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Comparative American Identities

RACE, SEX, AND NATIONALITY IN THE MODERN TEXT

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
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3.

Developing Diaspora Literacy and *Marasa* Consciousness

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The New Negro, Indigenist, and Négritude movements of the 1920s and 1930s constitute the grounded base of contemporary Afro-American, Caribbean, and African literary scholarship. Critics return repeatedly to this textual field as if to embrace a heralded center, familiar and stable. Skepticism regarding presentations of the era as a coherent whole has inspired redefinitions of the period's demarcations, classic works as well as national and transnational intertextualities.[1] Bearing in mind the discontinuities, one must acknowledge, however, that among other achievements, the new letters movements provided an epistemological break away from the predominance of Euro-American influences on black texts, the discursive agendas previously defining textual production particularly in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Caribbean writing.[2] New letters works became communal property to be read and revised across national boundaries. Antilleans and some Hispanics, for instance, embraced texts by Langston Hughes and Claude McKay and were challenged by the Afro-American example to respond in stylistic kind.[3] Unlike any other epoch of African-American expression, new letters shared a common ideology: writing regional, ethnic, and peasant experiences into existence. Their very articulation signified protest directed against cultural repression on the one hand and racial self-hatred on the other. The paradox of such a posture is suggested by Jean Price-Mars's use of the term *collective bovaryism* to describe in retrospect his generation's capitulation during the American Marine Occupation of Haiti (1915–1934). From the Haitian contradictions emerged defensive political, cultural, and textual agendas as of 1927 which paralleled the black revolts of Harlem and Paris but were determined by the particular circumstances provoking their enunciation.[4]

Even as the predominantly male new letters voices were materializing in the Caribbean, their narrative and discursive strategies were being redefined in terms of gender by women novelists the likes of Suzanne Lacascade and Annie Desroy whose texts inaugurated "la littérature féminine" in the Guadeloupe and Haiti of 1924 and 1934, respectively.[5] Scholars consistently overlooked these early texts primarily because none of the authors participated in either Indigenism or Négritude.[6] A separate tradition developed for over five decades and was not recognized as such until Maryse Condé published her study of Antillean novelists, *La Parole des femmes* in 1979.[7] Recent scholarship, however, has rekindled interest in this body of literature whose intertextual and comparative relationships I shall explore across national boundaries in theoretical discussions devoted to Maryse Conodé's *Hérémakhonon* (1976), Paule Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983), and Rigoberta Menchú's, *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1983), texts representing the Francophone Antilles, the Anglophone emigrant Caribbean, and the Native Central/Hispanic Caribbean respectively.[8] Their analysis as a unit suggests the need for new theories within comparative literature and revised definitions of the diaspora in African-American scholarship.[9]

The new letters movements invented a construct, *the African diaspora,* referring to the phenomenon and history of African-American displacement in the New World beginning with Columbus's settlements in coastal Hispaniola during the sixteenth century.[10] Demographic, cultural, and class differences among the slaves exported to North America and the Caribbean were reconstructed by merchants, colonists, and early colonial historians as an essentialist tale of shared experience. The differences which had not disappeared were used as means of preventing slave solidarity on a given plantation, particularly through the practice of separating captives who spoke the same language.[11] Centuries later, the new letters recognition of an African diaspora in part reclaimed the differences and rhetorically redefined unity in transnational terms.

Alain Locke's *The New Negro* (1925) belongs to a radical conception of black identity and expression. Three decades prior to African and Caribbean independence, he addressed the international consequences of America's emancipation of its slave populace and the racial awareness it unleashed. Moreover, Locke predicted that the then colonized territories would undergo a similar de-mastering process in the future.[12] His was a visionary pronouncement directed as much to the politics of decolonization as it was to Afro-American literary expression whose counterparts were soon to emerge in Port-au-Prince and Paris. Essentially, new letters invited readers into a sphere of cultural difference which required a command of what I have termed *diaspora literacy* if the texts were to be understood from indigenous, cultural perspectives beyond the field of Western or westernized

signification. From the 1930s through independence, African diaspora texts were bound to exoticism for mainstream readers and would remain so until Ethnic Studies entered elite, academic institutions to challenge the limited ethnicity of the canon.[13]

DIASPORA LITERACY

Diaspora literacy defines the reader's ability to comprehend the literatures of Africa, Afro-America, and the Caribbean from an informed, indigenous perspective. The field is multicultural and multilingual, encompassing writing in European and ethnic languages.[14] In the current textual environment, diaspora literacy suggests that names such as *Popul Vuh*, Legba, Bélain d'Esnambuc, Nanny, José Martí, Bigger Thomas, and Marie Chauvet represent mnemonic devices whose recall releases a learned tradition. This type of literacy is more than a purely intellectual exercise. It is a skill for both narrator and reader which demands a knowledge of historical, social, cultural, and political development generated by lived and textual experience. Throughout the twentieth century, diaspora literacy has implied an ease and intimacy with more than one language, with interdisciplinary relations among history, ethnology, and the folklore of regional expression. Only recently has literary theory applied to Afro-Caribbean texts become indispensable.[15]

Representations of African diaspora history and culture have assumed a binary formation—us and the Others—a residual construction surviving from the master/slave heritage. Houston Baker in his *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (1987) re-examines the binary oppositions existing between the ideologies of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois. From that encounter two intriguing discursive strategies have been identified—mastery of form/deformation of mastery. As I read Baker's work, I was aware that a third principle might well exist beyond the oppositional framework within which we have interpreted new letters.[16] I have termed that third principle *the reformation of form,* a reduplicative narrative posture which assumes and revises Du Bois's double consciousness. In the wider field of contemporary literary criticism, this reformative strategy approximates the deconstruction of mastery. The consciousness accompanying the revision in which many of us participate has no name. It may well be that peasants engaged in Vodoun ceremonies in Haiti and its diaspora have provided a figure and frame through which African diaspora criticism might establish a theory of comparative literature based on the vernacular.[17]

Black music has provided examples of contextual and formal re-presentations by mastering form/deforming mastery and reforming form. John Coltrane's "My Favorite Things" masters the text by replicating its melody,

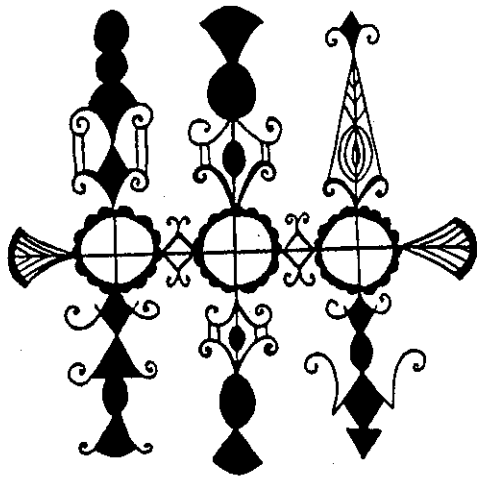
deforms that same text by sounding on it and the listener's implied identification with Broadway fantasy and through improvisation reforms the conflicting registers it has established in the process of their articulation.[18]

MARASA CONSCIOUSNESS

Marasa is a mythical theory of textual relationships based on the Haitian Vodoun sign for the Divine Twins, the *marasa.* The sign itself lures a viewer into interpretation limited only and obviously by the reader's degree of literacy. At the fundamental level, the *marasa* represent biological twins born to peasant families who may react quite differently to unexpected births. Twins are feared in some cultures throughout Africa and the Caribbean and adored in others.[19] Generative readings of the sign also include the child born sequentially after twins, the *dossu* (male) and *dossa* (female)—symbolically represented as a unit termed the *marasa trois* in Vodoun signification. In this *bosal* (uninitiated) interpretation, the sign derives from familial relationships and the anxieties accompanying two more mouths to nurse and feed or the belief that twins, despite the hardships their births have occasioned, will bring good fortune to the family compound.

Among Vodoun initiates instructed in the interpretation of signs, the performance of ritual, and the proper interactions with the *Iwa* (ancestral and nature spirits), the *marasa* are invoked in the *Prière Guinée* after Legba, Loko, and Ayizan. Legba is the first *Iwa* whose presence in a Vodoun ceremony must be acknowledged before ritual practice commences. He not only "opens the doors" for interaction with the spirits through drum, dance, and song, but also figuratively stands at the gates of literacy.[20] Loko the butterfly of wisdom (in the air) linked to his "wife" Ayizan, earth and keeper of goods and markets, are the metaphorical symbols of opposition devolving from Legba. In fourth place appear the *marasa* restating the binary oppositions commonly associated with the principal Haitian *Iwa* (the ebb and flow of the waters—Agwé and Erzulie or the serpent above and below—Damballah and Ayida), as well as the third principle formed by the sequence of Legba/Loko/Ayizan invocations. *Marasa* states the oppositions and invites participation in the formulation of another principle entirely. Those of us accustomed to the Hegelian dialectic would seek in comparable environments resolution of seemingly irreconcilable differences: slave/master, partriarchy/matriarchy, domestic/maroon, rural/urban, and the like when the *marasa* sign, like others produced in agrarian societies, has another more "spiralist" agenda in mind.[21]

Marasa consciousness invites us to imagine beyond the binary. The ability to do so depends largely on our capacities to read the sign as a cyclical, spiral relationship. On the surface, *marasa* seems to be binary. My research



Sign for the Marasa Trois

of Haitian peasant lore and ritual observance has revealed that the tension between oppositions leads to another norm of creativity—to interaction or deconstruction as it were. In Vodoun, the philosophical and environmental contrasts embedded in the *marasa* sign and the belief system it represents are danced into another realm of discourse during Vodoun ceremonies.[22]

Marasa is derived from creation myths among the Fon/Ewe in Ancient Dahomey (present-day Benin) which are non-patriarchal in character. *Marasa* is the Haitian version of Mawu (female)-Lisa (male) whose divine powers emanate from the non-gender-specific being, Nananbuluku. Mawu-Lisa populated the world through the figure of Legba, the chief guardian of language and literacy.[23] Representations of the *marasa* in the form of vèvè assume uniformity at the horizontal and vertical crossroads thereby insuring a stable field of interaction with the *Iwa;* improvisations on the grounded form, left and right, top and bottom encourage originality. Our contemporary notions of unity and difference in Caribbean writing find their reflection in the *marasa trois.*[24]

Marasa denotes movement and change and may serve as a metaphor representing the profound differences in environment, social organization, and language encountered by slaves in the Americas. Moreover, the *marasa* principle points to the transformation of cultural oppositions in plantation societies. Relief from contradictions was certainly not guaranteed and persists in many sectors of Caribbean societies to this day. Movement beyond

the binary nightmare occurred on several levels of experience, thereby transforming Caribbean society: indigenous religious practices (Vodoun, Santería, Candomblé, Shango); bought freedom; marronage and Back-to-Africa movements; interracial marriage or the mulatto phenomenon, as well as new letters movements. Marasa consciousness is a sign of the textual times in the Caribbean. So much of the writing features displacement: 1) environmental disruptions such as hurricanes, floods, and volcanos; 2) departures from home ground due to seasonal labor, rural-urban drift, exile, and emigration; 3) radical socio-political change through coups d'état, independence agendas, and strikes; 4) double consciousness due to color, class, and educational differences experienced by one individual. Degrees of bilingual or diglossic dissonance in the Caribbean are at the very root of the problem requiring transformation. In neo-colonial societies, the standard of literacy and the official language of its articulation is Other—French, English, Spanish rather than Creole or a native language. Literacy is therefore reckoned on an evolutionary chain from rural to urban or urban to hexagonic metropole. The toll on the individual's double consciousness at the level of language is deeply unsettling because out of place, signifying upon return to the regional landscape (if return does occur) an imagination out of mind. The past two decades of Creole revival and defense in the Anglophone, Francophone, and Dutch Caribbean have transformed the previously inferior status of amalgamated, New World languages into an increasingly valued form of written expression.[25] Social, textual, and linguistic transformations in Caribbean cultures and literatures when analyzed within the context of binary oppositions remind us that movement rather than false notions of stability are mandated if, indeed, stability signifies domination by a minority (whether old planters, békés, or military dictators).

Coming to *marasa* consciousness in the twentieth century is a third stage in diasporic development, the first two representing the racially conscious new letters movements followed in Africa and the Caribbean by anti-colonial, anti-repression writing. This third position looks back at the contradictions of new letters and liberation movements by commenting upon the results in an environment of continuous change. In the late twentieth century, we are witnessing not only the inclusion of the Other in the Academy, the extension of the notion of learning to include world civilizations, but also theoretical discussions based on the once disparaged vernacular. Henry Louis Gates's successive explications of the Signifying Monkey as a hermeneutics of black criticism culminating in *The Signifying Monkey* is a fine example of the shift in critical theory.[26] Similar use of vernacular figures and frames have occurred in Caribbean literature, notably in my brief essay, "Marassa: Images of Women from the Other Americas" (1984) and Maximilien Laroche's *Le Patriarche, Le Marron et La Dossa* (1988).[27] Laroche

seeks to establish a flexible reading of the Haitian novel from its inception in the nineteenth century with Eméric Bergeaud's *Stella* (1859) through to contemporary texts of the 1980s. Laroche's approach considers twin relations in a single novel (e.g., Manuel/Gervilien; Délira/Annaise in Jacques Roumain's *Masters of the Dew* [1944]), but is primarily concerned with the entry of women writers into the history of Haitian letters beginning with the publication in 1934 of Annie Desroy's *Le Joug*. Beyond the Caribbean, twinning relationships surface in Afro-American critical theory as in Gates's analyses of *Their Eyes Were Watching God, Mumbo Jumbo,* and *The Color Purple* which suggest to me an intertextual *marasa*.[28] Although the *marasa* figure is specifically Haitian, traditions of imagining beyond difference appear in various ritual practices throughout the Caribbean.[29] I shall use the *marasa* principle to illustrate intertextual readings of Marie Chauvet and Maryse Condé and comparative approaches to three scenes in texts by Condé, Marshall, and Menchú. In the latter, we are observing the protagonists as they develop diaspora literacy; we become voyeurs reading the characters reading events: Veronica Mercier attending the "Allegiance to the Revolution" gathering in West Africa; Avey Johnson dancing in the drum fête on Carriacou; and Rigoberta Menchú participating in a Labor Day strike in the capital city of Guatemala.

DECIPHERING THE DIFFERENCES

Intertextual relationships between Marie Chauvet's trilogy, *Amour, Colère et Folie* (1968) and *Hérémakhonon* have been overlooked in the increasingly sophisticated criticism devoted to Condé's work. Revision of *Amour* occurs in Condé's portrayals of the protagonist's sexual behavior as a strategy for drawing the reader into the political repression concealed in the narrative. To borrow Henry Louis Gate's term, Condé is Signifyin(g) on Claire Clamont, the central figure in *Amour* and on Chauvet's detached narrative technique.[30] Chauvet's text exposes a system of dictatorship in the Haiti of the Marine Occupation uncovered by the sheltered, unmarried Claire.[31] Her repressed sexuality becomes the metaphor for repressed desire generally among the bourgeois citizens of her town and by association the nation as a whole. Claire's alienation from her family and the political context, for reasons due to color and class antagonisms, does not prevent her from slaying the representative of oppression—Commandant Calédu—by the novel's end. Reaction against political oppression is accomplished through a *crime passionnel* whose motivations are confusing given Claire's peculiar detachment from social and sexual relationships. Chauvet's strategy ultimately protects Claire and the reader from narrative complicity in the very clandestine operations she discloses.

By contrast, Condé uses Veronica's sexual encounters as a device by which to educate the uninformed, implied reader presumably unfamiliar with the silences surrounding sexual and political repression within the diaspora. Veronica reacts against the sexual prejudices of her black, bourgeois relatives in Guadeloupe by sleeping with their socio-cultural enemies, as it were—a mulatto from a respected family and a Frenchman. Condé is not simply restating Fanon's *Black Skins, White Masks* in the narrative nor is she defending the Mayotte Capécias of the Caribbean,[32] rather she creates a text in which a black woman's sexuality is defined in prescriptive fashion—by class, color, race, and culture—limited according to the men with whom she *cannot* have a relationship. Clearly, the disclosure of sexual repression among Caribbean women is not the principal agenda in *Hérémakhonon*. The text is concerned primarily with another more secretive area of diaspora culture, access to which Condé provides through Veronica's sexuality. Her affair with Ibrahima Sory, the Minister of the Interior in a recently liberated West African nation occupies the narrative center—former relationships in Guadeloupe and Paris are recalled in flashback. Veronica and the uninformed, implied reader enter together the spaces of post-Independence, Islamic West Africa. Condé presumes that not unlike her protagonist, the reader is highly literate regarding the new letters movements, shares her pride in black culture and esteem for African liberation struggles. All three of these presumptions are challenged by the narrative, the latter more seriously indicted. Essentially, Veronica's brief three-month sojourn and her relationship with Ibrahima Sory unravel her own rigid apolitical posture as a teacher of philosophy who only begrudgingly agrees to include ideological works by Fanon and Nkrumah in her syllabus. At the Lycée she encounters members of the disenfranchized Opposition Party whose assertions regarding State repression she conveniently ignores. Her sexual relationship with Sory—once it becomes apparent to members of the Opposition—compromises the non-partisan position she has adopted. The implied reader, too, is compromised, having witnessed at close quarters the governing party's deliberate silencing, imprisonment, and (perhaps) murder of one of three persons who befriended Veronica and whose fate, rather than whose rhetoric, convinces Veronica and the reader that repression exists in independent Africa. Claire's detached sexual behavior in *Amour* is revised by Condé in such a way that Veronica's *liaisons dangeureuses* reveal black-on-black bias and political repression within the diaspora during the early 1960s—at a time when in North America and South Africa struggles for civil rights assumed that racial or ethnic conflict superseded issues of class and gender, and defined anti-colonial resistance.[33]

The differences in portrayal of a woman deciphering the sub-text of political repression may seem coincidental from *Amour* to *Hérémakhonon*. When Maryse Condé critiqued part two of Chauvet's trilogy in *La Parole des femmes,* she suggested grounds for intentional revision:

As in *Amour,* the reader might well regret the fact that power relationships are simply represented as a malevolent force, as Absolute Evil. We would have preferred to witness the system of repression dismantled in a manner more immediately apparent. However, such was not the novelist's intention. She wanted to convey the atmosphere of mourning which had engulfed the entire country; no amount of logic or rationalization could clarify the situation. Evil Incarnate does not allow for any kind of revolt at all.[34]

In apparent opposition to Chauvet's text, Condé reveals the insidious machinations of government repression in detail. At the discursive level, *Hérémakhonon* deforms the mastery of one of the most important political novels by a woman author in Caribbean literature.

Hérémakhonon is a paradoxical text at odds with itself. Its contradictory nature derives from Condé's resolve to write of her coming-to-political consciousness in Guinea during the early 1960s from the narrative perspective of an apolitical *anti-moi.*[35] Consequently, the text is double-voiced and the strategy particularly revealing in the "Allegiance to the Revolution" scene—one of Veronica's earliest exercises in reading the political subtext.[36] In free direct discourse, Veronica describes the ritual nature of the gathering at Party Headquarters. Within the interstices of that narration, she admits her inability to decipher the objectives motivating public, political enactments of this nature.

Through a veil of irony and sarcasm, an acutely observant "I" examines the setting in terms of gender relationships of power and acquiescence—the ruling male elites seated on a raised platform above, the women militants grouped at right angles in the audience below. The narrator views the assembly as mock service where praise, testimony, and the taking of oaths confirm one's loyalty to the ruling party. The voice here is skeptical: "Play-acting? Sincere? Does the crowd fall for it?" (p. 77/46). Through another "I," Condé presents the scene quite differently in asides inserted into Veronica's enlightened readings of the gathering. The other "I" fails to comprehend the scene in its entirety, in part due to the narrator's ideology of non-commitment. Primarily, though, Veronica is confused because she does not understand the languages other than French in which the participants speak. She has entered a diglossic situation; "I do not/can't understand," repeated at intervals, describes a major barrier to diaspora literacy which Veronica obviously does not seek to overcome.

Contradiction arises in the text through the tension between diaspora literacy and delusion. *Hérémakhonon* clearly celebrates the meticulous

learning of a displaced intellectual whose knowledge is affirmed by the often hermetic allusions sprinkled throughout the narrative.[37] Veronica's literacy is deceptive, having failed to evolve beyond the 1950s, and is further compromised by her indulgence in sentimental images of the noble revolution and the African homeland embraced by New World blacks.[38] As Françoise Lionnet observes in a penetrating critique, *Hérémakhonon* indicts " 'neurotics from the Diaspora' (p. 52)—who come to Africa in a selfish search for personal fulfillment, remaining safely uninvolved in the revolutionary struggles of the local population."[39] Condé's deformation of mastery is doubly focused on images of black revolutionary purity and an Africa recreated by the new letters movement. That agenda is clear in the ironic use of the Malinké *here* (happiness/peace) *makhonon* (await) or Welcome House—the figurative epithet with which Ibrahima Sory christens his villa. He and his extended family have occupied ruling space once occupied by French colonial administrators as they await post-revolutionary calm. Welcome House is also a metaphor for the mythical Africa invented by Négritude writers against whose call to come home Condé has frequently argued:

The proponents of Négritude made a big mistake and caused a lot of suffering in the minds of West Indian people and black Americans as well. We were led to believe that Africa was the source; it is the source, but *we believed that we would find a home there, when it was not a home.* Without Négritude we would not have experienced the degree of disillusionment that we did. (Emphasis added)[40]

Ironically, it is through disillusionment that the reader's diaspora literacy develops into post-colonial consciousness in *Hérémakhonon.*

Praisesong for the Widow and *Hérémakhonon* represent *marasa* of textual resonance and dissonance. Avey Johnson and Veronica Mercier are both seeking a welcome house; their "narratives of apprenticeship"[41] in Carriacou and West Africa figure as third and ultimate points in a triangular quest for lost identity. Both Avey and Veronica are seeking to weave together disparate memories surviving their childhoods and adulthoods. Avey's triangle is shaped by experiences among black cultures in southern coastal America, New York, and Grenada/Carriacou in the Caribbean. Veronica's begins in her native Guadeloupe, extends to Paris and later Guinea. Moreover, the texts are infused with a host of cultural allusions that challenge the reader's literacy. Linguist Velma Pollard has identified six of Marshall's recognizable culture references; of the six, interaction with Legba and the communal dances for the ancestors relate to *Hérémakhonon.*[42] Near the end of the "Allegiance" gathering, Veronica admits her frustrations at not being able to read the scene or intervene:

I have to admit, I'm lost. They have their problems that I can no longer

ignore. I need a guide, an interpreter, a chief linguist to make offerings and have the message from the oracle decoded. (p. 80/48)

The chief linguist whose services she requires is Legba. Veronica's retreat into mythology is very much out of character; the allusion functions, therefore, as an ironic invocation whose recall masks her lack of political sophistication. For Avey Johnson, Legba is a figure actualized. During the drum fête Lebert Joseph, the elderly, crippled figuration of Legba, dances Avey into diaspora literacy. He helps her decode the messages of solidarity and difference which stimulate her reading of events as they unfold and her participation in the mastery of form.

Marshall's revision of the welcome house topos is strikingly apparent in her representation of the drum fête. It is a healing ritual in which we cannot imagine her *marasa* Veronica consenting to participate in view of her ironic persona, positivist training, and incentive to discover the political sub-text of the narrative unfolding before her. No such political climate appears in *Praisesong;* rather, Marshall reconstitutes the ethos of new letter's travelogues and ethnographies of the 1930s. Much of this writing privileged cultural exchange with the peasantry over socio-economic and political analyses of cultural retentions.[43]

"The Beg Pardon" chapter in *Praisesong* provides a compelling metaphor describing a woman, an outsider overcoming alienation, as she simultaneously develops diaspora literacy. Structurally, interaction at the drum fête when Avey joins in the Carriacou Tramp is similar to Condé's "Allegiance" gathering: the scene is set, participants delineated, landscape examined. The absence or presence of interaction is perceived as a symptom of the protagonists' alienation from or embrace of diaspora literacy within the arenas to which their interest has been drawn. Following the "Allegiance" gathering, stunned by her inabilities to comprehend, Veronica retreats into whiskey, into the promise of forgetfulness in order to soothe her alienated self; Avey, by contrast, reassembles divisive memories from her past and is, thereby, reincorporated into black world society. Condé's representation is linear and at right angles related in a hyper-verbal narrative condition. Marshall's narration of the drum fête is circular, a danced event, conducted counterclockwise in a timeless evocation of diaspora memory. Avey's entry into the moving circle of dancers completes her quest as she crosses over the ancestral waters into meta-history. The scene impresses by its non-verbal form of communication; the absence of spoken words causes the few utterances by Joseph, Rosalie Parvay, and Bercita Edwards to assume heightened significance. Intrusive and comforting phrases, introduced as residues of Avey's past (pp. 247, 248, 249) because they are contextualized in ritual practice, reveal the continuity that she is seeking during her precipitous journey to Carriacou. Intrusive voices from Veronica's past, registered

as flashbacks in dissociated contexts throughout the text, do not allow her diasporic identities to knit, to heal. They remain so many allusions lacking a communal, therapeutic site in which personal growth might well have developed.

Mastery of form is the narrative purpose and discursive strategy in the Carriacou Tramp scene. Avey masters the rhythms and dances (if not the songs) which tie together in practice diasporic sites in Tatem, New York, and the Caribbean. She has crossed over, she has returned. The sounding of her name at the conclusion of the Carriacou ritual recalls her grandmother's teachings:

The old woman used to insist, on pain of a switching, that whenever anyone in Tatem, even another child, asked her name she was not to say simply "Avey," or even "Avey Williams." But always "Avey, short for Avatara." (p. 251)

By casting in the past as a remembered rather than presumed response to Bercita Edwards's query, "And who you is?," Marshall leaves space at the very opening of the next section for Lebert Joseph to rename her. He is convinced that she belongs to the *Arada* (West African) ethnic nation. *Arada* is inscribed in Avey's body language and ritual posture and the renaming recognized as a sign of initiation into diaspora literacy. In the future, in answer to rare questions about her ethnic identity, she might well respond: Avey, short for Avatara *Arada* Williams-Johnson.

Marshall's intent is to develop the drum and dance literacy of her readers and that of Avey as well. The short, declarative sentences and phrases are overwhelmed with detail. There is a cinematic quality to these descriptions: close-ups of body parts, a skirt flaring here, a foot edging forward elsewhere, the narrative perspective retreating at intervals to reveal the entire community of fifty persons or one section of that same moving mass. Marshall has captured the alternating perspectives from which we as outsiders perceive a danced ritual and, from Avey's point of view, how the uninitiated outsider is drawn into the dancing whole as participant.

Paule Marshall's representation of drum/dance literacy in prose engages in a revision of synecdoche. She has not allowed the traditional fragmentation of the trope to prevail, rather she fuses this rhetorical device of substitution through ritual practice:

The dancers in their loose, ever-widening ring were no more than a dozen feet away now. She could feel the reverberation of their powerful tread in the ground under her, and the heat from their bodies reached her in a strong yeasty wave. Soon only a mere four or five feet remained between them, yet she continued to stand there. Finally, just as the moving wall of

bodies was almost upon her, she too moved—a single declarative step forward. At the same moment, what seemed an arm made up of many arms reached out from the circle to draw her in, and she found herself walking amid the elderly folk on the periphery, in their counterclockwise direction. (p. 247)

Reuniting part with whole is the narrative purpose of *Praisesong,* and Marshall's metaphor for solidarity within the diaspora a memorable evocation:

And for the first time since she was a girl, she felt the threads, that myriad of shiny, silken, brightly colored threads (like the kind used in embroidery) which were thin to the point of invisibility yet as strong as the ropes at Coney Island. Looking on outside the church in Tatem, standing waiting for the *Robert Fulton* on the crowded pier at 125th Street, she used to feel them streaming out of everyone there to enter her, making her part of what seemed a far-reaching, wide-ranging confraternity. Now suddenly, as if she were that girl again, with her entire life yet to live, she felt the threads streaming out from the old people around her in Lebert Joseph's yard. From their seared eyes. From their navels and their cast-iron hearts. And their brightness as they entered her spoke of possibilities and becoming even in the face of the bare bones and the burnt-out ends. (p. 249)

Avatara-Avey-Arada embraces the *marasa* of her diasporic ethnicity constructed along axes of erasure and permanence. The contradictions of her upbringing and marriage evolve into "possibilities and becoming" signifying a consciousness no longer consumed by apparent conflicts. In opposition to Condé's text, *Praisesong* suggests the value of contextualized cultural action in transforming the colonized subject's skepticism regarding personal development and social change.

I, Rigoberta Menchú, the oral history of a young Quiché woman's coming-to-activist-consciousness, was related to Venezuelan anthropologist Elisabeth Burgos-Debray in Paris and rearranged by her for publication. Menchú is not middle class; her diaspora does not derive from Africa and, unlike Veronica Mercier and Avey Johnson, she is not involved in a personal quest for identity *per se.* Menchú was raised in an oral culture and has only recently learned to read—in Spanish, not her native Quiché; hers is a testimony and not a fictionalized rendering. The usefulness of comparing texts opposed at the levels of culture, class, ideology, and language proficiency resides in the quality of difference together they illuminate. Rigoberta Menchú's narrative challenges the limitations of the writing voice as we know it and the history of Caribbean literature by women in the process of its establishment. Her testimony revises our definitions of diaspora, literacy, narrative technique, and the implied reader.

Inherited as a culture-specific metaphor describing Jewish migrations and African displacement, the diaspora is not a term the reader generally associates with native North and South Americans. Nonetheless, resettlement of the so-called Indians sanctioned the construction of North America and the contemporary Caribbean as concepts from which the native presence has been conveniently excised.[44] I would argue that all cultures in the "New World" are diasporic. The singular memory that we "Americans" share in the hemisphere originates from histories of resettlement, emigration, and displacement. Resettlement reforms, if not eradicates, communal languages once defined in ethnic or nationalistic terms. Consequently, literacy in resettled territories implies assimilation to a master(ed) language transformed to accommodate the prerequisites of communication in a new environment.[45] When Rigoberta Menchú is forced to vacate her home in the *Altiplano* (mountains) to work as a day laborer in the *fincas* (plantations), and in the process becomes a revolutionary, she and others like her to do so because they have been terrorized by the Guatemalan army seeking to occupy lands the "Indians" claimed as their own; ironically, the Quiché give voice to their oppression in becoming literate in the language that oppresses her people. Menchú's testimony reads itself into the Spanish-speaking, *ladino* opposing camp and simultaneously "writes" into textual being a previously invisible Quiché history of resistance. Hers is an unusual illustration of diaspora literacy in whose sites the *marasa* principle of movement appears at the level of expression itself. *I, Rigoberta Menchú* creates new speech that is neither Quiché nor standard Latin American Spanish. Doris Sommer's perceptive article, " 'Not Just a Personal Story': Women's *Testimonios* and the Plural Self," addresses the diglossic language issue quite succinctly:

Rigoberta's Spanish is qualitatively different from that of the "ladinos" who taught it to her. And her testimony makes the peculiar nonstandard Spanish into a public medium of change.[46]

In addition, the testimony and others like it, redefine literacy as an ideological rather than a purely educational pursuit. Menchú distinguishes clearly between literacy programs focused on Biblical exegesis administered, for instance, by Catholic Action (whose pedagogical intent is assimilation) and liberation theology, in which reading functions as a mode of analysis and an ideology of contestation. Literacy becomes the Indianists' "miraculous weapon," inciting political action against *ladino* landowners and government officials. The C.U.C. (Comité de Unidad Campesina/United Peasant Committee) to which Menchú and countless others belong supports in action this new definition of literacy.

In chapter thirty-two, "Strike of Agricultural Workers and the First of

May in the Capital," Menchú depicts Indianist laborers fighting back against *ladino* violence and repression in February 1980 and May 1981. The structure of the chapter and narrative relationship of the May First celebrations to the whole consistently reform the form of indigenous Quiché cultural and oral practice, as well as bourgeois narrative techniques. Recall of the strike in 1980 is situated metonymically against the May 10, 1981 Labor Day scene to which I shall refer shortly. A pattern emerges in Menchú's narration of the strike. The multiple perspectives on the event are common in orature where the storyteller situates her/himself between antagonistic characters and their habitual behavior (Bouki/Malice, Tortoise/Hare). The narrator recounts the tale from one and then the other viewpoint and comments upon the interaction of opposites, in a process comparable to the *marasa* principle—all the while improvising on an already existing scenario.[47] Rigoberta Menchú does not presume the existence of a preceding text, in fact, testimonial literature supposes ignorance on the part of the implied reader.[48] Menchú re-members the strike for fair wages from opposed positions representing defense and offense among the "Indianists": 1) sabotage of plantation machines and the building of barricades during the strike; 2) organization of the offensive and its failure. In the midst of a "plural narration," she inserts a surprisingly personal account regarding the development of leadership qualities.[49] In an oral narrative, Menchú's analysis would function as a third analytical, narrating voice:

> We have learned that the role of a leader is as a coordinator more than anything, because the struggle is propelled forwards by the *compañeros* themselves. My work was mainly preparing new *compañeros* to take over the tasks that I or any of the other leaders do. In practice, the *compañeros* have to learn Spanish as I did, have to learn to read and write as I did, and assume all the responsibility for their work as I did. The reason behind this was that we're continually changing our roles, tasks, and our work. . . . we have understood that each one of us is responsible for the struggle and we don't need leaders who shuffle paper. We need leaders who are in danger, who run the same risks as the people. When there are many compañeros with equal abilities, they must all have the opportunity to lead their struggle. (p. 228)

The unspoken code here is the consistent murder of peasant leaders by the Guatemalan army. "Indianist" strategies requiring shifting directors reflects the peasants' pragmatic approach to resistance against the landowners. The three-sided representation of the strike as defense/offense and transformation of the individual stands as Menchú's ideological, narrative barricade protecting the significant event she is about to relate.

Having set the ground for an understanding of Quiché resistance in 1980 which, in retrospect, was a failure and considered a trial-run, Menchú settles into relating the May 10th, 1981 Labor Day successes. She narrates the scene as though it were a performance—structurally similar to Condé's and Marshall's approaches. Menchú's testimony is consistently time specific, remembered by dates and days in the oral manner, cast, however, in an activist, binary setting of struggle. The participants are opposed: peasant, workers, and Christian collaborators on one side; the police, authorities, army, and bracketed landowners whom they serve, on the other. No possibility of reconciliation; no liminal space is imagined, as in Condé's "Allegiance" gathering, where Veronica's perceptions stand between. Rather, Menchú draws the reader into conflict, brutal and unrehearsed. The narrative cannot be contained. The reader travels briskly about the capital city bombarded at once by the army's weaponry and a ubiquitous, plural self that Menchú's re-presentations evoke. She describes in detail interactions between these contending forces (all sorts of diversionary, peasant tactics) and ends the scene with a reflection on women's roles in the movement—a revealing, gender-specific moment in the text that may have been prompted by a question from Elisabeth Burgos-Debray:

> Women have played an incredible role in the revolutionary struggle. Perhaps after the victory, we'll have time to tell our story. It is unbelievable. Mothers with their children would be putting up barricades, and then placing "propaganda bombs", or carrying documents. Women have had a great history. They've all experienced terrible things, whether they be working-class women, peasant women or teachers. This same situation has led us to do all those things. We don't do them because we want power, but so that something will be left for human beings. And this gives us the courage to be steadfast in the struggle, in spite of the danger. (p. 233)

Throughout the rememorization of May 10th, Menchú depicts the power system tactics which were so elusive to the protagonists of *Amour* and *Hérémakhonon*. Menchú's text reveals systems of oppression that cannot be described effectively from a distance, but are best analyzed in the midst of conflict by activists, some of whom may not survive the encounter. Furthermore, survivors who testify must be literate enough in a European language to insure the inscription of these events on our collective memory.

In the struggle to survive and resist, Menchú's text represents the reformation of form at several levels. The 1981 Labor Day strike's significance resides in the peasants' determination to reform *ladino*-imposed holidays into events celebrating "Indianist" activism. Moreover, testimonial literature and the language of its articulation are by nature reformative. The genre implies reformation of contradictions as Sommer has observed: ". . . In women's *testimonios,* apparently incompatible codes, such as Ca-

tholicism and communism, militance and motherhood, are syncretized to produce a flexible field of signification and political intervention."[50] *Marasa* consciousness when applied to Caribbean culture redirects our concerns beyond the syncretism of already existing binary codes, toward the identification and analysis of cultural and political practices resulting from these interactions—such as Vodoun, Carnival, and liberation theology, for example.

Much of the scholarship devoted to testimonials presumes a bourgeois, implied reader. Clearly, Menchú's testimony revises that definition by addressing itself as well as to the growing numbers of indigenous peasants literate in Spanish for whom the text represents a manual for social change. The implied reader is obviously dually constituted by the testifying voice speaking in two cultural directions at once. A disengaged reading is equally probable, as Sommer indicates:

> . . . readers can be called into the text without their assuming an identity with the writer or with her group. Identity is unnecessary and impossible in the acknowledgement of difference that testimonials impose on their readers. The reader can be linked at a respectful distance metonymically, as an extension of a collective history.[51]

Ultimately, *I, Rigoberta Menchú* and other works within the genre suggest the need to revise current literary theory through examinations of the interactions that are now occurring between newly formed indigenous readers and these new texts.

The problematic area of reader identification remains a central issue for consumers of transnational texts. Concerns expressed by the producers of indigenous texts within the multilingual Caribbean assume a different configuration. Reader identification recedes in its theoretical relevance when bilingualism and illiteracy within national boundaries subvert the establishment of a coherent, native reading public. When some of the more adventurous authors render their texts in Creole, they risk not being read in the original by both national and transnational audiences. The notion of national literacy is further complicated by alienation—a replay of Price-Mars's *collective bovaryism*—among already literate readers disinterested in indigenous, or worse, diasporic texts.[52] Although partially reconciled by the practice of simultaneous rewriting in a language more widely read, the anxiety of not reaching one's language constituency—an indigenous, implied reader—has likely stifled the efforts of more potential authors than we know. Developing diaspora literacy, then, is a progressive enterprise to which Condé, Marshall, and Menchú have devoted their narratives against the odds. Within the fluid textual climates in which these works were being produced, Menchú's testimony reformulates concepts of political and cultural literacy depicted by Condé and Marshall. The compressed space of Menchú's coming-to-consciousness and textualization of her activism have fused otherwise oppositional discursive strategies, namely the mastery of form, deformation of mastery, and reformation of form into a cohesive undertaking.

To conclude with a synthesis would undermine the principles of revision figured in the *marasa*. But conclude, I must. For readers of Francophone Caribbean literature, it may be instructive to engage the critical imagination in the process of destabilizing established intertextualities. I am referring here to acknowledged intertexts, notably Jacques Roumain's *Gouverneurs de la rosée* (1944) and Simone Schwarz-Bart's *Pluie et vent sur Telumée Miracle* (1972).[53] Has the diaspora produced a revision of the narrative fields articulated by these textual opposites? And, if so, how do we as comparatists (pre)determine and identify the configurations of textual transformation? A final comment: to defamiliarize our tidy, binary constructs is in *marasa* practice to divine: the rhythm is gonna getcha, the rhythm is gonna getcha, the rhythm is gonna getcha.[54]

NOTES

1. Scholarship devoted to new letters is extensive. For bibliographical references see Nathan Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974); Margaret Perry, comp., *Harlem Renaissance: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1982); Victor A. Kramer, *Harlem Renaissance Re-Examined* (New York: AMS Press, 1987); Colette V. Michael, comp., *Négritude: An Annotated Bibliography* (West Cornwall, CT: Locust Hill Press, 1988). Although I have confined my remarks to new letters in Harlem, Port-au-Prince, and Paris, similar developments were occurring in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Trinidad. See, for example, Martha K. Cobb, *Harlem, Haiti and Havana* (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1979); Aníbal González Perez, "Ballad of the Two Poets: Nicolás Guillén and Luis Palés Matos," *Callaloo* 10.2 (Spring 1987):285–301; Reinhard Sander, *The Trinidad Awakening: West Indian Literature of the Nineteen-Thirties* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1988).

2. The history of nineteenth-century literary production is described in J. Michael Dash, *Literature and Ideology in Haiti* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble Books, 1981) and Léon-François Hoffmann, *Le Roman haitien: Idéologie et Structure* (Sherbrooke: Naaman, 1982).

3. On the subject of new letters influences and intertextualities, consult: Martha Cobb, *Harlem, Haiti and Havana;* Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Robert P. Smith, "Rereading *Banjo:* Claude McKay and the French Connection," *CLAJ* 30.1 (September 1986):46–58; M.E. Mudimbé-Boyi, "Harlem Renaissance et l'Afrique: Une aventure ambigue," *Présence Africaine* 147 (1988):18–28. With meticulous detail, A.J. James Arnold documents French literary influences in Césaire's work in *Modernism and Négritude* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); textual relations between Mallarmé and Césaire are examined in Annie Pibarot, "Césaire lecteur de Mallarmé" *Frankophone Literaturen Ausserhalb Europas,* ed. Janos Reisz (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1987):17–27.

4. Jean Price-Mars, *Ainsi Parla L'Oncle* (Paris: Imprimerie de Compiègne, 1928). For a rereading of the ideological conflict between the Francophile, Dantès Bellegarde, and Price-

Mars, see Patrick Bellegarde-Smith, *In the Shadow of Powers: Dantès Bellegarde in Haitian Social Thought* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1985). Their opposed positions deserve comparison with that of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois within the wider field of culture and discourse, as in Houston A. Baker's *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) and John Brown Childs's *Leadership, Conflict and Cooperation in Afro-American Social Thought* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989). I am grateful to Andrew Parker (Amherst College) for drawing my attention to Childs's study.

5. Suzanne Lacascade, *Claire Solange, âme africaine* (Paris: Eugène Figuière, 1924) and Annie Desroy, *Le Joug* (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie Modèle, 1934).

6. With the exception of Suzanne Césaire, Aimé Césaire's wife who edited the journal *Tropiques* with him from 1941–45, women's participation in Francophone new letters was marginal. See the two volume facsimile of *Tropiques* reprinted in 1978 by Editions Jean-Michel Place, Paris. The role of the Nardal sisters in the Négritude movement as conveners of gatherings and translators for *La Revue du Monde Noir* remains confusing despite frequent mention in literary histories. For a brief attempt at unraveling the story, see Louis T. Achille, "In Memoriam: Paulette Nardal," *Présence Africaine* 133–134 (1985):291–293.

7. Maryse Condé, *La Parole des femmes* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1979).

8. Maryse Condé, *En attendant le bonheur: Hérémakhonon* (Paris: Seghers, 1988); Paule Marshall, *Praisesong for the Widow* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1983); and Elisabeth Burgos-Debray, ed., *Me Llamo Rigoberta Menchú Y Así Me Nació la Consciencia* (Barcelona: Editorial Argos Vergara, 1983). English translations of Condé and Menchú are by Richard Philcox, *Hérémakhonon* (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1982) and Ann Wright, *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (London: Verso Editions, 1984). Further references to these editions are cited by page numbers within the text.

9. Contending approaches to comparative literature methodologies within Caribbean literature appear in Albert S. Gérard, "Problématique d'une histoire littéraire du monde carîbe" *Revue de littérature comparée* 62.1 (January-March 1988):45–56; Ana Pizarro, "Reflections on the Historiography of Caribbean Literature," *Callaloo* 11.1 (Winter 1988):173–185; and llena Rodriguez and Marc Zimmerman, eds., *Process of Unity in Caribbean Society: Ideologies and Literature* (Minneapolis: Institute for the Study of Ideologies and Literatures, 1983). Regarding comparative literary theory, see Ulrich Weisstein, *Comparative Literature and Literary Theory,* trans. William Riggan (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973).

10. The Christopher Columbus ventures are examined critically in Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984) and Hans Koning, *Columbus: His Enterprise* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976).

11. Edward Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770–1820* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); Eugene Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll, The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972); Gabriel Debien, *Les esclaves aux Antilles Françaises, XVIIe–XVIIIe siècles* (Basse-Terre, Guadeloupe, 1974).

12. Alain Locke, *The New Negro* (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1925).

13. For this insight, I am indebted to Sylvia Wynter's fascinating argument in which she identifies as an epistemological recentering the entry of Black Studies into the Academy. See her article, "The Ceremony Must Be Found: After Humanism," *Boundary 2* 12.3/13.1 (Spring/Fall 1984):19–70.

14. Albert S. Gérard, ed., *European-language Writing in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Budapest: Akademiai Kiado, 1986) and *African-language Literature: An Introduction to the Literary History of Sub-Saharan Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1981).

15. The term *diaspora literary* developed originally from my analysis of *Hérémakhonon* delivered as a paper during the African Literature Association Conference in 1984, Baltimore, Maryland. The definition here has been revised and expanded. See "Developing Diaspora Literacy: Allusion in Maryse Condé's *Hérémakhonon,*" in *Out of the Kumbla: Womanist Perspectives on Caribbean Literature,* eds. Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1989):315–331.

16. Houston Baker's analysis is certainly more broadly argued than my brief references would indicate. For purposes of comparing texts from the diaspora, I have found it useful to refer to his model for the study of discursive strategies rather than the Afro-American interdisciplinary sites on which the argument is grounded. In the future, similar cultural bases for analysis of Caribbean and African texts must certainly be considered.

17. Critical works by Houston Baker and Henry Louis Gates have suggested models for the vernacular approach to literary theory that I am attempting to practice in this essay. Gates's chapter, "A Myth of Origins: Esu-Elegbara and the Signifying Monkey" is exemplary; my efforts here represent a preliminary statement of the *marasa* principle within comparative literature; Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *The Signifying Monkey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988):3–43.

18. John Coltrane, *My Favorite Things,* Atlantic Recording CS 1361 (1981).

19. See, for instance, Peter B. Hammond, "Economic Change and Mossi Acculturation," *Continuity and Change in African Culture,* eds. William R. Bascom and Melville J. Herskovits (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959) and Robert Brain, "Friends and Twins in Bangwa," *Man in Africa,* eds. Mary Douglas and Phyllis M. Kaberry (New York: Anchor Books, 1971).

20. Depictions of the *marasa* in Haitian ritual ceremony appear in a number of works. Interpretive readings may be found in Milo Rigaud's two studies, *La tradition voudou et le voudou haitien* (Paris: Niclaus, 1953) and his *Ve-Ve, Diagrammes rituels du vodou* (New York: French and European Publications, 1974); Maya Deren, *Divine Horsemen* (New York: Chelsea House, 1953/1970); Karen Brown, "The 'Veve' of Haitian Vodu: a Structural Analysis of Visual Imagery," Ph.D. dissertation, Temple University, 1976.

21. The "spiralist" agenda to which I am referring has been transferred to literary production by one of Haiti's premier authors in Creole and French. Frankétienne qualifies the aesthetics of his poetry and prose as spiralist. See the most recent publications, *Adjanoumelezo* (Haiti: Imprimerie des Antilles, 1987) and *Fleurs d'Insomnie* (Haiti: Imprimerie Henri Deschamps, 1986) among others.

22. Consult, for example, Deren's *Divine Horsemen* and Brown's "The 'Veve' of Haitian Vodu: a Structural Analysis of Visual Imagery"; and VèVè Clark, "Fieldhands to Stagehands," Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1983.

23. Melville Herskovits, *Dahomey, An Ancient, West African Kingdom* (New York: J.J. Augustin, 1938) and Herskovits with Frances S. Herskovits, *An Outline of Dahomean Religious Belief* (New York: Kraus, 1964).

24. Milo Rigaud, *Ve-Ve, Diagrammes rituels du vodou:* 35, 91, 141, 409–419. Rigaud collected and reproduced vèvès of the *marasa trois* and through his analysis introduced a figure that had been obscured in previous scholarship. The validity of his interpretations has been approached skeptically due to their mystical nature. In the current theoretical climate, Rigaud's persistent work at collecting and analysis may be re-evaluated in an atmosphere more positively disposed to his unusual interest in Vodoun, uncommon among Haiti's mulatto elite, and his eccentric approaches devalued in the wider field of cultural criticism at the time.

25. For an overview of Creole language theory, see Derek Bickerton, *Roots of Language* (Ann Arbor: Karoma Publishers, 1981) and Albert Valdman and A. Highfield, eds., *Theoretical Orientations in Creole Studies* (New York: Academic Press, 1980).

26. Cf. the earlier essay by Gates, "The blackness of blackness: a critique of the sign and the Signifying Monkey," *Black Literature and Literary Theory,* ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: Methuen, 1984):285–321.

27. VèVè A. Clark, "Marassa: Images of Women from the Other Americas," *Woman of*

Power 1.1 (1984):58–61; Maximilien Laroche, *Le Patriarche, Le Marron et La Dossa: Essais sur les figures de la gémellité dans le roman haitien* (Sainte-Foy, Québec: GRELCA, 1988).

28. Gates, *The Signifying Monkey.*

29. In addition to the sources cited above in note 20, the principal bibliographical references to *marasa* are collected in Gates, *The Signifying Monkey:* 3–43 and 259–264.

30. Gates, *The Signifying Monkey:* xix–xxviii.

31. Marie Chauvet, *Amour, Colère et Folie* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1968). The setting refers, in fact, to François Duvalier's regime (1957–1971). Allusions to contemporary politics caused the text to be censored in Haiti and Chauvet forced into exile in North America where she died soon after of cancer.

32. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks,* trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

33. Jack M. Bloom, *Class, Race and the Civil Rights Movement* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); David J. Garrow, *The Walking City: the Montgomery Bus Boycott* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Publishers, 1989); Ernest Harsch, *South Africa: White Rule, Black Revolt* (New York: Monad Press, 1980).

34. Condé, *La Parole des femmes:* 104. Condé is equally critical of Chauvet's *Amour* in *La Parole:* "On aimerait que Marie Chauvet démonte davantage pour notre profit la stérilité de la machine de pouvoir qui se met en branle. Elle ne le fait pas, se bornant à des notations brèves sur la misère des paysans qui augmente, les vivres qui se rarefient. Sans doute ne peut-elle pas en dire plus, puisque tout est vu à travers les yeux de Claire, la vieille fille, enfermée dans la prison de ses frustrations. On ne peut pas nier que son portrait quant à elle soit tracé de main de maître" (p. 100).

35. Condé, *La Parole des femmes:* 125; and Maryse Condé, "I Have Made Peace with My Island," with VèVè Clark, *Callaloo* 12.2 (Spring/Summer 1989):101, 119–123.

36. Condé, *Hérémakhonon:* 76–80/46–48.

37. See my discussion in "Developing Diaspora Literacy" in *Out of the Kumbla.*

38. Regarding the limitations of Veronica's literacy, I am basing these conclusions on the absence of allusions to post-Independence political writings as well as the protagonist's reluctance to teach the works of Fanon and Kwame Nkrumah in *Hérémakhonon:* 14.

39. Françoise Lionnet, "Happiness Deferred: Maryse Condé's *Hérémakhonon* and the Failure of Enunciation," in *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989):181. From differing theoretical perspectives, Lionnet and I have arrived at similar readings of the text.

40. Maryse Condé, "I Have Made Peace with My Island": 117. Consult also Condé's articles: "Pourquoi la négritude: négritude ou révolution?" *Négritude africaine, négritude caraïbe,* ed. Jeanne-Lydie Gore (Paris: Editions de la francite, 1973):150–154, and "Négritude césairienne, négritude senghorienne, *Revue de la littérature comparée* 191–192 (July–December 1974):409–419.

41. "Narratives of apprenticeship" replaces the standard term *Bildungsroman* in Arlette M. Smith, "Maryse Condé's *Hérémakhonon:* A Triangular Structure of Alienation," *CLAJ* 32.1 (September 1988):45–54.

42. Velma Pollard, "Cultural Connections in Paule Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow,*" *World Literature Written in English* 25.2 (Autumn 1985):285–298.

43. I owe this insight to Hazel Carby's unpublished paper "Zora Neale Hurston and the Discourse of the Folk" and to my own research on Zora Neale Hurston's and Katherine Dunham's interactions with Caribbean societies during the 1930s. These two women are certainly not the sole participants in the discursive genres of ethnography created during the 1930s. George E. Marcus and Michael M. J. Fisher's *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (Chicago, University of Chicago, 1986) in their self-reflexive examinations provide enlightening perspectives on the field. These critiques notwithstanding, ethnography became a more personalized discipline in the 1930s, during which time the class and gender of the observer were allowed to enter into the dynamics of observation where previously difference was perceived according to racial and cultural definitions of the outside observer.

44. For an overview of this historical process, see Todorov, *The Conquest of America.*

45. Creolizing or "seasoning" in the assimilation process is analyzed from historical and linguistic perspectives in studies noted above; see numbers 11 and 25.

46. Doris Sommer, " 'Not Just a Personal Story': Women's *Testimonios* and the Plural Self," in *Life/Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography,* eds. Bella Brodski and Celeste Schenck (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988):128. Again, Andrew Parker drew my attention to this valuable assessment.

47. Descriptive and theoretical critiques of folk narrative may be approached through Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); Alan Dundes, ed., *Mother Wit From the Laughing Barrel: Readings in the Interpretation of Afro-American Folklore* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1973) and *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984.

48. Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Slave's Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). On implied reader theory, consult Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978) and *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communications in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974).

49. On the notion of "an explicitly collective subject behind the first-person narrator of testimonials," see Sommer, "Not Just a Personal Story": 108–112.

50. Sommer: 130.

51. Sommer: 130.

52. See Albert Gérard's, "Problématique d'une histoire littéraire du monde caraïbe" and Condé's view of the distanced reading public that she encountered on her return to Guadeloupe in "I Have Made Peace with My Island": 111–115.

53. Jacques Roumain, *Gouverneurs de la rosée* (Paris: Editions Messidor, 1986), and *Masters of the Dew,* trans. Langston Hughes and Mercer Cook (London: Heinemann, 1978); Simone Schwarz-Bart, *Pluie et vent sur Telumée Miracle* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972), and *The Bridge of Beyond,* trans. Barbara Bray (London: Heinemann, 1982).

54. "Rhythm is Gonna Get You," Gloria Estéfan and Miami Sound Machine on the album *Let it Loose,* Epic Records OET 40769.