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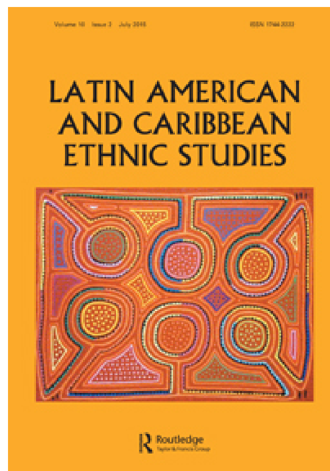

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AN INCLUSIVE 'BLACK ATLANTIC': REVISITING HISTORICAL CREOLE FORMATIONS

Sarah Quesada

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Creolization accounts are richly diverse as they are multifaceted. During the era of the Slave Trade, they were ever more unique. However, its mutually reinforcing nature and complexity across the Atlantic World have remained relatively unexplored until recently. Creole formation was nevertheless ubiquitously taking place as much in the New World as in Africa prior to the enslaved forced migration. Informed by historical debates on such cases, this article revisits constructions of cultural structures and their alterations throughout the Transatlantic Diaspora that lead to a better understanding of identity claims to an 'African heritage.' This article builds on the contact with certain synchronisms, but through new views of creole formations, I underscore the importance of African studies and African American studies working conjointly to foster a better understanding of Atlantic World History.

Keywords: Creolization; Africa; retentions; Transatlantic Slave Trade; Atlantic World

The Transatlantic Slave Trade forced 12.5 million individuals from Africa between 1501 and 1866. According to the best estimates, 10 million people survived what was the largest forced migration in modern history, destined for lives of bondage in American plantations (Eltis and Richardson 2010). Regardless of their transplantation as individuals scattered all over the Western Hemisphere, many of their descendants have claimed an 'African' identity. These 'African' cultures *within* the Americas are vastly diverse and their formation during the creation of an Atlantic World has become a subject of significant debate. The form of identity or the progression of identity formation within this context has been termed 'creolization,' used to understand both the history and the identity perception of these transplanted peoples. However, this concept of cultural hybridization had traditionally been conceived as following a uniform or mutually exclusive pattern.

Through the engagement of past and recent scholarly debate, some of which would not be customarily placed in dialog this article updates the previously held notions of creolization as it pertains to the Slave Trade, concerning peoples of African extraction. By acknowledging the term's myriad meanings and applications, this article, although non-exhaustive, nuances the creolization's historical evolution, surveying it as universal and not necessarily confined to *the American continent*. Heavily tied to the idea of

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hybridization, creolization is instead viewed here as complex and ongoing, taking place throughout the entire Atlantic World as a process that was mutually reinforcing. Consequently, I offer a more inclusive perspective of 'African' retentions in the Americas. A secondary end result of this piece is to reflect on what constitutes the African layer of creole formation after we have analyzed different forms of cultural synchronization emerging throughout in the Atlantic World and the plantocratic system's aftermath.

Before delving into the debates, however, a few basic definitions for 'creolization' are required as they apply in this article to concepts of language, cosmology, and healing practices. It is necessary to begin first by understanding the term 'culture.' By 'culture' we mean the intrinsic set of positions, attitudes, and behaviors that are shared among a collectivity or that an individual asserts are part of her main ideological framework as a member of a certain community. Argentine anthropologist Néstor García Canclini, who coined the term 'hybridity,' explains culture as a 'realm of production, circulation, and consumption of meanings' that can be conceived as an 'expression or reflection of material *structures*' [emphasis added] (2004, 338). To understand this process of change within a frame of cultural 'structures,' we may, among other examples, think of culture as a shared 'language.'[1]

While the grammar of a language is in constant transformation, the meanings of words within its grammar may change more fluidly. The grammar of language – while never static – is formed when a set of different linguistic elements come together, crystalize over time, and are spoken by a vast collectivity. It is also influenced by its exposure to other peoples, at times, forced or convivial. However, in any case, if grammar can be used as an analogy for deep cultural structures – 'structures' in García Canclini's sense (2004, 338) – then the term 'creolization' may be equated to the more flexible changes of the meanings of words.

Creolization within a culture, as this article considers, behaves like the changing of the meanings of words from a language, through exposure to other 'cultural' forms such as the term *marronner*. James Clifford employs this example to explain the dynamic terminology of word construction in the Caribbean (1988, 181). *Marronner*, a term from 15th century France, was applied to runaway slaves as early as the 17th century (Oxford dictionary). Reading from Martiniquean poet Aimé Césaire – who appropriates the word in his poem 'Le verbe marronner/ à René Depestre, poèt haïtien'[2] – Clifford explains the evolution of the term's meaning, based on the surroundings of runaway slave communities:

> Césaire makes rebellion and the remaking of culture – the historical maroon experience – into a *verb*. A necessary new verb names the New World poetics of continuous transgressions and cooperative cultural activity. Fugitive slaves who created cultures in the swamps of the Guianas represented distinct African traditions. (1988, 181)

Creolization in Clifford's example speaks for cultural traditions that are practiced among groups, but also illustrates how the meaning of a word, similar to cultural practices, is more adaptable than the grammar of French in this example. Other instances of this concept are found in spiritual rituals practiced in Benin that might be performed differently across the Atlantic due to influences of diverse customs. In this case, deep cultural structures do not remain static but rather evolve at a gentler pace.

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One can therefore think of creolization as a force by which some aspects of a culture do indeed change, but deep cultural structures are more resistant to transformation. In fact, returning to the example of language, as literary critic Maureen Warner-Lewis states, '[l]anguages in contact would tend not to borrow entire systems, but would borrow selectively' (2002, 253), implying that retentions or 'new features' (252) are absorbed but not the entire system or structure of that language. Furthermore, for Martinican thinker Edouard Glissant, creolization does not only function for the Caribbean; it is a 'universal process' altering itself constantly that is not dependent on *rules* but rather on individual *strategies* of agents (Glissant and Dash 1989, 264). Indeed, if deep cultural structures displaying African retentions exist in the Americas, particularly in the animism practiced by an enslaved Brazilian in historian James Sweet's recent findings (2011, 1) as I will later elucidate, then African-derived healing practices also assist in the understanding of how these cultural conventions developed.

In the Atlantic World, creolization was unique in the sense of scale as one that grouped individuals from a tri-continental axis.[3] But the study of Caribbean-based creolization emerging from Postcolonial studies, as Warner-Lewis (2002, 245) states, is a burgeoning field first appearing in the 1980s. Evolving from the previously conceived notion that African retentions are, as it were, static, contemporary diverse and differing scholarly literature today demonstrate that the culture of certain individuals or groups was persistently navigating the complex web of understudied interactions along the Atlantic World. The debates on creole formation assessed here fall into three main categories: First, by reviewing the early debates concerning preservation of African traditions in the Diaspora during the era of the Slave Trade, the brief surveying of this period questions whether or not the Transatlantic Slave Trade obliterated African aspects of tradition, or created them. Initially debated by sociologist E. Franklin Frazier and anthropologist Melville Herskovits, these early diasporic discourses set a foundation for African American studies within the United States, as scholars attempt to define what was indeed 'African' about the descendants of slaves. Crucial to the debate, although external from the United States, was Afro-Cuban studies' pioneer Fernando Ortiz, whose contribution had an impact on the theorization of African traditions in the Caribbean during the same period.

Second, by observing processes of transformation of certain African retentions, anthropologists Mintz and Price (1992) turn to a breakthrough theory of creolization within the Americas. This transformation is reproduced at different levels of a continuum, with the fleeing enslaved laborers and their development of autonomous communities (*quilombos*, maroons) on the one end, and those that stayed on plantations, on the other.[4] However, it is the latter case that leads us to inquire on a nuanced creolization account taking place under different circumstances, including those occurring in the African continent prior to the Middle Passage.

Lastly, recent work has juxtaposed these ideas with those of cultural influences being mutually exerted between diverse neighboring ethnic groups within Africa prior to their transfer to the Americas, and even during the Middle Passage.

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However, as research shows, this development remains complex as it is a transformation that depends on many variables. If seeking to comprehend a number of factors that influence the 'Africanity' synchronization of peoples, we may ask, how do different experiences of slavery and community creation make African Americans different from or similar to those on the African continent? ('American' in the continental sense. Unless otherwise noted, the term 'African American' in this article refers to individuals of African extraction living or hailing from the American continent rather than the United States exclusively). Can we speak today of 'authentic' African retentions?

Foundations of African American Culture in the Americas

More than 70 years back, Frazier (1939, 13), an urban sociologist claimed African Americans (within the United States) did not retain 'knowledge of their African background' as a consequence of their dramatic rupture from the continent. He postulated that societal troubles within the urban African American communities were an aftereffect of a lack of a common past with Africa (8), implying that they were, in a sense, not African, and thus lacked a sense of kinship. His findings were published in *The Negro Family in the United States* (1939) and his main sources were Howard College student essays. These elite informants found scarce details on African traditions when interrogating family members about their past and, inevitably, documented such findings in their academic analyses. Naturally, Frazier interpreted these results as a consequence of 'traditions not taking root' (7). However, if the elite students interviewed grandparents whose ancestors had been 'broken in … becom[ing] accustomed to their new environment' and American way of life (11), it is to be expected that they would find limited information on African culture.

Since Frazier envisions a plantation where an all-powerful master abuses and precludes his captives from freely observing their cultural practices, he concludes that many were forced to assimilate and thus forgot their 'roots.' Furthermore, Frazier believed in the master's absolute power and said assimilation by force was complete (1939, 488). In other words, just as easily as the master could marry slaves at will, he could also mold them into his own customs. The fictitious character of *Uncle Tom*, for instance, is rooted in the very notion of the *bon sauvage* and that of the docile assimilated slave who, following abolition, could be integrated into the 'minority' elite. As a consequence of Frazier's research, no African retentions are discernable in his study.

If Frazier concludes that African Americans exhibit a 'lack of memory' (1939, 22), he confidently explains that the institution of slavery was responsible for erasing any folkloric and cultural threads:

> Probably never before in history has a people been so nearly completely stripped of its social heritage as the Negroes who were brought to America. Other conquered races have continued to worship their household gods within the intimate circle of their kinsmen. But American slavery destroyed household gods and dissolved the bonds of sympathy and affection between men of the same blood and household. (1939, 21)

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The plantation and the Slave Trade for Frazier are the logic behind any dysfunctionality in the African American sector. Although opening up the debate for what would become foundational research on Black Diasporic studies, the main concern regarding his final premises principally 'support[ed] race prejudice' and 'rationalize[d] discrimination' in the United States (6), as Melville Herskovits (1941) later stated. In fairness to Frazier, at the time of his research, he did not have access to the resources available to scholars today. Nevertheless, the main caveat regarding his methods is that he only examined the experiences of a select few in the *urban* centers and only within the United States. He overlooked the evident variations of traditions that could be found: (1) elsewhere in the American hemisphere and (2) outside of the city centers. For instance, regardless of the fact that in the Americas as a whole, slaves were also present in the urban spaces of the Spanish and Portuguese colonial cities, Frazier did not consider this factor because other hemispheric geographies were outside of his scope. Frazier's argument of religious obliteration then would stand in stark contrast with what, decades later, James Sweet (2011) would find as African 'healing' practices presented in Brazil. Of course, Brazil, as a Portuguese settlement, witnessed a different style of colonization and exploitation than did the United States.[5] The goals and forms of colonization differed from region to region and also evolved in time, but they had an impact on geocultural practices. They suggest, for instance, that while indigenous culture remains ubiquitous in Peru or Mexico, they are less visible in Argentina or the United States. The same can be stated for African traditions and retentions throughout the Americas.

In the case of African traditions, while certainly not native to the Caribbean, some of their cultural practices seemed to have resisted colonization (which Frazier argues was not the case in Northern America). With regard to the Hispanic Caribbean, Fernando Ortiz, decades prior to Frazier's findings, had become fascinated with the varieties of Afro-Cuban traditions within marginalized communities in and outside of Havana as early as 1916.[6] He became the pioneer of Afro-Latin studies, and in his *Los negros esclavos* (1987, 163) explored the arrival of Africans to the ports of Havana, Matanzas, and Santiago. In it, he expands on the notion that slaves would not only be confined to rural coffee plantations and sugarcane fields, but were also the labor behind edifices of important city ports (e.g. El Morro in Santiago, and the Havana's famous fort adjacent to the Malecón). Most relevant to the discussion of the retention or loss of African traditions is Ortiz's famous neologism 'transculturation' coined in 1940 – a year after Frazier's *The Negro Family in the United States*. It was a term that evolved from 'acculturation,'[7] a notion that Frazier ideologically espoused. In Ortiz's terms, transculturation 'express[ed] the much varied phenomenon that originate in Cuba due to the complex cultural transmutations that are verified [t]here, and without which it is impossible to understand the evolution of Cuban society.'[8] As a concept of transamericanism, it would apply to the Americas in general (Ortiz 1987, 97). Of course, different from Frazier, Ortiz's focus was on Cuba, an island that, while more interconnected with the

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archipelago and the surrounding Caribbean regions, also differed from the US colonization experience. Cuba then still hosted a variety of spiritual African-originated customs. Nevertheless, Ortiz did not consider transculturation to be including only added elements of a culture. Similar to Frazier, he understood 'amestizamiento' ('miscegenation') to depart from the destruction of cultures,[9] leading to a 'synthesis' of both loss and added parts (Ortiz 1987, 93). In other words, he said that while 'losing a culture,' ('partial deculturation'), slaves gained another (96).

But somewhat wanting in Ortiz is the notion of retentions, in that if he subtly hints at this conjecture, it is not further developed. He postulated that 'Blacks brought with them their bodies, their *spirits*, but not their *institutions*, nor their instruments' (Ortiz 1987, 95; emphasis added). Mintz and Price (1992) will later nuance this notion, but what is most relevant here is that, while indicating a partial deculturation in the loss of 'institutions' and 'instruments,' Ortiz also signals that the 'spiritual' was indeed preserved (95). This idea is further parsed by Oscar Grandío Moráguez (2008), who illustrates with other examples the Yoruba initiation rituals of a five-year old in Cuba being similar to those of young adults in Nigerian villages.

Within the United States, however, and taking issue with Frazier, anthropologist Melville Herskovits (1941) categorically refuted the notion that continental Black Americans were bereft of retentions. He claimed, consequently, that it was commonplace for those unacquainted with African studies, or Afro-American traditions outside of the United States, to relinquish the notion of Africanity: 'Students from the United States who, without grounding in African cultures and equipped only with the hypothesis of the disappearance of African customs as a frame of reference, have tended to minimize African retentions' (Herskovits 1941, 29). The Diaspora therefore in his view did not cut off Black Americans from the African continent, but on the contrary: Africa fully extended into the Americas. Unlike Frazier, and similar to Ortiz, Herskovits visited many regions across and around the Atlantic. His fieldwork in Haiti led him to research *voudun* practices and find echoes of its spiritual productions transatlantically. He then could assume that certain New World religious practices were *reflections* of African rituals; that these productions were 'pure' African 'retentions' (Herskovits 1941, 143). As a result, he invited scholars to explore African history as a way of understanding Black traditions.

Thus far, the line of logic follows that Black Americans will be 'African' insofar that they still share important traditions practiced in continental Africa. But how can the practice or belief in these folkloric traditions infer such conclusions? If the Slave Trade and the plantation economy did not repress and then erase traditions completely, which ones remained and how do we know that they are indeed 'African'?

Creolization in the Americas

The former debates mentioned catapulted African American studies into the spotlight and were followed by a number of scholars attempting to assert such identity within

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the American way of life. Certain scholars would find distinguishable continuities of African traditions, while others would claim the transformations were actually *creole*. Robert Ferris Thompson (1984), for instance, asserted the former. His innovative text *Flash of the Spirit* expands on Herskovits' findings to make a stronger case for retentions by finding startling physical similarities between African and American *objects* and *practices*. For instance, Thompson explains that the *minkisi* figurines found among the Kongo-Cubans can be traced directly back to 'Kongo sculpture' (117). Worthy of note, however, is that by relying on the objects' *physical similarity*, one may overlook the nature of their travel to the New World. Therefore Thompson cannot really assert (and prevents himself from doing so) whether the objects created by the Diaspora share the same belief system as those of Africa. For instance, if the *minkisi* in Cuba were used to 'mystically attack slaveholders' (125) according to Thompson, could it be that they were employed for the same purposes in the Congo? This is particularly important given that Grandío Moráguez explains that the name 'Congo' used in Cuba does not necessarily connect to what today is geographically the Congo in Africa, signaling as a conclusion that upstreaming the origins of slaves or 'the historiography concerning which groups of people were captured and sent to the Americas is not always clear' (2008, 177).

We should then consider how these African artifacts came to exist in the Americas. As Mintz and Price will later show, their differing theory on this notion of 'similarity' is that the imagined symbolic bridge between the two continents is a commonly encountered conclusion within Diaspora studies, and can involve 'risky oversimplifications' (1992, 18). To this regard, what Thompson begins to hint at is that some of these African traits are not copies, but often 'resemblances' (1984, 119). It is in the writing systems that Thompson insinuates a process of creolization, without overtly stating it as existing. As he examines the cosmogram of the Ki-Kongo tradition found in Cuba, he reveals 'similarities' between New World and African writing (110–118).

If instead of asserting how these traditions came to be preserved, Thompson hints at a progression leading into a 'new cultural form' (1984, 111–113). When Thompson relates Cuban inscriptions to the Shaker religion on the island of St. Vincent in the Caribbean and those of the Shouters in the island of Trinidad, he points out the fact that 'the development of mystic ground-drawing in Cuba parallels the development of Afro-Christian crosses' (1984, 111–113). He is thus already implying a syncretic product as the result of a mix between Christianity and Kongo-influenced geometric sings, but does not dwell on it. We can thus deduce from the above that while Frazier was correct in stating that African culture was interrupted by the Slave Trade, Herskovits is also correct that the Trade brought African cultures to the Americas in the first place, subsequently enabling the said cultural tendencies to grow, develop, and change. Thompson in this vein begins to hint at the *creolization* that occurs once Europeans and Africans begin to coexist closely.

When certain communities in the Western Hemisphere produce and perform 'Africanized' artistic and religious rituals, can we then say that the phenomenon speaks to a common ancestry between Africans and African Americans? The

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challenge arises when determining whether these customs are copies as Herskovits maintained or retentions as Thompson would have assumed, or something else entirely that has *evolved*. How then can one classify African retentions if they have been modified? Groups such as the Kongo, Lucumí, and Arará in Cuba practice rituals that *seem* ancestral or traditionally African. They 'seem' or appear so, for one must ask whether such traditions practiced in Cuba are 'traditionally African' or whether they have changed. If they have transformed, could they still be considered 'African'? Furthermore, what are the conditions that enable these practices to survive? If we reflect on how traditions might have been preserved and developed, we may also consider the conditions that enabled them to do so, and then also to disperse. The creolization this article details is confined to the context of *marronage*[10] or within the plantation, as it analyses the works that have focused on that system, but also acknowledges that the process was effected in all cultural spaces, rural and urban.

In terms of plantation life, however, the mechanisms that enable kinship will vary depending on the living conditions in which the slaves were held. We must then consider a continuum that places *marronage* at one extreme and harsh prison plantations on the other. With a few exceptions, most enslaved Africans lived under conditions somewhere in between. Furthermore, one must see creolization as forming *around the Atlantic*. Several different cases here will present how kinship systems developed and took root.

In *The Birth of African-American Culture*, Mintz and Price (1992) zoom in on the development of creolized institutions within the Americas. If we take the *minkisi* example used earlier, their analysis would claim that the object possesses African retentions, but may be used for different purposes that were *created* by groups of people from diverse backgrounds in the Americas. Retentions in their view are always transformed and thus recreated. Building on their ideas of continuities, Mintz and Price elaborate on the idea of 'creolized' African cultures. They thus state that the oppressive environment of American slavery gave way to creolization in the form of 'crowds,' as opposed to *groups* (Mintz and Price 1992, 18). By 'crowds' they mean the aggregation of individuals from varying regions into a community that 'became,' what in Glissant's terms is a *devenir-peuple* or becoming-people, a heterogeneous kin that develops over time through events of cultural exchange (2005, 18). These crowds shared commonalities such as ritual practices that were similar enough to blend together in the face of oppression. Drawing from their example, this means that if a specific group of enslaved Africans in Suriname did not necessarily practice rituals from Benin before their arrival to the New World, they could associate with a wider cultural belief system that was similar to their own.

Recalling Ortiz's argument regarding African-based institutions, Mintz and Price would agree and are careful to point out that the Slave Trade did not enable their wholesale transfer nor that of the 'human complement of their tradition' (1992, 19). They proposed, rather, that what was transported was the individual with that knowledge: the priest and not the *priesthood*. Since purely African

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institutions were not present in the New World and thus did not dictate norms of religious practice, crowds with common religious beliefs would come together. This process of transference, for instance, fostered the Saramaka community: an aggregate of maroons between the borders of French Guiana and Suriname. This episodic transference further allowed for the creation of a group of kin who could be accountable to that individual in an unstable world of subjugation. Recalling Frazier's theorization that slaves' well-being depended on the master, Mintz and Price elaborate rather on the autonomy of said slaves. They expand on the notion that, in fact, they possessed a wide array of skills that enabled their kin: 'Slaves ministered to their own sick, cultivated inferior plantation land to grow their own food supply, fished and trapped delicacies for their masters' tables and their own, built their houses, and made the furniture and utensils in them' (Mintz and Price 1992, 26).

A reimagination of the plantation life depicting slaves 'fish[ing] delicacies' (Mintz and Price 1992, 26) and being provided with land to be self-sustaining directly opposes the model of the 'prison plantations.' It might be inferred that the relative freedom model found in Mintz and Price sets the stage for imagining the slaves' 'remaking' of their own culture in the New World. Mintz and Price thus deduce that while Africans stepped *beyond* the 'African' and created 'creolized' clan-like societies, they did so in plantations devoid of Frazier's all-powerful master.

Considering that neither Puerto Rico nor Suriname were major sugar plantocracies compared to those in Saint-Domingue (now Haiti), Cuba (in the 19th century), or Brazil, could Mintz and Price's conclusions of a rather peaceful plantation be attributed to their geographical areas of expertise?[11] Mintz's and Price's generalization of idealized plantocracies and claims of isolated crowds of slaves contrast greatly with Sweet's (2003) earlier work where he continually reports abuse and violence in the plantations of Brazil. Opening a brief parenthesis here, the comparison raises compelling questions regarding reports of mistreatment being less significant in the case for Suriname and Puerto Rico because of the smaller size of their plantations, directing scholars to analyze whether size is correlated to levels of slave abuse.

The debate dates back to the 1940s;[12] however, in 1959, the critical yet flawed research put forward by Stanley Elkins (1968) in *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* sparked significant criticism. He established a cross-cultural comparison in which he equated the Nazi concentration camps to life on the plantation. The impact of harsh regimes, he said, impacted the personality of the captives. In his work, he denoted the personality found in the slaves to be that of 'Sambo,' that is, to behave in a 'docile, infantile and childish' manner due to physiological damage caused by hegemonic abuse (Sweet 2003, 82). His research was eventually and vehemently attacked for the generalizations and blatant stereotypes it produced, but his conclusions also pointed to the commonality and ease with which scholars could overgeneralize the plantation experience. Elkins could generalize that plantation 'types' determined treatment, which in turn determined forms of slave resistance.[13] The research

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considered here however shows that, regardless of the size of a plantation, slaves could still be abused, and even if regions did not host 'global' plantocracies, individuals still experienced the plantation life (regardless of the kind of crop the plantation produced). Domingos Álvares, the slave whose life Sweet (2011) examined, suffered and was abused by his master even though he was on a relatively small plantation. This does not mean, however, that enslaved Africans did not endure hardship to a certain extent within maroon communities or that all maroon communities were one of the same thread. It should also be mentioned that not all plantations were like prisons and the ones that were did not follow the descriptions established by Elkins. Finally, and as we shall also see further, despite the continual abuse on the plantation, retentions developed regardless.

The main two questions raised by the important foundation put forth by Mintz and Price are that, first, how does the exclusion of different models of plantation experience modify our knowledge of creolization? Their study looks at one model: Those of smaller plantations, *marronage* occurrences, and isolated communities. By focusing on this model, conclusions may imply a heightened idealization of maroon communities as the zone that fosters 'authentic' (yet diverse) African processes. *Marronage* therefore is one point on a continuum where the counter-opposite is that of the plantation as a prison – the extreme that is absent in Mintz and Price; this does not imply that they considered African retentions only occurring in the absence of violence. But a second question is how may the creole occurrence outside of the Americas affect the model put forth by Mintz and Price? An examination of these two questions follows.

First, if Mintz's geographical academic field was based, on the one hand, in Suriname – a region that provided escaped slaves with hidden meccas – one would expect him to focus on the maroon experience. These 'maroons' established isolated societies that gave birth to communities like the Saramakas. Compared to Brazil and Cuba, Puerto Rico never received as many slaves as the Portuguese plantations or those of 19th-century Cuba. Therefore the retentions that one would find in Cuba and the model of creolization in that space are both absent from Mintz and Price's findings. This leads one to believe that since the Saramakas were in isolation, they had more space for their rituals but also received only a slight population inflow that would not have significantly altered their traditions. Therefore within this single issue, two important sub-concerns arise in this study: The generalizing of creolization on the basis of maroon community's isolation and the overlooking communities whose isolation was penetrated, receiving outside influences.

Emphasizing maroon's isolation infers that the retentions were more 'authentic' due to this factor. It must be recalled, as a parenthesis here, that runaway slave communities or maroons were not necessarily of the same African ethnic group, as accounted early on by Ortiz (1987), but might have had shared similar spiritual tendencies that later merged (while other tendencies or spiritual practices could have been dropped all together).[14] For instance, as Lourdes Martínez-Echazabal explains, 'the Yoruba-Lucumí mythology established itself as a hegemonic trading among African Cuban religious practices' (1994, 16). As a result, 'other groups, including

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slaves from Muslim tribes and, later, Chinese laborers, established equivalences and adopted the Yoruba deities, modifying, at times, only the names to fit their own pre-Caribbean tradition' (Martínez-Echazabal 1994, 16). The consolidation of spiritual practices to that of the Lucumí had a lot to do with the fact that, as Julia Cuervo Hewitt notes, the Lucumí held an intricate and elaborated mythological structure that enabled this adaptation (1988, 46).

Nevertheless, the second sub-concern to be questioned from Mintz and Price's study is that they do not inquire into communities with significant retentions that *did* receive a high influx of the so-called 'secondary elaborations' (Mintz and Price 1992, 50). In the case of 19th-century Cuba, communities of Ararás or Lucumíes that Grandío Moráguez speaks of saw a soaring number of enslaved Africans migrating to the island following the Haitian revolution. These in turn would have had more of an impact on their cultural traditions. In this vein, would Mintz and Price have stated that the Saramakas are more African than the Ararás or Lucumíes due to their isolation? Or could one consider rather that recent aggregates make a tradition in the Americas more 'African'? What if the recent Africans or even those that were in isolation were already creolized prior to their arrival to the Americas? These are yet some of the questions that arise from further nuancing Mintz and Price's approaches to creolization. Regardless of possible answers, what is important to analyze here is that not all maroon communities developed in the same way, and treatment of enslaved Africans is an issue that has been heatedly debated and deserves further attention.[15]

While one should not generalize the experience of maroon communities, one should also abstain from applying these same findings to those of enslaved Africans who remained on the plantation. If the authors' vision of Black cultural formation put into motion a model by which to analyze creolization in the Americas, another aspect to consider is how kinship systems developed through this process on the other side of the continuum, where slaves remained on the plantation as prisoners. In his most recent work, *Domingos Álvares: African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World*, James Sweet (2011) asserts that knowledge of healing powers is retained in a particular case study: that of Domingos Álvares (captured from the Bight of Benin). Despite the horrific conditions of abuse on the plantation, in Sweet's formulation, oppression and abuse were actually the catalyst of retention. In his earlier work, *Recreating Africa* (2003), Sweet in fact claims that slaves used rituals in Bahía as 'weapons' to defend themselves from the master's oppression. In this way, African rituals speak to the resilience of early African communities. What remains interesting while comparing Sweet's research to that of Mintz and Price is the variety of discrepancies in their conclusions with regard to slave's treatment, a product perhaps of the scholars' differing regional areas of study. While Mintz and Price would still agree with Sweet's creolized model of kinship as we shall see in this article's third section, it is telling that they do not delve into accounts of several forms of abuse when for Sweet, 'violence was critical in shaping the social and cultural identities of people' (2011, 13).

Finally, while the Mintz and Price model of creole culture is foundational for African American studies, their work must be put in dialog with other more recent studies on creolization occurring *transatlantically*. Without this conversation, the Africanisms that Thompson and Herskovits claim are found in the

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Americas, and that Mintz and Price explain are developed within the Western Hemisphere will exclude important factors from occurring within the Slave's Trade point of origin. Telling of the mobilization of cultural structures is the fact that creole formations were ubiquitous in Africa long before the enslaved crossed the Atlantic. In this manner, a creole during the 17th century possessed what Paul Gilroy calls a 'double consciousness' (1993, 1); it's just that it may have originated in Africa *first*.

The Case for Creolization in Africa

The mechanism of creolization was never a uniform development: the transformation of heterogeneous communities was enabled by a wide array of diverse and complex circumstances on all axes of the transatlantic triangle. As discussed in this last section, Sweet's case of the slave Domingos Álvares in the Bight of Benin, but also examinations of 16th and 17th century Senegambian creolization by Mark, da, and Horta in *The Forgotten Diaspora: Jewish Communities in West Africa and the Making of the Atlantic World* (2011), and Linda Heywood and John Thornton's *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585–1660* (2007) based in Angola and the Congo, presents an invaluable and complex understanding of hybridity procedures occurring prior to the Middle Passage. The accounts of slave experiences such as those of formerly mentioned Álvares, Moisés de Mesquita (Mark, da, and Horta 2011), Antonio Manuel (Heywood and Thornton 2007) as well as the recognizable figure of Olaudah Equiano (Equiano 1969) all present different cases of creole processes that speak of the importance of collaboration between African Diaspora scholarly findings. As a result, a more inclusive and comprehensive view of African Atlantic history and the effects of the Slave Trade on identity formation may emerge.

The case of Domingos Álvares mentioned earlier is a significant one since it illustrates how deep cultural structures such as healing techniques are both resistant to cultural changes within the New World and adaptable to American plantations. Álvares' knowledge of healing, one could say, even renders him resilient to abuse. His case however engages more fully with this aspect of healing traditions as means of resistance against annihilation that initiated and developed in Africa under multifarious circumstances. Álvares was allegedly kidnapped and sold into slavery sometime between 1728 and 1732 (2011, 26), but had been initiated in the *gbo* voudun practices, and was perhaps next in line to inherit his 'role as a spiritual leader' (24). Before captivity, Álvares was part of a diverse polyglot and polytheist community of refugees displaced by warfare. Explaining the context from which Álvares originates, Sweet states that in Dahomey, King Agaja, who ruled between 1718 and 1740, sold the main spiritual leader of Sakpata into slavery because he feared his divine powers as a sorcerer: 'he was more valuable to him alive than dead' (27). Similarly, Álvares is also (re)sold to a 'distant market' (72) after his master Freitas suffers unexplainable losses and attributes it to what he considers to be Álvares' witchcraft. His 'fame as a fetisher' produces fear and thus protects Álvares, better positioning him to 'refuse to adhere to planter formalities' imposed upon him. The healing traditions Álvares

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brings with him point to a form of resistance that is triggered in part because of the oppression he confronts. His 'defiance of his master's orders' (68) once again bumps up against Frazier's model of an all-powerful plantation master. However, different from the Mintz and Price model, Sweet also contends that violence pervaded on both sides of the Atlantic. He reports the horrifying examples of Agaja's torturing of prisoners to intimidate his enemies, similar to how slaves were treated to prevent disobedience on the plantation. Against a backdrop of uncertainty, peoples displaced by regional conflict recurred to coping mechanisms they found in their new environments. Álvares thus coped by joining a clan of refugees dislocated by war. This might have been an expected occurrence, since Sweet interprets that 'peoples displaced' during African wars 'often reconstituted themselves in alliance with others in similar circumstances' (2011, 13). While this community formation occurred in the Americas as established by Mintz and Price, Sweet demonstrates how kinship acted as an 'aggregation of crowds' in Africa, inevitably triggered by tyranny.

Therefore, the use of ritual knowledge for protection, the presence of violence, and the formation of kinship among peoples of different origins and practices developed in Sweet's work locate these occurrences in both the Americas and Africa. Indeed, this suggests that Mintz and Price could agree that these 'alliances' are rather 'institutions' that evolved because of some ulterior 'need:' these were institutions 'that would prove responsive to the *needs* of everyday life under the limiting conditions of slavery imposed upon them' (Mintz and Price 1992, 19; emphasis added). Similarly in Cuba, *cabildos* were created often and initially in Havana by groups who held '…ties to specific places of African origin' (Cañizares-Esguerra, Childs, and Sidbury 2013, 9). They later were pushed outwards towards the outskirts of the city, and as a result gained autonomy (Cañizares-Esguerra, Childs, and Sidbury 2013, 9). Yet, these *quilombos* or cabildo-like transformations were not exclusive to the Americas.

Álvares' particular existence points exactly to the telling fact that he was already creolized before he left Africa. Sweet also points out that Álvares and his fellow slaves on board the ship even started developing a collectivity, albeit limited, during the Middle Passage and prior to their arrival at the plantations. Pointing out how Mintz and Price conceived of the Middle Passage as a space for forming the 'birth of new societies' (cited in Hawthorne 2008, 54), before they arrived to the New World, Walter Hawthorne notes that 'with nothing uncommon other than their suffering, shipmates formed new bonds, which had long lasting importance' (2008, 56). He makes this observation based also on the peculiar case of the Portuguese slave ship, *Emilia*, which had been arrested by British patrols, rendering the captives 'de facto slaves.' This special circumstance led the captives to 'creat[e] very personal bonds with one another while at sea' (54). Although a particular case, similar to that of Álvares, it does point to the possibility of – at times brief – Middle Passage bonding.

Nevertheless, Álvares' relationship with other slaves and his African creolized identity from 'home' allowed him to be 'flexible in his understanding of kinship' (Sweet 2011, 26). If Mintz and Price previously established that kinship was fostered

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in isolation, Sweet proposes a creolization born from regional military upheaval in Africa. This also suggests that the ideas of kinship were 'African' and were transferred to the Americas in the form of Brazilian *quilombos*, resulting in an influence to the aforementioned *cabildos* in Cuba.

In *Recreating Africa*, Sweet (2003) upstreams history and establishes that *quilombos* in Brazil imitate certain male- and merit-based Central African communities that held more flexible notions of gender. He also concludes that because of this 'gender flexibility,' paired with a 1:10 female to male ratio and conditions of terrible oppression, queer tendencies among slaves were common and found shelter in an African-like, gender-flexible community. While this exercise in using a single-case scenario may appear to overgeneralize communities transatlantically, its use in Domingos Álvares (2011) is rather successful in terms of exposing a different creolization process. In Álvares' case, his particular circumstances are crucial to understanding the deep layering[16] that he acquires once he arrives in Brazil. On the plantation, Álvares is baptized and allegedly adopts Catholic elements within his worldview.[17] With the European layer added, Álvares moves effortlessly between worlds. His Catholic elements intermixed with voudun practices allowed him to adjust to other social structures. But in any case, Álvares was an African creole before he became an Atlantic one.

The New World witnessed the event of transculturation and syncretism produced by continuous contact with European influences. This means that Africans' arrivals into the Americas had *already* begun this process. However, accounts of deep European and African contact were already common in the 16th century. In *The Forgotten Diaspora*, for example, Mark, da, and Horta (2011) delve into the existence of Euro-African Jews, establishing that Christian, but also African and Jewish, influences created the Atlantic World of the early 16th and 17th centuries. Their findings imply creolization developing in Africa, but recognize that despite the well-known fact that Senegambia was important to the French, it was also vital to the economic development of the Iberian Peninsula during early modern times. The authors explain that in order to outmaneuver their European rivals, Portuguese Christian *lançados* literally 'launched' (4) themselves on to mainland Senegambia, settling there and learning to cohabitate with the Wolof and Serrer communities. It became common for them to marry Africans and their Luso-African descendants were called *filhos da terra*, creating categories of creolized offspring (5). However, they also stress that the Jewish refugees escaping the Inquisition in the Iberian Peninsula also developed what they term 'diaspora communities' for trade among the already-established population of Senegambia (17). Their coexistence created yet another creolized community who were 'connected with a specific place and who share[d] a way of living and thinking' that was 'reinforced by kinship ties' (15). Although these communities were not homogenous, Mark, da, and Horta establish that certain individuals developed 'strategies of connectivity' and could adapt to the circumstances created in their 'globalized world' (15).

The end result was that creolized individuals could even leave Senegambia as Euro-African mulatos moving comfortably between worlds, such as Moisés de

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Mesquita who became a wealthy Portuguese merchant in Amsterdam. Furthermore, Mark, da, and Horta establish that African religions were also altered as a result, and the region witnessed an 'emergence of distinctive, syncretic religious forms' (2011, 17). The end result of the contact between these three groups – Christians, Senegambian Africans, and also Iberian Jews – was that a new 'Luso-African culture' was created, enabled in part by a 'flexible, fluid sense of identity' of the local Africans of the region (17). Irrespective of whether this can be effectively asserted, what is important is the ways in which an Atlantic creolized environment was established due to the Iberian persecution of certain religious groups finding refuge in West Africa.

In contrast, within today's Angola and the Congo, Heywood and Thornton (2007) focus on the evolution of Catholic missionary influences in the region from 1580 to 1660. Their claim is that contact created such an intercultural exchange that they termed it an 'Atlantic creole culture' (1) mainly visible among the African elite. The most interesting example explored here is that of Antonio Manuel – a Kongolese marquis of Funta who goes to the Vatican and moves comfortably in the upper class. While creolization occurred mostly within the elite circles, these leaders could still be sold into the Trade. While Manuel did not suffer this fate, other elites like him did and bore with them their knowledge of Portuguese customs.[18]

Heywood and Thornton explain that the creoles that were enslaved possessed a 'knowledge of European material culture, religion, language, and aesthetics' that 'made it easy for them to integrate into the colonial environment' (2007, 2). Unlike Álvares however, they usually integrated into the 'homes of American colonists.' Nevertheless, these initial slaves transported during the first few decades of the 17th century already practiced traditions that had been creolized. An example is the Mbundu, located in what today is Angola, who 'accepted the faith' of the Catholic Church 'sufficiently as to put their mark on some of the religious celebrations' (Heywood and Thornton 2007, 188). Therefore, it can be established that forms of religious 'layering,' recalling that of the Yoruba and Catholic fusions of Cuban 'Santería,' had already been 'creolized' in Africa prior to its travel to America.

Heywood and Thornton's groundbreaking historical research focuses on Catholic Atlantic connections. But, as Sweet's analysis revealed, Brazil-bound Domingos Álvares' experience within the context of the refugee community in Dahomey demonstrates a variant of the creole experience, similar to the examples provided by Mark, da, and Horta. Therefore, one may conclude that these developments within Africa were also quite complex and by no means uniform processes.

While Álvares and Manuel were both hybridized individuals, one would never deny them their 'African' status or identity. To make this case for Equiano was different. His identity is oddly complex and has also made scholars question his true 'African' identity. Carretta (2005) believes him to be an African imposter of sorts having located his birth certificate, which claims him to be born in South Carolina. Further, as Frazier (1939) implied, due to the fact that he had adjusted to European ways, and thus possessed few African retentions by way of rituals, etc. (for he does not write about it), one could further claim that he was indeed not an 'authentic'

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African. Regardless of his birthplace or whether or not he was assimilated, what is perhaps more interesting is that his case raises important questions about 'Africanity' after creolization. Therefore the evolution of his identity compared to that of Manuel and Álvares becomes necessary.

Like Manuel, Equiano is assimilated to European culture, but this did not occur in Africa, as was the case for Manuel. It was not until he was free that he 'became' Europeanized. Like both Álvares and Manuel, Equiano used his layering of cultures to relate to the diverse peoples he encountered (Equiano 1969). However, while Álvares' resistance was enabled by his African retentions, Equiano's was facilitated by his European qualities. Equiano's rise to fame was based on the fact that as a former 'African' slave, he witnessed the horrors of the Trade, and his autobiography would thus be crucial to the abolitionist propaganda of the time (Equiano 1969). Equiano, in contrast to Álvares, did not develop a kinship with other fellow members of his race or ethnicity, and he may have even engaged in their selling.[19]

Nevertheless, the three individuals mentioned here also present layering qualities that enable them to move more comfortably within the communities across the Atlantic. Creolization was thus a truly transatlantic phenomenon. By thinking of this process as developing in vastly divergent ways, one may thus infer that African Americans are just as African as Euro-African Jews are European. Creolization thus blurs continental and national borders: What is it to be 'African' if one is creolized? Does one have to be directly descended of slaves or have experienced the Middle Passage to be truly African, particularly if one considers Equiano? Does contact with American or European influences make an individual less 'African?' These are questions that should be considered when excluding African 'crowds' in the Americas from African ancestry.

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Conclusions

While undertaking analyses of the precedence of certain groups of slaves within the Atlantic World, it was formerly a commonly accepted practice to treat various populations as a somewhat homogenous entity. But creolization was never a consistent and standard process, for individuals who arrived in the Americas as Trade captives were already culturally diverse: Their ways of perceiving the world and their customs evolved due to contact with diverse situations and peoples all throughout a truly multicultural interconnected World. Ultimately, as it has more recently been established, it is impossible to categorize all African slaves as equally creolized since, as recent studies have showed, hybridization registered a wide array of variables, which occurred *trans*-Atlantically.

If the study of these aspects of cultural contact helps us understand the development of identity formation even prior to the infamous Middle Passage, underscored is the complexity to trace precise African (or cultural) ancestry, given all the cultural layering that took place. Herskovits' model and even Mintz and Price's model of broad groups make it easier to retrace a general history, but if one zooms in to trace back the source of a selected group, challenges arise quickly.

If we look at the Lucumí in Cuba, what does the term 'Lucumí' refer to? Did all members of the said denomination in Cuba originate from the same region? Where is the region from which the term originates? As Grandío Moráguez (2008, 202) points out, 'Lucumí' could have been the name of the port in Africa, or could have been the phonetic understanding of the clerk that recorded it on a ledger or a number of other possibilities (including the clerk's unconcerned neglect for writing the appropriate term in the logbooks). Furthermore, Grandío Moráguez assures us that *certain* Lucumí today practice rituals that have been created in a New World setting and it is even possible that a number of their ancestors were influenced by the blending of practices and beliefs occurring even before their arrival in the Americas.

The Gangá, the Ibo, and the Mandingas in Cuba are also creolized African 'nations' that now practice traditions that originated from African regions but have been transformed. Tracing their ancestry is just as complex as it would be to unearth the origins of Álvares' speculative descendants (knowing that records providing slave lineage are scarce). Álvares was already saturated with other African cultures, and hence his descendants would have been even harder to pinpoint. While helping us understand the complexities of identity formation caused by the Slave Trade, creolization complicates the tracing of genealogy and point of origin.

The transatlantic Trade therefore produced a set of complicated cultural phenomena. In revisiting the most prominent debates, we recognize that scholars have discerned these occurrences as assimilation, pure retentions, mixing of cultures, or forms of layering. However, the varying lenses through which they have been analyzed looked at the ranges of slave experiences taking place on islands or regions that were either devoid of jungles, reported numerous accounts of marooning, or somewhere in between these two scenarios. As a result, plantation conditions enabled the formation of kinship in an environment of violence and resistance, as observed in the example of communities built around healing or in accounts of 'sorcery.' These conditions created a space over which the creolization of African peoples was staged. Such individuals experienced changes in their traditions, religious practices, and worldview due to their contact with other cultural forms within Africa, in the Americas, or both. In the end, even if scholars have envisioned the construction of African American communities in different ways, they all agree that African traditions in the New World are the key to what Herskovits calls an appreciation of a past (1941, 32). Telling of cultural resilience of this past, enslaved Africans' cultures, ideas, and customs *did* indeed survive sickness, abuse, and terror inflicted by the plantation.

The analysis of the major scholarly contributions to the theoretical paradigm of creolization presented here conveys that it was universal and mutually reinforcing. Recent works have thus fostered the understanding that this hybridized process, as it relates to enslaved Africans in the Americas, did not always include the contact and cultural alterations occurring within the African continent prior to the Middle Passage, and even during slaves' traversing of the Atlantic.

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Creolization as a hybrid progression was not confined to the Americas, but rather was far more complex and far reaching than thought initially. By placing diverse regional scholarship in dialog, we achieve a more nuanced and wider understanding of the Atlantic World formation and evolution of forms of 'Africanity.' As a result, we understand that these new paradigms of creolization influenced the layers of recognizable cultural traits noticeable in a specific group and expressed in their traditions today. It more amply illustrates how Africa extended to the Americas, remaining there permanently.

As a result of this survey and analysis, we are provided with deeper clarity as to why when an Afro-Caribbean poet, such as Georgina Herrera (2009), praises a 'forgotten Nigerian dame,' she feels compelled to foster a sense of sisterhood with a nameless African woman from the past. When searching for this severed tie, one may then be able to understand what she means by calling herself 'Afro' Cuban. It is important because there is a connection between the two axes that must be repaired. In this way, since African customs were so entrenched within the New World, America may also be studied as African, regardless of its geographical distance from the African continent.

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Notes

[1] As Dominique Chancé (2011) points out, the term 'creolization' emerged from linguistics and was then borrowed to describe 'cultural phenomena.' Chancé therefore explains that 'creolization eventually detached itself from these linguistic approaches and came to designate broad socio-cultural processes, without regard for the specifics brought to light by linguistics' (262). However, as I argue here, certain aspects in constant fluctuation within the termed 'creolized' cultures might behave similarly to the way meaning of words change over time.

[2] Translation, 'The Verbe "Marronner"/ For René Depestre, Haitian poet' (Césaire, Eshleman, and Smith 1983, 368).

[3] Robin Blackburn explains that the Slave Trade presented 'slave systems [that] were themselves radically new in character compared with prior forms of slavery' (1997, 3). In terms of scale, it was an 'acquisition of some twelve million captives on the coast of Africa between 1500 and 1870 [that] helped to make possible the construction of one of the largest systems of slavery in human history. The Atlantic slave trade itself was to become remarkable for its businesslike methods as well as its scale and destructiveness' (3). Consequently, 'the slavery of the Americas not only presented many novel features. Its development was associated with several of those processes which have been held to define modernity: the growth of instrumental rationality, the rise of national sentiment and the nation-state, racialized perceptions of identity…,' among other features (4). Perhaps most important was the unprecedented phenomenon that an intense transmigration based on labor was taking effect, as Blackburn notes: '[p]eople separated by an ocean were brought into vital relationship with one another' (4).

[4] As for the Americas, while Amerindian and autochthonous cultural influences were also important, it falls outside of the 'African' scope of this article, but acknowledges the scholarly contributions that dialogize with this cultural influence in editors David Buisseret and Steven G. Reinhardt's (2000) *Creolization in the Americas*, asserting indigenous influence in the 'acculturative process' (7) in terms of language (11), pharmacopoeia (86), healing skills (66), and other aspects of cultural traditions.

[5] For instance, while the Spanish Crown sought to extract commodities and evangelize the natives (in the case of its Latin American colonies), the British sought to expand their empire with a settlement of people that led to a massive extermination of native peoples (similar to that of the Caribs and other indigenous groups in the Caribbean that were wiped out by disease).

[6] That year, he published *Los negros esclavos* (1987), an account of the Middle Passage and slaves' experience on the plantations, having researched the origins of the Black population in Cuba using 17th-, 18th-, and 19th-century accounts by Jean-Baptiste Labat, Abbey Laffitte, and Alexander von Humboldt, among many others, already making mention of the various 'African' groups present in Cuba, such as the 'Lucumí' or 'Arará' (Ortiz 1987, 83).

[7] Acculturation was a term that Ortiz (1978) stated had become, in his lifetime, of popular usage. According to the author, '…al vocablo *aculturación*, cuyo uso se está extendiendo actualmente' ('the term *acculturation*, the use of which is currently expanding') (93) to indicate '…el proceso de tránsito de una cultura a otra y de sus repercusiones sociales de todo género' ('the process of transit between one culture and another, and all kinds of social repercussions') (93).

[8] From the original, 'Hemos escogido el vocablo *transculturación* para expresar los variadísimos fenómenos que se originan en Cuba por las complejísimas transmutaciones de culturas que aquí se verifican, sin conocer las cuales es imposible entender la evolución del pueblo cubano…' (Ortiz 1978, 93).

[9] From the original, 'Todos ellos arrancados de sus núcleos sociales originarios y con sus culturas destrozadas, promidas bajo el peso de las culturas aquí imperantes' ('All of them uprooted from their original social nucleus and with their cultures destroyed, under the weight of dominant cultures here') (Ortiz 1978, 93).

[10] *Marronage* is the action of fleeing the plantation. It is termed in French and refers to the maroon communities that fled and developed outside the plantation (Oxford English Dictionary).

[11] It must be noted that Mintz also conducted research in Haiti and Jamaica, but these regions were not included in the envisioning of the maroon community in the work at hand.

[12] The vast debates mainly respond to Tannenbaum's (1946) argument on 'Lusotropicalism' – a term coined by Gilberto Freyre (Freyre and de Garay 1933, 1942) in *Casa grande e senzala* – comparing US American plantations to be less benevolent than those in Brazil, claiming a unique relationship between Portuguese masters and slaves that granted them access to society.

[13] Another active academic discussion of the 1970s was that of Engerman and Genovese (1975) who, based on quantitative studies, debated the correlation between plantation size and obedience to the master.

[14] For instance, Obeah was a practice in the Caribbean derived from a 'synthesis' of West African beliefs, and 'used by African-Americans throughout the English Caribbean and the Guianas' (Rodriguez 1997, 477). Similarly, voodoo, as it is practiced in Haiti today, is also derived from 'African beliefs and practices' (Rodriguez 1997, 678).

[15] Although an important topic, it is too extensive for our purposes here. See footnote 7.

[16] Sweet speaks of 'layering' as an individual's ability to possess different coats of identities from which he can use one form of identity in one circumstance and another in a different environment. These are different coats of identity that 'run concentrically from natal kin to meta-ethnic signifiers' (Sweet 2011, 16).

[17] Sweet (2011) notes that this must have been significant to him since he is reported to have remembered details, such as the name of the Parish where he was baptized.

[18] An example of a royal elite who was enslaved is Phillip Curtin's example of Ayuba Suleiman, a Fuibe Muslim later released and sent back to Africa (Curtin 1967).

[19] The African American agency in the Slave Trade is another source of significant debate, since it has been established that the experience of slavery did not preclude the perpetuation of abuse when it comes to emancipated slaves.

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