the political, economic, spiritual and cultural violence of colonial annexation and control of Jamaica.

Like many other Caribbean women writers, Brodber posits a simultaneity of oppressions, using the theme of spirit thievery to represent racial and sexual domination as well as class stratification and colonization. Her use of two female protagonists to illustrate the central cases of spirit thievery in the novel keeps gender at the forefront of her use of syncretic resources to "cure" those dispossessed by spirit thievery, and shows the connections between patriarchy and imperialism. Mass Levi's spiritual possession of Anita takes the form of rape, as the dolly baby with "knife marks where her legs meet" attests (75). Anita's sexual exploitation by Mass Levi is a show of force that also marks his interactions with other members of the community as a man of wealth. Further, as

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[55] Selwyn also represents an echo of earlier forms of colonization and a foretelling of neo-colonialism by the United States: he is the future "emperor" of the family-owned pharmaceutical corporation called 'the Langley Complex'; the practices of this U.S.-based "empire" are "radiated all over the world" (42). What he steals from Ella/Jamaica, in the form of her stories, is "purest gold" (79).

Shalini Puri points out, her protest to her unknown possessor of "let me go" (74) echoes Reverend Simpson's song of resistance, "Let my people go" (36): "The stoning of Anita thus resonates with colonial domination and also sets the tone for the violence of sexual relations between men and women in the novel" ("An 'Other' Realism" 113n8). Brodber also indicates that when the English Maydene Brassington becomes the myal figure White Hen she becomes her own person, not simply a "second" to her minister husband; he realizes this when he looks at her and sees that "his wife was thinking. Her own thoughts. Her spirit was not there at ready waiting to take his orders" (89). Maydene, Ella, and Miss Gatha, head of the tabernacle, take leadership roles in healing the community and, as Carolyn Cooper suggests, *Myal* privileges forms of knowledge associated with women, "devalued folk wisdom—that body of subterranean knowledge that is often associated with the silenced language of women and the 'primitiveness' of orally transmitted knowledge" ("'Something Ancestral'" 65). Neil ten Kortenaar, further, points out that in *Myal* "it is women who are at the dangerous interface between the community and its enemies," who are taking the most public role (61). He argues for a parallel between women's subordination and Grove Town's subordination within the colony of Jamaica, suggesting that the "[y]oung women who suffer demonic trance possession are performing at once their own alienation from the community and the threat posed to the community by hostile spirit forces" (61).

The crux of the novel is the way diverse members of the community marshal their resources and "subterranean knowledge" to heal both girls and, in turn, imagine new ways to resist the continuing psychic and material violence of colonization and neo-colonialism. Brodber's location and time period for the novel focus her project of representing resistance. The novel is set in Grove Town, in the parish of St. Thomas near Morant Bay, from about 1913 to 1919. As Webb points out, the St. Thomas parish is on the eastern part of Jamaica "where the people of African descent have refused to give up their ways of knowing" (22) and where "the 'ancestor worship cult' still thrives" (23). It is also the location for the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865, when Deacon Paul Bogle led his parish to protest the continued economic and political disenfranchisement of the black peasantry after Emancipation (23); Brathwaite, in fact, cites an "'outbreak' of myalism on the eve of the Morant Bay Rebellion" (*Contradictory Omens* 31). This historical/geographical location means that "the myal men and women of Grove Town represent the legacy of political and cultural resistance" of the area (Webb 23). Joyce Walker-Johnson also notes that the year 1919, when the novel opens and Ella returns to the community to be healed, marks a year of "rioting and civil disturbances" during a period of increased resistance by African Jamaicans that was "both the start of this new phase and the culmination of efforts by the second generation of freedmen, forerunners [of] . . . Alexander Bedward and Marcus Garvey" (55). The "freak storm" (Brodber, *Myal* 4) that results from Ella's healing, she argues, "may be understood as a reference to the reverberations from the disturbances of 1919" (Walker-Johnson 55).

The medium for the healing of the two women, the religion of myalism, also brings together images of resistance and heterogeneity. Colette Maximin points out that in nineteenth-century Jamaica, "religion was the expression of militancy" (50). Maximin argues that during the nineteenth and early twentieth century in Jamaica, the masses "created new forms of religion" that aided in their political resistance: "the Caribbean masses were able to fight back by using distinctive cultural tools" (51). Myalism is one of these syncretic forms of religion, rooted in African traditions but responsive to the creolized demands of the Caribbean.[56] It combined European and African traditions, although it maintained an emphasis on its African origins, and in the post-emancipation period "became associated with the idea of unity within creole society and continuity within the African tradition" (Walker-Johnson 52). Myalism is considered curative magic or healing, countering obeah's malign manipulation of spiritual forces. It involves spiritual possession, but can also be used to relieve possession. Barry Chevannes, in *Rastafari Roots and Ideology*, suggests that myalism was first noticed by Europeans in the Taki Rebellion of 1760, when "it enabled a rebellion to be organized on pan-African instead of strictly ethnic lines for the first time in the history of the Africans in Jamaica" (17). This ability to creolize led myalism towards "absorbing and transforming Christian ideas," for "the class-leader system provided greater autonomy and freedom for Myal [rather than the Baptist church] to refashion the symbols and teachings of Christianity into its own image, to snatch the 'Christian message from the messenger'" (Chevannes 18).[57] Chevannes suggests that "[w]here Christianity is transfixed on Jesus as mediator, Myal was transfixed on the Spirit as possessor . . . [w]hereas Christianity placed its emphasis on transmitted *knowledge* (doctrine, Bible, catechism) for conversion, Myal placed its emphasis on the *experience* of the Spirit" (19). Myal's followers, around the time of emancipation, "took on the challenge of enforcing certain ethical values among the black population" and "mobilize[d]" to challenge obeah (Chevannes 19). Notably,

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[56] Carolyn Cooper provides useful definitions of "myal": from the Hausa, "1. Sorcerer, wizard; 2. Intoxication; Return. (All of these senses are present in the Jamaican use of the word.) . . . In recent use in AFRICAN and similar cults: formal possession by the spirit of a dead ancestor, and the dance done under possession"; from the *Dictionary of Jamaican English*, "Myal is the complement of obeah which is defined

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[as] . . . 'a thing or mixture of things, put in the ground, as a charm to cause sickness or death' . . . The practice of malignant magic . . . [to be] distinguished from MYAL; though the latter was supposedly curative of the ills caused by the former"; from Hazel Carter via Maureen Warner-Lewis: "person/thing exercising control" (Cooper, "'Something Ancestral'" 85-86).

Joseph Murphy distinguishes between obeah and myal by explaining that obeah "reflect[s] the disintegrative forces of a society under stress" while myal "might be seen as a force for social integration, bent on the exposure of *obeah*, and defusing it with the power of communal values" (120; qtd. in ten Kortenaar 58).

[57] *Myal* traces the Christian influences on African-based myalism through its frequent Biblical allusions: to give only a few examples, the novel mentions the "seven days" of healing Ella (*Myal* 1); "good Friday" when the "Saviour" was "lynched" (3); and Ole African, his arms stretched like a "rugged cross," bleeding on Anita's steps as he helps her (40).

Chevannes points out that since the Baptist missionaries would not sanction myalism, Jamaican people found a way to have "formal membership in the nonconformist denominations but informal participation in Myal," a practice that allowed them to "forge an identity and a culture by subversive participation in the wider society" (20-21). This practice became known as "dual membership" (Chevannes 20), a term that resonates with the novel *Myal*'s sense of characters' participation in different modes of spiritualism and resistance.

The myal team that comes together in Brodber's novel draws from this history of the religion, and also changes it in significant ways. Her representation of myal highlights the extent to which the religion uses collective efforts, "bands or teams" (Webb 22), to combat obeah, but her novel goes further in representing this group as necessarily including a transplanted English woman, Maydene Brassington. Each of the myal figures has a "dual membership" in the community: Dan, Willie, Perce, Mother Hen and White Hen are, respectively, Reverend Simpson, the Baptist minister; the necromancer Ole African; Mass Cyrus, the myalman; Miss Gatha, the leader of a Kumina tabernacle; and Maydene Brassington, English wife of the Jamaican-born Methodist parson. If, as Maximin argues, "[religious] denominations are symbolic of status and class" in *Myal*, as a reflection of the stratification of churches and classes in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Jamaica (50), then the collaboration between the members of these different religions is especially a sign of heterogeneous community healing itself by creolized methods. At the time of Anita's healing each of the myal characters performs synchronized but separate rituals: Miss Gatha gathers her followers at the tabernacle, Reverend Simpson prays inside his church, and Maydene prays in her home.[58] These different strategies are also valued in *Myal* as constituent parts of communal action against the larger spirit thievery of colonialism. Willie counsels Dan to "get in their books and know their truth," but, as Dan points out, Willie does not do this: he lives in the "wilderness . . . not learning their ways," and Perce is "stuck in some grove talking to snails" leaving Dan "alone in this Egypt" (Brodber, *Myal* 67). "Some have to root, man," Willie tells him—he and Perce are "the hills and the trees," a way of knowing the land that is "Step number one" to Dan's intervention of challenging images and representations (67-8).

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[58] Colette Maximin has observed that Maydene is always walking along the road from the manse to Grove Town: she "can be viewed walking or visiting and is always on the road as a female Legba" (Maximin 59). She also resembles Legba in that she is a messenger—after the ceremony to heal Anita, she is given the privilege by Miss Gatha of telling the news that "it is finished" (*Myal* 76; Maximin 59).

The scene in which Ole African/Willie and Maydene first have contact particularly reveals this hybrid channelling of resources. Ole African, a "scarecrow high in the air walking as if on two roots of sugar cane" (40) represents the anancy stiltman, the trickster who proposes the riddle "[t]he half has never been told" (40). When Maydene sees him, she drops to her knees and prays for "the armoury for spiritual warfare"—she "pull[s] all the power she could find from inside of her and anywhere else with which she was in touch" (56). Wilson Harris has noted that in limbo performances in Guyana, "Some of the performers danced on high stilts like elongated limbs while others performed spread-eagled on the ground. In this way *limbo* spider and stilted pole of the gods were related to the drums like grassroots and branches of lightning to the sound of thunder" ("History" 22). Joyce Jonas, in her study of the counter-discursive energy of anancy, identifies this limbo dance as "a symbolic reassembling of the dismembered god—a celebration of survival . . . a creative accommodation to the change in fortune" (80). Ole African on his stilts and Maydene crouched on the ground, I argue, recall the twin figures of the limbo dance, and therefore together comprise this creative accommodation. For Harris, limbo is a uniquely powerful example of the cross-cultural

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and syncretic energies of the Caribbean: the Middle Passage is a "*limbo* gateway between Africa and the Caribbean," but it also describes the "waves of migration" to the Americas that "century after century have, at various times, possessed the stamp of the spider metamorphosis in the refugee flying from Europe or in the indentured East Indian and Chinese from Asia" ("History" 26). Limbo is not "the total recall of an African past" because of the "eclipse" of "tribal sovereignt[ies]" that occurred after the Middle Passage, but is rather "the renascence of a new corpus of sensibility that could translate and accommodate African and other legacies within a new architecture of cultures" (26-7). He argues,

> this ground of accommodation, this art of creative coexistence born of great peril and strangest capacity for renewal—pointing away from apartheid and ghetto fixations—is of the utmost importance and *native* to the Caribbean, perhaps to the Americas as a whole. (27)

Brodber's use of the limbo image, viewed this way through Harris' work, crystallizes her project of replacing Manichean resistance with creative syncretic energies. The teamwork of Ole African and Maydene gains more resonance once it is clear that the image of their collaboration is itself a spiritual symbol of cross-cultural renewal.

The teamwork in the myal group is not without its conflicts, however, for as Walker-Johnson notes, Reverend Simpson/Dan "recognizes . . . the necessity to get to 'the centre of things' before Maydene Brassington," even though he eventually sees that she can make a contribution (61). Walker-Johnson proposes that as a representative of "the vanguard of the political changes" in Jamaica, Dan must play a more central role than the English Maydene (61). In the context of the musical motif of the novel, Maydene is dissonant in the community, for she oversteps social niceties in her headlong effort to understand; to pun on her last name, she is perhaps 'brassy,' and Simpson "did not know how to play her" (Brodber, *Myal* 77). As one of the novel's clearest representatives of English colonial subjectivity, it is inevitable that her presence would trouble the Afro-Jamaican position of resistance in the myal group. Simpson's hesitation and distrust of Maydene is an important caution against the potentially paternalistic or neo-colonial aspects of her involvement. Yet Maydene resists her role as the symbol of English Methodist womanhood, set for her by a Jamaican husband who is clearly more of a 'spirit thief' than she, and also, as Nelson-McDermott suggests, "refuses the position of the sympathetic outsider" (61). Brodber's decision to include Maydene in the group of healers indicates a commitment to heterogeneity that challenges the Manichean binaries of victim-victimizer. As Amy Holness notes of Maydene, "[y]ou never know who is going to set the balance right" (Brodber, *Myal* 26). Shalini Puri argues, "it is *fundamental* to *Myal*'s anti-essentialist politics that Maydene Brassington have a role on par with that of the others in the community of resistance . . . [her] *crucial* role in setting the balance right is asserted both at the level of plot and at the level of the valourized themes of hybridization and of infiltration as a means of resistance" ("An 'Other' Realism" 114n10; emphasis in original). Her role is that of both contributor and conduit—she helps with the healing, but can also take the message of myal to her husband who, as a Methodist pastor and as one of the literate "new people" (Brodber, *Myal* 109), can contribute by changing things from the inside.

Brodber's commitment to heterogeneity in *Myal* is also a commitment to feminist coalition. The myal team consists of both men and women, but the community of women in the novel deserves particular attention. Ella, Anita, Miss Gatha, and Maydene function as a coalition, working together across their differences to solve the community's crisis. Yet, their roles undergo metamorphoses—Miss Gatha and Maydene are both community members and myal figures, and Ella moves from victim to creative problem-solver.

Further, Maydene's involvement particularly illustrates Mohanty's suggestion, noted in the Introduction to this dissertation, that feminist political alliances are based on shared commitments, "the *way* we think about race, class, and gender—the political links we choose to make among and between struggles" ("Cartographies" 4). She joins the group out of a love for liminality and a commitment to her adopted community and its goals of fighting colonizing ways of understanding. In these ways, the women work together in a coalition not based on essential identities. As in other examples of feminist coalition, however, unequal positions of privilege cause tensions within the group, as indicated by the other myal members' suspicions of Maydene.

Brodber foregrounds heterogeneity at other levels of the novel. Grove Town is a community of people who are difficult to place in a binary formulation of African and European ancestry. Many of the characters in the novel do not fit discrete categories of colour or class, and their "strangeness" and "dissonance" initially isolates them from the community. Ella is born of a white Irish father and a part-Moor, part-"tan tuddy potato" mother (Brodber, *Myal* 8), and although her community considers her near-white, she is a 'white' girl who has visited the 'pale-skinned' world only through her imagination (45). Reverend Brassington is "Jamaican . . . 'not full white'" (23). Although he is more Jamaican than Maydene, he has less understanding than she does of the personalities and rituals of Grove Town: William considers Grove Town "exotic" (87). Maydene's "strangeness" makes her "transportable" from England to the St. Thomas parish (88), and it also makes her 'transportable' across other borders. She shakes up Grove Town's expectations of race and class: when she is with Amy Holness, she thinks that to Grove Town "a white woman and a black woman walking together quietly and comfortably like equals was news" (24). Maydene articulates the novel's border-crossings when she revels in her favourite word, "cusp . . .[t]he meeting of two disparate points" that heralds "the beginning of a new phase of creation" (13); she has "faith in the intrinsic beauty in the meeting of unlikes" (15).[59]

Myal emphasizes liminality and the creative potential of the "cusp," and accentuates the possibilities as well as pain of border-crossing identities. Moreover, Brodber questions singular and stable identity at what is perhaps the most fundamental level: the distinction between inside and outside, and between Self and Other. As noted above, the myal characters all have multiple identities: each is both an individual in the community, a myal personality, and an animal character in the colonial fable which the novel rewrites, the story of Mr. Joe's farm. At times the behaviour of one personality can erupt into a situation calling for the behaviour of the other, such as when Reverend Simpson/Dan locks his door so Reverend Brassington doesn't return to find him acting as Dan the dog and "out of his mind" (109). The myal characters communicate with each other across time and space, speaking through the "air-waves" (109) and letting their "mind[s] move" (65), which disrupts notions of carefully-bordered selves. The struggle between Mass Levi and Miss Gatha over Anita's spirit and body also crosses both spiritual and physical borders: Miss Gatha and Anita each take on the other's appearance during the final struggle, and Miss Gatha's cry of "Let me go" is echoed by Mass Levi in a "young girl's scream" (73-4). The doubling of characters also occurs between ostensibly separate characters, through the connections between Ella's and Anita's crises, in the form of strong identifications between two figures, such as the light-skinned Reverend William Brassington and Ella, or the conflation of the characters' names Maydene and May/Mary (91) or William and Willie. Finally, characterization crosses the borders between humans, animals, and landscape: as mentioned above, the myal figures are also animals, but other animals in Grove Town (like the stone bruise) and the landscape itself must take part in the community project of healing. Perce and Willie are "the hills and the trees" and show that "one must know this land, have this land, work this land before he can walk safely at home" (68).

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[59] The novel also crosses the borders of families: Ella and Anita are each "share[d]" (48) between two families, and Amy Holness' son is "closeted at her parents' house" (26).

Hybridity is also present in the novel at the formal level, through intertextual references as well as linguistic code-switching. Joyce Walker-Johnson notes that "*Myal* must be read against a background of other novels," including Vic Reid's *New Day*, an examination of Jamaican social and political events from the 1865 Morant Bay rebellion to the New Constitution in 1944; H. Orlando Patterson's *Die the Long Day*, which describes resistance and plantation life; and Kamau Brathwaite's *Rights of Passage*, an account of "the Black man's striving in the New World" (Walker-Johnson 50). Further, Evelyn O'Callaghan points out that Dan and Percy's chorus of "Chick a bow, chick a bow" echoes U Roy's song "Wear You to the Ball" ("Review of *Myal*" 52).[60] *Myal* makes such moves between literate and oral culture, from *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* (Brodber, *Myal* 107, 70) to Bob Marley (3) and from Dickens to Scottish folk song (14, 39). The voices of individual characters and the narrator's voice similarly switch back and forth on a continuum of linguistic registers from patois to standard English. The interpenetration of oral/popular and literary cultural references and speech furthers Brodber's use of border-crossings as an indication of syncretism.

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[60] Pam Mordecai's poem "Southern Cross" contains this repeated line:

> An a must get a chick
> Mi say you nah get no chick!
> Pinyaah di hawk is coming down. (58)

Since the poem also refers to "Mr Holness" (61), which echoes Teacher Holness in *Myal*, I haven't yet determined if one text is the source for the other text's reference, or if both texts refer to an anterior oral or literary source (such as the *Caribbean Reader*, identified by O'Callaghan as the source of the parable of Mr. Joe's farm [*Woman Version* 73]).

At the levels of both form and content, then, *Myal* emphasizes multiplicity, "the meeting of unlikes" (15), and partiality as constitutive of her vision of syncretism. The novel suggests that communal interpretation of an event can yield more valuable results than a single reading. A phrase that is frequently mentioned in the text is "the half has never been told." Not only does this phrase caution against interpretive closure, but the meaning of the phrase is also variously interpreted by each of the characters in the novel: Dan thinks it means "there are other things to come" (41); to Ella, it means that "the turmoil in Grove Town had not ended" when the rocks stop falling on Anita's roof (56); to Euphemia, Anita's mother, it means the stone-throwing "could happen again" (63); and to Dan and Willie, it refers to future resistance, to "planning a strategy. To beat back those spirit thieves and make our way home" (67). The phrase is particularly relevant when Ella cannot tell Selwyn "the half" of what happened to Anita because "[s]he did not know it" (56). There are "some parts missing" to her story (56), but the details of the event are assembled with reference to the perspectives of other characters. Diverse strategies and perspectives are therefore necessary, as is the recognition that knowledge is always partial: change and healing occur as "one little coral on top of one little coral finally ma[kes] a firm rock" (110).

As an indication of this partiality of knowledge, the narrator is not omniscient but rather appears to be a member of the community. Gossip is a form of community knowledge and information-sharing in *Myal*, and gossip and "silly linguistic rituals" (21) play a large part in the narration of the novel. When Maydene decides that she wants to take care of Ella, "the news winked about" from Maydene to Cook to Coachman to Miss Jo and finally "settled" with Amy Holness (20). There is frequent reference to "common knowledge"; the narrator is just repeating this common knowledge for the reader. Common, or local, knowledge, also helps in understanding some of Brodber's metaphors, such as the image of Maydene sitting in a chair with her "fat hips . . . drooping over the sides like a Friday evening hamper on a donkey's back" (22). And the narrator also draws the reader into the community by asking collaborative questions such as appear in oral storytelling: "Mass Levi catch the tief. You think him beat him? . . . What him do? Mass Levi tie him like a hog" (33). Moreover, as Walker-Johnson observes, "linguistic rituals" are used by individuals "to conceal their purposes, avoid confrontation and dispel emotional pressure. Saying one thing and meaning another and 'playing the fool to catch the wise' were strategies of survival in the slave community" (54). As Maydene Brassington herself realizes, "there are classes everywhere and . . . those below must hate those above and must devise some way of communicating this without seeming too obviously rude" (Brodber, *Myal* 21). She sees that if William's parishioners were to "empty themselves in front of him" it would be much easier for him to "remodel them into shapes of which he approves" (21); keeping parts of themselves secret preserves their own ways of being. Walker-Johnson suggests that Brodber follows folk tales such as Anancy stories by "encod[ing] her meaning" in a "verbal hide-and-seek" (54) that mirrors the linguistic survival strategies of the slaves and, I would argue, that also makes the reader piece together stories told at a slant. The novel is also structured so as to prove to the reader that the story is not easily come by, for it begins disorientingly in the middle and switches backwards and forwards in time: the action cannot be understood until many characters have spoken. As the story is pieced together through various characters' information about the major events, *Myal* embraces dialogue and difference.

Brodber's politics and poetics of difference therefore become articulated through her emphasis on heterogeneous community, multiple and divergent points of view, combinations of diverse resources, and partiality. Her pedagogy of improvisation culminates in Ella's struggle with the story of Mr. Joe's farm, which she must teach to her students as part of the curriculum. Ella recognizes the text as a colonial allegory, a fable of slavery and dependence that draws the schoolchildren into "complicity" with the story's implicit message that the farm animals (read: the colonized) are "ignorant" and cannot survive outside their master's control (Brodber, *Myal* 97, 106). The writer of the story has "robbed his characters of their possibilities," has "taken their knowledge of their original and natural world away from them and left them empty shells—duppies, zombies, living deads capable only of receiving orders from someone else and carrying them out": another level of the novel's theme of spirit thievery (106-7). She learns that her "voice" need not echo that of the writer—she can teach against the grain of the text to help her students reach a counter-discursive interpretation. Brodber enacts her pedagogy through the model of Ella's questioning and search for "alternatives" (105), as well as the young woman's realization, as Maydene understands, that she cannot merely throw out the text but must "find a way around it" (104). The monologic text contains the seeds of its own undoing, just as the monolithic text of colonial conquest, to use Harris' formulation, contains the cross-cultural seeds of transformation.

Improvisation becomes part of this lesson. In the same way that "Maydene believed in trying" (14), questioning is emphasized over knowledge. Reverend Simpson participates in Ella's gradual understanding of the fable's problems: he questions her in stages to "spur her thoughts to words" (97). William Brassington also understands the value of a dialogic method of learning, and asks Simpson to organize seminars to "[g]ive her a wider audience that can question her and by the questioning bring her ideas closer to the fore" (108). Musical metaphors in the novel support the theme of questioning: Willie, Dan, and Perce build analysis together using a call-and-response pattern of dialogue that resembles jazz improvisation, a comparison that is supported by the many references to the drums, trumpets, and cymbals that they "play together" (38) and to the "sound" that has been stolen from them (66). Improvisation becomes a particularly powerful weapon against spirit thievery, as Miss Gatha shows when she struggles with Mass Levi over Anita's spirit:

> So Miss Gatha spoke: "Nine times three is twenty-seven. Three times three times three". She recited; she sang; she intoned. In one register, in another; in one octave, then higher. Lyrically, with syncopation, with improvisations far, far out from her original composition. The changes were musical only. The lyrics never changed. (71)

With all these changes, Mass Levi cannot maintain his possession of Anita: "If she didn't change her style so much! If she would only keep one tune, he could follow her and hold her. But that woman was slippery" (72).[61] Through using improvisation to fight Mass Levi, Miss Gatha is able to elude his grasp.

Miss Gatha's strategy is Brodber's as well: Brodber uses a pedagogy of improvisation to approach the healing of Caribbean community from different directions, on multiple registers and "octaves," using different styles and a variety of illustrations to outline the same problem. Her vision of improvisation as resistance mirrors her version of syncretism: monolithic discourses of colonization, spirit thievery, and patriarchy that suppress otherness are incapacitated when attacked and resisted with heterogeneity itself, on multiple levels and with varying strategies. Brodber's syncretism advocates a turn to the creative resources of diverse community, to hybridity as a living tool that is, as Helen Tiffin notes, "initially symbolic of a destructive colonial subjectification" but becomes "facilitating and catalytic" ("Transformative Imageries" 433). To the extent that Ella's struggle with the fable of Mr. Joe's farm indicates a direction for the future, Brodber's syncretism is also about contingency and compromise, not about insularity and refusing admission to outside elements: syncretism includes the strategy of infiltration, the imperative to "[g]et in their books and know their truth" (Brodber, *Myal* 67). It is important to note that the "slippery[ness]" (72) of Brodber's strategy and the posture of questioning do not result in relativism: as Puri argues, *Myal* "shares with postmodernism the vocabulary of doubleness, ambivalence, hybridity, and textual proliferation" but "retains a commitment to the categories of truth and error, knowledge and ignorance . . . *Myal*'s interest is in the opacities of *particular* historical narratives. *Myal* dramatizes the difficulty of knowing; it does not assert the impossibility of knowing" ("An 'Other' Realism" 112). The centrality of myalism in the novel indicates the constant process of creolization that is sustained by elements from the different cultures that make up Caribbean communities. The community of difference that is Grove Town works together, using difference to enable creative solutions. Brodber suggests that the possibilities for collective renewal lie in a recognition of diversity, for "[t]here are so many paths" (Brodber, *Myal* 71), "[t]here are ways and ways of knowing" (76), "there are alternatives" (105), and there are 'other worlds' (91).

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[61] Ella, at the high point of her crisis with Selwyn, repeats Miss Gatha's strategy, improvising at different speeds and styles on the line, "Mammy Mary's mulatto mule must have maternity wear" (84). Her behaviour indicates that she has "tripped out indeed" but perhaps also that she is starting to resist spirit thievery by becoming 'slippery.'

Many of the Caribbean women writers studied in this dissertation may engage with the phenomenon of creolization without directly addressing its major theorists. Condé, on the other hand, has directly addressed *créolité* in both her critical and literary work, including *Traversée de la mangrove* (*Crossing the Mangrove*), discussed here. Indeed, Anne Malena points out that Condé "shows a remarkable willingness to engage with the theory of 'créolité' and to participate in its discourse, in spite of the fact that it has rightly been perceived as masculinist" (73). At the same time, as outlined in Chapter One, Condé enters the discussion as a challenger: she discounts the ordering imperative of *créolité* as articulated by Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant, and she offers her own literary and critical exploration of Creole Caribbean identity despite the dismissal of her work by the *créolistes*.[62] She asks, in "Chercher nos vérités," "Are there not many versions of antillanité? New senses of créolité?" (310).[63] Miriam Rosser concurs that Condé's novel joins other Caribbean women's writing in offering "counter-discourses to the masculinist metanarratives of Caribbean social space and identity" such as the theories of *créolité* proposed by Bernabé et al. (476). Anne Malena agrees that *Traversée de la mangrove* can, "at one level of interpretation . . . be seen as a thoughtful 'mise en scène' of the concept of 'créolité', inscribing its undoing within the performance itself" (Malena 68). At the same time, Rosser suggests that Condé's novel reveals "important conceptual overlaps with contemporary 'male' theories" (Rosser 476). Rosser proposes that Condé's novel "argue[s] against a poetics of Creoleness anchored in a place, however significantly place may function in [her] text" (477). Most significantly, she suggests,

> Condé's *créolité* is committed to a multiplicity and a hybridity that empties places and traditions of sacred value, insisting, instead, on an anthropology of everyday modernized spaces, where the problematic interrelations between people in creolized cultures figure centrally. . . . *Crossing the Mangrove* reveals that, for

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[62] Patrick Chamoiseau, chosen by Condé as the first 'public reader' of her novel in Martinique, reads *Traversée de la mangrove* largely for its representation of authentic Creole culture, and chastizes Condé for what he sees as her failure to represent an 'authentic' Creole voice. He writes, "[some] words of your vocabulary, still numerous, fail to invoke in me anything besides the flavor of other places and other cultures . . . all the footnotes that explain what we already know make us think, dear Maryse, that you are not addressing us, but some other people. . . . How can we construct our own literature if we fail to speak profoundly to ourselves if, at the very moment of writing, we address another people, another culture, other needs?" ("Reflections" 394). Despite his recognition that Condé's novel presents a "mosaic ensemble" of cultures in Guadeloupe (392), Chamoiseau's review is focused on evaluating the text for its adherence to a closed system of Creole culture. His review becomes patronizing at other moments, too, such as his comment at the end of the review, "What can I say of the rest? I could, of course, discuss the lack of psychological breadth of certain characters . . . I could discuss the vocabulary, often ill-suited to the cultural level of this or that person; I could discuss the choice of images that fail to stir my heart; . . . But what for? Let us leave this task to the doctors of standards" (394).

[63] "N'y a-t-il pas des versions multiples de l'antillanité? Des acceptions nouvelles de la créolité?" (translation mine).

> Condé, plural and diversely gendered subjectivities, including the representation of feminine and homosexual desire, must be included in the discursive construction of Caribbean cultural identity. Ultimately, Condé's poetics of diversity . . . radically interrogates the foundations for community or for cultural authority. (494)

Much of what Condé does with *Traversée de la mangrove* is critical without always being clearly constructive; that is, she pinpoints the flaws in theories of *créolité* that link Creole identity with an exclusionary, unchanging, and "authentic" representation of an older, plantation community, but her own vision of creolization is not always clear amongst the ironies and ambiguities of her narrative. At the same time, one can see in the novel that Condé is laying out the terms for a contemporary vision of heterogeneity, one that does not shy from the intransigences of social conflict and inequities across differences, but that insists on, as Rosser puts it, the "plural and diversely gendered subjectivities" that make up "the foundations for community" (494) in the Caribbean.

Traversée de la mangrove offers a productive comparison to *Myal* largely because of the ways the narrative structure invokes a diverse community with multiple voices. Unlike *Myal*, however, Condé's text reveals a community whose multiple voices are in discord, competition, and even violent confrontation. Set in the small Guadeloupean community of Rivière au Sel in the late 1980s, the novel is structured around the one-night wake of Francis Sancher, a stranger to the community who died a mysterious yet foretold death. The wake offers Condé a venue for bringing the various members of the community together in one place,[64] and it offers a provisional sense of inclusivity, for

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[64] Renée Larrier points out that the novel "borrows its structure from the Caribbean 'veillée mortuaire' at which friends and family gather to honor the deceased. They, in turn, tell stories and riddles, or reminisce" (89). In his review of *Traversée de la mangrove*, Chamoiseau also notes that "the wake is for us a melting pot of Creole culture, of its speech, of its orality, and it gave the extraordinary pretext that would allow plantation slaves to gather without spreading the fear that they were plotting to revolt or to burn down a

"you don't lock the door to a wake. It remains wide open for all and sundry to surge in" (Condé, *Traversée* 12). It is also a strategy that evokes the rural, Creole roots of Guadeloupean culture even as it repeatedly ironizes this connection. The novel is divided into three sections: Dusk, The Night, and First Light. The first and last brief sections are narrated by an anonymous narrator, but the central middle section, the key to the novel, is divided into twenty first- and third-person monologues spoken successively by nineteen members of the community (one character, Mira, speaks twice). Although they are physically together under one roof during the wake, the narrators reveal their startling differences from each other both by the details of their biographies and narration, but also by the ways they offer different, partial, and sometimes contradictory versions of Francis Sancher's background and appearance in the community.

As Sancher is the locus for this diverse community's attention, much of Condé's exploration of creolization lies with his character. Indeed, critics have described Sancher as "the symbolic point to which everyone converges in their differences" (Rosello 572), "a sign calling for interpretation, the start of a semiotic process that, through its dialogic dynamics, suggests the possibility of change in the life of the village" (Malena 70). Francis Sancher, or Francisco Alvarez-Sanchez, arrives mysteriously in Rivière au Sel and moves into the haunted Alexis house. He is both isolated and uprooted—"sans chez," as Renée Larrier quips on his flexible name (Larrier 88)—and yet intimately affects the lives of everyone in the village. There can be no certainty about his past or his time in the village, however, for his story is told piecemeal in layered, repetitive and contradictory ways by each of the nineteen narrators whose lives he has affected. As in *Myal*, gossip, "reported or distorted" (Condé, *Traversée* 186), is the primary source of information:

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plantation. I even have the feeling that the Creole language, in its whispers, that the Creole culture, in its ruses and detours, and that the Creole philosophy, in its underground, clandestine, and fatalist character, all were shaped in the wake's contours" ("Reflections" 391).

Sancher is rumoured to have been a murderer, a drug-dealer, an arms runner, a writer, a mercenary or freedom fighter, a military doctor, a healer, a gay man and a rapist of women. He appears to have been born in Colombia, and has lived in Cuba, Angola, Zaire, France, Madagascar, and the United States. Moïse learns that Sancher's family were white Creoles who fled from nearby Petit-Bourg after abolition, and that Sancher has returned to trace his family, but this information does not complete his genealogy, for his mother was the daughter of a black coffee planter in Colombia. He is described as having both gray and black hair, sand-coloured eyes, "bicolored" arms, "[a]lmost black up to the elbow, then golden above," and a "rich, roasted corn color" face (80). Another narrator calls him a "brown-skinned mulatto" (121). But as Loulou Lameaulnes, the wealthy white Creole patriarch points out, "the popular imagination . . . transforms a man, whitens him or blackens him" (98). For example, Mira anticipates that when her son grows up and searches for stories of his father Francis, he would be told "[w]e don't even know whether he was white, black, or Indian. He had every blood in his body" (192).

The shifting nature of Sancher's racial subjectivity does not, I would argue, make him the culmination of all forms of creolization, or "an 'everyman': an archetypal inhabitant of the Caribbean archipelago," as Lionnet would have it (*Postcolonial Representations* 81)—the weight of his white Creole past, and the mysterious ancestral crime for which he expects to die, encourage an historically specific reading of his complicated subjectivity. According to gossip, Sancher's great-grandfather, François Désiré, was a white Creole planter whose slaves cursed him. Each male descendent, according to documents that Sancher's mother gave him, dies mysteriously in his early fifties. Sancher tried to flee from this past: he travelled to Cuba, "the country I chose for my rebirth," but learned that "[y]ou are never born again" (Condé, *Traversée* 126). Finally, he came to Rivière au Sel to end the cycle of the curse, "to come full circle . . .

Return to square one and stop everything" (83). He impregnates two women in the village, though, and therefore has enabled the curse to continue another generation. Sancher tells Moïse, "[o]ne can't lie to one's own flesh and blood! One can't change sides! Swap one role for another. Break the chain of misery. I've tried and you see, nothing's changed. After all, it's only justice" (24). One's ancestors, he claims, "leave their crimes intact within us" (24). Sancher cannot find a way to creatively transform his legacy of violence.

The metaphorical curse, of course, is not Sancher's alone. As Xantippe's narration, the last of the wake, shows, the crimes of a slavery past must be collectively rehearsed and digested as part of the process of coming to terms with the creolized present. Xantippe haunts the novel, appearing silently and almost unnoticed in the corners of most of the other characters' monologues. He apparently arrived in the community shortly after Sancher and remains on the margins, "on the edge of Rivière au Sel," at a "crossroads" in a "pieced together" hovel (12). He disturbs others with his presence at the wake, "huddled up in the corner . . . motionless, silent, eyes glowing like cinders under a cooking pot" (12); he seems a "soucouyant" to Joby (74).[65] Sancher in particular is terrified of him, and begs Xantippe for forgiveness for the "ancient" crime: "It wasn't me, it wasn't me who shed his blood before hanging him from the manjack tree!" (91). Xantippe's liminal position in the community (physically as well as symbolically: Emile Etienne calls him "The Go-Between" [198]) belies the novel's representation of him as the essence of Guadeloupe. Xantippe appears an immortal figure: he claims, "I named all the trees of this island . . . I named the gullies . . . I named the rocks . . . In a word, I named this land. It spurted from my loins in a jet of sperm" (201-2). Xantippe "watched this country change"—he witnessed the burning plantations at Emancipation, the movement of people into towns, the effects of French education on Guadeloupean children, urbanization and the growth of consumerism: "Rivière au Sel I named this place. I know its entire history" (204). His expansiveness gives wider purchase to Sancher's story: he acknowledges that

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[65] Condé glosses "soucouyant" as "a spirit that attacks humans and drinks their blood" (Condé, *Traversée* 74).

> a crime was committed here, on this very spot, a long, long time ago . . . I know where the tortured bodies are buried. I discovered their graves under the moss and lichen . . . and every evening at dusk I come here to kneel on my two knees. Nobody has pierced this secret, buried and forgotten. (205)

The tortured bodies could be the slaves tortured by Sancher's ancestor, or could be representative of the general violence of slavery and colonial control. But Xantippe is not the agent of Sancher's death: "I won't touch him. The time for revenge is over" (205). Even as Sancher cannot "come full circle" and "stop everything"—cannot close the door on the crimes of the past—so Xantippe decides that revenge cannot change the present. At the same time, the opaqueness of Sancher's origins (most of his story comes to the reader via gossip) indicates the danger of drawing lines of victims and victimizers when defining cultural identity: Lucien Evariste, when chastized by his patriotic political friends for his friendship with Sancher, explains, "I divided the world in two: us and the bastards. Now I realize it's a mistake" (187).

Sancher—with the curse of his past, his ambiguous and contradictory signifiers, his "heart of gold" (62) and his named and unnamed crimes (including his enjoyment of raping a child)—is the insecure foundation for the novel's representation of a heterogeneous community. Condé presents Rivière au Sel as a community of diverse and syncretic ethnic origins, emigrants and exiles, and yet also with a highly xenophobic collective voice. As Moïse notes, "You need to have lived inside the four walls of a small community to know its spitefulness and fear of foreigners" (22). The linchpins of the community are the wealthy Ramsarans and Lameaulnes: the Ramsarans are South Asian cattle-breeders, many of whom "married into black or mulatto families . . . [a]nd so were related by blood to much of Rivière au Sel" (9); they were a "respected family" as long as they continued to "know their place" and didn't become "too big for [their] breeches" (8-9); Loulou Lameaulnes, white Creole owner of a nursery, "played the aristocrat" and literally dreams at night of being the Queen's florist (9, 95). He believes all foreigners should be deported from Guadeloupe, and considers himself descended from "the Discoverers" who "soiled their blood with Negro women" (100). Désinor, one of the Haitians Loulou thinks should be deported, says that in Guadeloupe "the enslavement of the Haitian is not over yet" (165). Moïse is called a "misbegotten freak" by people because of his mixed heritage: his black father married a Jamaican Chinese woman named Shawn "who up to her death had never really known how to speak properly to her neighbours" (22, 19). Loulou's second wife Dinah is Dutch and Indonesian, and Lebanese Guadeloupeans own a shop in the community (173). Mama Sonson, a black woman whose son marries a white woman, ponders, "Perhaps those words, black and white, no longer mean anything" (61), but these divisions do matter to the community.

The community's diverse origins, and obsession with origins, are represented by the tangled roots of the mangrove swamp of the novel's title. The use of the mangrove as symbol of cultural identity links Condé's novel with the *Éloge*:

> Creoleness is an annihilation of false universality, of monolingualism, and of purity. It is in harmony with the *Diversity* which inspired the extraordinary momentum of Victor Segalen. Creoleness is our primitive soup and our continuation, our primeval chaos and our mangrove swamp of virtualities. We bend toward it, enriched by all kinds of mistakes and confident of the necessity of

> accepting ourselves as complex. For complexity is the very principle of our identity. (Bernabé et al 892)

In their text, the "deep mangrove swamp of Creoleness" (902) focuses a constellation of descriptors: it represents "our original chaos . . . the magma that characterizes us" (897), "our alluvial Creoleness" (899), the authentic "ancestral speech" that Creole writers seek to resurrect (900), and the "fecundity" of Creole "roots" (900-901). The mangrove swamp offers images of ancient roots, creative ferment, mystery, complexity, and depth: the *Éloge* writers seek "verticalities . . . the deep bottom of ourselves" (886), "interior vision" (891), and "submersion into Creoleness" (903).

Yet Condé's text twists these associations between the mangrove swamp and cultural roots, genealogy, and access to authentic Creole culture: in her novel, the mangrove swamp takes on a complicated set of meanings that articulates, in relation to the *Éloge* writers, her ideas on *créolité*. Sancher is the character most identified with the mangrove swamp in the novel: he sits in the swamp waiting for his death, and meets several of the characters there. But more importantly, the key to Condé's manipulation of the association between mangroves and Creoleness is the book that Sancher attempts to write: he knows that "I'll never finish this book because before I've even written the first line and known what I'm going to put in the way of blood, laughter, tears, fears and hope, well, everything that makes a book a book and not a boring dissertation by a half-cracked individual, I've already found the title: 'Crossing the Mangrove'" (Condé, *Traversée* 158). The fact that Sancher cannot ever write the book "Crossing the Mangrove" does not bode well for the Caribbean writer seeking to resurrect the mangrove swamp of Creoleness through writing. Vilma indicates that his project is especially doomed when she shrugs and replies, "You don't cross a mangrove. You'd spike yourself on the roots of the mangrove trees. You'd be sucked down and suffocated by the brackish mud" (158).

Sancher, however, agrees: "Yes, that's it, that's precisely it" (158). In fact, he dies face down in this mud, never having resolved the questions of his genealogy. His mysterious end shows the folly of his having tried to "untangle the skeins of life" like the roots of the mangrove tree:

> Life's problems are like trees. We see the trunk, we see the branches and the leaves. But we can't see the roots, hidden deep down under the ground. And yet it's their shape and nature and how far they dig into the slimy humus to search for water that we need to know. Then perhaps we would understand. (139)

Not only are Sancher's roots tangled and hard to discern amongst the gossip about his past, but the roots of the community also come from multiple, criss-crossed sources. The mangrove is a particularly interesting choice of tree to use as a representation of cultural roots, for "[i]n the mangrove's thick growth it is difficult to tell roots from trunks and branches, origins from effects, beginnings from ends" (Hewitt 85). Jarrod Hayes offers a useful link between Condé's title and Glissant's work on "roots" versus "rhizomes" when he notes that "the scientific name for the mangrove is *Rhizophora*" (Hayes 466). In the mangrove swamp, in fact, as Hayes points out, "it is impossible to tell which roots belong to which tree," for "roots do not necessarily precede the tree," and a tree "may shoot down new roots from its branches" (Hayes 459). This characteristic of the tree indicates heterogeneity of roots, as the *créolistes* perhaps intend, but the lack of correspondence between roots and trees makes cultural genealogy, a search for origins or cultural authenticity, next to impossible. The *créolistes*' focus on the French Caribbean as in many ways an insular site for the regeneration of Creole language and culture also privileges the space of the island and a connection between home and cultural roots (remember Chamoiseau's injunction to Condé not to write for 'outsiders'); but, as Hayes points out, "mangroves . . . do not grow on land at all, but rather, they precede the land that gathers around their roots; they create 'land' where there was none before" (463). Anne Malena, in turn, has noted that nostalgia for a return to collective consensus, evident in the *Éloge*, is implicitly a nostalgia for plantation society, and "it may well be this nostalgic appeal to a culture of the land that Condé is reacting to in her questioning of 'créolité'" (72). It is interesting that Chamoiseau, in his review of the novel as Condé's first public reader, seems to miss the irony of her title: he comments that the mangrove is "a cradle, a source of life, of birth and rebirth," and that the title is a "good sign" that Condé has returned to "her native culture" ("Reflections" 390). He muses that he would have chosen an alternative title, though: "*Tracée dans la mangrove*, in order to evoke both the path of the runaway slave and the Creole act of crossing" (390). He seems not to have noted that "You don't cross a mangrove" (Condé, *Traversée* 158); and as Balutansky points out, he also does not acknowledge that Condé's title "is not so much an echo of the optimistic view of the 'mémoire collective' of *Éloge* as it is an intertextual pun, a sober warning. While Condé's title seems to echo the 'mangrove swamp of virtualities' of *Éloge* . . . it also echoes Césaire's use of the mangrove as a dead-end" (Balutansky 106). Condé's use of the mangrove swamp image confounds a celebratory Creoleness that seeks to trace well-defined roots to an earlier, more authentic, cultural identity.

Condé's attempt to find a more productive representation of the collectivity that undergirds heterogeneous community finds its fullest articulation in the novel's mode of narration. The multiplicity of voices that make up the novel's narration does not, as some critics would argue, result in "the unifying voice" of "an entire collectivity" (Spear 729), or "a utopian universe in which differences are respected and do not lead to mutual negation" (Lionnet, *Postcolonial Representations* 80). Rather, the narrative structure indicates significant differences in point of view and conflicts between characters. Each character's monologue reveals differences not just in the individual's biography and identity but also in the point of view of each character that is not merely unique or individual, but shaped by the speaker's gender, class, ethnicity and sexuality. The mystery of Sancher provides a focal point for their reflections and actions, as the healing of Anita and Ella do in *Myal*; however, in Condé's novel the community does not work together across differences, as Brodber's characters do, towards the common goal of solving the mystery. Intersections, understandings and agreements are rare, even though many characters seek to understand the differences within the community. As Anne Malena points out, referring to the *Éloge* writers' hope that finding a collective voice will lead to a crystallization of collective consciousness, "Condé's characters, in searching for meaning, may tend toward a common goal but no crystallization is possible nor wished for: their collective voice remains heteroglossic, fraught with individual tensions, contradictions, and perpetual negotiation" (89).

In many ways, Condé's narration performs the same pedagogical function as Brodber's. The reader lacks access to an authoritative voice, and must therefore seek for meaning amongst the novel's contradictions and partial explanations. Contradiction and incompleteness become their own sources of meaning: *Traversée de la mangrove* enacts the process of questioning, of openness to different explanations, and absence of a central unifying presence that are necessary for understanding her vision of heterogeneous community. To return for a moment to the image of mangrove roots, Hewitt points out that the title of the novel "provides a metaphor for the readers' situation. . . . The mangrove's tree branches . . . are a physical equivalent to the jumble of stories that overlap, intersect and crisscross one another. . . . the entanglement of contradictory facts, beliefs and attitudes undermines the reader's desire to get to a univocal truth concerning the 'root' or 'origin' of Sancher's identity and the cause of his death" (85). Similarly, Lionnet argues that "[t]he narrative harbors lacunae, . . . zones of nonknowledge and nonpower which the reader must learn to accept. The novel is not a completed whole but a rich open expanse of possibilities which assigns a multiplicity of meanings to the community" (*Postcolonial Representations* 80). Condé's strategy is perhaps to counter what she calls the "commands" and "order" of the male theorists of West Indian literature, with the "disorder" and "freedom" of a less schematized vision of creolization (Condé, "Order" 122). She also brings a sense of skepticism to the certitude of the *Éloge* writers and their, in many ways, closed system of *créolité*. The openness of her narrative means that the reader must "play a dynamic role in the process of signification" (Crosta 154). Crosta points to the novel's use of the conventions of detective fiction, a manipulation which, she argues, "underscores the importance of the act of reading within and outside the parameters of the text. . . . the crossing of the mangrove, the understanding of the text as language, is meaningful only if the reader is willing to relinquish the notion of a single perspective or a unified perception of reality as the sole basis of knowledge and truth" (Crosta 154-5). Finally, Condé uses the multiple and differing points of view of her characters to divert the reader from seeking a single explanation of creolization, and to refocus attention on the constantly-changing process of a community's definition of itself. As Arnold observes, "[t]he multiplication of narrative points of view . . . serves ultimately to deny the possibility of a privileged angle of vision that could support and sustain the illusion of Truth. . . . [Condé] has replaced the ideological weight of *discours* with a maximum of *récits* or tellings and retellings that urge the reader to attend, not to the Truth, but to the process by which a community comes to understand itself" ("Novelist" 716).

The novel's foregrounding of narrative voice offers one way to imagine gender as a key part of the definition of diverse community. A number of critics have pointed out the significance of narrative point of view in Condé's novel, arguing that the preponderance of first-person narration for the seven female narrators indicates that "the novel's authority (however ironically inscribed) is centered in its female voices" (Rosser 482). Only two of the twelve male narrators speak in the first person, and they might be considered marginal to the community: Joby, Loulou's feminized "pale little boy" (Condé, *Traversée* 7), and Xantippe, the outsider. Renée Larrier also argues that the assigning of first-person narration to the women "shows that Condé is adamant about allowing marginalized voices to emerge" (89). Rosser, though, points out that "Condé's derisive narrative treatment has a leveling effect: . . . women's narrations are not necessarily 'truer' than men's" (505). Indeed, the multiple indicators of oral discourse that pepper the text include the frequent disclaimer, "[b]ut people will say anything" (Condé, *Traversée* 18). At the same time, Condé has indicated in an interview that this strategy was not necessarily deliberate:

> Some chapters came to me in the first person and others in the third. I don't quite know why. I cannot explain it rationally. Later on, I noticed that narratives by female characters were in the first person. Then I realized that this was maybe more natural for me. . . . It may depend on the relationship between writers and characters during the writing. I don't believe there is any given rule. (Pfaff 73)

Still, the women's first-person narration does have the effect of drawing attention to their monologues as testimonies of women's enclosure in domestic spaces, as daughters or wives, in Rivière au Sel, and of the changes they will begin after the wake. Mira will make of her life a "quest," since "[m]y real life begins with [Sancher's] death" (Condé, *Traversée* 193); Dinah will leave Loulou and the village to "look for the sun and the air and the light for what's left of the years to live" (83); Rosa Ramsaran pledges to love her daughter Vilma; and Dodose Pélagie says, "[n]ow is the time for me to start over again," to leave Rivière au Sel to seek help for her son (177). The switch back and forth from first-person "women's" to third-person "men's" narration in the novel indicates that gender is a constituent part of the community's many differences.

Condé also points to marginalization in the community on the basis of sexuality. When Moïse and Sancher begin a friendship, rumours circulate that they are lovers: "Dare we say it? There were some wicked sneers. There was something fishy about that friendship and the two men were makoumeh [homosexuals]! That's for sure" (20). Some determine that although Moïse could be gay, Sancher "didn't look like one," especially when compared with "Sirop Batterie who dressed up as a woman at carnival time in Petit-Bourg" (20). This sequence seems to associate homosexuality with foreignness (Sancher), at the same time as it asserts the presence of a local "makoumeh," Sirop Batterie. When the news of Sancher's rape of /sexual relationship with Mira (different monologues give different versions) reaches the community, they wonder, "Can a rapist of women be a makoumeh as well? Can one have a liking for both men and women?" (20). The question is material for further gossip, and "[t]hey're still debating the issue" at the local bar (20). At the same time, the narrative asserts, the community is less concerned about Sancher's sexual preference than the fact that "he did nothing with his ten fingers" (20)—he is set apart more by class and vocation than by sexuality. Désinor, the Haitian immigrant, offers another representation of homosexuality in his monologue: he and his friend Carlos are lovers. In a matter-of-fact revelation, he notes,

> Two thousand miles apart and his heart still glowed with warmth. It was because they had grown up together, eaten out of the same bowl of poverty and sucked on the same dried-up breast of misfortune! . . . One day, tired of being refused by . . . heartless women, they climbed on each other, and to their surprise found the same

> flash of pleasure at the end of their lovemaking. So they had started all over again. (165)

Although the rumours about Moïse and Sancher reflect the "mischief" of gossip (20), the inclusion of gay characters in the novel makes sexuality another aspect of diverse community in Rivière au Sel.

In an interview, Condé indicates that her representations of homosexuality in *Traversée de la mangrove* may have been prompted by the "hypocrisy" of statements like Fanon's that homosexuality "[doesn't] exist in Guadeloupe and Martinique" (Pfaff 135). Jarrod Hayes usefully points out ways in which Condé's portrayal of the gossip about Moïse and Sancher "almost seems as if it were written to refute Fanon" (Hayes 470). He notes that Condé uses the Creole word "makoumé" for "homosexual" (spelled "makoumeh" in the English translation), which asserts a local, Creole gay identity: "it is as if the homosexuality she describes were so Caribbean that only a Creole word would do" (Hayes 470). She also, in the original French version of the text, uses the word "compères" to indicate Moïse and Sancher (translated as "two" in the English version, as in "They inspected the two in disbelief" [Condé, *Traversée* 20]). As Hayes points out, Fanon's "Ma Commère" ("godmothers") from his infamous footnote in *Black Skin, White Masks* on the absence of homosexuality in Martinique[66]—which becomes "makoumé"—deliberately feminizes the males referred to. Condé's "compères," in turn, genders the term masculine. That these criticisms of Fanon's homophobia are projected in the narrative through an apparently homophobic collective voice makes the move particularly subversive.

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[66] As the passage is lengthy, I will reproduce it here in a footnote rather than the body of the text:

> Let me observe at once that I had no opportunity to establish the overt presence of homosexuality in Martinique. This must be viewed as the result of the absence of the Oedipus complex in the Antilles. The schema of homosexuality is well enough known. We should not overlook, however, the existence of what are called there "men dressed like women" or "godmothers." Generally they wear shirts and skirts. But I am convinced that they lead normal sex lives. They can take a punch like any "he-man" and they are not impervious to the allures of women—fish and vegetable merchants. In Europe, on the other hand, I have known several Martiniquans who became homosexuals, always passive. But this was by no means a neurotic homosexuality: For them it was a means to a livelihood, as pimping is for others. (Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* 180n44).

Hayes' comments on *Traversée de la mangrove* anticipate Chapter Five of this dissertation, which focuses on alternative sexualities as a form of diversity that has been excluded from the imagining of Caribbean creolization. Hayes notes of the novel's focus on the "roots" of the mangrove, "while returning to one's roots can provide a source of resistance to colonial or racist oppression, roots can also be used to police identity . . . [and] exclude those who, for whatever reasons, do not share the official version of a group's identity" (Hayes 465). Anne Malena similarly argues that the novel "illustrates the failure of identity discourses, such as the discourse of 'créolité,' to offer liberating definitions for everyone" (69). The concept of *créolité* espoused by the *Éloge* writers, she suggests, is "limited by individual, socio-economic, and historical differences . . . [o]ne cannot cross the mangrove because, in order to do so, differences would have to be ignored, difficulties leveled out, thus destroying the mangrove by pulling up its roots and paving it over" (Malena 68). Hayes takes the roots/identity image further to point out that "the multiple roots of the mangrove also disrupt the sexual normativity implied by a notion of 'roots' that depends on the family tree": "it is the specter of homosexuality that interferes with the heterosexual purity of the novel's genealogy" (Hayes 467-8). Hayes usefully shows how the references to homosexuality in Condé's novel are an essential part of her representation of creolization. Hayes points out that "makoumé" also means "gossip," and he argues that Condé's glossing of the word "makoumé" as "homosexual" makes the references to homosexuality in the novel appear even more central: "The homosexuality in question is a subject of gossip, and this, in a novel whose plot consists entirely of gossip" (470). Hayes suggests, "This equivalence between gossip and narrative, both like roots of the mangrove, means that homosexuality constitutes one of the possible truths of the novel; at least one of the roots of Caribbean identity is inextricably homosexual. For Fanon, there are no queers at 'home' in Martinique; for Condé, there must be a 'home' for queers in Guadaloupe [sic]. Her fiction, in fact, creates the 'truth' of this necessity" (471). Hayes' observations on the links between homosexuality, gossip and mangrove roots can support an argument that Condé, in *Traversée de la mangrove*, is challenging the overt heterosexism and homophobia that characterize, as Chapter One indicated, the mythologizing of *créolité* in Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant.

The potency of gossip and hearsay in the novel contrasts sharply with the invalidation of writing and theorizing. While an undercutting of the authority of writing puts Condé's authority itself into question, her treatment of writers in the text appears, in context, to be a challenge to the confidence of the *créolité* writers and critics. Sancher's inability to write his novel has been discussed above; the community mocks him, asking themselves, "Writer? What's a writer? . . . Was a writer then a do-nothing, sitting in the shade on his veranda, staring at the ridge of mountains for hours on end while the rest sweated it out under the Good Lord's hot sun? . . . that's a writer? Come now!" (Condé, *Traversée* 21). Sancher points out that without all the elements of fiction that make a book a book, his text will be "a boring dissertation by a half-cracked individual" (158). He becomes cynical, deciding that "I'm more or less a zombie trying to capture with words the life that I'm about to lose. For me, writing is the opposite of living. I confess to impotence" (183). The narrative undercuts the authority of those who launch dissertations or make speeches, and renders undignified those who aspire to write treatises: Dodose Pélagie recounts her dislike of her civil servant husband Emmanuel, who 'holds forth' at dinner on the subject of creolization, and yet privately prefers "French French" culture (171-2).

Two other "writers" in the novel expose the pressure to write authentic Creole documents: "Lucien Evariste, commonly known as the Writer, although he had never written a word," and "Emile Etienne, commonly known as the Historian, although he had only published one pamphlet that nobody ever read" (11). Emile is treated somewhat sympathetically by Condé: he hopes to write an oral history of Guadeloupe, but when he follows after Xantippe with a tape recorder he gains only "undecipherable mumblings" (199). Lucien, the local armchair revolutionary, "got it into his head to write a novel" but cannot choose between an historical study of the Maroons or a story of the 1837 slave revolt (181). More importantly, his fellow patriots urge him to write "in his mother tongue, Creole," but the only Creole Lucien knows is the expression "'A pa jé?' (Are you joking?)" (181). His aspirations seem to be the joke, for although he becomes excited about the prospect of "discussing style, narrative technique, and the use of oral tradition in writing" with Sancher—"since the few Guadeloupean writers who did exist spent most of their time holding forth on Caribbean culture in Los Angeles or Berkeley"—he encounters Sancher's amusement (182). Nevertheless, Lucien decides to leave Guadeloupe to follow Sancher's footsteps and write the dead man's story, determining that "there's more humanity and riches in [Sancher] than in all our lecturers in Creole" (187). He anticipates acclaim in Paris but local censure: "Is this novel really Guadeloupean? . . . It's written in French. What kind of French? Did you ever think of writing in Creole, your mother tongue? Have you deconstructed the French-French language like the gifted Martinican writer Patrick Chamoiseau?" (189). The caricature of Lucien and his struggle to be a revolutionary writer outside the bounds of *créolité* illustrates Condé's criticism of the closed system of the *Éloge* writers, and foretells her critical treatment by Chamoiseau in his review of her novel.

Considering Condé's use of caricature and contradiction and her upturning of many of the edifices of *créolité* as articulated by the *Éloge* writers, it is in some ways difficult to determine what her positive version of creolization is in *Traversée de la mangrove.* Noting that many of the characters end their monologues with a commitment to changing their lives, and noting that the final section of the novel is "First Light," a time for new beginnings, some critics have interpreted that the community undergoes a significant change as a whole as a result of individuals' encounters with Francis Sancher. Patrick ffrench, for instance, suggests that "[t]hrough the sacrifice of Sancher the community moves towards a recognition and an acceptance of the strangeness or of the difference which constitutes it" (ffrench 99). Many members of the community seem far from this recognition, however, and in fact a more pessimistic reading of Condé's exploration of diversity would argue that "Condé elides from her portrayal of Guadeloupe the aspects of community that could nurture the growth of identity and connection. Far from participating in a process of 'communal assent,' each character is locked into an isolation from which he or she is unable to communicate even the most basic of needs" (Rosser 496). In fact, Rosser notes, the "insight" achieved by several characters during the wake "leads the inhabitants of the village, not into a forum of shared insights and improved communication and negotiation, but to departure" (496). Certainly, the path towards change that most characters contemplate involves leaving the community or island—hence the repeated litany of "Leave" (Condé, *Traversée* 29) and "Elsewhere" (43) that ends the sections of Moïse, Aristide, Mira, and Emile. Yet the fact that individuals will change and leave Rivière au Sel does not appear to indicate the death of the community: the community will, and must, "discard the old, worn-out clothes [it] slipped on morning after morning" just as the individual characters have gained courage to do (208).

The key to determining Condé's vision for creolization, for me, lies with the narrative structure of the novel: the community does not speak with a unified voice but with multiple, located, contradictory voices. Creolization does not mean, for Condé, a heterogeneous yet harmonious mix, but a community of differences that must be negotiated and tested, in the midst of, in some cases, intransigent conflicts and power differences. It is a vision of feminist coalition-building in which shared commitments can emerge that do not require sameness or absence of contradiction. Gender, sexuality, class and ethnicity mark some of the differences within the community. As Patrick ffrench points out, the novel proposes a community of "openness precisely *to* difference, of a hesitation on the margin or limit of difference, rather than a sealing over of difference in a hypostatized and total community" (95). It is a contemporary vision of creolization, one that does not assume that a creolized Guadeloupean identity must, for its survival, remain rooted on Guadeloupean land, and one that allows for the changing dynamics of continual immigration and diasporic movement, as well as the cultural leaching caused by departmentalization.[67] The "collective introspective exercise" of the wake does not, according to Anne Malena, "forge a renewed sense of community" but rather "serves to open the village to the outside world" (75). The inability to cross the mangrove swamp of a rooted past places responsibility with the present community for creating a viable future. As Rosser argues, "creole identity, if it exists at all, is always multiple, saturated in social power relations, and subject to historical change. Implicitly, [Condé's novel] argue[s] against a pure (or purifying) notion of creole origins existing in a temporal or spatial context untouched by history and contemporary power relations" (Rosser 506).

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[67] In "*Créolité* without the Creole language?" Condé comments on the massive migration of Caribbean peoples out of the region, and asks if, according to the *Éloge* writers, the designation "Caribbean writer" will only refer to writers "fortunate enough to live at home":

> I believe that we are faced with the need for redefinitions. What is a Caribbean person, and consequently what is a Caribbean writer? Are they always Creole? Where were they born, and where do they live? Cannot the Creole culture—I mean the culture of the Caribbean islands—be transplanted and survive just as well through the use of memory?
>
> In other words, aren't there new and multiple versions of créolité? (109)

The dynamics of creolization in Condé's framework differ in many ways from the *créolité* espoused by Bernabé et al. Condé refuses to heroize the male figure of *créolité*, the *conteur* (storyteller) who appears in novels such as Chamoiseau's *Solibo Magnifique*: Sancher is a talker, but as a writer he is impotent, a "zombie." He appears at times a tall mahogany tree (Condé, *Traversée* 15),[68] at other times "weak and whining" (23), and he dies an undignified death face down in the mud. Sancher is not a figurehead for Creole identity or a locus for the community's *créolité*. Condé also, in *Traversée de la mangrove*, forgoes the prescriptive stance of the *créolistes*, preferring instead a tone of questioning and partiality. "Sancher is all questions," as Lamiot points out, and Condé's novel "set[s] up a complete apparatus of questioning" (Lamiot 142, 139). The characters, and reader, proceed from a need to learn the cause of Sancher's death and the mystery of his origins, but despite the many explanations given through gossip and narration, the reader, like Vilma, doesn't "know what truth there is in all those stories the people of Rivière au Sel tell" (Condé, *Traversée* 160). The recognition that understanding can only be partial and contingent means that any vision of creolization and community will be part of an "infinite rehearsal" (the term is Wilson Harris') and a cycle of interrogation and renegotiation, a pattern indicated by Sancher's unending family curse and his pledge to

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[68] Larrier points out that Condé's text, with its emphasis on trees and mangroves, reads against the association between trees and heroic males that appears in much of French Caribbean literature, such as Roumain's *Gouverneurs de la rosée* and Glissant's *Mahagony*. In such texts, the connection between male figures and trees means that the men are "strong, solid, and sturdy [and] provide protection for the entire community" (Larrier 87). The description of Francis Sancher as a tall mahogany tree, she argues, "tempts the reader to liken him to Manuel" in Roumain's text, but Sancher "does not arrive in Rivière au Sel to take charge or to save the community from itself" (Larrier 90). In fact, as Moïse points out, Francis is "not at all the tree under whose shade he could blossom" (Condé, *Traversée* 23). As Larrier notes, Condé also cleverly indicates that Sancher is "emasculated, powerless" by having many of the characters encounter him sitting on a tree stump (Larrier 90).

"return each season with a chattering green bird on my fist" (208).[69] *Traversée de la mangrove* seeks a representation of creolization that accounts for various hierarchies of difference that constitute diverse community, but the novel maintains that, as Balutansky notes, "personal and cultural liberation will not automatically be achieved by the simple act of imagining a collective consciousness" (110):

> the answer, it seems, is that the Caribbean must come to terms with Caliban's silence. Our history and culture can neither emerge from nor lead to a collective experience of past or future, as proponents of "créolité" seem to suggest. Instead, the experience of creolization, as well as its inscription in a Caribbean literature, is achieved in the relentless negotiation and representation of the failures and successes of articulation that constitute the true human exchanges among individuals within our creole communities. (Balutansky 110-111)

This chapter deliberately began with *Myal* and ended with *Traversée de la mangrove* in order to avoid the suggestion that Brodber's novel offers solutions to the unresolved questions of Condé's text. Despite significant similarities in scope, *Myal* and *Traversée de la mangrove* differ at least in their visions of the possibilities for community renewal, political and spiritual change, and the potential for syncretism or *créolité* to heal or prompt this change. Although Condé's novel focuses on revealing diversity and arguing for the need for continual negotiation of difference, healing and change appear to happen in Rivière au Sel primarily at the individual level, unlike in *Myal*, where the community achieves and begins healing at a number of different levels through the linked actions of diverse members of the community. Some of these differences could be explained by the interpretation that Condé's skepticism is directed more at the possibilities for creolized *identity*, rather than at the transformative possibilities of creolization as process. As Chapters One and Two have indicated, theories of creolization, such as the *créolité* of the *Éloge* writers, can slip into a language of identity, and hence draw boundaries around the creolization that is purported to be inclusive and open to change. On the other hand, when examined in conjunction with *Myal*, Condé's text appears to reveal more clearly a vision, not programme, of creolization. It is through *Traversée de la mangrove*'s narration via multiple and conflicting voices that Condé explores a pedagogical aspect of creolization in a way comparable to Brodber's *Myal*. Both novels insist on an approach to syncretism or *créolité* that is as open, multiple, contingent, and dialogic as the heterogeneity that marks creolized Caribbean communities. This creolization does not involve a leveling of differences, but rather an attentiveness to the material distinctions between the "plural and diversely gendered subjectivities" (Rosser 494) in heterogeneity. This makes their visions of creolization ideally situated for feminist coalition, as both novels illustrate: communities of women can work towards shared goals both in the absence of essentialized identities and in the presence of contradiction, as Chapter Four will particularly suggest. Creolization is, in Brodber's and Condé's formulation, "ceaselessly unfinished" (Harris, "Some Aspects" 99), and gains its purchase of resistance and creative resources not from Manichean opposition or the excavation of subterranean mangrove roots, but from "roots beyond roots" (99).

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[69] Anne Malena identifies this line as part of a poem called "Amitié du prince" in Saint-John Perse's collection *La Gloire des rois* (91n13).

Chapter Four: Oral testimony, collectivity, and the politics of difference in Caribbean feminist coalition-building

The dissertation up to this point has focused mainly on literary texts in its attempt to bridge, and also reveal the contradictions between, two modes of speaking of difference in the Caribbean context: theories of cultural creolization, including Brodber's and Condé's more overtly feminist versions of syncretism and *créolité*; and Caribbean feminist articulations of the multiple axes of women's oppression. The latter mode focuses on gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation as both "differences" that result in unequal social hierarchies, and also "differences" across which women can build coalitions for resistance and change. The juxtaposition of these two approaches to speaking of difference/hybridity/multiplicity that occurs in many Caribbean women's texts suggests that a Caribbean feminist politics and poetics of creolization leans towards an activist stance, to a greater or lesser extent in different writers' works. Caribbean feminist strategies of creolization include coalition work, whether at the level of political activism, or, in literary form, in the linking together of multiple political struggles in the articulation of community. The dissertation has structured this argument around different texts' representations of community: in *Abeng* and *Beka Lamb*, the centrality of community in ostensibly individual-oriented *Bildungsromane* is one means by which the writers articulate a feminist reading of cultural hybridity; in Brodber's and Condé's texts, the move towards a focus on community in both plot and structure allows both writers to demonstrate creolization in process, in the multiple and partial voices of the community; and the present chapter turns to Trinidadian Dionne Brand's Canadian documentaries and to the work of the Jamaican theatre group Sistren as increasingly collective projects that use testimony and other oral forms of popular culture to develop women's stories about multiple axes of oppression into action.

There is a literary component to much of the material of this chapter: Sistren's performances and workshops are put into script form, for instance, and the stories in *Lionheart Gal* support Sistren's theatre work; Brand's poetry, essays, and novels reflect on and amplify her documentary work. However, for the most part this discussion will focus on the non-literary aspects of Sistren's and Brand's work. This chapter will also deal less with creolization as a body of theory, and more with Caribbean feminists' intervention into women's oppression at the intersection of differences such as race, class, and sexuality. In this sense, the present chapter functions to indicate a continuum in the thesis, to make clearer the fact that the other writers' readings of creolization are articulated through a feminist understanding of the multiple axes of women's experiences. To a certain extent, the readings in Chapters Two and Three of Cliff, Edgell, Brodber and Condé take as a starting point a form of creolization predicated on cultural and "racial" differences, with which the writers bring gender and sexuality into dialogue. Here, there is less cultural diversity in the texts or experiences of the women—the women in Sistren, and the women in Brand's documentaries are of African Caribbean or Black Canadian heritage—and although Canada's official multiculturalism is mentioned in Brand's work, the cultural creolization of the Caribbean is not central to Sistren's work.

Brand's documentaries, in the words of Rosemary Brown in *Sisters in the Struggle*, focus on the "double burden" (or multiple burden) of racism, sexism, homophobia, and class oppression that black women face, and propose the building of coalitions across antiracist communities to fight for change. Her films, like Sistren's work, narrate a collective history. Sistren explores how sexism, class oppression, and "recolonization"[70] shape women's lives, and by linking different women's experiences into collective patterns offers visions of change both practical and revolutionary. The following analysis is therefore organized around the simultaneous activities of critique and activism demonstrated in Brand's and Sistren's work, and summarized by Myriam Chancy's comments on Brand's films: "Eliminating multiple oppression is a task that demands the recognition of differences and collective action across those differences among women" (*Searching* 95). I must emphasize that the repetition of a "list" of the specific discourses through which women are made subjects should not imply that these discourses are interchangeable or indistinguishable—they are linked and interdependent, but at the levels of analysis and critique may require some separate engagement. This is not to suggest, though, that I am speaking of race and gender, for example, as separable identities, but rather I am indicating the potentials for contradiction and conflict that inhere in feminist coalition work. This dissertation refers to the multiple axes of women's oppression as an indicator that some forms of Caribbean feminist work contribute to theories of creolization by using a language of difference and multiplicity in women's experiences, and by proposing that political struggle must account for the links between these differences and build bridges across them. As Bhavnani and Coulson point out, in the context of articulating an "adequate politics" of antiracist socialist feminism, we need "to examine how 'race,' class and gender are structured in relation to one another. How do they combine with and/or cut across one another?" (89).

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[70] Honor Ford-Smith gives the name 'recolonization' to globalization and the process by which Caribbean states become increasingly economically dependent on institutions such as the International Monetary Fund: "it is a new style of colonization which involves extraction without obligation, but which also involves the manipulation of desires and tastes through sophisticated new technologies and a new range of

In much of Caribbean women's writing, and notably in Dionne Brand's and Sistren's work, articulations of cultural hybridity and the multiplicity of identity demand a materialist examination of the systems of domination and exclusion that underlie historical colonization and continuing inequities. As Chapter One suggested, celebrations

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commoditization of experience" ("Like a Goliath" 19). Sistren's work identifies the impact of the debt crisis on the quotidian realities of Jamaican women's lives.

of Caribbean creolization can elide the structural inequity that makes "difference" meaningful. Rosemary Hennessy offers a methodology of materialist feminism that, when used in an analysis of Sistren's performances and testimonies and Brand's documentaries, makes clear that these Caribbean feminists' materialist critiques are systemic and not simply experiential.[71] Hennessy argues that ideology critique, if it is to recognize "the ways meaning is the effect of social struggle" and be committed to "emancipatory social change," requires a "global analytic" (15). "A global analytic," she suggests, "posits the social not as a fixed or unified structure, but as an ensemble of relations in which connections between cultural, economic, and political practices are overdetermined" (16). The contradictions that appear in the uneven distribution of social power seem, in a global mode of analysis, to be "marked by dissimilar histories, heterogenous economic and political interests, and contrary political and ideological struggles which merge and condense" (31). This suggests that materialist feminism, using a "global social logic," can prompt "differentiation of the category 'woman'" (31).

> Because every subject is contradictorily and differentially positioned among multiple social coordinates—of race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, among others—every "individual" is unevenly sutured into a nexus of subject positions. Such an understanding of the subject as multiply and contradictorily positioned can provide the basis for reformulating political alliances and (collective) intervention. (32)

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[71] Ford-Smith, for instance, notes that experience cannot alone constitute critique or critical consciousness: in taking to task international funding agencies' lack of financial support for grass-roots feminists' development of organizational skills, she points out, "Grass-roots women are not miracle workers, and, like middle-class women, they need to study and understand a situation before they can work effectively in it. . . . Funding policies sometimes seem prone to fetishizing grass-roots women, confusing class and sex origins with class and gender consciousness" ("Ring Ding" 257).

Indeed, as Helen Allison notes, in Sistren's work "[t]he position of women is the starting point but this is set within national and international issues, such as, the under-development of Jamaica, external debt and the increasing militarisation of the entire region" (Allison 5). Allison further points out that Sistren's process of popular theatre involves an analysis of the material collected through dialogue between Sistren and the community/audience, analysis which sets the material "within wider social, economic and political systems and is informed by an understanding of how it [the material] fits into these overall structures. Thus the major issues are identified and the various layers of the problem are connected. In particular the contradictions become clear . . . that is contradictions at individual, community or class/race or gender level" (6-7). These contradictions, as the following analysis will suggest, arise also within feminist coalition work itself.

To sustain this critique of the material bases of difference and women's oppression, both Dionne Brand and the Sistren collective frequently turn to oral and collective forms of narration such as testimony. Brand and Sistren use testimonials as witnessing, as statements that are representative of a collective but importantly differentiated, and authorized by their goal of political critique. Doris Sommer, in a study of Latin American women's *testimonios*, notes that testimonials can differ from other autobiographies in their fundamentally political stance: they are "offered through the scribe to a broad public as one part of a general strategy to win political ground" (109). Testimonies, in this definition, form a kind of witnessing of political or historical events rather than "life histories narrated in a first-person voice that stresse[s] development and continuity" (109). As a political strategy, testimonies reveal a "lateral network of relationships that assumes a community of particular shared objectives rather than interchangeability among its members" (109): "[the] singularity [of the speaker] achieves its identity as an extension of the collective. The singular represents the plural not because it replaces or subsumes the group but because the speaker is a distinguishable part of the whole" (Sommer 108). *Testimonios* are populist and oral, "public events" (118). These features of the testimonial suggest one of their political functions: the narrator "calls us in, interpellates us as readers who identify with the narrator's project and, by extension, with the political community to which she belongs" (118). "The testimonial produces complicity":

> When the narrator talks about her*self* to *you*, she implies both the existing relationship to other representative selves in the community and potential relationships that extend her community through the text. . . . the map of possible identifications through the text spreads out laterally. Once the subject of the testimonial is understood as the community made up of a variety of roles, the reader is called in to fill one of them. (118)

According to the terms of Sommer's formulation, then, testimony is an important mode of critique for Caribbean women's writing because of its ability to suspend a differentiated subject in a context of collectivity and community, and to enable a reader/listener to identify with the community's story.

Rhonda Cobham points out that "Sistren's use of the term 'Testimony' comes from the Caribbean religious practice of sharing oral accounts of tribulation and divine intervention in a church setting" ("'A Wha Kind a Pen Dis?'"248). Carolyn Cooper, further, suggests that "[t]he simultaneously secular and religious resonances of 'testimony' intimate the potential for ideological development from the purely personal to the political that is the usual consequence of this process of communal disclosure" (Cooper, "Writing Oral History" 49). Honor Ford-Smith, artistic director with Sistren from 1977 to 1989, calls testimony "an important part of Jamaican tradition and . . . the women's tradition of *labrish* ['to blab, let out secrets']": "their form is well-known to most women from the labouring poor, because they have learned their structure in churches, at wakes and from listening to their mothers and grandmothers" ("Women's Theatre" 563).[72] The tradition of testimony in this context "places personal experience within an encouraging atmosphere" (Ford-Smith, "From *Downpression Get a Blow*" 11). Cobham and Ford-Smith note that Sistren indicated they experienced moments of testimony in their drama work as "a form of social catharsis and personal liberation" (Introduction 18). They quote Jasmine Smith, a Sistren member, who describes, "I used to think you shouldn't mek others hear you problems, like dem will tek it cuss you or something. But I find it not so at all. By talking my problems I find that others have the same and even worse ones . . . We shouldn't shame to talk because by talking we help not ourselves alone but also other women" (18). According to Cobham and Ford-Smith, based on the experiences articulated by Sistren members, testimonies "facilitated a familiar first step past description to analysis" (18). The process can also work in reverse: Pauline Crawford of Sistren notes, "When we first started out, our testimonies were a main foundation of our work . . . if I am talking about child abuse, I can somehow relate to child abuse as the facilitator and to you [workshop participants] as individuals—otherwise the issue is like in a vacuum, just floating around without any personal connection" (Di Cenzo 85).

Brand's use of testimony in her documentaries similarly serves to make connections between women and the factors that shape their experiences. Her films, and the oral histories that structure them, are "about recovering history, history important only to me and women like me"—histories that are therefore at risk ("Bread out of Stone" 10). In her interviews for *Older, Stronger, Wiser* she tries to "spin the thread between [the women's] eyes and mine, taut or liquid, to sew a patch of black, rich with moment and things never talked about in public: Black womanhood" (15). The essay "Bread out of Stone" makes clear in riveting prose the importance of testimony to antiracist resistance:

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[72] Ford-Smith has to date published the majority of critical articles on Sistren's work, analyses arising out of both her experience working with the group and her background in education and political theatre. The section of this chapter devoted to Sistren's work relies heavily on Ford-Smith's analyses both because of their quality and her position as an academic voice for Sistren, and because of the scarcity of primary materials (scripts, videotaped performances, interviews) relating to Sistren. I am indebted to Ford-Smith for taking the time to discuss Sistren with me and for providing me with unpublished articles and rare manuscripts of Sistren's plays.

> All Black people here have a memory, whether they know it or not, whether they like it or not, whether they remember it or not, and in that memory are such words as land, sea, whip, work, rape, coffle, sing, sweat, release, days . . . without . . . this . . . pain . . . coming . . . We know . . . have a sense . . . hold a look in our eyes . . . about it . . . have to fight every day for our humanity . . . redeem it every day. . . . There is always something that must be remembered, something that cannot be forgotten, something that must be weighed. There is always something more, whether we say these things today or tomorrow, or whether silence is a better tactic. (23)

Testimony uses memory to "make bread out of stone" (21), "uncovering beauty, possibility" and recovering humanity. Echoing Sommers, Brand states, "There is never room, though there is always risk. There is never the room that white writers have in never speaking for their whole race, yet in speaking the most secret and cowardly language of normalcy and affirmation, speaking for the whole race" (23). The testimony in Brand's films documents the preciousness of one "woman's face, old and a little tired, deep brown and black, creased with everything that can be lived . . . a woman's face that will fade if I do not dream it, write it, put it in a film," but it also speaks to the experiences and struggles of a community (14). Testimony therefore functions as the kind of survival tactic described by Bongie and Shohat in Chapter Two, whereby memories and stories, individual and collective, create a sense of identity that is resistant to "the finest, most skilful racism yet developed: the naming of things, the writing of history, the creation of cultural consent" ("Bread out of Stone" 22).

II

One notable characteristic of this chapter's focus on collectivity and coalition is the fact that both Brand documentaries under discussion, *Older, Stronger, Wiser* and *Sisters in the Struggle*, document black women's oral history in Canada. Although some of the subjects of her documentaries are Afro-Caribbean women, it is clear from the films and from reading Brand's essay "Bread out of Stone" that she sees this work as part of bridging the resistance movements of Black women from different experiences and geographies: the women in the films are to Brand "women in my community" ("Bread out of Stone" 13-14). These documentaries are appropriate for study in a dissertation on Caribbean women's writing, both because Brand herself is a diasporic Caribbean writer living in Canada and because of the place of coalition in Caribbean feminist cultural and political work. "Bread out of Stone" makes clear the coalition-building work of her films and collected oral histories, in its frequent reiteration of the connections between the locations of Brand's work and memory—Playas del Este, Cuba; Toronto, Montreal, and The Pas, Canada; St. Georges, Grenada. She writes, "In my hotel on the Playas del Este, as I read about a Black woman's childhood on the Prairies—' . . . and because I was a girl I did everything . . .'—I remember one noon in hilly St. Georges. I'm walking up that fatal hill in the hot sun" (12). The connection between the oral histories of Black women in Canada and the revolution and invasion in Grenada is smoothly made if not self-evident. The social liberationist goals of Brand's politics demand a broad scope of analysis and attention to the ways that material histories of racism and imperialism shape gender in different geographical spaces.

Her films are interventionary on a number of fronts. They create a space for black women to articulate their experiences; offer a sense of the diversity in black women's lives; document histories of black women in Canada; critique the economic, political, and social conditions under which black women as individuals and marginalized groups in general live; and outline a range of strategies for women to resist and survive oppression. This discussion, however, will focus on the ways Brand draws out the interconnections of racism, sexism, classism and homophobia that affect women's lives and against which women work for change. Her strategy is not to document these facets of oppression as separate discourses, but to show through their connections the political strategies of coalition necessary for their destruction. As Chancy points out, these films highlight women's confrontation of racism and sexism and work to "[make] those points of connection visible and *politically viable*" (*Searching* 88; my emphasis). The connections become politically viable, or actionable, as they provide a foundation for coalition; however, despite the necessity and importance of the kind of coalition work in which Brand's documentaries engage, the process itself is dangerous, contradictory, and at times destructive.

Older, Stronger, Wiser develops a collective history through the biographies of five black Canadian women, shaped around their work lives and recognition of themselves as members of a larger black community in Canada. Their work has included farming, teaching, ministering, factory work, domestic work, and owning a bookstore, and in each case the women highlight, as the voiceover indicates, that "if labour outside the home took the measure of these women's lives, leadership in the community was imperative" (Brand, *Older*). They work for change collectively out of the recognition that "to struggle for the underdog is a lesson life teaches all black women" and "what hurt one of us, hurt all of us." Dolores Shadd, for instance, on the board of the National Farmers' Union, fights against a farming system in which multinationals use Canadian farmers' food as a weapon of distribution against Third World farmers. Gwen Johnson runs the Third World Bookstore in Toronto, and Eva Smith teaches heritage classes to black children. The women's's stories generate a critique of systemic racism that, to echo Sommer's characterization of testimony, represents "a community of particular shared objectives" (Sommer 109).

"Bread out of Stone," however, which recounts the making and editing of *Older, Stronger, Wiser*, shows that although the film itself creates a sense of coalition or "shared objectives," the process of making the film demonstrates the downside of feminist coalition. Richly textured, the essay includes a context for seeing the connections between racism, misogyny and homophobia in black women's lives. Brand writes, "I remember a white woman asking me how did I decide which to be—Black or woman—and when. As if she didn't have to decide which to be, white or woman, and when. As if there were a moment I wasn't a woman and a moment I wasn't Black, as if there were a moment she wasn't white" ("Bread" 10-11). The inability of this white woman to see the inseparability of gender and race indicates one obstacle to coalition work: "she sees her sex and takes her race as normal" (11). Brand created the film with two other black women and three white women, none of the others lesbian, and the dynamics of this working team interacts with the dynamics of race, sex, and sexuality that Brand seeks to give voice to in the film:

> We are all nervous, the Black women nervous at what we will hear; some part of us knows that in the moment of telling we will be as betrayed as much as we will be free. I feel the other two behind me; they are nervous, too. Am I a sister? Will I

> be sister to their, our, silence? . . . The white women are nervous, hidden under the technical functions they have to perform. They, too, may not be able to bear the sound of this truth woven between those old eyes and mine. (15-16).

The women have come together out of shared antiracist feminist objectives, but fear and distrust complicate their coalition: for the black women on the project, for instance, testimony can mean freedom or betrayal. Brand is further isolated from the other five women because of their distrust of her lesbianism, and the other black women's belief that "because I am a lesbian I am not a Black woman" (18). These tensions dictate the questions asked and the editing decisions made:

> All three of us [working on the film] know that each question I ask must account for our race. I know that each question I ask must account for our sex. In the end I am abandoned to that question because women are taught to abandon each other to the suffering of their sex, most of all Black women who have the hard white world in front of us. (15)

Brand has a sense of the dangerousness, the fragility and importance of her project: "In a film, in a Black dream, will it be all right if five old women speak for five minutes? Black women are so familiar with erasure, it is so much the cloth against the skin, that this is a real question" (17). Part of its fragility stems from the "full rain of hate for lesbians" that she experiences from the other women working on the project (19). Given the hope that her film will offer a collective sense of the worth of individual women's lives, and will show their identities through the complexity of gender, race, and sexuality, she sees her co-workers' homophobia threatening to erase the old women's lives. In the film, however, she can see bridges, in the women's eyes and their words, in "something that says we do not need to leave ourselves stranded, we can be whole, and these old women need us to do something different, that is why they're telling us this story" ("Bread" 17).

The women who speak in Brand's documentaries identify the importance of addressing the different ways in which black women experience oppression in Canada, and the importance of making connections among women across their differences even though coalition is so difficult. Linda Carty, for instance, a member of the Black Women's Collective in Toronto, says in *Sisters in the Struggle* that "to fight against racism and not to fight against sexism is to defeat the purpose of being whole human beings" (Brand and Stikeman, *Sisters*). The women in *Sisters in the Struggle* suggest that both the women's movement and the Black Power movements have blind spots that make it difficult for them to assert the multiple facets of their identities: "Feminism is a white ideology," says Akua Benjamin of the Black Action Defence Committee—"there has not been an equal weight in feminist discourse in terms of being inclusive of all those other women that make up this community of women." Carolann Wright, an antipoverty political candidate in Toronto, similarly argues that feminism "needs a lot more clarity" around "the notion of poverty." Rosemary Brown describes how she saw the connections between racism and sexism when watching Black Power activists like Stokely Carmichael argue that black women's role was to serve black men. Angela Robertson, from the Black Women's Collective, addresses the discrimination against lesbianism in some anti-racist and feminist movements, pointing out that "once you're labelled as lesbian, you have no political validity."

Brand's film creates a sense of dialogue and community particularly in the sequences with women from the Black Women's Collective. The documentary shows the women as a group in discussion with each other, occasionally disagreeing with each other or amplifying each others' statements. Racism, sexism and homophobia require collective strategies, according to the speakers in *Sisters in the Struggle*: as Grace Channer, a visual artist, notes,

> the Black community experiences serious oppression. But if we don't recognize the full extent of what that oppression is—which isn't just the colour of our skin, it *is* our sexuality, it *is* our gender, it's all of those things—we're never going to have a cohesive forum that's going to really eradicate all the things we're all here working to eradicate.

Collective member Dionne Falconer similarly argues that black feminists "realize it's also important to bring together different groups and to unite, because that is a way of making the movement stronger." Several of the women address institutional racism in Canada, focusing in particular on police violence against people of colour. Women make connections between the black community, First Nations people, and Chinese Canadians, for instance, as groups who confront racism in a society in which "the institutions have been framed in a monocultural framework." "It runs counter to this whole notion of multiculturalism," points out Akua Benjamin; "government policy [is] saying that there is diversity—diversity, but where does that diversity play itself out?" Brand's documentaries indicate the complexities of working on a number of planes simultaneously, for although antiracist feminist struggle demands coalition across differences,[73] it also demands the realization that difference (and the uneven privileges and oppressions within difference) can make coalition break down.

III

The Jamaican feminist theatre collective Sistren joins Dionne Brand in using narratives of women's experiences as a basis for a critique of the multiple oppressions women face,

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[73] Within her focus on Caribbean women's writing in exile, Chancy offers a link to my dissertation's work on feminist coalition when she suggests that "the condition of exile demands such coalition [across feminist communities]" as well as "movement toward cross-cultural coalition building" (*Searching* 95).

and as an impetus for activism that crosses borders of class, gender, and race. Like Brand's documentaries and "Bread out of Stone," moreover, the *process* of their collective work reveals the contradictions that become part of coalition. Beverley Hanson, a founding member of Sistren, clarifies the collective's feminist politics: "Our plays constantly place the theme of gender oppression in the context of experiences common to working women's lives and examine the ways in which this oppression is compounded by class, regional and racial inequalities" (Laughton 87). Sistren's emphasis on community and collectivity reveals itself in their structure of collective organization, but is also uniquely demonstrated in their use of theatre and workshops to involve diverse audiences and communities in cultural work, problem-solving, and political organization. Sistren's work also usefully complements the priorities of feminist creolization outlined in Chapter Three to the extent that their workshops and theatre performances are pedagogical, processual, improvisational, dialogical, and "never finished products" (Ford-Smith, "Sistren Women's Theatre" 125). Their methodology offers this thesis an important and particularly materialist example of feminist poetics and politics of difference, as does the substance of their work: their plays and the collected autobiographies in *Lionheart Gal* use folk and oral culture and testimony to create links between black working-class women's experiences of gender, racial and class oppression, and to build coalition among women across class differences. As Ford-Smith notes, Sistren's woman-centred politics includes "a challenge to all segmented knowledge, all methods of approaching experience as unrelated parts" and an insistence on "the complex interrelationship of race, class and gender" ("Notes" 28).

Sistren began in 1977, "the result of a climate of reform and increased worker participation in all areas of the life in the country at that time" (Ford-Smith, "Sistren, Jamaican Women's Theatre" 87). As Pauline Crawford, a Sistren member, puts it, "it was a period [in Jamaican political history] when anything grassroots was encouraged . . . a lot of effort was spent on community building" (Di Cenzo 84). The thirteen original members of Sistren[74] came together as urban street cleaners under the make-work Government Emergency Employment Programme (known as "Impact") of Michael Manley's Democratic Socialist government, the People's National Party (PNP), in power from 1972 to 1980.[75] As Robert Carr points out, the program that gave short-term work to displaced workers was a response to "the Group of 7's/multinational corporation's destabilization campaign and the deepening global economic crisis" (131). 10,000 of the Impact Programme's 14,000 workers were women, in recognition of the situation of women workers among the poor: women-supported households were the norm, women's real wages had dropped 109.1 percent between 1976 and 1980 (Carr 131), and "it was the women who bore the brunt of the burden of unemployment" (Henry 191) (in 1986 in Jamaica, 37 percent of women were unemployed [Allison 2] and 60 percent of the unemployed were women [Carr 131]). The thirteen women were later chosen for training as teacher aides in a program for women organized by the Women's Bureau and the Council for Voluntary Social Services. Honor Ford-Smith points out that this series of events also coincided with the beginning of the United Nations World Decade of Women,

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[74] The original members were Vivette Lewis, Barbara Gayle, Bev Hanson, Bev Elliot, Cerene Stephenson, Lana Finikin, Lillian Foster, Jerline Todd, Lorna Burrell (Haslam), Pauline Crawford (now Afolashade), Rebecca Knowles, Honor Ford-Smith, and Jasmine Smith (Ford-Smith, "Re: questions about Sistren").

Since its inception, Sistren has engaged in a number of forms of political and cultural work: they have performed plays and workshops; produced *Lionheart Gal*, several videos, and a number of pamphlets; have assisted in the organization of other women's groups; participated in cultural exchanges in Jamaica and internationally; operated a silk-screen textile business; and published a quarterly magazine called *Sistren*. At the time of this writing, according to Ford-Smith, the collective and its activities have been much reduced: five founding members run the Sistren office and occasionally conduct a drama workshop, but the magazine and theatre program no longer exist ("Re: questions about Sistren").

[75] In 1980, Honor Ford-Smith writes, "There would never have been a Sistren if there hadn't been an Impact programme. . . in [hiring 10,000 women], consciously or unconsciously, the P.N.P. government had made a space within which women could begin to organize around their own concerns." Ford-Smith also notes that the Impact program was closed in 1981 by the new conservative government ("Women's Theatre" 555-6).

"which resulted in Women's Bureaus being set up all over the Third World" ("Sistren, Jamaican Women's Theater" 87). The women approached the Jamaica School of Drama and discussed with Honor Ford-Smith their interest in using drama to articulate their experiences of women's oppression. Ford-Smith notes that "Sistren's consciousness had always been of themselves as *representatives* of working-class women" (88). Their first piece was *Downpression Get a Blow*, which they performed at the Annual Workers' Week celebrations in Jamaica in 1977.

Sistren was catalyzed by the political changes in Jamaica in the late 1970s, but its creation and practices were also representative of other social movements gaining momentum at the time. Ford-Smith suggests that "Sistren was born in a moment of democratic opening—that is, at a moment in history in which there was a possibility for those who are oppressed to intervene in history and transform their society" ("Ring Ding" 217). The anti-colonial movement as it was articulated in Jamaica at the time linked political resistance with cultural work, and "nam[ed] a space within the specifics of everyday life that could be conceptualized as a basis for resistance" (Ford-Smith, "Notes" 27). Sistren took the taboo, private, and quotidian experiences of women and showed their political valances in a form of cultural resistance that drew from the shared experiences of black working-class Jamaicans. The group also grew out of the context and ideology of the international organized women's movement, but because Jamaica in the late 1970s had no organized women's movement "to highlight systematically the issues of women's oppression," "Sistren took the role of speaking out" (Allison 22). Sistren distinguished itself from "the organized women's movement," as Ford-Smith characterizes it, by focusing on "the 'private' areas of women's lives . . . issues such as sexuality and reproductive rights"; by "criticiz[ing] male privileges . . . in a thoroughly Jamaican idiom while serving as a support group around women's personal experiences and struggles"; and by "emphasiz[ing] cultural production and the representation of women's experience in the arts and media as an important site of struggle" ("Ring Ding" 218-19).

The form of popular theatre with which Sistren works enables a collective and resistant education process.[76] Popular theatre, or "people's theatre," is a form of theatre that "minimizes the division between audience and performance by various strategies (group composition of a work from improvisation, collective research on a chosen topic of central interest to a community, a declared intention that activism should result from the production)" (Fido, "Finding" 333). As Helen Allison notes, referring to a 1980 manifesto of popular theatre activists in Berlin, popular theatre draws from popular culture, which is "the culture which preserves, rescues and incorporates elements whose content is eminently popular, that is to say the culture which strengthens ethnic, class and gender consciousness" (6). Honor Ford-Smith argues that "[i]n its ideal form, collective creation implies that the process of creating theater is as important as the end product" ("Notes" 29). In choosing a methodology, Sistren was aware that "the production process itself needed to validate certain kinds of hidden experience in black working class culture and among working class women. It needed to do this by making visible through theater hidden knowledge and submerged cultural codes" (30). The images and methods Sistren uses are for the most part drawn from an oral, African-based tradition, creolized in Jamaica. This tradition ensures a more collective approach to artistic production, for it is "by its nature far more participatory than that of a literary tradition. It evokes a communal response from both audience and actor" (Ford-Smith, "Sistren, Jamaican Women's

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[76] In keeping with this dissertation's secondary interest in the relation of genre to resistant cultural practices, it is worth noting here Elaine Fido's comments on theatre: "Theatre is a particularly important meeting ground for all of society, whereas the *book* remains a middle-class and even a colonial structure for most" (Fido, "Radical Woman" 37).

Theater" 88). This dynamic is a central factor in the usefulness of Sistren's drama workshops for empowering both the women in Sistren and the communities of women with which they work, for "[c]ollective creation . . . brings out into the open the methodology of realizing a theatrical concept. . . . The process of collective creation requires that the mystery be removed so that the community becomes central to the development of the work. The onus of responsibility, then, is removed from the individual creator and placed on the group" (Ford-Smith, "An Experiment" 158).

Sistren uses collective and grassroots strategies at each stage of the theatrical process, and "each step of the work . . . attempts to broaden the basis on which the collective has contact with and expresses solidarity with the struggles of the community as a whole" (Ford-Smith, "Women's Theatre" 561). The process begins with the identification of the community with which Sistren wishes to work, and the establishment of themes for performances or workshops. These themes are derived from the women's experiences and stories and from physical exercises and the playing of folk games (like children's songs or ring games) that help in improvisation and also metaphorize some of the themes the group develops (562). The women then develop these themes through testimonies which can become the core of workshops, or can be analyzed for commonalities that can become material for drama. Through finding relationships between testimonies, Ford-Smith argues, a problem becomes visible as not just personal or even shared, but as "social and political" (565). When the women develop sets of questions arising from the testimonies that cannot be explained simply through their experiences, they turn to research. Sistren uses either the services of a professional researcher, often part of the group itself, or collect oral histories from other women to build their research (566). The women then incorporate the research material into the testimonies and begin shaping all aspects of the performance (including structure, central images, action, characters, storyline, and theatrical imagery) through improvisation which is recorded (Ford-Smith, "Sistren: Exploring Women's Problems" 9). A writer or director then develops a script from these improvisations which is returned to the group for re-interpretation. Writing is done in Creole and then translated into English (Ford-Smith, "Sistren, Jamaican Women's Theater" 88). As Ford-Smith notes, "[b]y writing a language that had hitherto been that of a nonliterate people, the women broke silence" (88).

There are important differences between performances and workshops. Performances "can be an act of solidarity with a particular issue or struggle" (Ford-Smith, "Women's Theatre" 567), and are "used for mixed audiences (different classes, sexes, interests)" (560). Workshops, on the other hand, are for "smaller, homogeneous groups" in which there is a specific set of problems to be addressed and a shared sense of communal experience (560). Performances and workshops interact in such a way that "[t]he active relationship between the investigative base (drama workshops) and the more objective completed statement (theater) gives the educational process a tangible goal. The drama workshops aim at a constant process of consciousness-raising" (Ford-Smith, "Sistren, Jamaican Women's Theater" 86). Workshops can involve the participation of the audience in drama exercises constructed from research, or can include the presentation of a short play that leads to audience problem-solving of a set of issues and re-imagining of the play (Ford-Smith, "Sistren: Exploring Women's Problems" 10). The theory behind the workshops, in Ford-Smith's formulation, is as follows:

> 1. That by actually experiencing the problems put before them the participants will in their imaginations have a better understanding of the situation being studied. . . .
>
> 2. That because of its inherent structure of conflict, drama allows a complex exploration of problems and the development of an awareness of contradiction.

> 3. That by presenting situations through improvisation and role play it often allows things to be brought out which might otherwise be considered taboo. (10)

The interplay between drama and workshops allows for a process by which Sistren, in collaboration with specific communities, "took in material from women in the society and then later gave it back in a way which could be actively useful to others (Ford-Smith, "Women's Theatre" 557); "The educational process in Sistren addresses itself to the problems of the women with whom we work, as they are articulated by women from the laboring poor. It introduces these problems back into the wider society for discussion, for analysis, for solution. It suggests alternatives" (Ford-Smith, "Sistren, Jamaican Women's Theater" 86). The workshops aim to assist women in the process of conscientization, in developing tools for organization, and in working to change the political and social systems in which they live.

Sistren documents a particularly successful workshop event in the film *Sweet Sugar Rage*, in which Sistren joined women sugar-workers in the rural Jamaican community of Sugartown. The collective performed a scene from their play *Domesticks* to establish common ground between themselves and the sugar-workers, then listened to the women tell of their own parallel experiences in the context of their lives in the sugar belt. Over a period of a few months, Sistren worked with the women and conducted interviews to develop a play called *The Case of Iris Armstrong*, which presented the story of a female sugar worker who worked as a supervisor and struggled with inequities in the labour practices of the sugar estate. The women sugar-workers, who formed the Sugartown Women's Organization during the process (French, "Organizing" 6), identified part of the problem as the tendency of the unions to "fight for the family man but not for the working woman" (Sistren, *Sweet Sugar Rage*). Sistren then asked the community to identify an issue from the play that was relevant to women and on which they believed they could act, a process that "enables participants to come to terms with the actual alternatives facing women in the sugar belt" and "force[s] them to consider the material conditions as they struggle to weigh the possibilities" (Ford-Smith, "Sistren: Exploring Women's Problems" 10). The participants identified a water shortage as an immediate issue in their own situation that they felt they could confront. The remaining workshops and drama activities involved identifying the information needed to address the water problem, determining the form of action best suited to resolving the problem, strengthening cooperation and role-playing to prepare for a meeting with the local parish Councillor, and setting criteria for evaluating the outcome (French, "Organizing" 8-10). The water problem was resolved, women organized a local women's group to take on further issues, and a discussion was initiated on "the system of people's representation in the country, on real democracy as against sham democracy, on the power of people's action, [and] on male chauvinism preventing women to be effectively represented in the system" (11).

Through such workshops Sistren engages in one of its most practical forms of activism: the creation of sister groups among other women in Jamaica in both rural and urban areas and across different occupations and economic situations. Sistren is committed to enabling women to "organise to take control of their own lives. Like so many other animators in third world countries Sistren is defining new ways of mobilising the poorest and most oppressed groups" (Allison 14). In Jamaica, Ford-Smith notes, "[s]lowly we have begun to build a small network among the most marginalized women" ("Sistren, Jamaican Women's Theater" 91). At the same time, Ford-Smith is quick to note the role of cultural work in social change:

> The practice of cultural work is part and parcel of a process of empowerment both at an individual level and at a social level. It does not represent empowerment but

> merely one step toward it. It is not in itself a political action. . . . it will disturb rather than effect change, create insight rather than measurable action. . . . In my own work, the link between theater and political action has gone as far as using theatrical form as a rehearsal for change. ("Notes" 28-9).

Sistren's drama performances and workshops rehearse change by revealing the contradictions in women's lives in terms of the interaction of gender, racialization, and class oppression, and by indicating ways to move from consciousness of these contradictions to building coalitions to challenge systems of power.

In its own composition Sistren also exemplifies coalition building across differences, but the contradictions that Sistren exposes in its theatre are also contradictions that threaten the viability of its coalition work. Although the group is generally described as being a working-class black women's organization, some of its members are middle-class and lighter-skinned or white.[77] For the most part, the middle-class women are resource people, but they also organize funding and production ("Ring Ding" 241). Honor Ford-Smith notes that "In the 1980s, Sistren was unique among many other feminist organizations in that it brought together middle-class and working-class women to work on a supposedly equal basis":

> This partnership between different classes is different from middle-class women providing a professional service to working-class women or working-class women working in their own groups 'at the base' and then collaborating with middle-class women around specific issues. In many ways, the working relationship between the middle- and working-class women in Sistren was one of the most creative features of the group. It was also one of the most problematic. ("Ring Ding" 237)

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[77] Honor Ford-Smith, for instance, describes herself as "Jamaica white," an "apparently white woman with a partially black ancestry" ("Introduction" 10), as a way of indicating the white privileges she experiences in a society "where race is deeply associated with class" ("Ring Ding" 241).

According to Ford-Smith, the middle-class women, because they usually had more formal education, generally provided skills in management, research, and fundraising. The working class members "brought to the collective popular cultural knowledge and language which had been made invisible and inferiorized by centuries of colonization" (238). In an attempt to overcome the unequal access to power or knowledge that this division of labour entailed, and to ensure that the group empowered its members, Sistren conducted reading skills workshops in tandem with drama exercises to "teach comprehension and reading skills and develop . . . critical consciousness" of class and gender (Ford-Smith, "Sistren, Jamaican Women's Theater" 88).

However, Ford-Smith argues, the organization has demonstrated internal contradictions related to collectivity and class differences, a situation that she outlines in *Ring Ding in a Tight Corner: A Case Study of Funding and Organizational Democracy in Sistren, 1977-1988*, a monograph published the year she officially resigned from full-time work with Sistren (a briefer version appears in *Feminist Genealogies*, from which my citations are drawn).[78] The organization did not acknowledge the extent of the "informal power of the resource people" that had developed out of Sistren's methodologies, and "work operated as a proxy for class and color, rather than as a set of skills which could be acquired" ("Ring Ding" 241, 248). Ford-Smith argues,

> the dictates of international funding agencies exacerbated internal contradictions in the collective structure around race and class, specifically on issues having to do with service and product delivery, education, decision-making, leadership, power, and authority. As a result, the organization became constrained, both in

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[78] Outside observers have occasionally commented on the demographics of the group. Elaine Fido, for instance, notes that "There is some controversy over this fusion of White middle-class and Black working-class women amongst intellectual circles in Jamaica. Some of the controversy is over what Ford-Smith has imposed from her knowledge of African and African-derived theatrical styles on her actresses, and some is clearly simple jealousy" (Fido, "Radical Woman" 40).

> terms of what it offered the community, its ability to develop clear and effective organizational support, and its ability to satisfy member's needs [sic]. (215)

"On the one hand," she suggests, "funding agencies claimed that they were setting up self-reliant grassroots structures; but, on the other hand, they required accounting and reporting processes which could only be done by people who had either university-level qualifications or many years of experience" (233): "Working across difference is doubly difficult where the creation of a product to be inserted into the free market is involved" ("Like a Goliath" 16).

Within Sistren's collective structure, Ford-Smith argues, there was little discussion of job description, even though women did very different work from each other: "[t]his way of working assumed not only that we were equal but that equality meant sameness" ("Ring Ding" 242). She writes, "[t]he problem in Sistren was that the structure so masked the power relations in the group that any open renegotiation of power was almost impossible" (244). The middle-class/light-skinned women, a group to which Ford-Smith belongs, "imposed on ourselves virtual silence about our own experience of class and of becoming raced and sexed": "[n]ot only did we deny what lay behind our own experiences of race and class but, since we denied it, we had no basis on which to examine the relations between classes and races which we were creating within the organization" (244). Ford-Smith identifies one cause of the tensions in the group as the deeply-rooted colonial narrative in Jamaican society that suggests "middle-class women had to act as patrons and 'social mothers' if they were to have any interclass relations with working-class women," as facilitators but not interested parties, a set of expectations that limits "a sense of what is possible for women of different classes and races" (247).

Sistren, therefore, illustrates one of the unavoidable contradictions of feminist coalition work: in practice, the group seemed able to bridge between collectivity and difference in inspiring women to become empowered for change; however, they experienced methodological problems in working across differences internally. The group identified democracy with the radical form of collective decision-making, which, Ford-Smith argues, can "mask the perpetuation of central contradictions such as race and class. Where ideological variety or difference exists within a group, these become perceived as obstacles to sameness rather than as opportunities to develop the richness and complexity of the group's work" (253). The group's ethic of "volunteerism, good intentions, and hard work" were "not strong enough weapons against the weight of a history of multileveled colonialism" (215). Ford-Smith documents the "overwhelming sense of failure, powerlessness, rage, or guilt" that she faces when considering the ways in which Sistren's collective process broke down:

> I am trying to get at the meaning of the silences and denials in our work, and I am trying to interrogate what was said and done, in order to reveal the complex interrelationship of layers of power, privilege, and resistances in daily life. . . . A language is needed that will help to analyze and address the contradiction between the emancipatory goals of groups and their internal practice, between their interest in transforming social relations toward liberatory power relations and the tense, conflicted organizational culture of many women's groups. (216)

The results of coalition work, which the next section of this chapter outlines, are important enough to justify the risk of contradiction and conflict endemic to coalition: that a group such as Sistren faltered over these contradictions makes an even stronger case for the urgency of feminist attention to questions of difference. Sistren's experiences, however, indicate how the conflicts of privilege and disempowerment that accompany coalition work can, in practical terms, make it difficult to identify and act upon "new definitions of power and new patterns of relating across difference" (Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex" 275).

IV

The portion of this chapter devoted to Sistren has thus far focussed primarily on the ways that Sistren, in its structure, methodology, and activism, represents Caribbean feminist strategies, and pitfalls, of building coalitions across difference. The remainder of this chapter will turn to Sistren's artistic work—*Lionheart Gal* and *Bellywoman Bangarang* in particular—to examine how the collective uses oral testimony and Creole folk culture to explore and critique women's oppression within classist, sexist, and racist systems of power. Oral and folk culture, and the manipulation of a continuum of standard English and patois or Creole English, represent for many critics a fundamentally syncretic and resistant mode of Caribbean aesthetics and politics. Kamau Brathwaite, as indicated in Chapter One, argues for the importance of nation language in the plural societies of the Caribbean, the creolized language strongly based on an African model with some English lexical features (*History of the Voice* 13). The oral tradition of nation language, he suggests, "demands not only the griot but the audience to complete the community" (18), a system of values indicated by Sistren's work. Brathwaite also notes the importance of folk culture in the "rootlessness" of the creolized Caribbean: "the recognition of an ancestral relationship with the folk or aboriginal culture involves the artist and participant in a journey into the past and hinterland . . . [t]hrough this movement of possession we become ourselves, truly our own creators" ("Timehri" 35, 44). Gordon Rohlehr similarly sees the "oral" as "hybrid" ("Literature and the Folk" 82), and identifies a "fluid continuum" between folk and urban in West Indian experience, "a certain fluidity in [West Indian] societies, which at times made it difficult to define differences between classes, behaviour, attitudes, language and categories of sociological definition" (54).[79] West Indian artists, he argues, need to "suggest the dichotomy of fragmentation and communion" in their work and indicate the "continuum . . . between the various West Indian Creoles and Standard West Indian English" (56, 68). Rohlehr also notes that the "self-in maronage"—Brathwaite's term for "the marooned, submerged and often subversive self" (Rohlehr, "Articulating a Caribbean Aesthetic" 16)—affirms itself in ways including "the syncretic blending of West African and European proletarian heritages" and "the survival of folktales, proverbs, rhetoric, patterns of performance, and the capacity to create style" (16).

Rohlehr points out that Jamaican dialect poet Louise Bennett in particular achieved a radical social critique in her poetry and performances that could not have derived from the context of "middle-class philistinism" and its efforts to maintain "position and stereotypes":

> Louise Bennett . . . was primarily concerned with shattering stereotypes; with making the language of the people into a tool which could penetrate the barriers of colour and class. . . . [She] seems to be arguing for what we have described as a fluid process of interlocked relationships, a continuum flowing between the various polar opposites which, for the sake of examining West Indian experience, can be imagined to exist. (70)

Carolyn Cooper, in turn, argues that Louise Bennett's use of dialect is "syncretic"; her use of dialect-speaking personas is "the product of a complex process of socio-linguistic accommodation . . . an affirmation of what one might term *naygacentric*/nativist aesthetic values, rooted in the particular socio-political contradictions of Jamaica's history"

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[79] He later goes on to indicate the presence of oral and folk culture in urban West Indian culture, suggesting for example that in the oral form of 1940s calypsoes, "the complexities of the Creolisation process were reflected in the insistent theme of race and racism" ("Literature and the Folk" 61).

(*Noises* 40-41). Sistren has adopted "Miss Lou" as a cultural foremother for her theatrical work, for her emphasis both on working-class dialect and on the women's tradition of labrish (testimony, gossip), and for her early and, at the time of Sistren's inception, in some ways eclipsed feminist contribution to Jamaican popular culture:

> The domestic issues which Bennett raised and made visible to the public as political questions have disappeared from the poetry of the new generation of popular poets. . . . with the loss of the voice of a Bennett . . . [w]e lose touch with the question of how the subordination of women reproduces all forms of oppression and we lose the voice of a woman testifying about her own history. We lose the record of contradictions which Bennett had built into her poetry, the contradictions which have overcome and silenced her persona. (Ford-Smith, "Women's Theatre" 553-4)

Ford-Smith is suggesting that it was *through* her use of folk forms and dialect or patois that Bennett was able to articulate the contradictions of race, class, and gender that constitute women's oppression.

Sistren uses strategies similar to Miss Lou's: the collected testimonies in *Lionheart Gal*, for example, examine the multiple sources of women's oppression, and demonstrate collective work across class differences in part by their use of language. This autobiographical project represents a continuum of Jamaican English and standard English that reveals the syncretic nature of both Jamaican society and the collective itself, with its diversity of class and education. Code-switching along this continuum occurs across the text as a whole—two of the fifteen stories were submitted as written responses, rather than transcribed from oral accounts—but also within each story. Gordon Rohlehr proposes that linguistic code-switching indicates a bridge of community, a creolized aesthetic that has been described as "a model . . . receptive to the creative possibilities generated by a culturally plural and syncretic framework" (Donnell and Lawson Welsh 290). That the issue of language in the Caribbean is intimately tied up with the issue of creolization is indicated by Sistren member Pauline Mattie's comment: "[a]s people with a common goal to free themselves from oppression, the . . . creation of language to communicate as a collective has turned out to be the most remarkable accomplishment of the Jamaican and Caribbean people. We take the language they imposed on us with all the others and we mix them up and we blend them to a flavour" (Laughton 88). Robert Carr similarly argues that Creole or patwah is "a language initiated in the emergency economy of slave culture, where alliances had to be made and a language/culture constructed that could maintain a sufficiently broad base of inter-tribal African understandings to keep each other alive and able to go on" (136). In the present, patwah is a source of resistance, expressing "the refusal of a people to imitate a coloniser, their insistence on creation, their movement from obedience towards revolution" (Ford-Smith, "Introduction" 17).

"Ava's Diary," in *Lionheart Gal*, is one story that particularly reveals a syncretic use of language, in part, perhaps, because it began as a written statement for the police to document a domestic assault, but was then extended through oral interviews (Ford-Smith, "Introduction" 16). Code-switching can occur suddenly in the text, sometimes in response to a need for a different dialect to express a thought:

> Bertie moved out of his mother's house and got a room in Kencott. He asked me if I wanted to come up there to stay with him. It makes sense, for things are very bad on my part of the road. (Next ting yuh know dem a go reach inna fi we yard wid di bulldozer and me no have noweh fi go.) (Sistren, *Lionheart Gal* 288)

In this case, the patwah seems necessary for expressing a social criticism. In other cases, the standard English appears to be used for analysis: "Why do men always feel threatened anytime we woman begin to exchange thought and experience? Dem mussy feel seh di only solution di women a go come up wid is fi tell yuh fi leave dem. Wid Sistren, him feel extra threatened because we a deal wid issues pertaining to women" (293). In general, however, the code-switching in "Ava's Diary" seems to confound stereotypes of patwah that suggest it is incapable of reflective thought. In one particularly illustrative passage, Ava writes about one of Sistren's plays:

> Our new play *Bandoolu Version* deals with problems facing women living in the ghetto—like tribal war, and mafia business. It a show dem from di point of view of di women. I think we are doing the right thing to encourage women to discuss our troubles. If people know what dem a face dem can start look for a way out. (294)

Class is openly represented through language in this text, but the code-switching indicates the possibility of crossing over a diversity of class subjectivities. As Carr notes of this story, "the 'diary' operates to construct a language/subject on the borderlands of class strata and points to a collective subject where differences interact without one erasing the other" (135). The multiple locations of the stories in *Lionheart Gal* along a creole continuum represent a coalition of differences, interacting to "change the effect of oppressive forces on our lives" (Ford-Smith, Introduction 4).

As a document, *Lionheart Gal* is particularly symbolic of the way that Caribbean feminist cultural workers like Sistren operate collectively yet without erasing their differences. It would not do to romanticize the book: the analytical work performed by Ford-Smith's Introduction and her activity of "search[ing] for a throughline for each story" (Introduction 16) are central to the shaping of the project, and her role has been studied in many critical treatments of the text (see Boyce Davies "Collaboration" and Cooper "Writing," for example).[80] Yet the process of storytelling, questioning, and editing that were involved in the book's genesis, a process documented in her Introduction, indicate that a collective goal and collaborative methodology are at work. Boyce Davies usefully points out that a collection of life stories such as *Lionheart Gal* can be seen as a "*collective life story*" that is "*multiply articulated*" ("Collaboration" 4; author's italics). To the extent that Sistren itself began at the moment the women approached Ford-Smith and said, "we want to do plays about how we suffer as women" (Ford-Smith, "Women's Theatre" 556), the group has always had a common goal, and a perception of themselves as witnessing to a common, even if differentiated, set of experiences.

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[80] Boyce Davies, for instance, notes, "the 'Introduction' offers an ideological frame for the stories that defines the boundaries of their meaning: the stories assume a sociological authority that the improvisational

The "throughline" that connects all the stories is the speakers' use of personal experience to illustrate the multiple forms of oppression Jamaican women face. Foxy, for instance, in "Foxy and di Macca Palace War," learns during her experiences working on a political candidate's campaign how supposedly progressive male leaders reinscribe sexism into political activity for change. She says,

> Di party Spangler belongs to talk bout woman, so him bring in more woman fi camouflage. Whole heap a woman used to follow him. When dem waan we fi cook and run up and down fi dem, den claim seh woman a di backbone a di political struggle. But when we waan more dan fi serve dem, dem no tek no interest. (Sistren, *Lionheart Gal* 276)

Foxy, like Geraldine Heng (see Chapter Two), identifies the hypocrisy of a politics that 'camouflages' itself with lip-service to women's interests in order to create a progressive image. She notes, "Politics supposed to be someting to help people. It supposed to bring

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authorial process cannot readily support" ("Writing" 50). She also argues that Ford-Smith's search for each story's 'throughline' "superimposes on these misbehaving oral accounts a decidedly scribal narrative necessity" (51).

welfare and educate people bout dem democratic rights. Instead it a ruin me life" (276). With Sistren, she analyses her experiences and finds connections and contradictions:

> Tings develop so-till we meet more people and talk bout woman and work and woman and politics. We discuss what is politics and how it affect woman. After we done talk ah get to feel dat di lickle day-to-day tings dat happen to we as women, is politics too. For instance, if yuh tek yuh pickney to hospital and it die in yuh hand—dat is politics. If yuh do something to yuh own child dat damage him or her fi di future, dat is politics too. If yuh man box yuh down, dat is politics. . . . Ah also get fi find out dat for a long time woman all over di world been fighting fi woman rights. (273)

Foxy gains strength from her understanding that by working in Sistren she is contributing to changes fought for by Jamaican and other women. The process of testimony here works on at least two levels: by speaking out within the collective Foxy and the other members of Sistren can see patterns in their experiences; and Foxy's autobiography functions as a politically agential testimony for other women.

The narrator of "Red Ibo" similarly documents the contradictions she identifies in her life. She critiques the hypocrisy of the race/class hierarchy in Jamaica, noting the segregation of white, brown, and black people in church and children in school. As a light-skinned girl in a self-consciously middle-class family, she chooses to affiliate with black and poorer people, and "imagined myself leading a great movement of the people against injustice," although she later "became humbler and figured that the people would have their own ideas about who should lead them" (242). At an early age she "wondered about the lives of women and if equality wasn't for them too" (242) and challenges the General Secretary of her union when he acts as if "being a 'strong, fighting woman' . . . exclude[d] me from the category of normal human being. Supportive action was reserved for helpless females" (253). She also publicly stands in the way of her union's attempt to launch an anti-gay campaign in the school system. The narrator ends her story by writing, "the people's struggle will never be fully a people's struggle until women and their concerns are fully integrated into it" (260). Stories such as "Red Ibo" make clear the discourses of race, class and sexuality through which women's concerns are articulated.

The juxtaposition in this chapter of Dionne Brand's and Sistren's work may draw attention to the scarcity of references to sexual identity in my reading of Sistren's politics of difference. Lesbianism appears in Sistren's plays, stories, and in analysis of Sistren largely as an accusation aimed at the women in an attempted delegitimization of Jamaican feminist work. "Veteran by Veteran," in *Lionheart Gal*, notes, "If a man lick yuh and yuh decide fi lick him back, dem call yuh 'man-royal'" (182). Ford-Smith documents the scathing or even violent reactions some members' male partners expressed at the women working with other women on women's issues, reactions that ranged from accusations of lesbianism to one man's threat, during a dress rehearsal of *Bellywoman Bangarang*, that he would "mash up de show" if the woman didn't come home to look after her children ("Sistren: Exploring Women's Problems" 5). Cobham and Ford-Smith note that by the time of Sistren's second production of *Bellywoman Bangarang*, they already had a reputation as a radical group and caught the notice of the now "ultra-conservative" Jamaican government: "Efforts were made to censor the group's work by government and media officials. In addition, the collective was dubbed 'pro-woman' and therefore 'anti-man,' with all the negative stereotyping attached to such a label in the Jamaican context" (Introduction 7). The fact that the women cross-dressed as men for some roles also led to accusations of lesbianism: Ford-Smith noted in conversation with me that the women began to feel threatened about cross-dressing on stage after reactions to the women dressed as Maria's rapists in *Bellywoman Bangarang*. Cobham and Ford-Smith also tell of how, during one of the last local performances of *Bellywoman*, "the actresses were threatened and pelted by men in the audience, who cheered on the rapists" in the play (Introduction 7). Chapter Five will do more of the work needed here in defining a context for Sistren's exclusion (to a certain extent) of lesbianism from their range of concerns, a context that must include recognition both of the different ways discourses of sexuality are framed in different economic and cultural contexts, and of the real concerns of physical violence that attach to representations of homosexuality in Jamaica. For the moment, however, I will only address the latter concern by noting Robert Carr's comments on the charge of lesbianism as it appears in *Lionheart Gal*. He notes that an accusation of homosexuality levelled at either a man or a woman "can get someone killed if it is believed to be a sexual practice and not a metaphor" (140). Carr writes, "Subaltern Jamaicans make clear their capacity for regurgitating violent disciplinization and punishment on unruly women's bodies, taken to the extreme at the thought of identifying the bodies of gay men and lesbians. It is a social identity invoked only alongside death threats"; gay identity is "a politicization of sexuality that remains largely inarticulate, that cannot speak" (140). This reality, and the economic and cultural context from which Sistren derives and in which it does most of its activist work, can explain why the issue of lesbianism has been forcibly driven out of *Bellywoman Bangarang* and the group's other work; however, it must be stated that Sistren has done little to readdress the issue.

The earlier part of this chapter section noted how Sistren uses code-switching to indicate syncretism within a continuum of language. In their plays, Sistren also uses folk rituals as structuring and metaphorical devices to build community among women of different classes and experiences. In *Bellywoman Bangarang*,[81] for instance, a call-and-response chorus and children's games link the different characters. The play focuses on four pregnant teenagers who meet in the hospital during their labour; the play enacts each woman's story of how circumstances led her to the situation of this unwanted pregnancy. The play opens with a chorus (appropriately collective) representing the striking nurses in the hospital:

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[81] The title means "Pregnant Woman's Struggle" (Cobham, "'A Wha Kind a Pen Dis?'" 233). I cite from the second version of *Bellywoman Bangarang*, which uses the nurses' strike as a framing device; the original production framed the four women's stories with a series of ritual dances by a "Motherwoman" figure (see Cobham and Ford-Smith, Introduction 29).

> Voices 1: So what we ah go do?
> Voices 2: Bound dem to pay we
> Bound dem to pay we.
> Voices 1: So what we a go do den?
> Voices 2: We work have to feed, de whole of we family
> We work have to feed, de whole of we family.
> Voices 1: So what we a go do den?
> Voices 2: Make dem understand say we serious
> Make dem understand say we serious. (Sistren, *Bellywoman Bangarang* Prologue)

The chant continues, exploring the danger of the nurses, themselves single mothers, losing their jobs and the options of demonstrating, striking, or "go[ing] pon go slow" (Prologue). As the nurses bring each pregnant woman into the room, they discuss their situation and the ironies of the sexual division of labour:

> Nurse 3: How much longer are they going to take? We've voted twice! . . . Too damn cautious. That's what's wrong with them. Can't come together and take a strong stand.
>
> Nurse 4: They believe all that nonsense the Minister said about the blessings of a woman's caring hand.

Nurse 3: I'd like to see him say that and take home my salary.

Nurse 4: Or sit in Casualty for hours. (1.1)

One nurse notes, "the whole damn service sector should go out with us—Secretaries, Waitresses, and Teachers" (1.1), creating between women in a sexist economic system a link that crosses class divisions. This opening scene plays on the connection between (economic) labour and (birthing) labour, in part through the overlapping of the nurse's discussion of the strike and their encouragement to their patients: as the nurses leave the room, for instance, it is unclear if one nurse's statement "Good luck it'll be a struggle" is addressed to a fellow nurse or one of the women in labour (1.1). The play returns to this connection in the next-to-last scene, when Didi, Yvonne and Gloria work together to help Marie through a life-threatening labour. Off stage, the chorus repeats again,

So what we a go do den?
Bound dem fe pay we!
So what we a go do?
Make dem understand say we serious.
So what we fe do now?
Fight for we right, fight for we right,
Fight, Fight, Fight. (2.6)

As the chorus repeats "Fight," the stage directions indicate, "ALL THE MOTHERS MAKE A FINAL 'AHHH' SOUND AS IF GIVING BIRTH" (2.6). The birthing scene at the end functions as a healing ritual for the women, given the pain and struggles that the women have narrated during the play. This reprisal of the nurses' chant therefore links across possible class conflicts the collective struggle and resistance of the nurses with the collective and life-affirming labour of the women: the chant of "fight" urges the pregnant women towards the end. Rhonda Cobham, similarly, argues that the repetition of the chant "helps transform a moment of desperate struggle for survival into an image of militant resistance against a violently oppressive system" ("'A Wha Kind a Pen Dis?'" 238). To make the connection between the women even more explicit, when the nurses return to the hospital room, Didi says to them, "I hope you get what you ask dem for . . . We will support you nurse" (*Bellywoman Bangarang* 2.6). The play therefore uses folk rituals to identify common interests between the nurses and pregnant women of which they themselves may not be fully aware. Cobham and Ford-Smith note the nurses' abrupt treatment of the pregnant women, arguing that their focus on their own "professional and economic hardships" offers an "image of the way in which the absence of a 'nurturing' state produces a scarcity of material and psychological support for its citizens" (29). Lack of resources and staff to properly care for the patients is one of the nurses' concerns, however, as are their own struggles as single mothers. The folk rituals enact a coalition between the women and suggest the possibilities for cross-class empathy.

The play also uses children's games as vehicles for proposing women's solidarity across class divisions. In the first scene, the transition from the hospital to the first "flashback" narrative of Didi's life is accomplished through a "clap hands" game: a drum begins beating and while masked figures teach the women to play the game, they metamorphize into children. The song declares a sisterhood between women across the range of class/race social positions:

> Hands of the 85, and we say gonna guess
> Me sey names of girls, me sey one a piece
> Me sey no repeat, me say no hesitation (repeat three times)
> Me sey mothers, me sey Sistren, me sey neices too
> Me sey higglers me sey barmaid, me sey dancers too.
> Secretary, teller, cashire, and office maid, helper and mistress,

> Actress and waitress, poetese and teacher, florist, designer,
> Conductress, leggo gal, revel gal and daughter, chuckiboo and
> Fly-by-night. Bombastical-Basoo. (sic) (Sistren, *Bellywoman Bangarang* 1.1)

Later, the four women, who differ from each other subtly in education and colour, take part in a ring game of "Pass di Ball" that offers a nexus for the crisis point of their different stories of how they became pregnant. A chorus skips in a circle singing "pass the ball and the ball gone round" (1.6). As they increase in speed, each of the pregnant women is caught in the centre and, in turn and at the cue of the repeated "pass the ball and the ball gone round," each acts out how a man flattered, insulted, or otherwise manipulated her into sleeping with him. Cobham and Ford-Smith note that the ritual of the game symbolizes "the almost ritual process by which [a] devaluation of self is linked with the economic and social dead ends of working-class life"—sexual favours are traded both for self-esteem and for material needs (Introduction 31). Didi, for example, tells her mother why she slept with the man who promised to buy her lunch: "Me never did a look boyfriend mama, Me did only a look de lunch" (*Bellywoman Bangarang* 2.5). The game therefore becomes a hub for their different stories and experiences, a frame that shows their fragmented experiences as a collected whole.

Children's games are also used to represent women's struggles. After "Pass di ball," the pregnant women play a game called "Bull Inna di Pen," in which the chorus surrounds the women chanting "bull inna di pen and him cyaan come out" and the women respond "And a what kind of pen dis?" (1.6). The function of the game, according to Cobham and Ford-Smith, is that "the player in the middle has to work out strategies for breaking out of the ring" (Introduction 17). They explain,

> In the improvisation exercise [that led to the play], each of the players in the outer circle was asked to represent one aspect of the society by which they felt

> oppressed. The player in the center was challenged to strategize a means of liberating herself from the forms of oppression represented by the players who constituted the pen. The idea was eventually built into the play as one of a series of metaphors for the nature of the women's struggle for survival and self-fulfillment. (17)

As the women ask, "a what kind of pen dis?", chorus members become characters from the women's past and act out the form of oppression or "pen" that relates to the scene. Didi's mother represents a "Punishment Pen" and enacts her abusive treatment of Didi, expecting her to stay home and wait on her brothers who are allowed an education; a shopkeeper, as "Run-All-Out Pen," shames one girl and demands payment of store credit; a parson, representing "Church Pen," advocates obedience and chastity; and a teacher in the pen representing 'school' chastizes a girl for coming to school barefoot (*Bellywoman Bangarang* 1.6). The play thus identifies sexist treatment of girls, poverty and class snobbery, stereotypes of female sexuality and the threat of male sexual violence, and an education system bound up with colonial and class expectations, as systems of oppression that restrict the women's choices, and led them to poverty, rejection by their families, rape, and unwanted pregnancy.[82]

The children's games in *Bellywoman Bangarang* therefore "[offer] a rich interplay between individual action and collective" (Ford-Smith, "From *Downpression Get a Blow*" 13). The games were also a practical tool for the actors: as Cobham and Ford-Smith point out in their introduction to the play, trust was important in the group because of "issues of class and race which separated the group's director from the actors" and "deep-seated taboos" about sharing intimate experiences (16). The games were familiar to the women, and "established a relationship between the cultural tradition of the women and the work to be undertaken" (16). Each of the collective's plays, therefore, includes at some level folk rituals and street games as a method of crossing class boundaries both in production and in the presentation of theme—that is, the games enable the building of trust that is so fragile in coalition work.

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[82] Rhonda Cobham argues that in the ring games, "the circle is a shifting, open-ended structure that may simultaneously reconstitute itself as trap or bulwark" ("'A Wha Kind a Pen Dis?'"240). Cobham and Ford-Smith similarly note that the "Bull inna di Pen" game presents education, church, and discipline as traps rather than the escape routes they are promised to be in many Caribbean middle-class narratives of childhood: "rather than allowing a few girls escape routes out of poverty and away from sexual vulnerability . . . [they] create the walls or fences which keep most working-class women penned in like animals in the social situations which facilitate their violation" (Introduction 32).

Sistren's work, then, illustrates a way of imagining multiplicity in collectivity, the process of working across and with differences among women for collaborative, activist ends. It "show[s] the importance of concretely linking cultural work at an artistic level to political strategy and action at a social level" (Ford-Smith, "An Experiment" 163). Their plays and stories aim to raise the consciousness of Jamaican women by exposing the contradictions in their lives, and offering a framework for the identification of the multiple vectors of women's oppression. As Ford-Smith notes, "[t]he issues for us, then (and for women in much of the Third World), are how to create a balance between the solutions to the class questions we face, while at the same time dealing with the specificity of women's oppression in what is still a sexist society; and how to create a new society without losing touch with the particular needs of women" (Ford-Smith, "Sistren, Jamaican Women's Theater" 85-6). Brand's documentaries similarly use strategies of testimony and collaboration to build a sense of black feminist collectivity that addresses the differences of race, class, and sexuality that create this collectivity. Her films, and Sistren's work, emphasize Caribbean feminists' political and cultural practice of building coalitions across difference in order to change the conditions of women's lives. Their testimonial work, in the context of creolized social networks, reveals "communit[ies] of particular shared objectives" (Sommer 109) and collective utterances that are "multiply articulated" (Boyce Davies, "Collaboration" 4).

But both Sistren's work (at the levels of process, performance, and cultural artifact) and Brand's documentaries complicate these idealistic goals by revealing that coalition-building is both an absolutely necessary strategy of feminist "creolization," and also a process fraught at all stages with contradiction, distrust, and trial-and-error methods. "Coalition" describes Caribbean feminist methods of addressing differences among women, but coalition is also threatened by these very differences. Honor Ford-Smith's account of the "painful process" ("Ring Ding" 216) of publicly documenting Sistren's unacknowledged internal contradictions and racial/class hierarchies illustrates some of the stakes of feminist coalition-building. A group whose goals are socially and culturally interventionary may feel it has failed if it cannot overcome the effects of multileveled oppression in its own ranks. Ford-Smith clearly paused to weigh the repercussions of telling the truth against the demonstrated success of Sistren both symbolically and in terms of its body of work. Brand's analysis in "Bread out of Stone" of the making of *Older, Stronger, Wiser* similarly resonates with a sense of the risks entailed in making such an important film through a production process and team fraught with contradiction. The essay testifies to the fragility of the process, which is like "balancing on [a] thread"—"it is not perfect" (16-17). Both Sistren's and Brand's experiences of feminist coalition work and collective processes illuminate how Caribbean feminist critiques of discourses of difference are not merely matters of consciousness and awareness, but must address the ways that difference and inequity are materially structured within organizations of women.

This chapter has attempted to address creolization and Caribbean feminist politics of difference from a fresh perspective in order to refocus some of the key questions of the dissertation. In response to Chapter Two's problem of how to think beyond the bifurcation of discourses of identity and discourses of creolization, this chapter has offered the narrative mode of testimony as political critique. In testimony, first-person articulations are delivered in the context of a community of shared objectives and evoke a "lateral network of relationships" (Sommer 109); they enable a sense of collectivity that is differentiated rather than homogeneous. In this sense, testimony suggests a way to assert narratives of identity that are at home with discourses of difference and creolization. Testimony can also answer to Shohat's assertion that discourses of identity are necessary for sustained and resistant positions of cultural critique: Brand and Sistren use testimony to "win political ground" (Sommer 109). In Brand's documentaries, individual women's stories enable the "recovering [of] history" in a context of social oppression in which black women "have to fight every day for our humanity" (10, 23). Within Sistren's work, testimony offers women the opportunity to analyze patterns and contradictions in their experiences and to think beyond these experiences towards a community of difference—"communal disclosure" such as testimony offers "the potential for ideological development from the purely personal to the political" (Cooper, "Writing Oral History" 49).

Further, this chapter has functioned in some ways as the practical ground for a bridge between Chapters Three and Five. In putting to a practical test the methodologies of a feminist politics of difference—that is, in exploring how coalition works in process and performance—this chapter has made the syncretism of a novel like *Myal* appear more utopian. Although *Myal* does, primarily through characters' reactions to Maydene Brassington, acknowledge the distrust that can arise within coalition-building, its vision of community healing is markedly idealistic when juxtaposed with Brand's and Ford-Smith's accounts of the negative aspects of feminist coalition. This chapter does not conclude with a dystopian view of coalition, however, for this analysis of coalition within feminist organizations indicates that coalition-building is particularly urgent *because* of the ways that the resulting contradictions illuminate the politics of difference. A Caribbean feminist politics of difference is not just about working *across* differences, but also entails acknowledging the embeddedness of privilege and disempowerment within coalition. Moreover, if Chapter Four has focused on the here-and-now of creolization and the successes and failures of a feminist politics of difference, Chapter Five indicates where creolization must move in the future, and juxtaposes a certain idealism and the use of utopics to expose creolization as an excluding agent. Chapter Five shifts from the grounded realism of Brand's and Sistren' work and a more clearly cultural materialist analysis in Chapter Four, to novels that describe a dreamlike utopia, "another place" in which alternative sexualities have a home in the Caribbean. In the end, however, Chapter Five engages in a different kind of reading of the materialism of creolization, to the extent that Brand's and Mootoo's novels offer activist readings of Caribbean homophobia.

Chapter Five: Sexual citizenship[83] and the politics of creolization

Previous chapters have addressed the question of Caribbean feminist contributions to the discussion of creolization by focusing on a feminist politics and aesthetics of difference: a recognition of the multiple ways that discourses of gender, race, class, and sexuality intersect in women's lives, and of the need to build coalitions across differences among women. This chapter will turn in a slightly different direction, to address the elision of sexual diversity from the championing of heterogeneity in creolization. The issue of sexuality has been a continuing subtext of the dissertation: beginning with the analysis, in Chapter One, of both the mythologizing of heterosexuality in some theories of creolization and also their half-buried homosociality; and continuing in the ensuing chapters with the readings of attempts by writers such as Cliff, Condé, and Brand, to assert the presence of alternative sexualities in creolized communities. This chapter focuses on sexuality, particularly sexual orientation, as an emerging focal point in Caribbean feminist analyses of Caribbean diversity. More significantly, however, the discussion will point to both the contradictions of homophobia in decolonizing politics and to the strategies used by Caribbean writers, particularly diasporic writers, to inscribe differences of sexuality in their work. This chapter therefore also continues the dissertation's organization around the question of "community," but from a different direction: the following critique of Caribbean homophobia points to the drawing of circles of "authentic Caribbean community" that set up boundaries of sexual acceptability; and the writing of Caribbean lesbians and gay men inscribe a community that is rarely safe to act *as* a community in Caribbean space. Questions of community and of Caribbean space are particularly relevant in this chapter because the two primary writers discussed, Brand and Mootoo, are both diasporic Caribbean-Canadian writers.

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[83] The first part of my title is an allusion both to Jacqui Alexander's work, discussed below, and to David T. Evans' book, *Sexual Citizenship: The Material Construction of Sexualities* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993). Alexander proposes that Caribbean nation-states restrict the citizenship of lesbians and gay men by criminalizing specific sexual practices. Evans suggests that "If '[c]itizenship involves essentially the question of access to scarce resources in society and participation in the distribution and enjoyment of such resources' . . . sexual citizenship involves partial, private, and primarily leisure and lifestyle membership" (64). My use of the term differs from Evans' in that I use "sexual citizenship" to indicate access to both scarce (economic, political, social) resources and to the resources of 'cultural citizenship.' This chapter, further, does not focus on a notion of citizenship that means political representativeness in a limited sense.

The latter sections of this chapter bring together Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here* with Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night* to explore a significant feature of much gay and lesbian Caribbean writing: on the one hand, some writers identify as a contradiction the fact that diverse cultural resources can find a home in creolized Caribbean culture, but non-mainstream sexual orientations are absolutely barred from entry;[84] and on the other hand, many of these writers respond not by invoking the processual, heteroglossic, liminal tropes of creolization (as Mootoo does), but rather, like Brand, through assertions of a more stable identity, resembling the "roots"-oriented decolonizing strategies discussed in Chapter Two.[85] In that chapter, I pointed out the strategic value of affirmations of identity for resistance: liminality and blurred borders can take the oppositional edge off a political stance. As Ella Shohat asks, "[w]hile avoiding any nostalgia for a prelapsarian community . . . we must also ask whether it is possible to forge a collective resistance without inscribing a communal past" (109). Similarly, Chris Bongie argues that "we cannot simply do away with the sort of nonrelational, exclusionary thinking that is at the basis of conventional identity politics. . . . provisional affirmations of identity are often politically necessary, notwithstanding the fact that they are theoretically 'unviable' (to echo Gayatri Spivak)" (11). Kobena Mercer, for instance, argues both that "a keen commitment to the aesthetics and politics of hybridity has arisen from subject positions [such as lesbian and gay] that are highly sceptical of the binary code of gender apartheid" ("Decolonisation" 122), and also that

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[84] This statement works both literally and symbolically: on several occasions chartered cruise ships carrying gay and lesbian vacationers have been refused entry to Caribbean ports, including the Cayman Islands and Nassau, Bahamas in 1998 (Emling A14; L. Martin n.p.). The reactions of anti-gay demonstrators—quoted as saying "Go Home!" and "I wouldn't want 900 homosexuals coming into my city as a group"—reinforces the stereotype that homosexuality is foreign to the Caribbean, particularly when it can be associated with 'foreigners.'

[85] Dionne Brand's work, in fact, rarely addresses the nature of cultural creolization in the Caribbean. When asked by Frank Birbalsingh in an interview if, in living abroad, she "lose[s] identification with specific Caribbean issues such as the racial problem between Indians and blacks in Trinidad and Guyana," she responds, "Someone asked me why there was very little reference in my work to Indians in Trinidad. The only thing I can say is that it was about the time I left Trinidad that, because of the kind of influences I had on me, I became a kind of black Nationalist who saw affinity with African-Americans, and looked for a past in Africa as really central while ignoring the past right there around me. It was silent in my writing" (Birbalsingh 130). Brand appears in this chapter not because she has specifically articulated a response to creolization in the Caribbean, but because she addresses the exclusion of lesbianism from Caribbean cultural space and does so in a way that exemplifies Chapter Two's distinction between two modes of Caribbean cultural resistance.

> when one takes account of the way black lesbian and gay cultural practitioners have been at the forefront of decentring former narratives of national identity, the [centre/margin] metaphor retains its validity in describing forms of social agency responsible for the demarginalisation of postcolonial subjectivities. (119)

Carol Morrell, similarly, in an edited collection of poetry by Dionne Brand, Claire Harris, and M. Nourbese Philip, argues that these three Caribbean-Canadian writers "take an essentialist subject-position" and "use that subject-position for political intervention" (10). The poets use a strategy of "throw[ing] their voices," she argues, "speaking through . . . other people with whom they identify," a strategy that "allows them both a community and a coherent sense of self from which to act and write" (10). Morrell cites Diana Fuss on strategic essentialism:

> [W]hen put into practice by the dispossessed themselves, essentialism can be powerfully displacing and disruptive . . . [T]he determining factor in deciding essentialism's political or strategic value is dependent upon who practices it: in the hands of a hegemonic group, essentialism can be employed as a powerful tool

> of ideological domination; in the hands of the subaltern, the use of humanism to mime . . . humanism can represent a powerful displacing repetition. (*Essentially Speaking*; qtd. in Morrell 32)

Although I do not wish to endorse fully this categorization of Brand's tactics—the concept of "strategic essentialism," particularly as analyzed by Gayatri Spivak as both "unavoidabl[y] useful" and "very dangerous" (Rooney 156), requires more attention than I can give it here—Brand does, in *In Another Place, Not Here*, demonstrate a different response to creolization than does Mootoo. As the later discussion shows, even though Brand's representations of "space" are mobile in her novel, her articulation of black Caribbean lesbian identity is less so. This more stable sense of a political identity seems necessary, given the focus on direct political resistance in her text. Mootoo, on the other hand, subjects racial, sexual, and gendered identity to a dynamic of process and transformation that affects all representations in her novel. Sexual identity, in her formulation, more closely resembles the dynamics of creolization. What links the two novels, however, is the writers' use of a utopian framework to imagine a home for alternative sexualities in the heterogeneous space of the Caribbean. This chapter addresses the subject of creolization through an analysis of the withholding of cultural citizenship from lesbians and gay men in Caribbean cultural and national space. Brand and Mootoo show the crucial links between place, culture, and belonging in connection with sexuality, and engage in a critique of homophobia in Caribbean culture at the same time as they assert a sense of "ownership" over Caribbean cultural space.

II

The latter two parts of this chapter will explore the connections between sexuality and nation-place in Brand's and Mootoo's novels, but first I wish to frame this discussion with reference to a debate that illustrates the distinction between "insiders" and "outsiders" that often characterizes discussions of homophobia in the Caribbean, a distinction that constitutes the exclusion of alternative sexualities from creolized Caribbean culture.[86] Timothy Chin's 1997 *Callaloo* article on homophobia in black popular culture and contemporary Caribbean culture is prompted by the case of Buju Banton, performer of the Jamaican dancehall song "Boom Bye Bye," a song which stimulated controversy in Caribbean and American communities around the question of whether its lyrics were homophobic.[87] Chin argues that the controversy set up a polarization between Caribbean cultural politics and gay politics, and that Caribbean participants in the ensuing discussion failed to challenge the notion of Caribbean culture that "relies on certain fixed oppositions between native and foreign, indigenous and metropolitan, us and them" (128).

Carolyn Cooper, for instance, rightly points out that "Translation is clearly an ideological issue" ("'Lyrical Gun'" 442); she argues that the translated lyrics of "Boom Bye Bye" provided by The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) and Gay Men of African Descent (GMAD) during the public debate about the song neglected the cultural specificity of dancehall and the cultural authority of Banton's rudeboy posture in the context of "working-class resistance in urban Jamaica" (442) (see Appendix A for this translation). Some of the lyrics that prompted the controversy include (in their original and in translation): "Get an automatic or an Uzi instead / Shoot them now, let us shoot them" ("Boom Bye Bye"); "When Buju Banton arrives / Faggots have to run / Or get a bullet in the head" ("Boom Bye Bye"); and "rudebwoy nuh promote no nasty man, dem haffi de'd" (Noel 29). Cooper makes a number of claims about the translation. She argues that "the privileging of the literal to articulate the abstract is not always understood by non-native speakers of Jamaican," and suggests that the Jamaican creole phrase "aal bati-man fi ded" is not a literal death sentence, but rather "an indictment of the abstraction, homosexuality" (438-39). Cooper claims that the translation of "tyre wheel" into "firewood" in the line "Burn him like old firewood" divests the lyrics of their allusion to "the necklacing of traitors in South Africa" and thereby to "a pattern of ideological convergence in which both homosexuality and racism are constructed in dancehall culture as equally illegitimate" (443). Finally, she argues that the line "Hapi an yu lov it / yu fi jojos / bum bai bai" ("If you're happy and you love it / You should just / bum bai bai") is "a gun salute to heterosexuality itself, rather than the inciting to violence against homosexuals" (444).

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[86] It perhaps needs to be said explicitly that despite this chapter's focus on the workings of homophobia in Caribbean communities and through certain articulations of black nationalism, I am by no means suggesting that homophobia pertains only to these communities or that it is "overcome" in other cultural contexts. Further, in looking at homophobia in the Caribbean I have not explored another route of explanation, the traditions of conservative Christianity, out of an interest in understanding how liberatory anti-racist discursive communities could at the same time systematically exclude and oppress their members.

[87] I should make clear here that I do not intend to open up the subject of how popular culture shapes cultural and sexual identity, or propose a dialogue between oral/popular culture and literary texts. Rather, I am taking my cue from the critical response to the Banton issue, and using this as an exemplary case of articulation of the problem of homophobia in Caribbean culture. I thank Michelle Smith-Bermiss for bringing this question to my attention.

In her critique of the translation, however, Cooper firmly locates all resistance to the song *outside* Jamaica and the Caribbean, suggesting that "the impetus to publicly protest in Jamaica the heterophobia [her neologism for fear of difference, including fear of homosexuality] of 'Boom By-By' seems to have come from Europe and North America" (439), and that "it would appear that homosexuals in Jamaica themselves accept the social contract, proverbially expressed, that 'where ignorance is bliss, tis folly to be wise'" (440). She argues that critiques of dancehall culture reflect "[*i*]*mported*

Western feminist notions of 'misogyn[y]'," and that "powerful organizations of homosexuals *in* the North Atlantic like GLAAD seem to be playing the role of imperial overlords in the cultural arena" (444; emphasis added). Cooper's intervention goes beyond the necessary work of situating the Banton issue in its dense cultural specificity—she makes it impossible, in the terms she sets up, to envision resistance to homophobia in Caribbean culture as being anything other than "imported" or imperialist. Cooper's efforts to explain the cultural contexts of the song do not adequately deal with the very real threats of violence against gay men both in New York and in Jamaica (two scenes for the debate over the lyrics) that are not allayed by nuances of translation.

Indeed, as Robert Carr points out, in the Caribbean homosexuality is "a social identity invoked only alongside death threats," a "denunciation" that is "predicated . . . on the violent erasure of gay men and lesbians as people" (140). The August 1997 deaths of inmates in the Kingston and Spanish Town penitentiaries attest to this: when corrections commissioner John Prescod suggested that condoms be distributed to guards and prisoners to prevent the spread of AIDS, sixteen gay prisoners were targeted and "stabbed, beat and burned" to death in the ensuing riots (Burnett; Emling A14). Patricia Powell gives another specific example of this anti-gay violence when she notes the reaction in Kingston, Jamaica, in the summer of 1992 to an announcement by gay Jamaicans that they would have a public march. She notes the "rabid homophobic articles" in the newspapers, the "protesters blocking the roads and wielding weapons," and "irate machete- and bottle-bearing people threatening to attack" the marchers (F. Smith, "Interview" 327). Powell offers this context as a reason for her decision several years later not to give a public reading of *A Small Gathering of Bones*, a novel about AIDS in a community of gay Jamaican men, in a Kingston bookstore: "I was completely terrified. All I could think of was that gay march" (327). St. Vincent writer H. Nigel

Thomas similarly testifies that "People who are gay in the West Indies are so scared they wouldn't dare talk about it publicly. So, in Trinidad, you never read anything about it in the papers. Gays and lesbians are afraid to lose their jobs. Homophobia has become institutionalized" (qtd. in Burnett). Given these circumstances, Cooper's suggestion that gay Jamaicans did not *wish* to publicly participate in the Banton debate is disingenuous at best.

In contrast to Cooper's insider/outsider articulation of Caribbean culture and homophobia, Chin calls for "a politics that recognizes . . . the heterogeneous and contradictory (as opposed to homogeneous and monolithic) nature of all cultural formations" (128):

> it is necessary—especially given the complex ideological issues currently surrounding the question of black cultural production—to formulate modes of cultural criticism that can account for the differences within as well as between cultures. (128)

Chin's search for a cultural politics that can recognize heterogeneity is particularly telling in the context of the centrality of creolization in both "official" discourses and avant-garde cultural criticism in the Caribbean. He finds in Michelle Cliff's and H. Nigel Thomas' work attempts to articulate indigenous lesbian and gay sexuality that make "the critique of homophobic and sexist ideologies an integral component of what we might call a decolonized Caribbean discourse" (129). Chin's intervention into this debate is particularly useful for the way he acknowledges the ethnocentrism of the North American critics on the Buju Banton issue, notably their assumptions that "North American culture is more advanced and therefore less homophobic than its Caribbean counterpart" (128), and yet challenges formulations of Caribbean culture that rely on an assumed parallel between Caribbean or African-based culture and heterosexuality, on the one hand, and between European or imperialistic culture and homosexuality on the other.[88] Such a formulation has everything to do with the questions this chapter takes up—questions about who belongs and who doesn't, and about the nature of cultural and political citizenship and "authentic" decolonized culture. Kobena Mercer argues that "questions of sexuality have come to mark the interior limits of decolonisation, where the utopian project of liberation has come to grief" ("Decolonisation" 116). Likewise, Jamaican-Canadian writer Makeda Silvera has noted the effects of this insider/outsider dichotomy. She points out that in the exclusion of lesbians from Caribbean culture, "What is implicit . . . is that one cannot be a lesbian and continue to do political work and, not surprisingly, it follows that a Black lesbian/artist cannot create using the art forms of our culture" ("Man Royals" 530).

One source of the insider/outsider distinction around sexuality can be found in articulations of Caribbean nationalism. Critics such as Benedict Anderson and Homi Bhabha have pointed out the extent to which the modern nation is a self-generating symbolic community that maintains political unity through a continual displacement of plurality (Bhabha, "DissemiNation" 149). Jacqui Alexander, in particular, has brought an analysis of Caribbean nationalism and sexuality together with a reading of legal texts in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas to "foreground the complicity of the state in sexual politics" and the expulsion of sexual plurality from national identity ("Redrafting" 147). She points out that the Caribbean states she examines, in order to assert their legitimacy, naturalize heterosexuality by criminalizing lesbian and gay sex, and thereby revise the terms of citizenship to exclude lesbians and gays. "Not just (any) *body* can be a citizen any more," she argues,

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[88] Marlon B. Ross similarly argues that "black nationalism" or "Afrocentrism" has "tended to scapegoat homosexuality" and to propose "that homosexuality should be viewed as an abstract, segregatable phenomenon spawned and spread by a conspiracy of European-American origins" (203, 212). However, he points out that historically (he particularly focuses on pre-1960s U.S.A.), African American communities have had "greater tolerance of black homosexuals" than have white communities of white gay men and lesbians (201)—a tolerance or "overlooking" of the sexual identities or practices of individuals that did not necessarily extend to a tolerance of homosexuality in the abstract (212). The cultural value of racial solidarity among African Americans, he argues, prevented the ostracization of individual gay men, and the need for cultural continuity meant coming out for black gay men could not involve leaving their communities. Ross argues, "African American culture has generally refused to treat homosexual individuals as an abstract phenomenon that threatens community survival and welfare, fully aware that the real threat to survival and welfare comes from economic deprivation, racist policies, and myriad other causes" (212). Although the identification of homosexuality as "outside" African-based culture is a common root of homophobia in both African American and Caribbean communities, significant differences in histories and in the dominance or marginality of these communities in the U.S. and Caribbean states would make inadvisable assumptions of interchangeability.

> for *some* bodies have been marked by the state as non-procreative, in pursuit of sex only for pleasure, a sex that is non-productive of babies and of no economic gain. Having refused the heterosexual imperative of citizenship, *these* bodies, according to the state, pose a profound threat to the very survival of the nation. ("Not Just" 6)

Alexander's critique is useful for proposing how, in a political and cultural desire for a nation free of Western intrusions, the Caribbean state may suggest some "originary . . . moment for the heterosexual founding of [the Caribbean] nation" ("Erotic" 85). The state does this through the "sexualization and commodification of black women's bodies,"[89] and through "mechanisms [such as tourism]. . . deployed to recolonize and renativize the population, more than three decades after flag independence" ("Imperial Desire" 281). Caribbean states, she argues, mask the processes by which their allegiances to multinational capitalism weaken their sovereignty, by "eroticizing the dissolution of the nation" and blaming sexual practices that "contradict . . . [the] dictates of orderly nation building" (281-2). "The neocolonial state," she suggests, "offer[s] up, as it were, a loyal heterosexualized citizenry to pay the debt which a crisis-prone capitalism perennially demanded: a putative heterosexual family to act as its ideological anchor and secular savior" (282).

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[89] Honor Ford-Smith similarly draws attention to sexualized nationalism, noting that "[t]he attempts on the so-called personal level of men to control the reproductive potential of 'their' women is often expressed as a part of the assertion of national identity. That is, as the society struggles to liberate itself, to expunge colonialism, its men reclaim 'their' women and so assert control over their natural resources" ("Women's Theatre" 550-551).

Alexander's analysis is crucial for this chapter's understanding of how, and what kinds of, differences are excluded from creolized Caribbean communities' constructions of cultural identity—how these constructions of identity in fact *rely* on such exclusions for their substance. She draws attention to Caribbean states' struggle for legitimation, both in terms of sovereignty (because of a "crisis of authority" caused by increased globalization ["Not Just" 6]) and also in terms of the cultural authority assumed by "Black [middle-class] nationalist masculinity" (13). However, the insider/outsider dichotomy described by Chin is found not simply at the specific level of the Caribbean nation but, in a looser sense, in cultural nationalism and the identity assumed to inhere in Caribbean nations as cultural "spaces." For the purposes of this chapter, this suggests citizenship in both a political and cultural sense—a wider form of social enfranchisement.[90] This more flexible notion of citizenship can account for Kobena Mercer's critique of "the latent heterosexism of certain cultural nationalist discourses in the present" (*Welcome to the Jungle* 88). And it can also support Paul Gilroy's comment that the "crisis . . . of black social and political life" has been taken up by black nationalist discourses as "the crisis of black masculinity," with a resolution through "the mystic reconstruction of the ideal heterosexual family" ("It's a Family Affair" 313).

The link between cultural nationalism and heterosexuality derives in part from the equation of anti-racism and heterosexual masculinity that can be found expressed in

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[90] In a response to Leslie Sanders' comment that Brand is "becoming" a Canadian writer (Sanders 20), Peter Dickinson argues, "Sanders's use of the verb 'becoming' is, I believe, telling here, since Brand's race, gender, and sexuality necessarily preclude full participation in national citizenship, and thus prevent her from ever 'being' a Canadian writer. In this sense, then, Brand remains a 'borderline case'" (Dickinson 161).

Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, discussed briefly in Chapter Three. Fanon makes a number of contradictory statements about sexuality in the context of racism's psychic effects. The violence of racism, Fanon argues, leads Negrophobic women to desire rape, while "the Negrophobic man is a repressed homosexual" (156). Conversely, he points to "men who go to 'houses' in order to be beaten by Negroes; passive homosexuals who insist on black partners" (177). Homosexuality, then, appears to be both the cause of racism (when repressed) and (when manifest) the effect of that same racism (see Dollimore 344-5; qtd. in Mercer "Busy in the Ruins" 210). Moreover, Fanon suggests, homosexuality is absent in Martinique: and yet, it is present in the form of cross-dressed "godmothers" who are, he is "convinced," masculine enough not to be homosexual; and present in the Martiniquan gay men in Europe who, however, are simply earning a living (*Black Skin* 180n44). Fanon's double-sided schema of sexuality and race leads Mercer to argue that "sexual politics has been the Achilles heel of black liberation" ("Busy in the Ruins" 206). Fanon's "preoccupation with the binary distinction of active and passive sexual aims," Mercer suggests, "illuminates the phobic logic of black nationalism whereby homosexuality is equated with whiteness as something inherently alien to African eroticism, something foisted and imposed by the European colonizer—that it is a 'white man's disease'" (210). Mercer further points out the 'logic' behind the "fixation and disavowal" of Fanon's footnote ("Decolonisation" 125):

> Once women have been excluded from positions of power and authority, the problem of the phallus—who owns it, who lacks it—nevertheless remains an issue for homosocial institutions, such as the revolutionary party or the nation-state. The either/or logic of castration is thus brought to bear on relations between men via the binary fixations of a me/not-me boundary that positions the figure of the homosexual as the enemy within. (125)

If homosexuality is grouped together with black male powerlessness, passivity or effeminization as the effects of racism, then black liberation, in this logic, must expunge homosexuality. Dwight McBride, for example, notes the tendency in black cultural nationalism to "read homosexuality as 'counter-revolutionary'" (368). McBride sees the "rhetoric of community" functioning in African American communities to assume "a cultural specificity which works as much on a politics of exclusion as it does on a politics of inclusion" (366). The strategic essentialism of this discourse, he argues, excludes gays and lesbians in black communities. Wesley Crichlow similarly notes, "Black relationships have always been assumed to be heterosexual, especially within the context of the Black Consciousness and Black Nationalist movements. . . . [w]e were also told that same-sex relations were 'genocidal,' against the Black race, the white man's influence" (103-4). He argues that there is "no dialogue in our communities about difference, no place of conversation to deconstruct the traditional notion of the Black family and to give voice to the many facets of sexuality and identity. . . . Black Nationalism practices a form of surveillance that seeks to deny difference" (105). Crichlow quotes Marlon Riggs, from Isaac Julien's 1995 film *Black Is, Black Ain't*: "[w]e have got to conceive of new forms of community. We each have multiple identities and we're moving in and out of various communities at the same time. There is no one grand Black community or Black male identity" (qtd. in Crichlow 108).

Curdella Forbes offers a particularly compelling analysis of gender/sexuality in the context of Caribbean nationalism that deserves outlining here because of its connection to the creolized world of the plantation.[91] She points out that a

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[91] Forbes notes of her use of the trope of hermaphroditism, "[t]he image obviously has implications for sexuality and sexual identity, but discussion of these is outside the scope of this paper, which is concerned primarily with masculine/feminine gender politics" (34n1). Despite the limitations she imposes on her own conclusions, her discussion of this trope, combined with her illustration of it through texts by a gay and a lesbian writer (Scott and Cliff), offers important critical tools for my discussion of sexuality and Caribbean nationalism and decolonizing discourses.

"hermaphroditic presence" in Caribbean slave collectives, "essentially a manifestation of the carnivalesque, opened the way for a gender-equal concept of social organization which has been constantly circumvented since Emancipation, however, by the society's attraction to patriarchy" (19). Her argument hinges on an opposition between two gender constructs: first, the "iconic masculinity" of the slave master's control, whereby the slave master "was not only the sign of his own individual power, but also the *personation*, metonymically, of plantocratic power and, by extension, the imperial colonial power"; this masculinity, which could also extend, she argues, to white slave-owning women and poor whites, was "constantly being enacted for an (often voyeuristic) audience" (20; italics in original). Secondly, she proposes that the term "hermaphroditism" applies to slave collectives to the extent that one can document the "indiscriminate participation of female *and* male slaves in uprisings, rebellions and sabotage of every kind" (21; italics in original). Moreover, this concept of hermaphroditism can be understood in the context of slaves' double lives: led in the public world of the plantation where the slave was socially "dead,"[92] but also in the "liminal world of the slave's secret lives" (22). In this secret world, "the slave, possessed of absolute impunity, fashioned out of all things—not excepting the fragmentary, the forbidden, the insupportable, and the abominable—something 'torn and new,' lacking both the iconic 'cohesiveness' and the traditionalist outlines of civilized, masculinist society" (22). Hermaphroditic gender, in this frame, is fashioned out of fragments of slaves' culture and resistance.

The hermaphroditic import of slave resistance, then, according to Forbes' schema, is profoundly creolized. Forbes goes on to note how "the *publicly visible* articulators of nationhood [in newly independent Caribbean nations] were middle-class men" who achieved "iconic, Messianic status" as representatives of "'counter-masculinities' interrupting the masculinist-imperialist discourses of the colonial power" (36n18). Eric Williams, for example, leader of Trinidad, used "linguistic theatricality" to "appropriate the carnivalesque" for his political speeches: "Thus, ironically, the hermaphrodite was emptied out of the carnivalesque in the public stagings of nationhood as the carnivalesque became recuperated into iconic masculinities. It is important to note that women played very critical roles in the nationalist movement, but this was occluded in the discourses and representations" (37n18). Forbes' study, then, extends the work of Alexander and others in its suggestion of how a creolized and carnivalesque dynamic in pre-Emancipation Caribbean societies, expressed through the breaching of gender boundaries, became co-opted into an image of hetero-masculine nationalism.

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[92] Forbes here refers to Orlando Patterson's *Slavery and Social Death* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982).

Patricia A. de Freitas, likewise, investigates the link between Carnival and nation-building through a study of the "crisis" of increased visibility of women in Trinidad's Carnival during the past decade: "Carnival's 'gender change' both exposes the dilemma of post-colonial nation-building and strikes at the very heart of the hegemonic nationalist project" (6). de Freitas points to the "imagined bonding" required of citizens in nation-building that, in Trinidad under Eric Williams, necessitated "reduce[d] attention to color, class, and ethnic differences" and emphasis on the "common 'culture'" of Carnival (8). Male aggression and "hardness" (13), as a form of nationalist resistance to colonial and dominant elites, came to replace the more "un-gendered subaltern" (15) figures of the early twentieth-century Carnival that included women. During the 1990s, however, women have been perceived to dominate Carnival increasingly with overtly sexual dancing and performance; the fact that the women do not seem to be performing for men has led to charges that the women are "debased," "individualistic," "auto-erotic," or "lesbian" (24-26). de Freitas argues, "[a]s the out-of-control Woman, Carnival symbolically represents, for many, an out-of-control nation where traditional gender roles and expectations are overturned and tenets of the 'male' dominated nationalist project radically undermined" (29-30). In this analysis, the heterogeneity and gender-transgressing potentials of the carnivalesque are brought under control, and emptied of creolizing potential, by an ideology of hetero-masculine nationalism. As the next section of this chapter will suggest, many Caribbean writers use tropes of Carnival to express a vision of liminality and creolization in their representations of alternative Caribbean sexualities. Forbes' and de Freitas' studies offer a framework for understanding how explorations of gender and sexuality in the Caribbean can lead to questions of national or cultural identity.

III

The preceding studies of sexuality and cultural nationalism help to explain the "Boom Bye Bye" debate and the polarization of critical positions that it revealed, and indicate the urgency of imagining anti-homophobic resistance that has Caribbean cultural authority. Brand's and Mootoo's novels take up this task of articulating Caribbean-based, decolonizing assertions of gay and lesbian subjectivity. Granted, there are aspects of the "Boom Bye Bye" discussion that pertain only to homophobia directed at gay Caribbean men; and the distinction between "African-Caribbean" and "European" that characterizes the Buju Banton example, and much of the criticism on Caribbean homophobia, omits the Indo-Caribbean context of Mootoo's novel; nevertheless, the novels by Mootoo and Brand intersect usefully with this discussion of insiders and outsiders. In their concern with "place" and movement between locations, and in particular with the utopic or imaginary quality of belonging, *Cereus Blooms at Night* and especially *In Another Place,* *Not Here* deal with the connections between sexuality and the Caribbean diaspora. In fact, most of the Caribbean writers/artists challenging the exclusions of lesbians and gay men from Caribbean social space—Michelle Cliff, Richard Fung, Audre Lorde, Patricia Powell, Makeda Silvera, and H. Nigel Thomas, for example[93]—have lived or are all living and working in North America.[94] Since so many Caribbean writers, including central writers in the Caribbean canon, have either emigrated or spent much of their careers abroad, the North American location of these figures would not be as significant, were it not for the lines drawn between insiders and outsiders in discussions of homophobia in Caribbean culture.

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[93] In the next section I read texts by H. Nigel Thomas and Lawrence Scott and a film by Richard Fung alongside texts by Caribbean women to suggest a literary community of interest around issues of sexuality, even though the rest of the dissertation, and the majority of this chapter, is focused on women's writing and cultural work. The three male artists demonstrate strategies and concerns comparable to those evident in texts by Powell, Lorde, and Cliff.

[94] Certainly, my selection process in naming these writers (deciding what constitutes a representation of gay or lesbian sexuality) reflects my own position as a white Canadian, and my outsider status vis à vis Caribbean culture. I'm looking for certain *kinds* of representations that I recognize as gay or lesbian, after taking my cue from writers such as Brand and Mootoo. I have been struggling for ways to theorize and frame representations of gay and lesbian sexuality in Caribbean women's literature, and finding that "identity politics" models, and more mobile uses of the term "queer," often seem out of place. Provisionally, I think these concepts work with Brand's and Mootoo's novels, respectively; but I am finding that my evaluation of critical materials on Caribbean analyses of sexuality also falls into dichotomies of inside/outside.

On a different note, Rhonda Cobham has pointed out the cultural specificity of sexuality in an essay on African writing, in which she argues for a distinction between homoerotic behaviours and homosexuality as 'identity.' Her distinction might be a useful framework for reading homoeroticism in other Caribbean women's texts, such as Jamaica Kincaid's. See Cobham, "Misgendering the Nation." Robert Carr, on the other hand, focuses on the specificity of gay identity as not simply a cultural, but also a historical-economic construct. In an article on Sistren, cited in Chapter Four, he suggests that "gay and lesbian identity . . . becomes a liberating function predicated on [political/economic] development" (140). Carr's distinction proposes that the process of "development" in the Caribbean shapes the possibilities of culturally Caribbean gay and lesbian *identities* (as opposed to simply desires). Carr derives his thesis from John D'Emilio's work in "Capitalism and Gay Identity," in which D'Emilio argues that "it has been the historical development of capitalism—more specifically, its free labor system—that has allowed large numbers of men and women in the late twentieth century to call themselves gay, to see themselves as part of a community of similar men and women, and to organize politically on the basis of that identity" (102). Capitalism in the late-nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century has enabled this development of gay identity, he suggests, by "divesting the household of its economic independence" and by "fostering the separation of sexuality from procreation" (104).

Evelyn O'Callaghan notes the place of the diaspora in forming a dividing line between Caribbean women writers around the question of sexual identity. She suggests that "heterosexuality for West Indian women is rarely unproblematised in [their] fictions," but that "there seems to me a clear distinction between 'older' writers such as Rhys, Allfrey and Gilroy and regional-based writers (Hodge, Brodber, Senior, Pollard, Goodison, Collins and Edgell, for example) in whose works the lesbian experience is hardly acknowledged, and 'newer', usually foreign-based writers like Michelle Cliff, Dionne Brand, Marlene Nourbese Philip, Patricia Powell and Shani Mootoo, whose texts openly confront such experience" ("Compulsory Heterosexuality" 299). Her distinction is useful to the extent that she notes that most Caribbean writers offering open representations of gay and lesbian identity live outside of the Caribbean. However, a more obvious explanation for the presence of lesbian identity in some texts and its absence in others—that is, that Cliff, Brand, Powell, and Mootoo, at least, have declared themselves lesbians, while, to the best of my knowledge, the other writers she lists have not—does not enter into O'Callaghan's schema.[95]

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[95] O'Callaghan's article disappoints me, in part because I had high hopes from such a rare study of lesbian identity in Caribbean writing by a mainstream and Jamaican-based critic. What disappoints me is that O'Callaghan turns to psychoanalytic explanations (specifically, Chodorow's object-relations theory) for lesbianism, and moves from a potentially interesting use of Adrienne Rich's "lesbian continuum" to an investigation of "the relationship between homosexuality and absent or dysfunctional mothering" ("'Compulsory Heterosexuality'" 309). She then lists a range of texts by West Indian women along a modified "lesbian continuum" that takes problematic mother-daughter relationships as its point of comparison. She may begin with the goal of critiquing the "silencing of lesbian existence" (298), but her reading of the texts reproduces a sense of homosexuality as dysfunctional.

Although the Anglophone Caribbean has not yet produced much analysis of gay and lesbian sexuality and subjectivity in the Caribbean, more work appears to have been done on this topic in the Hispanic Caribbean and Latin America. Recent critical or biobibliographical texts include Bergmann and Smith's *¿Entiendes? Queer Readings, Hispanic Writings*, Molloy and Irwin's *Hispanisms and Homosexualities*, and David William Foster's *Latin American Writers on Gay and Lesbian Themes*, *Gay and Lesbian Themes in Latin American Writing*, *Sexual Textualities: Essays on Queer/ing Latin American Writing*, and *Chicano/Latino Homoerotic Identities*. Further, Herskovits and Herskovits point out the presence in Surinamese Sranan of a lesbian ceremonial known as the "birthday party" (32). During this party, given by a woman for her female lover or *mati*, ritual songs and dancing include jealousy rituals. I am grateful to George Lang for directing me to this text.

Gay and lesbian Caribbean writers refuse the designation "outsiders," and assert cultural warrant for claiming space for gay and lesbian representations in Caribbean culture. Audre Lorde, for instance, insists on the cultural authority of Caribbean lesbianism by tracing histories of women loving women in Grenada, and by naming them in Creole:

> Madivine. Friending. Zami. How Carriacou women love each other is legend in Grenada, and so is their strength and their beauty. . . .underneath it all as I was growing up, home was still a sweet place somewhere else which they had not managed to capture yet on paper, nor to throttle and bind up between the pages of a schoolbook. It was our own, my truly private paradise of blugoe and breadfruit hanging from the trees, of nutmeg and lime and sapadilla, of tonka beans and red and yellow Paradise Plums. (*Zami* 14)

Lorde's juxtaposition of a Creole identity for Caribbean lesbians with the image of a "somewhere else" Caribbean paradise resembles Brand's strategies, discussed later in this chapter. Michelle Cliff notes the importance of finding Caribbean models for lesbian representations in her novels: she explains that she didn't write a lesbian relationship for Clare in *No Telephone to Heaven* because

> I don't want her to embrace another woman or a lesbian relationship in a European context. I want to show homosexuality or lesbianism or gayness, whatever you want to call it, as a whole identity, not just a sexual preference. . . . what would it mean for a woman to love another woman in the Caribbean? Not in the Mediterranean, not in a Paris bar, not on an estate in England. These are the representations of lesbians we have in much literature. But for Caribbean women to love each other is different. It's not Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf,

> it's not Djuna Barnes or Natalie Barney, and it's not Sappho. (Raiskin, "The Art of History" 69)

H. Nigel Thomas, a St.Vincentian writer living in Canada, also realizes the importance of inscribing the Caribbeanness of gay identity. In *Spirits of the Dark* he parallels Jerome's realization of his attraction to men with his growing consciousness of and pride in his African roots: "they'd unburied a part of his African self" (69). He finds a place to express both in a Afrocentric religious group through which he becomes, in Chin's words, "a decolonized 'indigenous' gay subject" (Chin 138).

As mentioned in the opening of this chapter, lesbian and gay Caribbean writers offer representations of alternative sexualities that range from assertions (or assumptions) of stable identity to more fluid subjectivities. Lawrence Scott's *Witchbroom* uses the latter mode as a strategy for imagining sexual diversity in Caribbean space. According to Forbes, *Witchbroom* is a novel of community and "boundary erasures," "an affirmation of difference," and Lavren is a figure of reconciliation, "offered as a construct by which the experience of all groups which make up the society may be articulated or at least emphatically intuited" (Forbes 28-29). Although Forbes sees the novel's import largely in terms of "the possibility for a new West Indian national identity as well as new concepts of gender identity" (30),[96] there is a clear effort in the novel to propose this vision through alternative sexual identities. In its link between sexual liminality and the creative liminality so central to Caribbean creolization (and Caribbean "identity"), *Witchbroom* is startling:

> In the buoyancy of the water, Lavren seemed to be without a body, but had the soul at that moment wished to manifest itself it could not have done it more

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[96] Forbes also proposes that "the hermaphrodite is at one level a trope for the restoration of equitable relationship[s] between men and women" (31).

> beautifully or wonderfully. It was the body of a young boy not quite a man, the body of a young girl not quite a woman. This was a body known only to mythology, to the pantheon of gods, a place of goddesses and nymphs in a carnival of coupling. S/he was born in the waters of the new world a hermaphrodite . . . S/he levitated between worlds. S/he hung between genders. S/he trembled between loves and desires. S/he was pigmented between races. S/he stretched her young body between continents and hung about her neck this archipelago of islands. (*Witchbroom* 11-12)

Scott's collected stories similarly use tropes of liminality to house images of gay, or marginal, sexuality. The title of "Chameleon" offers an image of mutability to a story about a man who eroticizes his memories of being whipped by his father, and who cherishes women's clothes. In "I want to follow my friend," two boys, Christopher and David, play sex games with each other as they transform themselves in carnival costumes. Carnival also offers a mode of transformation to Philip Monagas in "King Sailor One J'Ouvert Morning," but in this case it is racial transformation he hopes for, via the black costume of Jab, in order to feel he belongs in Trinidad as a white Creole: "it would have to emanate from him, himself inhabit a costume which would come alive when he moved" (*Ballad* 10). The trope of costuming in the collected stories joins the hermaphroditism of *Witchbroom* as symbols of a border-crossing creolization.

Richard Fung's video *My Mother's Place* similarly uses what might be called postmodern strategies to show the silences and elisions of gender, class, sexuality, and colonialism in his mother's stories. A Chinese-Trinidadian filmmaker living in Toronto, Fung interviews his mother in this video and juxtaposes her stories of Trinidad with commentary from four feminist critics and his own counter-narrative. Fung notes, "I know which questions I'm not allowed to ask. I live in this family and there are consequences. . . . we both have our strategies. What to reveal. What to hint at. So that we neither make full-out disclosures nor commit ourselves to all-out lies" (*My Mother's Place*). Race and sexuality are two topics that appear in the spaces between disclosure, silence, and lies: for instance, Fung pushes his mother to admit that the social separation of different racial and ethnic groups in Trinidad caused harm, but her belief that "you must know your place" is written across the screen. Partway through the video, Fung shows a home movie clip of his siblings, noting that the black woman in the background is Violet, the woman who takes care of the Fung children. Her sudden appearance in the video highlights her untold story, her invisibleness during Fung's growing up: "her apron makes her invisible." In text on the screen, Fung writes, "I don't know how much Vio was paid to look after me." The story of Fung's gay identity is also half-told: an extended sequence shows Fung as a child dancing enthusiastically and effeminately and sticking out his tongue at the camera. Importantly, the voice-over notes, "in all the family pictures this is the only shot that shows what I remember." Fung narrates playfully, "you can see from these pictures my mom took of me that I was just an ordinary boy doing ordinary boy things." Immediately afterwards, a line of text is superimposed over the dancing shots, stating "One day Mom caught me in one of her dresses and threatened to put me out in the street. I was scared but it didn't stop me." Fung links sexuality and hybridity through the fragments and contradictions of his mother's stories, performing what José Estaban Muñoz calls "disidentification," the "negotiation" of "identity's fragmentary nature" (79). Estaban Muñoz argues that in Fung's video, "[the] moment where things do not line up is a moment of reflexivity that is informed by and through the process of queerness *and* hybridity. It is a moment where hybridity is not a fixed positionality but a survival strategy that is essential for both queers and postcolonial subjects who are subject to the violence that institutional structures reproduce" (84). Fung's closing comments in the video capture both the critical possibilities of shifting ground and contradictions—the fact that his mother's stories, the feminists' comments, the photos and home movies, and his memories don't 'line up'—and the desire for fictions of identity: "these questions can never be satisfied. But I need her answers."

All three of Patricia Powell's novels focus on gay and lesbian characters, but the first two can be sharply distinguished from the third according to my provisional categorization of stable gay/lesbian identity and liminal sexuality. *Me Dying Trial* (1993) is constructed in a realist mode, and seems designed to "explain" the humanity of Jamaican gays and lesbians to a potentially homophobic audience. Gwennie, the mother of six children, one of whom is a gay man and another a potentially lesbian girl, gives voice to many of the stereotypes that support homophobia. She appears to remain homophobic towards her son Rudi throughout the novel, but a wealth of "positive" gay and lesbian characters, as well as gay-positive community members, are brought forward to challenge these stereotypes. *A Small Gathering of Bones* (1994) similarly intervenes into mainstream Jamaican homophobia in its somewhat soap opera-esque portrayal of a community of gay men in late 1970s Jamaica facing the beginnings of the AIDS crisis. *The Pagoda* (1998), on the other hand, turns to racial and sexual border-crossing as a strategy for challenging the exclusions and isolation that occur across differences in creolized nineteenth-century Jamaica.

Lowe, in this third novel, is a Chinese woman masquerading as a man in order to breach gender-exclusive immigration laws and enter Jamaica.[97] "She"[98] lives her life as a male shopkeeper with a light-skinned Caribbean wife, pretending that her daughter was given birth to by a fictitious Chinese first wife; in reality, this daughter was conceived during Lowe's rape on the journey by the white shipmaster who kidnapped Lowe along with other Chinese men. Powell's depiction of liminal sexuality and gender masquerade becomes linked through a social justice critique to the creolization in this small nineteenth-century community. As a Chinese immigrant, Lowe is part of a culturally and socially isolated minority of indentured workers in Jamaica, whose fragile marginality is illustrated when members of the black community, angry at Lowe's prosperity, burn down her store. Powell asserts Caribbean diversity by narrating the hardships of the indenture system for both Chinese and South Asian workers and for the emancipated black ex-slaves, and the social tensions involved in this hybridity. Powell explores Lowe's sexual liminality—Lowe makes love with Sylvie as a man, with Joyce as she begins to feel her woman's body, and with Omar as both a woman and a social superior—in concert with the cultural hybridity of her environment, and proposes a wider presence of same-sex desire in Jamaica: the Chinese male community includes "those who took each other in love" (*Pagoda* 41), and her customers include black women who talk to her about "the women they loved on the side" (56). Lowe's is a "body that transgresses space, a body with a foot in both a masculine and a feminine world . . . a body that cannot be one thing or another" (Powell, "Dynamics" 192), even though Lowe herself feels the need for cultural stability, and wishes to build a Chinese cultural centre, a "Pagoda," as a means of "creating an identity politic on the island" ("Dynamics" 194). The Pagoda is never built, however, and Powell leaves the novel with a sense of cultural syncretism in process that mirrors Lowe's process of transformation.

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[97] Powell notes that "Chinese laws prohibited women from emigrating until the third wave of Chinese immigration to Jamaica" ("Dynamics" 190).

[98] Lowe is referred to in the novel by male pronouns, but Powell herself calls Lowe "she" in her article on the novel (see "Dynamics").

Michelle Cliff's character Harry/Harriet in *No Telephone to Heaven* is a particularly notable representation of liminal Caribbean sexuality. "[B]rave, glamorous" Harry/Harriet is Clare's confidante, a mixed-race "boy-girl" (*No Telephone* 121, 21) and, in Cliff's words, "the novel's lesbian in a sense" (Schwartz 601). A gay man who dresses as a woman, Harry/Harriet is "more than lesbian, s/he is ultimately queer, refusing to draw new lines, new boundaries, create new divisions and new definitions as s/he chooses her/his new identity" (Elia 352). Harry/Harriet was raped as a ten-year-old by a white officer "in the garrison of Her Majesty" (*No Telephone* 128), but does not see this act as the cause of his queerness, or as symbolic of colonialism: "that t'ing didn't make me who I am. Didn't form me in all my complexity" (128). Cliff thus refuses a reading of Caribbean gay identity as a product of white imperialism or as a victimized, in this case emasculated, condition. Harry/Harriet upturns polarities and boundaries of race, gender, and sexual identity and is the novel's best illustration of the transgression of binaries that constitutes Cliff's politics of creolization. Raiskin argues that in showing "possible alliances across difference" Cliff attempts to "complicate the meaning of 'identity politics'" ("Inverts" 159, 167). At the same time, as Harry/Harriet tells Clare, "the time will come for both of us to choose. . . . Cast our lot. Cyaan live split. Not in this world" (*No Telephone* 131). Although the indeterminacy of their sexual and racial identities make a clear identity politics difficult for either character, they choose to align themselves with political struggles they believe in: Harriet, by choosing to live as a woman, and Clare, by joining a revolutionary group and affiliating herself with resistance rather than privilege.

Dionne Brand and Shani Mootoo join this community of Caribbean writers in claiming Caribbean space. Mootoo does this by linking sexual border-crossing with creolization, as do Scott, Fung, Powell, and Cliff; Brand makes this move by joining lesbian and feminist consciousness with anti-racist, anti-colonial politics in both Caribbean and Caribbean diasporic space. Furthermore, *In Another Place, Not Here* asserts that diasporic movement, from "another place" to "here" and back, should not prevent full cultural citizenship of Caribbean lesbians in Canada and the Caribbean. Brand's and Mootoo's novels sever the link between homophobic or heterosexist allocations of Caribbean cultural citizenship and the work of decolonization, and bring together an anti-racist politics with an affirmation of Caribbean gay men's and lesbians' cultural belonging.

Both texts address the issue of cultural citizenship or social enfranchisement through the use of a semi-utopian imagining of this cultural belonging. Annamarie Jagose, in *Lesbian Utopics*, points out that the category "lesbian" is automatically implicated when one imagines "a space beyond phallocentric prioritizations of masculinity and heterosexuality," and in this sense is "at once liberatory and elsewhere . . . a utopic space" (2). She argues, however, that this conceptualization suggests that the lesbian is "beyond the reaches of cultural legislation" (2): "imagining 'lesbian' as a utopic site, subscribing to lesbianism's impossible dream of exteriority, misrecognizes the ways that category is elaborately and irretrievably enmeshed in structures it is imagined beyond" (160). Jagose's solution to the transcendentalizing, essentializing effects of "lesbian utopics" is to be mindful of the discursively constructed condition of lesbian (and other) bodies, an awareness that allows for an understanding that "the cultural meanings of the lesbian body, like those of any body, are neither fully self-determining nor fully determined" (161). At the risk of simplifying Jagose's conclusions, however, it appears that *In Another Place, Not Here* and *Cereus Blooms at Night*, to the extent that the novels invoke a utopian Caribbean space for gay and lesbian subjects, use utopics in a way both emancipatory and resistant to homophobic and colonial structures of power.

Mootoo, a multi-media artist and video maker, as well as short story and novel writer, deals often with the place of hybridity in themes of identity, place, colonialism, and sexuality. Her short story collection *Out on Main Street* (1993) explores the complexity of culture, sexuality, and memory for Indo-Caribbean women characters primarily in Vancouver and Trinidad. Mootoo has also created six videos dealing with sexual identity, language, and place and displacement, entitled *Lest I Burn* (1991), *English Lesson* (1991), *A Paddle and a Compass* (1992) (with Wendy Oberlander), *Wild Woman in the Woods* (1993), *Her Sweetness Lingers* (1994), and *Güerita and Prietita* (1996) (with Kathy High). Her novel *Cereus Blooms at Night* can be read in the context of the critical priorities of this wider body of work.

Cereus is set in a sometimes dreamlike, fictional place called Paradise, in the country of Lantanacamara. In this space, by no means protected from homophobia and sexual abuse, the novel gradually brings together a somewhat utopic community of outsiders who find healing and selfhood through their recognition of each others' "shared queerness" (*Cereus* 48). Tyler, a male nurse, is the "witness" (100) and scribe of the story told to him by a mysterious elderly woman, Mala Ramchandin, who arrives at the nursing home where he works. The novel's primary representation of creolization is in its collection of characters living on, and crossing over, social and sexual borders: Mala's Indo-Caribbean mother, Sarah, gradually develops a passionate relationship with Lavinia Thoroughly, a wealthy white woman, and leaves her husband for her; Mala's suitor, Ambrose, has a daughter, Otoh, whose "transformation" into a man is "flawless" (110), and who falls in love with Tyler; Tyler, with growing confidence, expresses both his attraction to men and his love of wearing feminine clothes; and Mala herself, left behind as a child with her sister Asha after her mother leaves, sacrifices herself to save her sister by becoming her father's lover in a decades-long nightmare of incest.

Cereus responds on a number of fronts to the idea of incompatibility between gay and lesbian identity and Caribbean-based decolonizing politics: the novel emphasizes these boundary-crossings and the characters' multiplicity of identity; it brings together a troubling of the divide between "perversion" and "natural" at the level of both characters and landscape; and it mirrors the metamorphoses of characters with metamorphoses in the natural world of the Caribbean landscape. The novel thus makes the creolized Caribbean a space for a utopian community of queer subjects, and both implicitly and explicitly links their stories to a project of imaginative decolonization. This representation of creolization is, further, characterized by process and transformation, linking Mootoo's work with that of the other Caribbean women writers and activists discussed in this dissertation.

Cereus presents sexuality as a fluid form of identity, and parallels sexual indeterminacy or outlaw sexuality with other forms of border-crossing identities. Tyler immediately offers a representation of transgressive gender roles when he speaks about his "ways" and his resistance to the idea that a man "ought to be strong and fearless and without need of protection" (10). He feels "neither properly man nor woman but some in-between, unnamed thing" (71) and yearns to feel "ordinary" (22). When Mala, his charge in the old-age home, offers him a nurse's dress and pair of stockings, Tyler feels himself "metamorphosing" into a woman's body, excited by "the possibilities trembling inside [him]" (76) and by the freedom of feeling "ordinary." This freedom allows Tyler to acknowledge his attraction to other men, including Otoh. Otoh, born a girl called Ambrosia, imperceptibly changes into a man. His (Mootoo uses the male pronoun) parents, preoccupied, "hardly noticed that their daughter was transforming herself into their son": "[t]he transformation was flawless" (109-10). The adult Otoh appears attracted to both men and women, dresses up in both his mother's and father's clothes, and has "the ability to imagine many sides of a dilemma . . . and the vexing inability to make up his mind" (110).[99] In both cases, the emphasis on "in-between" identities, change, and process indicates the mutability of sexuality in the novel.

Tyler and Otoh's examples of sexual/gender border-crossing as metamorphoses find parallels elsewhere in the novel. Mootoo makes the risky move of associating both Tyler and Otoh with Mala—Tyler because of their "shared queerness" (48), and Otoh because each has "secrets" (124). The move is risky because the novel opens up the question of the "perverse" and the "natural" (48) in relation to the sexual abuse that Mala endures. When Tyler ponders his gender identity, he asks his grandmother, "Could a nephew be the father of his uncle? . . . could a mother ever be any other relationship to her child? Could she be the father? . . . Could your sister be your brother too? Could your brother be your father?" (25). He learns from Nana, in the context of the town gossip about Chandin and his daughter Mala, that "the father could be the grandfather too," but that "it's not good, it's not nice" (25). It takes Tyler a long time to distinguish "between his [Chandin's] perversion and what others called mine" (48).

Mala's identity-splitting—she sees herself as adult Mala, and a child (Pohpoh) that she must protect—is another form of the multiplicity of identity in the novel, but is also a result of child sexual abuse. The question of incest also masks an instance of interracial attraction—Chandin's secret and unrequited love for Lavinia Thoroughly, the daughter of the rich white missionary family that adopts him as a native protégé. When his attraction becomes apparent to the Reverend Thoroughly, the Reverend forbids the relationship on the grounds that Chandin and Lavinia are "siblings," even though it is clear that Chandin's dark skin and role as representative "of the race that it was their mission to Christianize" (38) is the real obstacle. Thoroughly argues, "You cannot, you must not have desire for your sister Lavinia. That is surely against God's will" (37). In this case, Thoroughly thwarts Chandin's attempt to cross racial and social borders: he resists creolization by naming it incest.

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[99] I am indebted to Heather Zwicker for pointing out that "OTOH" stands for "on the other hand," a deft way of indicating a "both/and" orientation in this character.

Cereus consistently links these questions of sexual identity with the idea of metamorphosis or liminality, including the forms of border-crossing discussed above. The novel also plays with the designations "perverse" and "natural" in relation to the "natural" world of plants and insects that surrounds Mala's house. This link between the metamorphosis of sexuality and the larger metamorphosis of the natural world serves to authorize the location of these marginal characters in Caribbean space. Mala's house is surrounded by the scent of decay, a result of the bodies of insects she collects, the snail shells she carefully boils, and her father's decaying corpse she hides in the cellar. To Mala, this smell is not offensive: it is "the aroma of life refusing to end . . . the aroma of transformation" (128). This transformation reaches out to the main characters. The plant of the title, cereus, is a nondescript cactus plant that blooms once a year in an astonishing display of petals and scent. The plant's rare appearance of "exquisite elegance" for "one short, precious night" (54) occurs as Otoh, Tyler and Mala are brought together in the narrative, a juxtaposition that demands associating the characters with the plant. Tyler, like the cereus, testifies that, through his connection with Mala, "my own life has finally . . . begun to bloom" (105). Mala, in turn, resembles many natural things: a bird, a "giraffe" (178), the mudra tree into which she blends. Otoh, unable to initially see Mala against the tree trunk, says that he could have "mistaken her for a shrub" (155). And Mala is like the snails for which she cares: Lavinia tells her that snail souls protect the humans who care for and protect living snails; Ambrose watches out for Mala, he tells Otoh, because "you might simply consider charity towards such a creature as insurance toward positive retribution" (107-8). The novel links these major characters with the natural world in order to situate queer identity in Caribbean space.

Mootoo's vision of the local, Caribbean queer community of "Paradise" takes a utopian shape. Once Tyler "metamorphoses" into an openly gay man, he is accepted by his fellow nurses and staff at the nursing home. Mr. Hector, the gardener to whom Tyler is attracted, tells Tyler of his gay brother Randy, who was sent away by his mother in order to protect him from an abusive father. Mr. Hector says to Tyler, "Is like you bring Randy back to me, boy. . . . I want to ask you so many questions but I don't even know what it is I want to know" (73-4). When Tyler later "unabashedly declare[s]" himself, "cross[es] [the] line," and walks arm in arm with Otoh wearing a skirt, makeup, and scent, Mr. Hector says, "I wish my brother could meet you two. . . . By any chance, you know my brother?" (247-8). Other experiences of the main characters are not so clearly positive, however, such as the double-edged form of acceptance Otoh earns from his mother, Elsie. Near the end of the novel, Elsie surprises him by indicating that she is fully aware of Otoh's (technically) female sex: she reminds him that "you don't have anything between those two stick legs of yours" (237), telling him,

> you are not the first or the only one of your kind in this place. You grow up here and you don't realize almost everybody in this place wish they could be somebody or something else? That is the story of life here in Lantanacamara . . . every village in this place have a handful of people like you. And is not easy to tell who is who . . . I does watch out over the banister and wonder if *who* I see is really *what* I see. (237-8; italics in original)

Elsie Mohanty connects Otoh's sexual identity with the novel's larger themes of metamorphosis and indeterminacy of identity, but she does so in a way that divests Otoh's sexual difference of its specificity at the same time as she brings Otoh into a larger

Caribbean community. The novel ends with Tyler's vision of a reunion drawing Lavinia and Sarah, and Mala's sister Asha, into this eclectic community. The utopian spirit of this vision, however, is compromised by Lavinia and Sarah's haunting absence from the text, the violence of their exit, and the extremity of abuse inflicted by Chandin on Mala and Asha after Sarah's necessarily hasty departure.[100]

The violence surrounding Lavinia and Sarah's absence ensures that the novel's utopianism is still implicated in (and resistant to) very real conditions of exclusion and oppression, as does *Cereus'* implicit linking of Mala, Tyler, and Otoh with decolonizing politics. The novel makes this link in part through the character of Chandin, whose abuse of his daughters cannot help but be linked to his role in the text as a representative (and victim) of colonizing missionary work. For a time, Chandin wholeheartedly adopts the manner, dress and goals of Reverend Thoroughly and students from the Shivering Northern Wetlands (presumably a stand-in for England), and assists Thoroughly in the conversion of Indo-Caribbean field labourers. At another level, though, the text counterposes a monolithic colonizing discourse (represented by the exclusivity of the surname "Thoroughly") with the myriad possibilities and multiple identities offered by the central characters. Through a "both/and" approach to sexuality, Mootoo makes the flexibility of queer identity become a decolonizing tool through the politics of creolization. In her novel, liminality and hybridity, rather than fictions of stable identity, become the means for resistance.

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[100] Shazia Rahman has suggested to me that Lavinia and Sarah may not have returned for Asha and Mala because the older women have died, which suggests that outside of the utopian space of "Paradise," the lesbians cannot survive. Perhaps the lesbians cannot survive *in* "Paradise," either, or perhaps they found freedom elsewhere on the island, or abroad—the novel is inconclusive on the women's outcome.

Trinidad-born Dionne Brand's poetry, essays, documentary film work, and novels all respond politically and poetically to forms of oppression that include racism, sexism, and homophobia. Although Mootoo creates liminal and shifting subjectivities as a form of resistance to these monolithic discourses, Brand has consistently in her work responded by affirming politically resistant racial and sexual identities. As I pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, Morrell has identified in Brand's work an "essentialist subject-position" that she uses "for political intervention" (10). Peter Dickinson similarly discusses how, in *No Language is Neutral*, Brand's "navigation of the various roots/routes of identity . . . implies a provisional alignment of racial, gender, and erotic identities within a single, coherent location, the lesbian body" (170). He notes "Brand's invention . . . of a 'mythic' space from and through which to speak, her 'reterritorialization' of the shifting boundaries of her identity (as a black woman, as a lesbian, as a black lesbian) in order to map out 'a paradoxical continuity of self'" (170). Morrell's and Dickinson's arguments about Brand's creation of a mythic subject position are valuable in that they emphasize some of her most useful strategies for resistance to gender, sexual and racial oppression: "reterritorialization" of identity, the grounding of her poetic voice in materialist analyses, and an unwavering sense of the political stakes (and stakes of survival) of her work. However, although I do wish to retain a sense of Brand's distinctiveness from Mootoo in terms of her strategies of resistance (not leaning towards liminality and hybridity), identity in *In Another Place, Not Here* is by no means fully "coherent" or self-evident, but rather is hard-won.

In Another Place, Not Here creates a mythic space of Caribbean lesbian identity, and extends the commitments of Brand's poetry and documentary work to bring together more fully a lesbian love story situated in anti-racist and Caribbean anti-colonial politics.

Her novel is structured around her protagonists' movements between nations and places, as indicated by the title, *In Another Place, Not Here*. But, as the title also indicates, place, or in particular a sense of belonging to a place, is always deferred. Verlia and Elizete meet while cutting cane on a Caribbean island identifiable as Grenada. Their love and their individual histories take shape in a non-linear, often fluidly poetic movement between Canada, where Verlia lived before meeting Elizete, and to where Elizete travels after Verlia's death; and the Caribbean, where both women grew up, later meet, and where Verlia is killed during the American invasion. Canada and the Caribbean operate as poles in Brand's search for a home for her black Caribbean lesbian characters, and, by extension, in her efforts to claim legitimacy for lesbian subjectivity in Caribbean, and, in different ways, in Canadian space. Like *Cereus Blooms at Night* does with queer identity, her novel asserts a sense of "ownership" over Caribbean space for lesbian sexuality, and articulates it through a connection between lesbian erotics and Caribbean images. But *In Another Place, Not Here* also suggests that the various forms of oppression its characters are subject to means that no place is home for Verlia and Elizete, except perhaps the metaphorical home that is created through political struggle and commitment. The novel therefore proposes a dialectic between a utopian vision of lesbian space, and a more materialist or activist critique of the disenfranchisements of racism and homophobia.

The core of the book is a series of scenes at the beginning of the novel where the two women meet and begin their relationship on a cane field in a place called Caicou. Elizete's description of Verlia and of her growing attraction to her is phrased in sensual terms that connect both women to the Caribbean landscape around them. For Elizete, the connection between the two women is sweet like sugar. She says:

> That woman like a drink of cool water. The four o'clock light thinning she dress, she back good and strong, the sweat raining off in that moment when I look . . . I

> see she. Hot, cool and wet. I sink the machete in my foot, careless, blood blooming in the stalks of cane, a sweet ripe smell wash me faint. With pain. Wash the field, spinning green mile after green mile around she. See she sweat, sweet like sugar. (*In Another Place* 3-4)

A constellation of images connects the two women sensually to the place they are in, and to its history of (forced) labour: sugar, sweat, and sea; cane, water, heat, and blood. Their love is "rough. Coarse like a bolt of crocus sacking full of its load of coconuts or husks for mattress ticking. . . . we do it so furious and so plain. Coarse like the bruise on the back from carrying it and heavy as if you walk into the sea with it and it come out twice the load" (75-76). Verlia has a "mouth like a ripe mango" (13), and when she whispers "Sister" to Elizete, Elizete says the sound "feel like rum going through my throat" (14). Elizete herself, who is associated with the earth in this novel, becomes part of the land in her fantasy. When the man she lives with abuses her, she thinks, "I carried a mountain inside of me. The thought of him and his hardness cut at the red stone in me from sun-up to sundown" (11). She shovels in a quarry, imagining that her body can have the destructive power of the earth:

> I feel my body full up and burst. All my skin split . . . I dream of taking his neck with a cutlass and running to Maracaibo, yes. I imagine it as a place with thick and dense vine and alive like veins under my feet . . . I destroying anything in my way . . . My stomach will swell and vines will burst out. I dream it is a place where a woman can live after she done take the neck of a man. Fearless. (11-12)

In other words, in these early scenes, the novel invokes the Caribbean landscape for at least two purposes: it uses sensual imagery that firmly situates the women's love in Caribbean space; and it links Elizete's body to the landscape to provide a means of fantasizing her resistance.

As indicated earlier, though, Brand's novel partly proposes a utopic space for lesbianism, not by disavowing any of the violent history or present of racism and sexism in the Caribbean and Canada, but rather by leaving unnamed the different geographies in which the novel takes place. Sudbury, Ontario is named, and so is Toronto, which is further identifiable by street names only; and Canada is identifiable primarily by extrapolation from the cities mentioned. The novel uses the word "islands" but does not mention Caribbean countries by name. Except for landmarks like Grand Anse and Morne Rouge that identify Grenada, or, in other cases, Trinidad, the litany of place names gives an impression of specific locations without, usually, offering the name of the country. This strategy reinforces the novel's focus on place rather than nation, and allows Brand to imagine a utopian space for her Caribbean lesbian characters without the singularity of specific nation-states.

In dialectic tension with this utopian and affirmative vision of Caribbean lesbian space, *In Another Place* suggests that no place (*ou-topos*, or utopia, means "no place") is home for Caribbean lesbians. The pattern for this sense of dispossession is set in the story of Adela, the great-great-grandmother of the woman who raises Elizete. When Adela is brought by slave ship to the Caribbean, she memorizes the route in order to find her way back. But when she arrives, and "done calculate the heart of this place, that it could not yield to her grief, she decide that this place was not nowhere and is so she call it. Nowhere" (18).[101] She lets the maps fade in her head, refuses to name her children or anything in this new place, and forgets "she true true name and she tongue" (20). Elizete inherits from Adela this negation of the place she is in, and uses it to explain "how I don't know the names of things though I know their face. I know there is names for things but I can not be sure of the truth of them" (19-20). Despite her sense of dispossession, Elizete understands Adela's reaction, but decides to name the things around her, to bring back Adela's memory of herself, and to not "feel lonely for something I don't remember" (24). She says,

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[101] If we read Adela's reaction through Wilson Harris' syncretism, her resistance to her enslaved state and forced exile—denying the validity of these acts by calling this place "Nowhere"—is also a refusal to make of this place a new thing, to shift from tragedy towards a creolized future.

> Nothing barren here, Adela, in my eyes everything full of fullness, everything yielding, the milk of yams, dasheen bursting blue flesh . . .Where you see nowhere I must see everything. Where you leave all that emptiness I must fill it up . . . the place beautiful but at the same time you think how a place like this make so much unhappiness. But since then I make myself determined to love this and never to leave. (25)

Elizete gently takes possession of this place in the name of a woman, turning Adela's negations into affirmations.

In Canada, on the other hand, both women find that dispossession and alienation cannot be overcome. Elizete's strategy of naming does not work in Toronto. She says, "this place resisted knowing. When she tried calling it something, the words would not come . . . Her names would not do for this place" (69-70). She lives as an illegal, underground. She has "nothing to hold on to" and cannot "leave a mark" on this place: "Here, there were many rooms but no place to live. No place which begins to resemble you, had you put a chair here or thrown a flowered curtain in the window or painted the trim of a door pink or played a burst of calypso music through its air or even burned a spice" (199, 63).[102] Abena, an activist in Toronto and Verlia's former lover, tells Elizete, "Go home, this is not a place for us . . . No revolution is coming" (109-110). Elizete confirms, "Go home. And really no country will do. Not any now on the face of the earth when she thought about it. Nothing existed that she could live in" (110). She feels "cold and motherless" at the thought—"Crazy, without a country" (109). She is without a home or country because of racial and sexual oppression in Canada, and because she has lost the woman she loves and cannot speak of this love to anyone: she connects nation-space with this love when she says, "Life already take a country and a woman from me" (111).

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[102] Elizete's discovery that she cannot make a mark on this place is a telling indictment of the so-called openness to diversity of Canada's official multiculturalism.

For Verlia, there are two worlds in Toronto. There is the white world that "runs things" and that she ignores as much as possible: it is "opaque" and "something to keep an eye on, something to look for threat in" (180). Then there is "the other world growing steadily at its borders," "the one she knows and lives in" (180). Verlia lives in the world of black people in Toronto and the anti-racist movement, and by her involvement in the Movement she claims this place as Elizete claimed her island. At age seventeen, escaping her family home in the Caribbean and travelling to Toronto to join the Black Power Movement, she says, "it doesn't matter that it's Toronto or a country named Canada. Right now that is incidental, and this city and this country will have to fit themselves into her dream" (159). When she decides she can be most effective by joining the revolution in Grenada, she commits herself to this revolution as one would to a place: Elizete says of Verlia, "She bet all of she life on this revolution. She had no place else to go, no other countries, no other revolution" (114-115). She also loves the revolution as she would love a woman—she "falls as if in love" with the revolution and with Che Guevara's words, "the true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love" (165). Verlia asserts that as a black lesbian she will not find a home anywhere but in political activity and "love of living humanity" (166), in challenging the dispossession that makes neither Canada nor the Caribbean her home.

In Another Place, Not Here, therefore, responds to the exclusion of Caribbean lesbians from national space in a number of ways. It sets up a dialectic that requires two mutual strategies: a utopic assertion of Caribbean lesbians' *belonging* in Caribbean space, through a connection between lesbian erotics and Caribbean space; and an activist assertion that belonging is found through political activity, the attempt ultimately to create a social utopia. These two facets of the novel come together in the final scene, when Verlia either jumps or is shot at by American soldiers and falls off a cliff, tracing an arc in the sky. Elizete, at the top of the cliff, falls and tunnels into the ground. These associations mirror an earlier scene in the novel, when the two women are making love, and Elizete says that Verlia writes her words "in an arc in the sky" (75) while her own words "come to grounds" (75). Verlia's leap into the air also links her resistance through coalition with that of the Caribs in Grenada who, after fighting the French in 1651, leapt to their deaths over a cliff at Sauteurs Bay—this scene may be an allusion to Derek Walcott's *Another Life.*[103] In other words, the novel brings together the two women's love with revolutionary action, and situates these two things in the history of resistance in Grenada. Verlia's death, which haunts the entire text, appears in these final pages as utopian, an escape into her dream of "going to some place so old there's no memory of it" (246)—another layer of this scene's meaning, invoking Africa and the myth of "flying back to Africa."[104] Yet the text is haunted also by the death of revolution in Grenada, about which Brand writes elsewhere, "there isn't a hand large enough / to gesture this tragedy . . . / dream is dead / in these antilles" ("October 19th, 1983" 40). Perhaps it is this lost dream that prevents an easy bringing together of the two sides of Brand's dialectic—even though the final scenes of the novel may show the necessity of both utopian visions of belonging, and engaged political struggle to free places for this belonging, Brand refuses to compromise or suggest a middle ground.

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[103] Thanks are due to Stephen Slemon for pointing out to me the connections between Verlia's leap, the historical act of the Caribs, and Walcott's text. The reference to Sauteurs appears in Chapter 11 of *Another Life*:

> yet who am I, under
> such thunder, dear gods, under the heels of the thousand
> racing towards the exclamation of their single name,
> Sauteurs! Their leap into the light? . . . I am one with this engine
> which is greater than victory, and their pride
> with its bounty of pardon . . . I am all, I am one . . . (69)

[104] I would like to thank Heather Zwicker for pointing out to me the possibility that the "place so old there's no memory of it" is Africa.

Brand and Mootoo, therefore, use tropes of utopianism to explore what it might mean to imagine a space for lesbians and gay men in the Caribbean. In *Cereus Blooms at Night*, this imagined place is inhabited by a coalition of queer subjects who find healing and a space for the performance of their liminal identities. The fragile sense of "paradise," however, is complicated by the sexual, spiritual, and physical violence of colonialism and other forms of oppression. In *In Another Place, Not Here*, the "no place" of utopia, or Adela's "Nowhere" (18), indicates a dialectic between an affirmative imagined space of Caribbean lesbians' belonging, and a recognition of the need for political revolution to make this vision real. The novel draws together erotic and political utopias by connecting the two women's love with the revolutionary's love for "the people." These decolonizing and sexually emancipatory projects are both collective: both novels focus on a pair or group of characters rather than on a single protagonist. Both novels, finally, call for an anti-homophobic articulation of Caribbean decolonizing politics, and for a fuller understanding of the diversity of Caribbean experience.

I have been arguing throughout this dissertation that "creolization" and the narrative strategies that would seem to resemble it—fragmented narrative, an emphasis on community over the individual, heteroglossia and liminal subjectivity—are especially congruent with a feminist politics of difference. Chapter Two suggested the tendency to exclusiveness of an approach to Caribbean identity and culture that emphasizes roots over the process of creolization and change. Given the present chapter's analysis of how a roots-oriented cultural nationalism indeed *can* exclude diversity (that is, sexual diversity) from its purview, Mootoo's strategy of upturning identity through an emphasis on metamorphosis and border-crossing seems a direct response to this exclusiveness. On the other hand, mixing up sexual liminality with a host of other processual identities and metamorphoses can deprive it of political force: Elsie Mohanty's reaction to Otoh's "coming out" brings him back into his community, but indicates to him that his difference is just like any other, less marginalized, difference. Brand, alternatively, turns to a sense of identity that is not fluid but rather coalitional, representing the conjunction of a number of necessarily linked struggles. This political stance enables the revolutionary critique of her characters, a mode that Dash, as noted in Chapter Two, argues is effective for "those who experience a sense of homelessness" and wish to "erect a poetic fiction" (*Other America* 73). *In Another Place, Not Here* gives a sense of both the strength and vulnerability of Elizete and Verlia's love, in part because their love has no name and their home is "Nowhere" (*In Another Place* 18). Brand names this love, and gives a coherent shape and groundedness to the change that both women fight to bring about.

Throughout this dissertation I have sought to articulate what it is about Caribbean women's writing that echoes and yet fundamentally critiques the discourse of creolization that dominates Caribbean literary studies. Heterogeneity is a linking point between Caribbean feminist politics of difference and creolization, but what separates them is often the question of exclusion and social justice. It is worth returning to Nigel Bolland's comment, cited in Chapter One, that "creolization . . . is not a homogenizing process, but rather a process of *contention* between people who are members of social formations and carriers of cultures" ("Creolization" 72). Bolland's remark is significant for this dissertation for at least two reasons: first, he reminds us of the materiality of social relationships that underlie discourses of creolization expressed as literary theory and ideology; secondly, he emphasizes that creolization is, in practice, a process of contention more often than harmony. Chapter Four in particular engaged with the contradictions of coalition and alliance in Caribbean feminist activism even as it emphasized the importance of viewing heterogeneous social formations as fundamentally creative. One question that remains for me with this dissertation is whether discourses of creolization can accommodate and grow with challenges to their exclusions. That is, speaking of sexuality in particular, is the "queerness" explored in Chapter Five the breaking point of creolization, or the evolution of creolization? Writers like Mootoo and Scott, for example, appear to find in creolization and cultural hybridity a vehicle for asserting the Caribbeanness of sexual liminality. But both writers only imagine this juxtaposition through dream and fantasy. Brand's strategies differ, but her place in this chapter has re-emphasized the need for social critique when advancing the Caribbeanness of alternative sexualities. I have used the word "exclusions" with reference to creolization, but the problem is not solved by simply "adding" sexuality into the mix—the complicated role of sexuality and gender in creolization is more substantive, as Chapter One suggested, and sexuality is not the only kind of difference that does not fit the parameters of creolization. Chapter Five, however, has argued that focusing on sexuality illuminates more fully the limitations of discourses of creolization as liberatory discourses, and reinforces the political stakes of difference in the Caribbean.

Conclusion

This dissertation has attempted to show the importance of viewing Caribbean creolization through feminist analysis: to reveal the politics of gender and sexuality in canonical theories of creolization; and to outline the priorities of Caribbean feminist work on diversity and difference. I have argued that many theories of creolization, although transformative in vision and sometimes profoundly democratic, lack a committed methodology for considering differences of gender and sexual identity in their scope. Moreover, a close examination of the images, vocabulary, and narratives in these theories reveals that their articulation frequently relies both on images of women and "feminine" qualities, and on the elision of women as cultural agents. Glissant, for instance, links *Antillanité* with "irrationality" (*Caribbean Discourse* 3), "relationship" (*Poetics of Relation* 11), and with the fluidity and centrifugality of the Caribbean Sea—qualities traditionally associated with "the feminine" and devalued in a masculine/feminine binary (a binary that, perhaps, many of these theories do not question, despite their efforts to avoid exclusionary categories at other levels). Glissant's revaluation of these qualities appears more benign than Benítez Rojo's use of the Caribbean Sea with its chaotic, cyclical rhythms as a springboard to disturbingly racist and misogynistic metaphors for creolization. Brathwaite, in turn, uses images of Sycorax from *The Tempest* to house his representations of Caribbean cultural identity and creolized nation language, but claims that Caribbean women have not contributed to the region's culture. Kutzinski points out how Cuban *mestizaje*, "perhaps the principal signifier of Cuba's national cultural identity" (5), is similarly expressed through the figure of the mulata, a mixed-race woman, who is symbolically central but socially marginal; the mulata becomes a bridge, a figure whose body, "absented by rape" (Kutzinski 168), links homoerotically African and European masculinity.

Caribbean women writers and critics have participated to varying degrees in the discussions of creolization, syncretism, *Antillanité*, and *créolité*; Chapter One in particular, and portions of Chapter Three, outlined these analyses. However, the argument that this dissertation has hoped to contribute to the fields of theories of creolization and Caribbean women's literature is an understanding that much of the feminist participation in questions of creolization and diversity in the Caribbean has come about through a feminist politics and poetics of difference. This terminology describes the priorities (and in some cases, self-conscious re-evaluation) of a number of bodies of feminist theory, including African American feminist thought, contemporary materialist feminism, and third world feminist analysis, and it is generated through Caribbean women's literary criticism and cultural production. A feminist politics and poetics of difference, in the Caribbean context in particular, entails a commitment to exploring the material conditions that subtend discourses of race, gender, sexuality, and class, among other discourses that constitute women's subjectivity; an orientation towards coalition across differences between women; and a critical practice that involves activist engagement and a seeking after emancipatory social transformation. The Caribbean women writers and cultural workers discussed in this dissertation approach creolization from a wider purview, bringing the focus on cultural difference in the Caribbean into dialogue with forms of diversity and differentiation identified in feminist thought as key to social equity. Further, a feminist politics of difference offers a context for understanding the contradiction and contention that arise within coalitions across difference.

Chapter One read the work of the key theorists of creolization from the perspective of this feminist politics of difference. This chapter identified the central importance of creolization as the "methodological ground" (Dash, *Other America* 7) on which theoretical models in the Caribbean, in a number of fields, are developed. I discussed the major ideas on syncretism, *Antillanité*, *créolité*, and creolization of Harris, Glissant, Bernabé/Chamoiseau/Confiant, Brathwaite, and Benítez Rojo, and touched on the contributions made in postcolonial studies of hybridity by Gilroy and Bhahba. What I found most valuable for a feminist study of creolization was the focus in Harris, Glissant, and Bhabha in particular on the transformative dynamics of heterogeneity and the proposition of a third term or 'in-between space' that confounds Manichean dialectics: in Harris, this heterogeneous imperative enables the "transubstantiation of consciousness" ("The Phenomenal Legacy" 45) through "ceaseless dialogue" (*Womb of Space* xviii); Glissant offers "the concept of the region as a third possibility in the normally opposed categories of national and universal" (Dash, *Other America* x) and an emphasis on process and opacity; and Bhabha disturbs the binary opposition of colonizer and colonized through a proposition of a hybrid space and "form[s] of multiple and contradictory belief" that structure colonial relations "at the inter-subjective level" ("The Other Question" 75; Moore-Gilbert 116).

My readings of Brathwaite, Bernabé, Chamoiseau, Confiant, and Benítez Rojo, however, took issue with their concepts of creolization and *créolité* on a number of points. I noted the impression that *créolité* is a closed system, focused centrally, perhaps exclusively, on French-creole Martiniquan, largely African-creole, culture; Brathwaite's creolization, similarly, despite attention to the process of interculturation between European and African peoples, tends to return to its African and African-Caribbean origins, giving secondary status to other ethnicities. *Créolité* and Benítez Rojo's "repeating island" model also appear to lack a methodology for scrutinizing the contentions and differences in social status that structure cultural hybridity: *créolité*, because of the writers' call for an end to raciological distinctions and reliance on Creole language as a unifying force; and Benítez Rojo's paradigm, because it renders equivalent an eclectic range of signs of difference. Most importantly for this dissertation, however, is the politics of gender and sexuality in these theories. Benítez Rojo focuses obsessively on feminine sexualized images of the Caribbean, but the women in his monograph are goddesses, female characters in male-authored books, and the homosocially-inflected "men dressed and painted as women" (*Repeating Island* 29). Brathwaite expresses a form of filial respect for the image of Sycorax and "my mother, Barbados" (*Mother Poem* n.p.), but her role is of passive carrier of Caribbean culture; as a woman, she has not contributed to Caribbean culture, and in fact the creative genesis of creolization is, in Brathwaite's poetry, of singularly masculine origin. The *Éloge* writers similarly seek an "inseminat[ion]" of Creole into their literature ("In Praise of Creoleness" 896), but their model, unlike others discussed here, does not seem to have a symbolic (if passive) role for "the feminine": their hero is a male *conteur*, whereas women as writers are worthy of little notice.

The remainder of the dissertation focused on the critical and creative work of Caribbean feminists in relation to questions of creolization and difference. The last section of Chapter One outlined the presence of a clear feminist politics of difference in critical work by Caribbean women scholars and writers. Some of this work responds to creolization directly: Condé, for instance, frequently addresses the masculinism and exclusiveness of *créolité*; O'Callaghan develops the methodology of "woman version" as a response to the syncretic traditions of the Caribbean; Clark's *marasa* consciousness operates according the dynamics of creolization; and Chancy seeks a concept of *métissage*, "syncretic feminism" in effect (*Framing* 38), where "the multiple levels of social existence are brought together" (117), a form of hybridity that can encompass gender, class, and sexuality as well as racial and ethnic difference. Other treatments of difference rely more on assertions of the centrality of diversity in Caribbean women's writing, such as Savory Fido's "crossroads" position for critique, Mordecai's "prismatic function", and Boyce Davies' "braiding" and "critical relationality."

Chapters Two through Five, then, developed my argument that much of Caribbean women's theorizing on the question of creolization occurs in their creative work, and is expressed through a feminist politics of difference that attends to a more comprehensive range of status differences—including gender, sexuality, and class, in other words—than do theories of creolization. In isolating the focus for each chapter I attempted to engage in the kind of analysis and pedagogy practiced in Brodber's *Myal*: a practice of improvisation, posing the same arguments in different registers. Chapter Three offers the dissertation's clearest account of sustained feminist literary engagement with theories of creolization, while Chapter Four steps closer towards feminist organizing and activism around both pragmatic and theoretical questions of difference; these two chapters in particular underscore the ends of a continuum between creolization and feminist coalition that this dissertation hoped to indicate. Chapters Two and Five traverse this continuum as well, in their combination of literary analysis and focus on more public forms of activism. Chapter Two read Michelle Cliff's aesthetics of coalition and feminist alliance and Zee Edgell's exploration of women in emerging nationalism in the context of their manipulation of the *Bildungsroman*. Chapter Five put *In Another Place, Not Here* and *Cereus Blooms at Night* alongside gay and lesbian Caribbean challenges to the homophobic status quo and violent backlashes against alternative sexualities in Caribbean cultural space.

In each case, the analysis focused on the texts' attention to the intersections of gender, sexuality, class, and race and the dynamics of diversity in Caribbean community. Coalition is activist work across lines of difference, I argued, but it also takes place in narratives that seek non-oppressive ways of imagining the creatively transformative energies of difference. In *Abeng*, this refers to Clare's imagined political affiliations and her recognition of heterogeneous community; in *Beka Lamb*, it indicates Beka's desire for an ethical national community that does not exclude women or augment ethnic divisions. In *Myal*, it takes a linked spiritual and political form in the healing of a community through the channeling of diverse resources; in *Traversée de la mangrove*, positive heterogeneity is expressed through a narrative form that expresses collectivity. In Brand's documentaries, it explicitly refers to a black feminist politics that demands attention to the multiple forms of women's oppression; in Sistren's work, the coalitions built across class and colour lines illustrate multiplicity in collectivity. Finally, *In Another Place, Not Here* simultaneously imagines a utopian space of belonging across differences and also challenges the oppressions of racism and homophobia that constitute a community's refusal to permit differences; *Cereus Blooms at Night* explores both figurative and literal examples of the transformative energies of liminality and difference.

The feminist visions of difference and creolization that these writers and cultural workers develop share many features. Brodber and Condé attend to the dynamics of collectivity and to the qualities of partiality, dialogism, openness, and repetition. Cliff's and Edgell's *Bildungsromane* are perhaps surprisingly partial and provisional, their sense of process more unfinished and cyclical than the classic *Bildungsroman*'s narrative of development might suggest. Collectivity and community are core features throughout the dissertation, ranging from Cliff's and Edgell's insertion of the individual heroine into community, to the desire of gay and lesbian Caribbean writers for both an individual and collective sense of Caribbean identity. Sistren's theatre and autobiographical work and Condé's text illustrate two dimensions of collective utterance: differentiated and multiple yet broadly collective in the first instance, and highly differentiated, conflicting, yet formative of community, in the second. The study of Brand and Sistren, however, emphasized even further the importance of partiality and provisionality in feminist strategies of coalition, given the contradictions that inevitably arise in feminist work across difference. Coalition is essential, but it is not perfect, as Brand notes: Caribbean feminists articulate both the urgency of advancing antiracist feminist alliances that cross lines of class and race, and the need to recognize and act upon breakdowns in alliance.

Throughout the dissertation I put discourses of creolization up against discourses of identity and roots. Harris and Glissant in particular, out of the theorists discussed in the first part of Chapter One, distinguish the resistance of a Manichean Prospero-Caliban dialectic from the transformative possibilities of the dynamics of creolization. The former, they argue, is prone to the same exclusions and oppressive potentials as the colonizing or otherwise repressive discourses that oppositional discourses seek to resist. Chapter Two furthered this analysis by pointing out, via Bongie, Shohat, and Stam, the appeal of identitarian discourses for oppressed groups, and the danger that the privileging of hybridity obscures the asymmetrical power relations that underlie such hybridity. Although I have maintained throughout the dissertation that a Caribbean feminist politics of difference is congruent with discourses of creolization, there are points when this assertion must be complicated further. For instance, one of the underlying tensions in the juxtaposition of Caribbean feminist writing and the *Bildungsroman* is the seeming incommensurability between Cliff's and Edgell's projects of exploring creolization in Caribbean community, and the *Bildungsroman's* impulse towards narrating individual identity and origins. Chapter Four introduced the concept of testimony as a way to blur the boundaries between identity and creolization—boundaries artificially imposed in this dissertation, perhaps, as a gesture towards the separation of these modes of resistance in Caribbean cultural criticism. Testimony has the political edge valued by Shohat in particular, and forwards both the individual/autobiographical voice and the voice of the authorizing community. Yet, as Brand's documentaries and Sistren's work showed, testimony functions well within heterogeneity, for the practice of testimony in feminist coalition involves dialogue and negotiations of difference.

The final chapter, however, returned to these questions of identity to emphasize again how roots-based strategies of resistance, in creating poetic fictions to fill the void of homelessness or historylessness, can exclude specific identities and voices. In challenging the exclusion of non-mainstream sexualities from notions of Caribbeanness, gay and lesbian Caribbean writers respond in at least two interesting ways. Some, like Brand, exemplify Shohat's argument that collective resistance requires assertions of a communal past or identity: the antiessentialist bias of discourses of hybridity, argues Shohat, can involve "dismissing all searches for communitarian origins" (109). Brand's novel offers a nuanced assertion of the Caribbeanness of black lesbian community. Mootoo also responds by creating a community, but she invents a community of liminal figures, sexual and otherwise, that echoes the heterogeneous fluidity of creolization. I mention this chapter in detail here primarily because it is the culmination of some of this dissertation's questions about how, and to what extent, creolization can enable fully democratic representations.

I pointed out in the Introduction that my own location in this dissertation is that of an interested outsider. Although I did not undertake this project to learn more about my own national context, it seems to me that one of the most significant future directions for this research would be an examination of discourses of Canadian multiculturalism. The move from Caribbean creolization to Canadian multiculturalism is not so abrupt, considering the key roles played in discussions of Canadian multiculturalism by Caribbean-Canadian writers and critics. In this dissertation I have spoken about both resistant forms of creolization and the hegemonic uses to which discourses of creolization and hybridity have been put in the Caribbean and elsewhere. I believe the work done in this dissertation on these two uses of discourses of creolization can help in articulating a more resistant or popular conception of Canadian multiculturalism to query the management of difference of official multiculturalism and theorize the politics of difference in Canadian self-representation. One of my goals with this dissertation has been to find ways to translate a primarily racial/cultural mode of difference, "creolization," into a methodology that incorporates gender, sexuality, and class, and to make this methodology speak to the political and economic conditions that structure difference. In other words, I have asked whether creolization as a dominant discourse of difference in the Caribbean can evolve to amend its shortcomings. I believe that this discussion's bringing together of Caribbean creolization and a feminist politics of difference can be useful for Canadian studies, given the ways that the discourse of multiculturalism in Canada has become the overriding structure of representation for "otherness" and difference in Canadian cultural criticism.

Indeed, as Smaro Kamboureli notes, "the representation of otherness cannot be examined in isolation from such political and institutional realities as Canada's official policy of multiculturalism" (210). In a more general context, Homi Bhabha points out that multiculturalism has become "a portmanteau term . . . a 'floating signifier'" ("Culture's In Between" 31). If, as Rinaldo Walcott asserts in a discussion of official multicultural policy, "the Canadian nation-state has no way of making sense of communities founded upon and across difference" (*Black Like Who?* 78), then a new critical language must be devised for heterogeneity in Canadian culture. Much of the theory and institutional history of Canadian multiculturalism suffers from an additive formula, an impression of multiplicity contained in phrases such as "multiracial" and "pluri-ethnic" (Hutcheon and Richmond 2). Such terms suggest a more quantitative than qualitative explanation of

Canadian heterogeneity. This dissertation has prioritized at each stage what Kamboureli identifies, in the context of Canadian multiculturalism, as the "urgent need to address the materiality of difference in ways that would broaden our terms of reference without reproducing the old polarities" (Kamboureli 210).

It is my hope that, as a gesture towards future research, this dissertation could indicate some critical pathways for illuminating a more politically interventionary way of discussing Canadian multiculturalism. One of my contributions, I hope, has been my indication of how aspects of anti-racist feminist methodology can become tools for critically reading the dynamics of cultural hybridity. Ajay Heble, for one, points out the lack of a committed methodology of hybridity in Canadian literary studies. He cites a passage from *The Empire Writes Back*, which I will reproduce here more fully:

> In Canada, where the model of the 'mosaic' has been an important cultural determinant, Canadian literary theory has, in breaking away from European domination, generally retained a nationalist stance . . . But the internal perception of a mosaic has not generated corresponding theories of literary hybridity to replace the nationalist approach. . . . Where its acute perception of cultural complexity might have generated a climate in which cross-national or cross-cultural comparative studies would be privileged, little work of this kind seems to have been done. (Ashcroft et al, 36)

Granted, the authors' observations were made in 1989, but Heble's 1997 article reiterates the need for Canadian criticism to "move beyond a nationalist framework into genuinely democratic forms of cross-cultural work" (86). Heble calls for "an altered set of strategies for reading and responding to Canada's self-representational acts," strategies that can account for the "new contexts of Canadian criticism" such as "the roles that ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, and class have played in the cultural construction of

Canada" (87-88). Heble seeks a "de-hierarchiz[ed] . . . process of *cultural* listening" as a reflection of the "multiple" and "dialogic" nature of identity, and offers a preliminary model based on Glenn Gould's notion of counterpoint, a "combination of simultaneous voices" that "results in a complex, but nevertheless coherent, structure" (86, 90). I believe that this dissertation's work on Caribbean cultural creolization and Caribbean feminist politics of difference can extend Heble's proposal for ethical, cross-cultural models of Canadian criticism, models that attend to the multiple ways that "difference" structures the Canadian social imaginary.

This dissertation can contribute to the discussion of cultural hybridity in Canada a recognition of the need in Canadian studies for an integrated, materialist understanding of the interpenetration of discourses of gender, race, class, and sexuality, and an understanding of the need to link discourses of difference with an antiracist, feminist politics capable of systemic analysis. The critical pathways that this dissertation identifies as important to studies of both Caribbean creolization and Canadian multiculturalism include attention to the tendency, particularly in official multiculturalism, for discourses of hybridity to be used to mask social inequities and manage difference. Multiculturalism as a critical model may not be simply inadequate, but in fact can be a strategy that, to return to Ghassan Hage's words again from Chapter One of this dissertation, uses tolerance to "mystify" inegalitarian relationships and is "aimed at reproducing and/by disguising relations of power in society" (28). Gordon and Newfield, further, in their Introduction to *Mapping Multiculturalism*, argue that multiculturalism in the 1980s "appeared to replace the emphasis on race and racism with an emphasis on cultural diversity . . . and allowed 'culture's' aura of free play to attribute a creative power to racial groups that lacked political and economic power" (3). Maria Koundoura similarly notes that multiculturalism's focus on cultural difference draws attention away from political and economic exploitation: "in naming and treating as cultural the economic conditions that necessitated [multinational flows of people into a single nation], multiculturalism erases the history of capitalism's need to import and exploit cheap labour. Multiculturalism thus becomes another of the crisis-managements of capitalism" (80).

The link between this dissertation's work on creolization and a feminist politics of difference on the one hand, and the discourse of Canadian multiculturalism on the other hand—and the benefits of investigating these fields through feminist materialist analysis—appears even more clear to me upon reading Himani Bannerji's recent work, *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and Gender* (2000). Bannerji seeks in this study "a liberatory or emancipatory use of culture as a basis for political identities and agencies," and identifies in official Canadian multiculturalism a process of "racialized ethnicization" whereby official multiculturalism as an "ideological state apparatus" is "a device for constructing and ascribing political subjectivities and agencies for those who are seen as legitimate and full citizens and others who are peripheral to this" (2, 6). Further, Bannerji sees in official multiculturalism a process of competition between non-white peoples in Canada that allows for no coalition or "cross-border affiliation or formation" (7).

Bannerji's work and my dissertation are both propelled by several linked propositions. Firstly, discourses of multiculturalism and creolization can treat cultural and other differences as givens, rather than as ideologically and politically maintained social hierarchies: Bannerji argues, "[i]n the multicultural paradigm, where difference is admitted, structural and ideological reasons for difference give place to a talk of immutable differences of ethnic cultures" (9). Secondly, we have both pointed out the possibility for both resistant and dominant articulations of multiculturalism and creolization. Finally, both projects link discourses of multiculturalism and creolization with gender. Bannerji's methodology is both feminist Marxist and anti-racist; she argues that "[t]he mosaic approach has not been compensated with an integrative politics of antiracism or of class struggle which is sensitive to the racialization involved in Canadian class formation" (8). Bannerji suggests that the discourse of multiculturalism has offered to both academic and activist Canadian feminism the term 'visible minority women,' and the "grassroots notion of the woman of colour," as a way to name "building coalition among all women" (31); these terminologies, however, have "no interest in class politics, and no real analysis of or resistance to racialization or ethnicization" (31). The concept of diversity that Bannerji argues has provided a language for multiculturalism and Canadian feminism is paradoxical: it "simultaneously allows for an emptying out of actual social relations and suggests a concreteness of cultural description, and through this process obscures any understanding of difference as a construction of power" (36). Bannerji, I was interested to note, counters the discourse of diversity with coalition: she argues that "difference" is more capable than "diversity" of having political and cultural content:

> With class, 'race' and gender and sexuality seen as components of this difference, we admit of both solidarities and relations of opposition. . . . We can unite, as coalition is a basic prerequisite of organizing for change . . . [this] is an act and task of political conscientization . . . [and] admits of asymmetrical social and cultural locations and power relations. (52)

This trajectory of Bannerji's argument makes it clear that my dissertation's work on creolization can contribute to the current discussion on multiculturalism in Canadian criticism.

I have taken a somewhat resistant position against discourses of creolization throughout this dissertation, for obvious reasons, perhaps, when discussing critics such as

Benítez Rojo, Brathwaite, and the *créolistes*. But I have also stood on the side of Caribbean feminism when challenging the body of work on creolization in general, suggesting that it is exclusionary and not fully forthright about the contentious conflicts of racism, ethnic and class division, and gender politics that form the social fabric of creolization. In the end, however, I wish to return to the question of whether creolization, like Canadian multiculturalism a dominant structure of representation, can more fully accommodate difference and provide a model for heterogeneity that progressive Caribbean writers can embrace. The fact that so many Caribbean feminist writers and gay and lesbian Caribbean writers have articulated resistant narratives through the aesthetics of creolization suggests that as a model for cultural creativity creolization remains compelling. As a descriptive or realistic mode, creolization has failed to account for the kinds of difference in Caribbean space, and the ways that differences intersect and compete; but as ideology, perhaps the idealism of creolization will provide a model for the future. It is the partiality and provisionality of creolization as articulated by critics like Harris and Glissant—the stance that "it is only through an apprehension of these partialities and the subject's position in relation to them that real change in the world can occur" (Johnson, "Translations" 126)—that suggests it can remain open to negotiation with Caribbean feminist democratic literary and cultural strategies.

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Appendix A

"Boom Bye Bye"
(standard English version)

The world is in trouble
When Buju Banton arrives
Faggots have to run
Or get a bullet in the head

Chorus

Bang-bang, (shots) in a faggot's head
Homeboys don't condone nasty men
They must die (repeat)

Verse 1

Two men necking
Lying in a bed
Hugging each other
And caressing one another's legs
Get an automatic or an Uzi instead
Shoot them now, let us shoot them
(gunshot sound)

Verse 2

They don't want Jackie
Give them Paul instead
They don't want the sweetness between (women's) legs
Girls bend over and take your dick
And even if it really hurts
She still won't refuse
And some men still don't want pussy
They only love faggotry

(chorus)

Verse 3

Women are the greatest things
God ever put on the land
Buju loves you from head to toe

But some men reverse it
Why do they do that?
Peter is not for Janet, Peter is for John
Suzette is not for Paul, Suzette is for Ann
What the f.... is going on!
Here is Buju Banton to . . .
(remainder of line unintelligible)

Verse 4

This is not a bargain, this is not a deal
If a man makes a pass, he must bleed
Burn him like old firewood
Go on Buju Banton, you are the man

(chorus)

Repeat Verse 1

Verse 5

They don't want pussy from between Patsy's legs
All they want is some ass from Fred
But this is Buju Banton

(chorus)

Repeat Verse 3

Buju Banton is here to give the masses satisfaction
You're happy and you love it

(chorus)

The New York crew doesn't condone faggots
Jump, dance, wave your hands in the air
Brooklyn girls don't condone faggots
Jump, grind, and shake your butt
Canadian girls don't like faggots . . .

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