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VèVè A. Clark

DEVELOPING DIASPORA LITERACY AND *MARASA* CONSCIOUSNESS

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

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VèVè A. Clark coedited Kaiso! Writings by and about Katherine Dunham *and* Antifeminism in the Academy*, co-wrote* The Legend of Maya Deren: A Documentary Biography and Collected Works*, and helped to found the nation's first doctoral program in African diaspora studies at the University of California, Berkeley, where she worked as an Associate Professor until she joined the ancestors in 2007 at the age of 62.*

The following is an excerpt of a highly influential though recently out-of-print essay previously published in *Comparative American Identities: Race, Sex, and Nationality in the Modern Text,* ed. Hortense J. Spillers (New York: Routledge, 1991), 40–61.

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(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 Condé'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 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 within 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 a means of preventing slave solidarity on a given plantation, particularly through the practice of separating slaves 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 colonized territories would undergo a similar demastering 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 works 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

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signification. From the 1930s through independence, the African diaspora was 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 *Popol Vuh*, Legba, Belain d'Esnambuc, Nanny, José Marti, Bigger Thomas, and Marie [Vieux-] 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) reexamines 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 replicative 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 [recording of] "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]

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Marasa Consciousness

Marasa is a mythical theory of textual relationships based on the Haitian Vodoun sign for the divine twins, the *marasa* (Fig. 1). 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 [either] 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 Lwa (ancestral and nature spirits), the *marasa* are invoked in the prière Guinée after Legba, Loko, and Ayizan. Legba is the first Lwa whose presence in a Vodoun ceremony must be acknowledged before ritual practices 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), [and] 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 Lwa (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, patriarchy–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 of Haitian peasant lore and ritual observances 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 nonpatriarchal 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]

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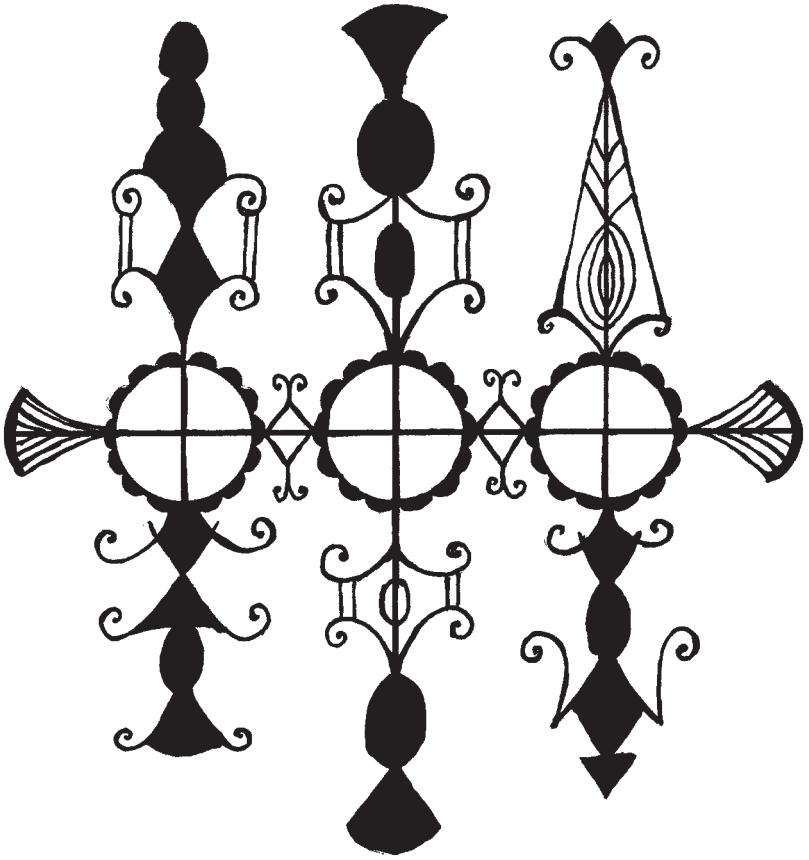


Figure 1.
Sign for the *marasa trois.*

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 Lwa; 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,

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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 volcano[e]s; (2) departures from home ground due to seasonal labor, rural–urban drift, exile, and emigration; (3) radical sociopolitical 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 neocolonial societies, the standard of literacy and the official language of its articulation is Other—French, English, Spanish, rather than Créole 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 or the level of language is deeply upsetting 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 Créole 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 anticolonial, antirepression 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 Emériс Bergeaud's *Stella* (1859) through to contemporary texts of the 1980s. Laroche's approach considers its twin relations in a single novel (e.g., Manuel–Gervilien; Délira–Annaise in Jacques Roumain's *Masters of the Dew* [*Gouverneurs de la rosée*, 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

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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

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.[30] 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 Télumée Miracle* (1972).[31] Has the diaspora reproduced 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

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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.[32]

ENDNOTES

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 [and Commentary]* (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, DC: Three Continents Press, 1979); Anibal González Perez, "Ballad of the Two Poets: Nicolás Guillén and Luis Palés Matos," *Callaloo* 10.2 (Spring 1987): 285–301; Reinhard [W.] 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 & Noble Books, 1981) and Léon-François Hoffmann, *Le Roman haïtien: idéologie et structure* (Sherbrooke, Québec: Naaman, 1982).

3. On the subject of new letters influence and intertextualities, consult Cobb, *Harlem, Haiti, and Havana*; Arnold Ramersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes* [vol. 1] (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Robert P. Smith [Jr.], "Rereading *Banjo:* Claude McKay and the French Connection," *CLA Journal* 30.1 (September 1986): 46–58; M. E. Mudimbe-Boyi, "Harlem Renaissance et l'Afrique: une aventure ambiguë," *Présence Africaine* 147 (1988): 18–28. With meticulous detail, A. 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. Janós 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 Child'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 Child'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 to 1945, women's participation in Francophone new letters was marginal. See the two-volume facsimile of *Tropiques* reprinted in 1978 by Éditions Jean-Michel Place, Paris. The role of the Nardal sisters in the Négritude movements as conveners of gatherings and translators of *La Revue du monde noir* remains confusing despite frequent mentions in several literary histories. For a brief attempt at unraveling the story, see Louis T. Achille, "In Memoriam: Paulette Nardal," *Présence Africaine* 133–4 (1985): 291–3.

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 *Me Llamo Rigoberta*

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Menchú y Asi Nació la Consciencia, ed. Elisabeth Burgos-Debray (Barcelona: Editorial Argos Vergara, 1983). English translations of Condé and Menchú are by Richard Philcox, *Hérémakhonon* (Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1982); and Ann Wright, *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (London: Verso Editions, 1984).

9. Contending approaches to comparative literature methodologies within Caribbean literature appear in Albert S. Gérard, "Problématique d'une histoire littéraire du monde caraïbe," *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): 173–85; and Ileana Rodríguez 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 Tzevetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America* [trans. Richard Howard] (New York: Harper & Row, 1984); and Hans Koning, *Columbus: His Enterprise* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976).

11. Edward Braithwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770–1820* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); Eugene [D.] Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972); Gabriel Debien, *Les esclaves aux Antilles françaises: XVII^{e}–XVIII^{e} siècles* (Basse-Terre: Société d'histoire de la Guadeloupe, 1974).

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

13. For this fascinating insight, I am indebted to Sylvia Wynter's 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: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1986); and Albert S. Gérard, *African Language Literatures: An Introduction to the Literary History of Sub-Saharan Africa* (Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1981).

15. The term *diaspora literacy* developed originally from my analysis of *Hérémakhonon* developed as a paper during the 1984 African Literature Association Conference in 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*, ed. Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1989), 315–31.

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. Gate'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; see 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) [originally LP and SD 1361 (1961)].

19. See, for instance, Peter B. Hammond, "Economic Change and Mossi Acculturation," in *Continuity and Change in African Culture*, ed. William R. Bascom and Melville J. Herskovits (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), [238–56]; and Robert Brain, "Friends and Twins in Bangwa," in *Man in Africa*, ed. Mary Douglas and Phyllis M. Kaberry (New York: Anchor Books, 1971), [213–27].

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 voudoo et le voudoo haïtien* (Paris: Niclaus, 1953) and *Ve-Ve: Diagrammes rituels du voudou* (New York: French &

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European Publications, 1974); Maya Deren, *Divine Horsemen* ([London: Thames & Hudson] 1953; repr., New York: Chelsea House, 1970); Karen [McCarthy] Brown, "The 'Veve' of Haitian Vodou: A Structural Analysis of Visual Imagery" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1976 [Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1984]).

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 a spiralist. See, among others, his most recent publications, *Adjanoumelezo* ([Port-au-Prince] Haïti: Imprimerie des Antilles, 1987) and *Fleurs d'insomnie* ([Port-au-Prince] Haïti: Imprimerie Henri Deschamps, 1986).

22. Consult, for example, Deren's *Divine Horsemen*; Brown's "The 'Veve' of Haitian Vodou"; and Vèvè Clark, "Fieldhands to Stagehands in Haiti" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1983).

23. Melville J. Herskovits, *Dahomey, an Ancient West African Kingdom*, [2 vols.] (New York: J. J. Augustin, 1938); and Herskovits with Frances S. Herskovits, *An Outline of Dahomean Religious Belief* (New York: Kraus, 1964 [1933]).

24. Rigaud, *Ve-Ve: Diagrammes rituels du voudou*, 35, 91, 141, 409–19. 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 reevaluated in an atmosphere more positively disposed to his unusual interest in Vodoun, uncommon among Haiti's mulatto elite, and his eccentric approaches, [which were] 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, [MI]: Karoma Publishers, 1981); and Albert Valdman and A[rnold]. 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," in *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: essai sur les figures de la gémellité dans le roman haïtien* (Sainte-Foy, Québec: GRELCA, 1988).

28. Gates, *The Signifying Monkey* [chaps 5–7, respectively].

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 259–64.

30. See 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 ["Je me suis réconciliée avec mon île: une Interview de Maryse Condé /] "I Have Made Peace with My Island" [:An Interview with Maryse Condé," interviewed by VèVè A. Clark, *Callaloo* 12.1 (Winter 1989): 85–133, at] 111–15.

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

32. "Rhythm Is Gonna Get You," Gloria Estéfan and Miami Sound Machine on the album *Let it Loose*, Epic Records OET 40769 [1987].

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