

Latin American Spanish: Creolization and the African Connection

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Introduction

The Caribbean region is rightfully considered to be the largest repository of Afro-diaspora culture and language in the Western Hemisphere. In the popular perception of most Americans, attention usually turns to the islands which were once part of the British and French empires, while the Hispanic Caribbean is much less clearly understood. Within the Spanish-speaking Caribbean nations, recognition of the African contribution is a difficult enterprise, complicated by racial polarization and Eurocentric cultural elitism that has sought to relegate all African influence to popular music and a handful of words related to uniquely Afro-American themes. On those occasions where Afro-Hispanic populations have received serious attention—usually by cultural anthropologists and historians—the groups have been studied in isolation, as transplanted African societies in miniature, having little or no impact on the remainder of the population. Turning specifically to language, opinions by writers from inside and outside of the Caribbean zone have clustered around two equally untenable poles. The first position, representing Afrophobic insecurity or simple ignorance, affirms that there are **no** African traces to be found in Caribbean Spanish, other than the undeniable presence of at best a dozen or so words of limited circulation. The other position—most often sustained by non-Caribbean observers lacking knowledge of the full range of Spanish dialect variation—ascribes **all** typically Carib-

bean Spanish traits to African influence, regardless of whether they also occur in other areas of the Spanish-speaking world.

Africans and their descendents have been present in the Caribbean from the earliest Spanish expeditions until the present time—nearly 500 years of Afro-Hispanic language and cultural contact and symbiosis that cannot be brushed aside by categorical statements such as the ones just mentioned. In the following remarks, I would like to focus on three essential facets of the search for African contributions to Caribbean Spanish. First, we must consider the historical and demographic configurations which existed in the Spanish Caribbean, and the means by which varying social contacts among Africans, Afro-Americans, and Europeans could have influenced the languages of each group. Second, I will briefly discuss the search for concrete evidence of earlier stages of Afro-Hispanic language and the attempt to extract usable conclusions from amidst the jumble of confusing, distorted, and deliberately misrepresented testimony. Finally, I will attempt to assess specific features of modern Caribbean Spanish in terms of potential African contributions.

Historical and demographic considerations

When one society dominates and enslaves another, the languages of the enslaved group are automatically placed at a disadvantage, and can only seep into the language of the dominant society to the extent that both demographic weight (a high ratio of slaves to master class) and

direct social contact make such transfer possible. Beginning with demographics, simple ratios are not enough to ensure language transfer. During the early colonial period, Native Americans outnumbered Spaniards by as much as 100,000 to 1, but as long as the Spanish lived in walled cities or fortified coastal enclaves, they may as well have been living on a space station. Mexico City for example was originally walled off from the millions of surrounding indigenous residents, and Spaniards had contact with only a tiny handful of bilingual Indian or *mestizo* intermediaries. The Spaniards did not learn the indigenous language, and most of the indigenous population learned no Spanish. The bilingual and bicultural individuals who served as bridges between the two societies allowed for a little cross-fertilization, but it was only when the walls came down and a large *mestizo* class came into its own—and moved in among the Spaniards—that serious linguistic influence of indigenous languages on Spanish could become possible. In most instances this meant simply transfer of individual words such as *chocolate*, *tomate*, *zacate*, *tecolote*, *poncho*, *jaguar*, *cóndor*, but when a bilingual population—retaining structural features of the indigenous language while speaking Spanish—became numerically and socially predominant, even monolingual Spanish usage was affected. This occurred, for example, in Paraguay and much of the Andean region, where grammatical patterns derived from the indigenous languages are used by Spanish speakers with no Native American heritage. A key factor facilitating the transfer of structural patterns from the indigenous languages to Spanish was the fact that in a given area, a single native language

predominated. Indigenous residents continued to communicate with one another in their own language, and their approximations to Spanish all shared a common basis, reflecting the patterns of that native language. For example, bilingual Andean speakers frequently produce possessive constructions such as *de Juan su mamá* instead of *la mamá de Juan*, a direct translation of the Quechua possessive. Use of such patterns by thousands of bilingual/bicultural speakers is reinforced by the common awareness of a similar pattern in the shared native language. Much the same occurs in bilingual Spanish-English groups throughout the United States; a Cuban-American from south Florida, a Puerto Rican or Dominican from New York City, a Mexican-American from California or Texas, and a speaker from one of the isolated Spanish-speaking communities of Louisiana or New Mexico—not to mention the thousands of English-speaking students who are learning Spanish as a second language—will all understand the distinctly non-Spanish construction *Clinton está corriendo para presidente*, based on the shared knowledge of English. In Africa, Portuguese is spoken for example in Angola, in contact with the Bantu languages KiMbundu and KiKongo (Lipski 1995b). Particularly KiKongo is characterized by double negation, and Angolan Portuguese frequently uses combinations such as *não sei não* ‘I don’t know.’ KiMbundu also does not move question words to the beginning of the sentence, and Angolan Portuguese uses questions such as *Você faz isso porque?* ‘Why are you doing that?’ These constructions are easily understood by all Angolans because they reflect patterns in the prevailing local languages.

They are also contagiously picked up by Europeans living in Angola, even those who already spoke Portuguese prior to arrival. In the Philippines, Spanish is still spoken in some areas; these speakers use the predominant VERB + SUBJECT + OBJECT order of all Philippine languages, thus *Tiene Juan una casa*. Also frequent among all Spanish-speaking Filipinos is the expression *él cuidao, tú cuidao*, etc., roughly meaning 'he, you will take care of a situation,' which is a direct translation of an expression found in most Philippine languages, combining the subject pronoun with the word for 'care' or 'attention.' All Filipinos, regardless of their particular native language, share these patterns and readily understand the Philippine-Spanish equivalents (Lipski 1992b).

For a variety of reasons, the relationship between African languages and Spanish in the Caribbean was substantially different than in the cases just mentioned. First, Africans in Latin America usually did not enjoy the possibility of a shared common language. More by circumstance than by deliberate design, slaving ships typically picked up loads of slaves from several West African ports before traversing the Atlantic, and a shipment of slaves could contain speakers of a dozen mutually unintelligible languages. Moreover, at least six major African language families were involved in the Afro-Hispanic mix (Atlantic, Mande, Kru, Kwa, Congo-Benue and Bantu), each of which has totally different structures, and which share almost no common denominators at all. Unlike the case of Angola, the United States, or the Philippines, a typical heterogenous group of Africans acquiring Spanish could not use loan-translations from their native languages that would be widely understood by Africans of different

backgrounds.

In such countries as Angola, Equatorial Guinea (Lipski 1985), and the Philippines, most individuals who use Spanish or Portuguese do so primarily with foreign expatriates, and less commonly with fellow citizens from other language backgrounds. They are never deprived of the use of their native language within the family, in the marketplace, on the street, and usually in school and in the workplace. When turning to Spanish or Portuguese, these speakers naturally draw upon their native language for structural patterns and pronunciation. At the same time, Spanish or Portuguese are typically acquired first in school, in a standardized version that lacks a colloquial register. This partially counteracts the tendency to carry over traits of the native language to the school language, by providing a constant reinforcement of the prescribed combinations.

Until the 19th century, Africans in the Spanish Caribbean usually worked on small farms, in placer gold deposits (panning for gold in river beds), or as domestic servants and laborers in cities and towns. In the largest cities, Africans were sometimes allowed to form socio-religious societies based on membership in a specific African ethnic group, which may have facilitated retention of some African languages beyond the first generation, but in general when Africans found themselves together in Latin America, they had to resort to Spanish. This situation predominated throughout the entire Caribbean area, including Cuba, Puerto Rico, Santo Domingo, coastal Venezuela and Colombia, and Panama, until the very end of the 18th century. Following the early use of Africans in placer gold mining, pearl diving, and agriculture, the importation of

Africans dropped drastically in all of these areas, except for the Colombian port of Cartagena de Indias, through which nearly all slaves destined for the northwestern part of South America passed. Thus although in some regions the population of African origin was considerable, most Afro-Hispanics had been born in the colonies in close contact with native speakers of Spanish. Only in a few of the largest cities, such as Havana and Cartagena, did even a minimal amount of ghettoization take place, which may have fostered the retention of certain ethnically marked words or pronunciation, similar to inner city neighborhoods in the United States, or the townships of *apartheid*-era South Africa. In the remaining places, the ratio of African-born workers who learned Spanish as a second language (these were known as *bozales*) was always small in comparison to the native Spanish-speaking population—black and white.

Matters changed rapidly following the Haitian revolution, which began in 1791. The French half of the island of Hispaniola, known as Saint-Domingue, was by far the world's largest sugar producer at the end of the 18th century, and the ratio of black slaves to white masters was as high as 100:1 on some plantations. Following the revolution and the establishment of the free nation of Haiti by the 1820's, sugar production dropped almost to zero, and other Latin American countries which had previously been reluctant to compete against the French near-monopoly rushed to fill the gap. This required the immediate importation of hundreds of thousands of additional laborers, the majority of whom came directly from Africa, with a considerable number also drawn from other established Caribbean colonies. The two

largest participants in the new sugar boom were Brazil and Cuba. In Cuba, to give an idea of the explosive growth of the African population, up until 1761, approximately 60,000 African slaves had been taken to Cuba. Between 1762 and 1780 some 20,000 more slaves were imported. From 1780 to 1820 the number jumps dramatically: more than 310,000 African *bozales* arrived during this period, bringing the total number of slaves taken between the first colonization and 1820—the **beginning** of the sugar boom—to around 390,000. By 1861, this number had jumped again, to an astonishing 849,000, which means that nearly 86% of all slaves taken to Cuba arrived during the first half of the 19th century. Extrapolating to allow for underreporting and clandestine traffic, some historians estimate a total as high as 1.3 million African *bozales* taken to Cuba during the entire slave trade.

Puerto Rico also participated in the explosive growth of sugar plantations, although on a proportionally smaller scale. Out of a total of 75,000 African slaves estimated to have arrived in Puerto Rico during the colonial period, almost 60,000 arrived in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Among other Spanish American colonies which saw rapid growth of the African-born population to meet new agricultural production demands were Venezuela (principally the production of cacao, which had started in the 17th century) and Peru (cotton and sugar cane).

Unlike in earlier times, the last wave of Africans arriving in the Spanish Caribbean was often divided into larger groups speaking a single language. This is because only a few large slave traders remained in business, and had established themselves in ethnically homogeneous

African ports. In Cuba, Yoruba speakers from southwestern Nigeria (known as *lucumíes*) represented the largest group, and provided the linguistic and cultural basis for the Afro-Cuban religion *santería*. Igbo- and Efik-speaking *carabalíes* (from southeastern Nigeria) also arrived in large numbers, and their language contributed to the secret Afro-Cuban society known as *Abakuá*. Groups of KiKongo speakers (known as *congós*, from modern Zaire and northern Angola) and Fongbe speakers (known as *ararás*, from modern Benin and Togo) were also found in Cuba, and to this day musical, cultural, religious, and linguistic traditions from these African ethnic groups remain in Cuba, Haiti, Trinidad, and other Caribbean areas. This created the conditions for wider use of African languages in the Caribbean colonies, and Africans who spoke less common languages learned major African languages such as Yoruba and KiKongo in the Caribbean, much as major regional languages are used as lingua francas throughout Africa.

Equally important in the search for African roots in Caribbean Spanish is the fact that the newly arrived African workers were highly concentrated in sprawling sugar plantations known as *ingenios*, housed in barracks or *barracones*, and deprived of the broad-based contact with native speakers of Spanish that earlier generations of Africans had encountered. A description of one such estate written in 1849 by the English traveller Richard Madden (1849: 156), graphically describes the living conditions:

The appearance of the negroes on this estate was wretched in the extreme; they looked jaded to death, listless, stupified, haggard, and emaciated: how different

from the looks of the pampered, petted, well-fed, idle, domestic slaves of the Dons of the Havana! The clothing of the Olanda negroes was old and ragged ... they lived here in huts, near the Ingenio, but very miserable places, unfit for the habitation of wild beasts that it might be thought desirable to keep in health or comfort ...

Newly-arrived *bozales* rarely communicated with white plantation owners or even working-class whites, but rather with a small group of free black or mulatto foremen, slavedrivers, and overseers, known as *mayorales*, *contramayorales*, and *capataces*. These free blacks spoke Spanish natively, although given their own relative isolation from wider segments of the Spanish-speaking population, they may have used an ethnically marked variety. These large slave plantations deprived most of the African-born workers from acquiring full native competence in Spanish, although even with the use of some African languages, the slaves inevitably had to use Spanish with the overseers, as well as with some of the other Africans. The combination of a need to speak Spanish and the absence of sufficient native speakers resulted in the formation of a PIDGIN or reduced form of Spanish. Imagine for example that everyone in this room had taken a year or two of college Spanish, but that most of us had no native language in common (allowing perhaps for groups of 2-3 with the same native language). Imagine also that we were all on a cruise ship, which shipwrecked near a deserted island (before the days of cellular phones). In this environment, we would have to use our rudimentary Spanish—better in some, worse in others—with one another,

without the possibility of consulting grammar books, and without any native speakers either correcting us or adding to our knowledge of vocabulary and structure. As the years went by, we would all become more proficient at communicating with one another, developing new circumlocutions and paraphrases for Spanish vocabulary items that nobody in the group knew. The language might stabilize somewhat, so that for example if nobody knew the word for 'fire,' a combination such as *luz caliente* might become widely used. It's also possible that a word from one of the native languages of the group might surface and be accepted by other group members. This is one way in which a pidgin is formed; in other circumstances, pidgins exist for longer periods of time in multilingual trading areas such as much of West Africa, the China Coast and the South Pacific during the 19th century. Sometimes native speakers of the full language also learn the pidgin deliberately, in order to communicate more effectively with speakers of other languages. Over time, words and expressions from the pidgin may even slip into the dominant language from which the pidgin was derived. Modern English retains Asian/Pacific pidgin English expressions like *long time no see*, *no can do*, and *have a look-see*.

In a multilingual pidgin-speaking environment such as a large plantation or our hypothetical group of shipwrecked Spanish students, nature will eventually take its course, love will leap across the communication gap, and couples who can communicate with each other only using a pidgin will produce offspring. What happens when children are born to pidgin-speaking parents who share no native

language? Inevitably, each child will acquire at least one non-pidgin language, since parents will speak to their children at least part of the time using the language which is closest to their hearts, namely their native tongue. However, the children will also acquire the language that their parents speak to one another and to other community members. Rather than being a haphazard improvisation invented by adult second-language learners, the child will acquire the pidgin as another **native** language. Children who speak a pidgin natively will not regard it any differently from other languages, and will be unaware of its origins as an improvisational strategy. They will further extend the vocabulary and structure of the pidgin, creating more elaborate patterns and giving the language greater inter-speaker consistency. The language thus becomes a **creole**, that is to say, a restructured version of the language that was originally pidginized. This is not the only way in which a creole is formed, but it is a common enough scenario. A creole has thus passed through a historical **DISCONTINUITY**; it is not simply the result of normal language change, but has rather suffered an abrupt change caused by the intermediate presence of a pidgin which was nobody's native language, and which contained structures and combinations not present in the original language. Decades or centuries after the fact, it is usually impossible to tell whether a given language has passed through the **PIDGIN + CREOLE** stage or whether it has simply followed a normal course of evolution unaffected by language contact phenomena. A comparison of earlier stages of a language with later periods, combined with a comparative knowledge of typical forms of language

change, may allow for an educated guess as to whether or not a creole stage intervened, but in the absence of historical and demographic information which explicitly documents the rupture caused by pidginization, the true answer may never be known.

For more than half a century in the Spanish Caribbean, social and demographic conditions existed which necessitated the use of a Spanish-based pidgin by African-born *bozales*. Their attempts at speaking Spanish are well-documented, as we shall see shortly. What is less clear is whether *bozal* pidgin Spanish ever became a native language in the Caribbean, and whether subsequent reentry into mainstream regional varieties of Spanish produced a permanent African imprint. In the most isolated slave barracks of large plantations, Spanish pidgin undoubtedly became the native languages of children born in these difficult conditions, and given the social isolation of black plantation laborers, a creolized Spanish may have existed for at least a generation in a few of the largest *ingenios*. However, following the abolition of slavery in the Spanish Caribbean around the middle of the 19th century, even African-born *bozales* were placed in contact with large numbers of native Spanish speakers. If a Spanish-based creole ever existed in the 19th century Caribbean, it was a fleeting occurrence in a few of the largest plantations, and quickly rejoined the mainstream of Spanish following the integration of the Afro-Hispanic population. There is less likelihood that Spanish became a creole language in the Caribbean prior to the 19th century, except in highly exceptional cases. From the earliest colonial times, slaves often escaped and formed isolated maroon villages, where

Spanish-based pidgins and creoles undoubtedly flourished briefly before being extinguished or re-absorbed by the dominant population. A few of these 'special' forms of Afro-Hispanic language made their way into historical accounts, and in addition to fragmentary hints scattered throughout remote Afro-American communities in the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Panama, Colombia, and Venezuela, at least one full creole language has survived to the present day, in the Colombian village of San Basilio de Palenque, near Cartagena.

Possible vectors for Afro-Hispanic penetration of Caribbean Spanish

If we assume for the moment that at least some Africans and their descendents in the Spanish Caribbean spoke a Spanish-based pidgin or creole, or an ethnically distinct 'black Spanish,' how could such a language exert a permanent influence on the speech of non-African speakers? There are actually several possible mechanisms, each of which was operative at one time or another. First, in areas where the population of African origin was proportionally large, eventual intermarriage with individuals of European ancestry, together with the social levelling created by the abolition of slavery and the gradual disappearance of elite ruling classes, brought the speech of Afro-Hispanics more and more into the mainstream. At the same time, continued immigration from the poorest areas of Spain resulted in the formation of a white working class, whose members labored alongside slaves and free blacks much as occurred in the southern United States. As a result white Spanish speakers picked up

words, expressions, and sometimes even pronunciation patterns from their black co-workers. Throughout Latin America, emigration from the countryside to the cities has been constant, and in the Caribbean this brought predominantly black villagers and former plantation laborers into urban neighborhoods, where their language interacted with regional Spanish. Much as has occurred in other societies, these words and expressions work their way up from the most marginalized working classes into the middle class, to eventually enter the general language. Words like *chévere*, *marimba*, *ñame*, *cumbia*, *ñinga*, and *bitute* are used throughout the Caribbean, much as *jazz*, *juke* (as in *juke-joint*, *juke-box*), *banjo*, *mojo* (as in *I've got my mojo working*), *goober* (peanut), *tote* (carry), and *yam* (the vegetable) have entered mainstream American English.

In wealthier families, children were cared for by black servants. The white children learned the language of their black caretakers and their children, and as occurred in the southern United States, grew up in effect bi-dialectal. Finally, as the popular music of Afro-Hispanic groups caught on with middle-class youth, words and expressions originally reserved for speakers of African descent became part of popular culture. The Argentine *tango* was once the exclusive purview of black residents—who formed 30%-40% of the population of Buenos Aires and Montevideo at the time of colonial independence—the same as the Veracruz *jorochó*, the Cuban *son*, the Dominican *merengue*, the Colombian *cumbia*, the Peruvian *marinera*, the Puerto Rican *plena* and *bomba*, and the Venezuelan *salsa*. As this music became accessible to wider segments of the population, the remnants of Afro-Hispanic language

found in the earliest musical forms also lost their ethnic designations.

Documentation of earlier Afro-Hispanic language

What sort of documentation exists of former Afro-Hispanic language and how can such information be used to reconstruct the African impact on Caribbean Spanish? Beginning at the end of the 15th century, Spanish and Portuguese writers produced literary imitations of the speech of African-born *bozales* who struggled to learn European languages. Even before black slaves arrived in large numbers in Latin America, southern Portugal and Spain contained thousands of Africans, and such prominent writers as Gil Vicente, Lope de Rueda, Góngora, Quevedo, Lope de Vega, Calderón de la Barca, and—in Spanish America—Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz included imitations of Africanized Spanish (Castellano 1961; Lipski 1986a, 1986b, 1986c, 1988, 1992a, 1995a, 1998; Chasca 1946; Dunzo 1974; Granda 1969; Jason 1965, 1967; Ríos de Torres 1991; Veres 1950; Weber de Kurlat 1962a, 1962b, 1970). Some of these authors had extensive contact with African *bozales* and probably wrote accurate imitations. For example, the early 16th century playwright Lope de Rueda played the part of black characters in the theatre troupe which he led, and prided himself on the authenticity of his 'Africanized' language. In effect, a comparison of his literary examples with existent Afro-Hispanic and Afro-Hispanic pidgins and creoles bears out these claims. However, most of the other writers were more interested in the comic value of racist stereotypes, which inevitably portrayed Africans as buffoons and simpletons. The 17th century satirist

Quevedo quipped that in order to speak *guineo*—as he called *bozal* Spanish—it sufficed to change all /r/'s into /l/: *Francisco* > *Flancisco*, *primo* > *plimo*, etc. Although some African language families do produce this type of interference, others distinguish /l/ and /r/ perfectly; Spanish writers uncritically adopted literary formulas of deformed pronunciation, misconjugated verbs, and humorous but unbelievable words such as *cagayera* for *caballero*. Such language even made its way into Catholic religious practice, where humorous madrigals known as *negrillos* were sung in churches and cathedrals in Spain and Spanish America through the end of the 18th century. Lacking in all authors prior to the 19th century is any sympathy for the plight of black slaves and free workers, as well as an interest in accurately portraying Afro-Hispanic language. More critically lacking is the voice of the Africans themselves. With the exception of a few black Spaniards who managed to become educated and well-respected, such as the 17th century scholar Juan Latino (who wrote in impeccably ornate Spanish), the Africans' own voice is completely absent from literature. In the theater, black characters were portrayed by white actors in black-face, and increasingly, Spanish authors relied on second-hand information in the representation of Afro-Hispanic pidgin, since the majority of blacks in Spain and Spanish America were native-born and spoke Spanish with no distinguishing characteristics. Thus in the balance, the entire corpus of pre-19th century Afro-Hispanic imitations must be approached with extreme caution. There are indeed kernels of truth sandwiched amidst the crude parodies and parrot-like author-to-author mimicking, but only the barest

skeleton of reconstructable language emerges. The few trustworthy common denominators which can be extracted from these texts show a range of approximations to Spanish that differ little if at all from what is found among our own English-speaking students' performance in our Spanish classrooms. In particular, there is no evidence of a consistent restructuring of Spanish, either in terms of copying African language constructions or the development of innovations from within the Afro-Hispanic community.

Beginning around the turn of the 19th century in Latin America, there is a great outpouring of imitations of *bozal* language; by far the most extensive corpus comes from Cuba, the second largest group comes from Buenos Aires and Montevideo, with relatively small numbers of texts coming from Peru and Puerto Rico. Significantly, there are no known *bozal* imitations from the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Panama, or Colombia from this time period, reflecting the proportionally small number of African-born *bozales* in these colonies. The existent Afro-Caribbean texts run the gamut from the crude parodies of past centuries to reasonably accurate travellers' observations, anthropological descriptions of local customs and language, and works written by abolitionist authors who had no reason to denigrate Afro-Hispanic language. At the end of the 18th century, the Spanish priest Duque de Estrada (Laviña 1989) living in Havana published a manual for other priests to teach the Catechism to African-born *bozales*. Although both condescending and designed to convince Africans that slavery was the will of God (portrayed as the 'great overseer'), the approximations to *bozal* language show nothing other than

simplified Spanish with lapses in agreement and many circumlocutions: 'yo soi un pobre esclavo, yo tiene dos gallinas no más, gente tiene suelto su cochino, cochino come mi gallina. Yo ya no tiene con que comprar tabaco ni nada ... ¿yo va andando en cueros?' In the 1840's—as the sugar plantation boom entered its most frenzied period—the Cuban lexicographer Esteban Pichardo (1849) wrote in the introduction to the second edition of his dictionary of Cubanisms an unflattering but reasonably accurate description of *bozal* Spanish, as well as the Spanish pidgin spoken by Chinese indentured laborers and Mayan Indians from the Yucatan who had been forced into servitude in Cuba:

Otro lenguaje relajado y confuso se oye diariamente en toda la Isla, por donde quiera, entre los *Negros bozales*, o naturales de Africa, como sucedía con el Francés *Criollo* de Santo Domingo: este lenguaje es comun e idéntico en los Negros, sean de la Nación que fuesen, y que se conservan eternamente, a ménos que hayan venido mui niños: es un Castellano desfigurado, chapurrado, sin concordancia, número, declinación ni conjugación, sin R fuerte, S ni D final, frecuentemente trocadas la L por la N, la E por la I, la G por la V &; en fin, una jerga más confusa mientras más reciente la inmigración; pero que se deja entender de cualquiera Español fuera de algunas palabras comunes a todos, que necesitan de traducción. Para formarse una ligera idea de esto, vertiremos "na respuesta de las ménos difíciles: "yo mi ñama Frasco Mandinga, neglito reburujaoro, crabo musuamo ño Mingué, de la Cribanerí, branco como carabon, suña como nan gato, poco poco mirá oté, cribi papele toro ri toro ri, Frasco dale dinele, non gurbia dinele, e laja cabeza,

e bebe guariente, e coje la cielo, guanta qui guanta"... los negros criollos hablan como los blancos del país de su nacimiento o vecindad: aunque en la Habana y Matanzas algunos de los que se titulan *Curros* usan la i por la r y la l, v.g. "poique ei niño puee considerai que es mejoi dinero que papel" ...'

Towards the end of the 19th century, the Cuban writer Antonio Bachiller y Morales (1883), responding to a written request by the German philologist and creole language researcher Hugo Schuchardt wrote an imitation of the *bozal* language which he still heard on a daily basis: 'Ah, si oté no lo cubrá, si oté tovía no fué, ¿pa que buca que bebé? ¿Con qué oté lo va pagá?' All of these imitations show no evidence of grammatical restructuring, but only the sort of errors found among all second-language learners of Spanish.

Beginning in the 19th century, a small but important group of Afro-Cubans also found a literary voice, and were able to describe their own situation. The most important surviving work is the autobiography of Juan Francisco Manzano, a slave who was born in Havana around the turn of the 19th century. Raised in an aristocratic family, Manzano was able to teach himself to read and write, and began to compose poetry at an early age. This does not mean, however, that his childhood and adolescence were happy and carefree. To the contrary, the young Manzano was made to work long hours at arduous housecleaning tasks in the Havana residence and later in on a sugar estate in Matanzas, and he often received cruel punishments for real or perceived transgressions.

In 1839 Manzano wrote his autobiography, a highly stylized denunciation

of slavery, a work which was translated into English and published in England by the abolitionist Richard Madden, whose description of Cuban slavery we have already noted. For obvious reasons the work was not published or even known in Cuba, until Calcagno included some excerpts in the anthology *Poetas de color* (1878). The full autobiography was not published until 1937 (Franco 1937). Manzano's auto-biography, as might be supposed, shows no traces of Afro-Hispanic language, since Manzano was a Cuban-born slave who was raised in close proximity to educated native speakers of Spanish. His writings, however, are replete with orthographic mistakes and odd turns of phrase, and while not part of the *bozal* corpus, do provide an insight into the situation of American-born slaves who attained a modicum of literacy. Given his life, Manzano's choice of language had little to do with the highly Africanized Spanish of the slave barracks. This consideration would make suspect any use of Afro-Cuban oral traditions, or any other strictly vernacular usage. Manzano, however, makes no such reference; rather his possible slips lie in the direction of pan-Cuban popular Spanish, tendencies which were found in the unguarded speech of even the most aristocratic members of society, while having a higher frequency among the lower sociolects. Although shedding little light on colonial Afro-Cuban speech, Manzano's autobiography is linguistically important for other reasons. In a very real sense, the Manzano text is similar to documents from earlier centuries, in Spain and Latin America, written by semi-literate military or civilian personnel, or copied by scribes with questionable levels of functional

literacy. His writings exemplify the language of American-born blacks, and is important in assessing the sort of language that was used among Afro-Hispanics in the 19th century Caribbean.

Variants of *bozal* language appear in several 19th century Cuban novels, most of which were written as anti-slavery documents. By far the most famous is *Cecilia Valdés*, by Cirilo Villaverde (1979). Villaverde was in a position to closely observe different varieties of Afro-Cuban speech, and indeed he based his black characters on individuals whom he had known personally. He was also sympathetic to the situation of Cuban blacks, and did not seek to ridicule any of his characters through use of language. We may therefore tentatively take the *bozal* imitations in *Cecilia Valdés* to have at least some basis in observed reality:

Labana etá perdía, niña. Toos son mataos y ladronisio. Ahora mismito han desplumao un cristián alante de mi sojo. Uno niño blanca, muy bonite. Lo abayunca entre un pardo con jierre po atrás y un moreno po alantre, arrimao al cañón delasquina de San Terese. De día crara, niño, lo quitan la reló y la dinere. Yo no queriba mirá. Pasa bastante gente. Yo conoce le moreno, é le sijo de mi marío. Me da mieo. Entoavía me tiembra la pecho.

Another well-known Cuban abolitionist novel containing purported Afro-Cuban *bozal* speech is *Francisco*, by Anselmo Suárez y Romero (1947), originally published in 1839, containing examples like: 'sí, siñó, contramayorá manda mí, sí, siñó, yo va caminá ... que va hacé, pobre clavo? Ese ta malo que ta la carreta.' Suárez y Romero shared with Juan Manzano a common mentor, Domingo del

Monte, who urged both the white Suárez and the mulatto Manzano to produce literary works which could aid the abolitionist cause in Europe and ultimately in Cuba itself. Martín Morúa Delgado, another 19th century Cuban abolitionist writer, employed *bozal* language in his novels *Sofía* (1972) and *La familia Unzúazu* (1975). A few 19th century Cuban novels contain only tiny fragments of *bozal* language: 'Médico. ¿Y pa qué? Neye lo que tiene só un bariga con su yijo lento. Lo góripe que síá dao pué binilo un malo paito, pero entuavía se pué remedialo. ¿Sisita médico pa sujetá un criatula?' For example, Francisco Calcagno's (1977) well-known *Romualdo: uno de tantos* (first published in 1881, and written some time before): 'ése no son la jijo francés, ése viene langenio chiquitico ... no quiere la mayorá. no quiere cadena con maza ...' Another abolitionist novel with *bozal* fragments is José Antonio Ramos' *Caniquí* (1963): 'Camina po lo suelo, niña asustá, camina po lo suelo, cueva tapá camina po lo suelo, no sale má manque te juya tú báa morí coggao.' This novel is set in the slaving area of Trinidad, Cuba, in the 1830's, but it was written a century later, in a modern Cuba where slavery was but a distant echo of the past.

These abolitionist writers, whose imitations of *bozal* speech cannot be dismissed as racist parodies, were responsible for only a fraction of the Afro-Hispanic literary imitations from the 19th century Caribbean. Much more frequent were poems, newspaper columns, plays and novels, whose authenticity ranged from the most vulgar stereotypes to accurate—if not flattering—approximations to Afro-Hispanic pidgin. The sheer number of such texts, as well as the availability of information on the authors, makes

evaluation of the linguistic details somewhat easier, especially when compared with the living memories described previously.

More important for the reconstruction of Afro-Caribbean Spanish is the fact that the last African-born *bozales* arrived in the Caribbean around the middle of the 19th century; some of the speakers survived until the middle of the 20th century, where their voices and recollections were transcribed by unbiased and talented contemporary or recently deceased writers such as the Cubans Alejo Carpentier and Lydia Cabrera. The largest body of Caribbean *bozal* language comes from the extensive writings of Lydia Cabrera (born in 1900, died in 1990), whose amateurish but generally accurate reproductions of the Afro-Hispanic speech which she heard during the first decades of her life correlate closely with empirical observations made by trained linguists (Cabrera 1970a, 1970b, 1970c, 1971, 1975, 1976, 1979, 1980a, 1980b, 1983, 1989).

Despite the critical importance of obtaining samples of the last living *bozales* or their immediate offspring, almost no field research has been done by contemporary Caribbean linguists. Elderly former slaves or the children of former slaves are among the most marginalized citizens of the Spanish Caribbean, and within these nations there has been little interest in tapping the vast historical and cultural knowledge which they represent. Unlike what happened in many former British and French Caribbean colonies, the Spanish Caribbean nations are not run by primarily Afro-American governments, and there have been no nationwide African roots revival movements which would stimulate interest in the language and customs of Afro-Hispanics. As an

example of the contrast in national attitudes, the Trinidadian historian and linguist Maureen Warner-Lewis (1991: xx) writes of newly independent Trinidad that 'In the second half of the twentieth century there were still people alive who remembered their ancestors from Africa and who could sing and speak in African tongues. This had important implications for our sense of historical depth, our sense of historical and cultural possession, as well as our ability to reconstruct the processes of cultural transmission in the New World.' Although the same situation obtained for the Spanish Caribbean, there was no comparable interest in tracing the African roots of countries which still continued to identify themselves as anything but African.

The exceptions to this trend have made little impact on Afro-Hispanic linguistic studies. In 1965, a Cuban linguist jotted down some observations gleaned a few years earlier from elderly former slaves (Alzola 1965). In 1963, a 104-year-old former slave—Esteban Montejo—was interviewed and taped by the Cuban writer Miguel Barnet (1966), whose interest lay more in relating 19th century slave revolts with the Cuban Revolution than in reconstructing Afro-Hispanic language and culture. Although this slave was Cuban-born and spoke vernacular Cuban Spanish, he recalled the speech of *bozales* and offered accurate imitations:

Criollo camina allá adonde yo te diga,
que yo te va a regalá a ti una cosa ...
Usté, criollo, son bobo ... mire, usté ve
eso, con eso usté consigue tó en cosa ...
Mientras tú trabaja mayombe, tú son
dueño e tierra ... Tú son bueno y callao,
yo va a contá a ti una cosa ...

His own father had been born in Nigeria, and his godfather was presumably a *congo*. The *bozal* language of Montejo's recollections is unremarkable, in no way suggesting a stable creole language with non-Hispanic syntax. Montejo himself declared (p. 158):

Les decían bozales por decirles algo, y por que hablaban de acuerdo con la lengua de su país. Hablaban distinto, eso era todo. Yo no los tenía en ese sentido, como bozales; al contrario, yo los respetaba ... esa palabra, bozales, era incorrecta. Ya no se oye, porque poco a poco los negros de nación se han ido muriendo ...

Last year, a former student of mine, Luis Ortiz (Ortiz López 1996), travelled to extremely isolated areas of eastern Cuba and interviewed elderly Afro-Cubans, many of whom were over 100 years old, and who vividly recalled the speech of now-deceased *bozales*. Most of the recollections fit with the pattern of Spanish as a second language, although in Havana itself, some Afro-Cubans recall having heard *bozal* language that might have been more internally coherent, and therefore possibly the first stages of a true creole. Thus the trail of living Afro-Caribbean speech is not entirely cold, given the existence until the late 1950's of the last living *bozales*, and the current existence of elderly Cubans who recall the Africanized Spanish which they heard in their youth.

There is still considerable fieldwork to be done throughout the Caribbean, which may shed light on earlier Afro-Hispanic language, despite the fact that the last of the slaves are long gone, and in most regions so is any ethnically marked variety of Spanish. Despite the relatively small

geographical size of the noticeably Afro-American areas of the Caribbean, there has been little serious fieldwork designed to uncover vestiges of earlier *bozal* language. Moreover, within many Afro-Caribbean communities, African linguistic carryovers are not shared with outsiders, but may form part of ceremonial language or in-group speech; thus, considerable ingenuity and plain luck may be required to ferret out remaining evidence of Africanized Spanish. I have already mentioned one intrepid fieldworker who traversed eastern Cuba, often crossing mountains by mule-back, to interview elderly residents whose voices and memories had never before been catalogued. A graduate student at the City University of New York has come upon some decidedly creolized language in some remote villages of the Dominican Republic, despite the fact that the most 'Africanized' Dominican villages had already been scoured by other linguists in search of post-*bozal* evidence. The isolated settlements of northwestern Colombia, known as the Chocó, have recently turned up possible evidence of earlier Africanized Spanish, some of which may have penetrated surrounding coastal dialects. There are Afro-Mexican villages whose language has yet to be recorded, and there are some hints that traces of the once massive presence of Africanized Spanish along Mexico's Caribbean coast may still be found. In Panama, I have done fieldwork with the so-called *Negros Congos* (Lipski 1989), Afro-Panamanians who natively speak the local variety of Spanish, but who also speak a special language during Carnival season which they claim is derived from former *bozal* Spanish. Although much of the *Congo* language is really just humorous improvisation and word-play, there are also

legitimate remnants of *bozal* Spanish which could not possibly have been invented in modern times by these isolated and nearly illiterate communities. I have also worked with the few remaining speakers of Spanish on the Caribbean island of Trinidad (Lipski 1990), some of whose speech can be traced back to the days of Spanish slavery, and contains *bozal* traits. In Puerto Rico, I have delved into Afro-American villages, where nearly all traces of *bozal* language have faded, but where songs and oral traditions contain small nuggets of information. There is much work still to be done in Afro-Bolivian communities, in the interior of the Afro-Ecuadoran province of Esmeraldas, in the Afro-Uruguayan *comparsas* or Carnival societies—which still sing songs in *bozal* language and may hold the key to further information on Afro-Rio Platense speech—in the Afro-Peruvian villages to the north and south of Lima on the Pacific coast (distinctly Africanized language and songs have been recorded in several such villages), in some remote Afro-Venezuelan villages in the eastern coastal region (despite considerable work already done on Afro-Venezuelan language). Africans were held only in small numbers in Paraguay and Chile, but at least in the former country a few descendants still remain, and given the paucity of knowledge of ethnic varieties of Paraguayan Spanish, some information may be recoverable. Naturally, there is still much research to be carried out in countries where Afro-Hispanic language has been the subject of serious study: the last word has yet to be heard of Africanized Spanish in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, and so forth.

There is a final possible hunting ground for surviving traces of earlier Afro-

Caribbean Spanish, which to date has received absolutely no attention. Indeed, the geographical location where such a search might begin seems incredible at first sight: West Africa, the very region from which the majority of Africans arriving in the 19th century Caribbean were taken. In the final decades of the 19th century, there arose "return to Africa" movements in Brazil and Cuba, as well as in some Caribbean colonies. Many African-born Brazilians and even some of their descendents returned to Nigeria and especially Benin, where their descendents still identify themselves as 'Brazilians' (Cunha 1985, Krasnowolski 1987, Turner 1975, Olinto 1964, Verger 1969). This reverse diaspora actually began towards the end of the 18th century, where Brazilian slaves who had been freed or purchased their freedom established themselves in Whydah, Dahomey, where they maintained Brazilian customs and lifestyle, and at times even participated in the final decades of the Atlantic slave trade.

Afro-Cubans also returned to Africa, but in smaller numbers, and beginning well past the first decades of the 19th century. It is possible that in Benin they blended in with the already established Afro-Brazilian population, an easy task, both culturally and linguistically. The most well-documented Afro-Cuban return migration was to Nigeria, the homeland of the Yoruba-speaking *Lucumies*. Africans who had spent decades in Cuba began returning to Nigeria as early as the 1840's, and in the 1850's a document produced in Lagos quotes one returnee as describing the difference between slave-holding within Africa and slavery in the Caribbean (Pérez de la Riva 1974: 175): 'Los negros no Jesús: los blancos todo religión.' This brief statement suggests that *bozal*

Spanish made its way back to West Africa. More than a century later, in fact just over a decade ago a Cuban scholar (Sarracino 1988) visited Lagos, Nigeria, where he met children and grandchildren of these repatriated *bozales*, some of whom were able to converse in (presumably *bozal*) Spanish (cf. also Pérez de la Riva 1974). Unfortunately, neither recordings nor detailed linguistic observations were made, and given the political instability and urban explosion of Lagos, Nigeria, the chances of recovering *bozal* language in this West African setting grow slimmer by the day. Rural areas of Nigeria and Benin, where family oral traditions still predominate over mass media culture, may still be viable sites for Afro-Hispanic field research. Finally, the Cuban linguist Sergio Valdés Bernal, who lived for a time in Angola, reports meeting a (possibly *bozal*) Spanish-speaking descendent of a Cuban slave in that African nation.

Possibly African imprints in Caribbean Spanish

I have suggested in the preceding remarks that throughout the Caribbean, Africans who acquired Spanish as a second language spoke it with much the same difficulties as experienced by other foreign language learners, with each speaker or ethnic group giving the Afro-Hispanic pidgin a slight flavor of one African language or another, but with the common denominators not being uniquely African. Moreover, in reviewing the demographic situation prevailing in most of the colonial Spanish Caribbean, I believe it quite unlikely that a fully creolized form of Spanish ever came into sustained contact with mainstream Spanish—although Spanish unquestionably trans-

mutated into a creole here and there as special circumstances stranded heterogeneous groups of Africans for a generation or more in plantations, mines, or maroon communities. We have seen that there continue to exist small pockets of distinctly Afro-Hispanic language, set against the backdrop of general vernacular Caribbean Spanish; however, precisely due to the marginality of the groups in question, this particular form of Africanized Spanish has had little opportunity to influence larger regional varieties. What, then, are the demonstrable African imprints in Caribbean Spanish? This question has both obvious and more elusive answers. The use of African-derived words is beyond question, although even in the most Africanized holdovers in the Spanish Caribbean we do not find loan translations of African idiomatic expressions, such as are commonly found in Caribbean English- and French-based creoles (e.g. *eye water* for 'tears,' *foot* for 'entire leg,' etc.). Throughout the Caribbean, the colloquial use of *hombe* for *hombre* can be heard (even making its way into *merengue* and *vallenato* songs). This is a carryover of the African pronunciation, which often reduced two-consonant groups to a single consonant; for example, in colloquial Brazilian Portuguese, *negro* is pronounced *nego*, used nowadays as a term of endearment with no racial connotations. More generally, Caribbean Spanish pronunciation is derived from the speech of southern Spain and the Canary Islands, which provided the main trade routes to Spanish America, as well as a high proportion of merchants, settlers, and sailors. Andalusian/Canary Spanish was already weakening or eliminating final consonants at the time of the first Afro-

Hispanic contacts. Africans did not initiate these changes; they did, however, extend them far beyond the natural evolution of these processes in Latin American regions lacking a large African population. In contemporary Andalusia and the Canary Islands, the elimination of final consonants takes place at rates as high as the most Africanized forms of Latin American Spanish, presumably because these Spanish dialects already had a 'head start' in terms of this evolutionary process (Lipski 1995a). Within Latin America, however, there is a very high correlation between the extreme elimination of final consonants and sustained African presence, particularly in the last century and a half of colonization. This includes eastern Cuba, most of the interior of the Dominican Republic, the Caribbean coast of Panama, the Chocó and the Pacific coast of Colombia, and the Afro-Hispanic villages of coastal Ecuador and Peru, not to mention Afro-Mexican villages in the states of Oaxaca and Guerrero, where the heavy consonantal reduction stands in stark contrast to the surrounding Mexican dialects, in which final consonants are pronounced strongly.

In the realm of grammar, matters are considerably less clear, but the best estimate that can be made with currently available evidence is that such African traces as are to be found are twice-removed from the direct contact of Spanish and African languages. In addition to the interaction between *bozales* and Spaniards, Caribbean Spanish came into contact with a variety of Afro-Atlantic creoles, particularly in the last century of the slave trade, when Cuban and Puerto Rican plantation frantically acquired slaves and free laborers from other Caribbean islands, where established creole languages were spoken

natively by those born on the islands. In one version, this proposal is at the center of a heated debate over creole language formation, while from another viewpoint, the contact of Spanish with Caribbean creoles has scarcely been touched (Lipski 1996, 1998). Based on a handful of suggestive Afro-Cuban texts, together with one Puerto Rican skit, several scholars have suggested that many if not most African slaves arriving in the Caribbean **already** spoke a Portuguese-based creole or at least a stable pidgin, acquired in the major Portuguese slaving depots of West Africa, particularly the island of São Tomé, on which an Afro-Portuguese creole language survives to the present day. São Tomé creole bears striking resemblances with the one surviving Afro-Hispanic creole in Latin America, spoken in the Colombian village of San Basilio de Palenque. Moreover, a description of Africans in Cartagena de Indias (Colombia) written by the priest Alonso de Sandoval (1956: 94) in 1627, stated that many of them spoke 'con la comunicación que con tan bárbaras naciones han tenido el tiempo que han residido en San Thomé, las entienden casi todas con un género de lenguaje muy corrupto y revesado de la portuguesa que llaman lengua de San Thomé ...' However, this refers **only** to slaves shipped through the holding station on São Tomé; of other Africans, Sandoval noted that they spoke only pidginized Spanish, '... al modo que ahora nosotros entendemos y hablamos con todo género de negros y naciones con nuestra lengua española corrupta, como comúnmente la hablan todos los negros.' The creole of San Basilio was formed early in the 17th century, when the Portuguese were still supplying the majority of slaves to

Spanish America, mostly through São Tomé. However, beginning in 1640, control of the Atlantic slave trade passed first into Dutch hands, and then successively to British and French dealers, none of whom received slaves from West African areas where any form of Portuguese was widely spoken. In particular, the huge influx of Africans in the 19th century Caribbean came principally from Nigeria, the Slave Coast (Benin and Togo), and the Congo, and there is no indication that any of these Africans spoke creole or non-creole Portuguese (except for one sea captain's log which stated that he had taken a few slaves from the Portuguese-creole speaking Cape Verde Islands to Cuba).

What is documented for the Spanish Caribbean is the presence of other Caribbean creoles, brought first by escaped slaves from neighboring colonies, and then during the 19th century sugar boom by contract laborers. The most prominent Caribbean creole inserted into the Afro-Hispanic cauldron is Papiamentu, spoken on the Dutch islands of Curaçao and Aruba. The former island was used by the Dutch for almost two centuries to supply slaves to the Spanish, and the Papiamentu language contains approximately equal portions of Spanish and Portuguese. Papiamentu speakers are documented in 19th century Cuba and Puerto Rico, where travellers noted their presence, and some songs and poems were even transcribed (Alvarez Nazario 1970: 4; Pasarell 1951: 124). In Venezuela, maroon communities were formed of Papiamentu-speaking escaped slaves from nearby Aruba; songs and poems in this language were discovered as late as a few decades ago, and may still be remembered in some villages (Aretz de Ramón and Ramón y Rivera

1955: 72; Domínguez 1989: 12). The linguistic features of Papiamento, including many key words not found in other forms of Afro-Hispanic language, are found in several key Afro-Caribbean Spanish texts which others have used as evidence that Spanish creolized directly (Lipski 1993, 1996, 1998).

Another creole language once found in Cuba and Puerto Rico is Negerhollands, the Dutch-based creole formerly spoken on the Danish-then American Virgin Islands (the last speaker died a few years ago). In the 19th century Negerhollands was the major language of the western Virgin Islands, whence slaves escaped by swimming to nearby Puerto Rican offshore keys. Negerhollands workers from the Virgin Islands were also imported into Cuba, where they worked on sugar plantations with other Caribbean-born laborers.

French-based Haitian Creole has profoundly interacted with Dominican Spanish for more than 200 years, and the language of many Afro-Dominican villages bears traces of Haitian influence (Lipski 1994). A large Haitian community also developed in eastern Cuba, in Oriente and Guantánamo provinces, where they continued to speak a Haitian-influenced Spanish pidgin until only a few years ago (a few elderly Haitians, some over 100 years old, continue to speak in this fashion even today; Ortiz López 1996). The presence of French creole speakers from the Lesser Antilles is documented for colonial Puerto Rico and 19th century Panama.

Afro-English language first entered the Spanish Caribbean in the form of West African Pidgin English, the Lingua Franca of coastal Nigeria. Pidgin English words made their way into Afro-Cuban Spanish, and are also attested in Puerto Rico.

During the sugar plantation boom, English-creole speaking workers from Jamaica arrived in Cuba and Puerto Rico (and during the 20th century also in the Dominican Republic). Creole English speakers from English-speaking Virgin Islands worked in Puerto Rican agriculture, while creole English and French speakers from Trinidad made their way to the Venezuelan mainland, where remnants of their speech—highly reminiscent of earlier *bozal* Spanish—can still be found (Lipski 1996, 1998).

In a few cases, actual words from Caribbean creoles crop up in *bozal* imitations, but this is exceptional. In some Afro-Cuban texts, for example, we find *yijo* (Pap. *yiú*) 'son, daughter,' *agüé* 'today' (this form is still recalled by elderly Afro-Cubans), *ahuora* 'now,' and a couple of other items (Lipski 1993; Ortiz López 1996, 1998):

TRACES OF PAPIAMENTO *YIU*
'SON/DAUGHTER' IN AFRO-CUBAN TEXTS:

Mi *yijo*, gayina negro son mucho, y toíto pone güebo blanco (Martín Morúa Delgado, *La familia Unzúazu*)

no ta sufrí mi *yijo* (Armanda Ruíz García, *Más allá de la nada*)

Yija de mi pecho son (Ignacio Benítez del Cristo, "Los novios catedráticos")

Si mañana *yijo* fúiri, ¿quién llora su madrina? (Lydia Cabrera, *Por qué*)

ay, *yijo*, yo no tiene carabela aquí. (Lydia Cabrera, *La sociedad secreta Abakuá*)

si, *yijo*, es mío el quimbombó (Lydia Cabrera, *El monte*)

mi *yijo* Eulogio, nació y crio en el Guatao (Benjamín Sánchez Maldonado, "Los hijos de Thalía")

¿Tú no ve uno yegua paría que anda con la *yijo* suyo como quien la tiene orgullo

porque saca lotería? (José Silvio Rodríguez, "La esquina de la viajaca")
 Neye lo que tiene só un bariga con su *yijo* lento. (Martín Morúa Delgado, *Sofía*)
 tu son mi *yijo*, arrea, vamo ... Yo no tiene mujé, no tiene *yijo* ... (Lydia Cabrera, *Reglas de congo*)

TRACES OF PAPIAMENTO AWE 'TODAY' IN AFRO-CUBAN TEXTS:

Poquitico fatá pa que señora murí *agüoi* (Ildefonso Estrada y Zenea, *El quirín*)
Agüe memo, ñamito (María de Santa Cruz, *Historias campesinas*)
 ahuoy lo va a jasé Pancha ... Ma *ahuoy*, letó mi corasón ... *ahuoy* bariga yo saca ... *Ahuoy* vamo ta mosotro como pecá dentro lagua ... (Creto Gangá, "Un ajiaco o la boda de Pancha Jutía y Canuto Raspadura")
agüé día tambó to mundo baila (Lydia Cabrera, *Reglas de congo*)

TRACES OF PAPIAMENTO AWOR 'NOW' IN AFRO-CUBAN TEXTS:

¿Y qué yo dicí *ahuora*, eh? ... *ahuora* sí mi pecho está girviendo como agua que pela engallina (Ignacio Benítez del Cristo, "Los novios catedráticos")
 y *ahuora* que no lo ve ... donde *ahuora* yo só otra vé congo y trabajaore la muelle ... dende *ahuora* yo só José mimo ... *Ahuora* a trabajá (Francisco Fernández, "El negro cheche")
 con toa esa bamba se larga *ahuora* mimo de aquí ... vamo a ve si *ahuora* oté me entiende ... *ahuora* sí verdá que no pue má ... hasta *ahuora* yo no tení guto pa conocé a noté (Manuel Mellado y Montaña, "La casa de Taita Andrés")
 Prusumpueto que *ahuora* narie lo habra diotro cosa ma que de la Jópera (Creto

Gangá, "Un ajiaco o la boda de Pancha Jutía y Canuto Raspadura")
 ... la Cula ta gualando *aguora* en la cafeté (José Florencia López [Jacan], *Nadie sabe para quién trabaja*)
 Camina, pícaro, que *aguora* tú lo va pagá (Ildefonso Estrada y Zenea, *El quirín*)
aguora yo jabla oté (*Guayabo, rumores del Mayabeque*).

In rural Afro-Dominican villages, Haitian Creole words crop up more than occasionally, among speakers with no current knowledge of Creole (Lipski 1994). Much more important than the very occasional contribution of words, the Caribbean creoles' impact on Spanish stems from another fact: the creoles share a large number of prominent grammatical patterns, which in turn differ from equivalent structures in other varieties of Spanish. The reasons for the similarities among Caribbean creoles are twofold. The mix of African language families which formed the input in creole formation were typically the same in each case, thus producing comparable results in the ensuing creoles, regardless of the European language which served as a platform. Universal strategies of simplification were also at work, as well perhaps as transfer from one creole to another on neighboring islands or colonies. Among the common deominators found in Caribbean creoles known to have interacted with Spanish, the following deserve special attention:

(1) **Invariant word order**, including questions in which the subject remains in preverbal position: *¿Qué tú dices?* These questions are found sporadically in the Canary Islands and Galicia, regions of Spain which supplied a large proportion of immigrants to the Caribbean during the 19th century, but the frequency is nowhere

near as high as in Caribbean dialects. As in the case of massive loss of consonants, non-inverted questions were probably aided by the presence of speakers of a variety of creole languages, all of which use the same question strategy. It is important to note that non-inverted questions are not a common denominator among most West African languages, thus ruling out a direct African-to-Spanish connection.

(2) **Constructions with a preposition followed by a subject pronoun and an infinitive:** *antes de yo llegar aquí*. This combination occurs occasionally in Canary Island and Galician Spanish, probably derived from Galician/Portuguese in both cases. In the Caribbean, however, the construction was strongly reinforced by identical patterns in all the major creole languages which interacted with Spanish.

(3) **Obligatory use of subject pronouns.** In Spanish, subject pronouns are typically redundant, since the subject can be identified by the verb conjugation: *tenemos, hablaste, hablo*, etc. In Caribbean creoles, verbs are not conjugated (they have a single form), and subject pronouns become obligatory, much as in English. Caribbean Spanish in turn is noted for its comparatively high use of subject pronouns. Sometimes this is due to other causes, such as the widespread loss of word-final /s/, which makes certain verb forms sound identical. However, the proportion of overt subject pronoun usage in Caribbean dialects characterized by a heavy African presence is noticeably higher than in southern Spain and the Canary islands, where final consonants are lost at the same or higher rates. Once again, an Afro-creole 'nudge' of an option already present is the most likely scenario.

(4) **Two-part question words,** particularly the equivalent of 'what thing,'

for 'what,' 'what side/place' for 'where,' 'what person' for 'who.' Caribbean Spanish, particularly in Cuba, often uses *qué cosa* instead of just *qué* (the equivalent form became shortened to *kiko* in Papiamentu, and to just *cosa* in Philippine Creole Spanish). Other two-part question words crop up from time to time.

The combinations just mentioned have survived in non-African Caribbean Spanish precisely because they represent extreme cases of options that were already available in other dialects of Spanish. Other cross-creole characteristics were found in non-native *bozal* language, but did not survive the transition into mainstream Caribbean Spanish, since they were too 'exotic' to be accepted by the general population. This includes unconjugated verbs, the use of preverbal markers such as *ya* and *ta* (in creole/pidgin English: *mi walk, mi de walk, mi don walk, mi bin walk, mi go walk*, etc.).

Another non-surviving creole trait is the use of the same pronouns for subject and object, with the original object pronouns ('me,' 'us,' etc.) chosen in each case. Some Afro-Cuban *bozal* texts exemplify the use of *mí* as subject instead of *yo*; the identical pronoun exists in Papiamentu, creole English, and Negerhollands, while creole French has the cognate form *mwe* (Lipski 1993, 1994, 1996):

A mí no bebe aguariente, mi ama
(Contesa de Merlin, *Viaje a La Habana*)
Ah, ñamito, perdona mí ... Mí no sabe,
ñamito ... mi no sabe ná (María de Santa Cruz, *Historias campesinas*)
Ecucha Encarna, mí no guta eso ... ella
dise, mí ba casa ma Cecilia ... (Emilio Bacardí Moreau, *Filigrana*)

This usage never took hold in the Spanish

Caribbean, probably because it was highly stigmatized from the outset (this substitution is very common in early child language, and also was found in the first Afro-Iberian language from Spain and Portugal in the 16th century.

Caribbean creoles—the same as many African languages—use the same pronoun for ‘he’ and ‘she.’ Afro-Antillean *bozal* Spanish used *elle/nelle* in this capacity (elderly Afro-Cubans recall and sometimes still use this word; Lipski 1993, Ortiz López 1996, 1998):

Elle estaba en un mortorio. El borbanao manda prendeslo. Dentra Tondá, *elle* solito con su espá, coge dos (Cirilo Villaverde, *Cecilia Valdés*)

¿Y *nelle* lo muchachito va pendé su Paña de nuté? (Martín Morúa Delgado, *La familia Unzuazu*)

Eso mimo quiere yo, *nelle* lo mimo, vamo pa la engresia (Ignacio Benítez del Cristo, “Los novios catedráticos”)

si yo lo tené uno niño como *nelle*, yo va murí de cuntentamienta (Creto Gangá, “Un ajíaco o la boda de Pancha Jutía y Canuto Raspadura”)

yo mirá que *nelle* tiene sangre, ese simbregüenza mimo se piá detrá la quitrín y arrancá corré. (Ildefonso Estrada y Zenea, *El quitrín*)

Hora, dipué que *nelle* coge yebba la gloria, vamo saludá Ocha ... Muñeco con píritu de mueto muchacho, que *nelle* metía dentro (Lydia Cabrera, *El monte*)

Po que juntó con la mala compañía y *nelle* lo pervierte o lo sonsacá. (Benjamín Sánchez Maldonado, “Los hijos de Thalía”)

Yo tiene la pecho premio pur *nelle*. Yo ta namorá, yo va vé si *nelle* quié só mugé mía pur langresia ... yo pué casá *cunelle* ... (Francisco Fernández, “Los negros

catedráticos”)

nelle que lo só intriuo ... *nelle* mimo que lo só ... poque *nelle* ta en la tea ... porque *nelle* lo gatá ... (Francisco Fernández, “El negro cheche”)

noté quie jabla cun *nelle* ... y disi que va a tumbá mi bují, vereme *nelle* ... (Manuel Mellado y Montaña, “La casa de Taita Andrés”)

nelle tiene un vapó ... *nelle* viene, yo le da ... *Neye* se ñama mujé ... *neye* va acabá con pacífico insurrecto ... (Lydia Cabrera, *Reglas de congo*)

toíto *neye* ta cargá ... cuando *neye* mira yo ... *neye* ta morí de risa ... (Manuel Cabrera Paz, “Exclamaciones de un negro”)

cuando *nei* ta vení, ya yo no tiene que da vueta ... singá caballo pa *neye* ve jodienda la Tajonera ... (Lydia Cabrera, *Francisco y Francisca*)

varón quitá *neye* ... (Lydia Cabrera, *La sociedad secreta Abakuá*)

Neye lo que tiene só un bariga con su yijo lento (Martín Morúa Delgado, *Sofía*)

yo te ba da un medalló pa que tu luse con *eye* (Anon., “Yo bota lan garafo”)

luego *nelle* va viní a comé la buen caliente (José Florencia López [Jacan], *Nadie sabe para quién trabaja*)

Nelle son mala cabeza (Ramón Méndez Quiñones, alternate fragments from ¡Pobre “Sinda!”; Puerto Rico)

Yo no quisió di con *elle* (Eleuterio Derkes, “Tio Fele”; Puerto Rico)

Since this usage is completely at odds with Romance language patterns, no variety of Caribbean Spanish has chosen a single pronoun, although in isolated Afro-Hispanic communities throughout the region, what appear to be ‘errors’ of pronoun choice are sometimes found.

The creole languages under discussion do not inflect adjectives for masculine and

feminine gender; *bozal* Spanish did so inconsistently. This massive neutralization has not passed into Caribbean Spanish, but once again, isolated Afro-Hispanic groups even today produce discrepancies at a much higher than chance rate.

Conclusions

To summarize the results of the preceding survey, I have suggested that direct African influence on Caribbean Spanish may occasionally have occurred, especially in the context of plantation labor, but that indirect influence via already existent Afro-European creole languages was the more common scenario. This entails a re-evaluation of the relevance of Caribbean Spanish for the study of Afro-Hispanic language contacts. The heavy African cultural and ethnic presence in the Spanish Caribbean has often been taken uncritically as proof that any unusual feature of Caribbean Spanish is due to African influence. When to the mix is added a corpus of creole-like language formerly attributed to blacks in several Caribbean nations, the equation seems complete: Spanish once creolized in Latin America, at least among the population of African origin, and this creole gradually percolated up to encompass all local varieties of Spanish. This would make Caribbean Spanish much like English as spoken by Jamaicans, or French as spoken by Haitians, except that in the Spanish Caribbean the creole itself would have disappeared, leaving only fossil imprints in vernacular Spanish.

The facts, however, do not support this simple equation. Conditions favoring the formation of a stable creole never existed in the Spanish Caribbean. A much more

reasonable basis route for creole-like characteristics of earlier Afro-Caribbean Spanish, as well as contemporary vernacular varieties, is the impact of established creole languages, which in one guise or another formed the linguistic backbone of the 19th century Caribbean. Regardless of the European language which provided their lexicon, these creoles already shared considerable similarity with one another, due both to universal aspects of creolization, and to commonly recurring patterns in key groups of West African and European languages. In the linguistic proving ground of 19th century Caribbean plantations, simply throwing Spanish together with any of the Caribbean creoles, or better yet with several, would yield strikingly similar results, which might be superficially indistinguishable from the effects of spontaneous creolization of Spanish.

These remarks are meant to be suggestive rather than definitive, and to stimulate discussion rather than to stifle it. Latin American dialectology is full of little-explored corners and unsuspected subcurrents, and few linguistic features can be safely attributed to a single cause. In Latin America, spontaneous generation was the exception, and language contact was the rule. The influence of creole languages on Spanish represents African linguistic and cultural contact twice-removed, and the study of creole-to-creole transfers promises to fill in more pieces of the still enigmatic puzzle of Latin American dialect differentiation. This new journey has only just begun, and I welcome the thoughts and efforts of fellow-travellers.

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