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## CHAPTER 3

# THE EMERGENCE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ENGLISH

*Monogenetic or Polygenetic? With or Without “Decreolization”?*  
*Under How Much Substrate Influence?*

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

I use *African American English* (AAE) in this chapter as a convenient umbrella term that facilitates discussing together common aspects of both Gullah (the creole spoken in coastal South Carolina and Georgia) and African American Vernacular English (AAVE, the non-creole variety spoken elsewhere in the United States). This is not to suggest that both varieties evolved from a common (creole) ancestor. Rather, I argue that colonial English did not evolve uniformly among (descendants of) Africans in the United States, owing largely to differences between, on the one hand, rice fields and, on the other, cotton and tobacco plantations as contact ecologies. My approach fits within “comparative history” (Diamond and Robinson 2010); it focuses on ecological factors that account for this differential evolution. The ecological approach helps articulate clearly the historical evidence for treating both AAVE and Gullah as sister offspring of English in the United States, while suggesting a critical interpretation of Labov’s (1972) claim that AAVE is homogeneous across the country, albeit with a non-monolithic, variable system (Mufwene 1992; Labov 1998).

One of the central questions of the debate on the emergence of AAE concerns the nature and extent of the contributions of languages to its system. I submit that the Africans definitely shaped the varieties now associated with their descendants in the New World by selecting from within English those features that were congruent with those of some of the languages they had spoken in Africa (Corne 1999), by modifying the characteristics of some of the English options they selected, or by introducing new features (identified as “apports” by Allsopp 1977; see also Mufwene 2001a, b). The question remains: Which answer is plausible for which features?

We must bear in mind that the rice fields and the tobacco and cotton plantations generated different population structures, with the latter becoming racially segregated only after the abolition of slavery in the mid-nineteenth century. Owing to the significant “Black majority” (Wood 1974) in the rice fields area, the slaves were already segregated in the early eighteenth century, which fostered Gullah’s structural divergence from colonial English in the American Southeast. The smaller size of the tobacco and cotton plantations, on which the slaves were generally a minority, and the late institutionalization of Jim Crow appear to have been less favorable to (extensive) substrate influence. Indeed, AAVE and Gullah do not diverge to the same extent from White American Southern English (WASE), nor does Gullah diverge from the construct “English” to the same extent as Caribbean English creoles (CECs). Along with Schneider (1995) and Bailey and Thomas (1998), I argue that in fact AAVE and WASE have common origins. They appear to have been one and the same regional variety until Jim Crow was introduced in the late nineteenth century and triggered the Great Migration of African Americans out of the South. AAVE was invented as a separate ethnolect in the North, where most White Americans were then getting their first exposure to American Southern English.

### 3.2 TOBACCO, COTTON, RICE, AND THE DIFFERENTIAL EVOLUTION OF ENGLISH IN THE UNITED STATES

The colonies of Virginia, very central to the emergence of AAVE, and of South Carolina, critical to the emergence of Gullah, did not start at the same time. The former was founded in 1607 directly from England, while the latter started as a “second-generation colony” (Chaudenson 1992, 2001), settled from Barbados in 1670. Neither settlement evolved overnight into a major slave colony, owing to lack of capital to invest in the plantation industry from the start.<sup>1</sup>

The first Africans, twenty-three acquired from a Dutch frigate, arrived in Virginia in 1619 and had the status of indentured servants, entitled to buy their freedom within a few years. They and the other Africans imported later worked typically as domestic servants in the homes of the wealthiest colonists (Tate 1965). The population then was not yet racially segregated, though, to be sure, the Africans were not treated as equal. Still, they had full exposure to the vernacular of the colonists, thanks to regular interactions with them, although, like anybody learning a language naturalistically, they must have started with interlanguages, which need not be confused with a pidgin as a communal variety.<sup>2</sup> According to Tate (1965), it would not be until about 1675 that the Africans became slaves, which is about the time the industrial cultivation of tobacco would develop and the African population started growing rapidly, owing to increased importations, for work on the plantations.

Although, Virginia had the most numerous slave population in the eighteenth century (Rickford 1997), it was actually also the most densely populated colony, totaling 53,184 Europeans and 19,800 Africans in 1750 and 288,200 Europeans versus 105,500 Africans in 1790. Perkins (1988) and Fischer (1989) estimate that, on average, the Black population in the Chesapeake hardly exceeded 38 percent of the total colonial population by the end of the eighteenth century. AuCoin (2002) points out that there were a couple of coastal counties (in the swamps) where the Black population reached about 60 percent, but this was not the regular pattern. Although, according to Rickford (1997), most of the slaves lived in the coastal area,<sup>3</sup> the large tobacco plantations, on which only 29 percent of the African population (according to his source) lived, developed inland. According to Kulikoff (1986),

By the early 1780s, more than two-fifths of the slaves who resided in eight piedmont counties organized before 1760 lived on plantations with twenty or more other slaves. In contrast, more than two-fifths of the slaves of the frontier piedmont counties organized after 1760 still lived on small units of ten or fewer during the early 1780s. (337–39)

Only one third of the slaves along the Potomac lived on farms of more than twenty slaves. In Virginia, both James City and York counties were more than 60 percent enslaved in the 1780s. Most of the large plantations in these counties were located in upper Yorkhampton Parish, where more than half the slaves lived on quarters larger than twenty slaves. Only one third to one fourth lived on big quarters in the rest of the counties. (342)

The tobacco plantations apparently claimed less than half the slave population, a demographic distribution that suggests non-uniform evolution of English across the African population, as some interacted more frequently with the European colonists than others.<sup>4</sup> On average a tobacco plantation appears to have had only twenty to thirty slaves, integrated with the indentured servants, in sharp contrast with a sugarcane plantation in Jamaica, which exceeded one hundred slaves segregated from the European colonists. Thus, the Virginia population structure did not favor the emergence of a Creole slaves' English that was distinct from that of the locally born White population.

Another important factor is that in the eighteenth century, the Virginian slave population grew as much by importation as by birth, with the locally born slaves sometimes constituting no less than 40 percent of the relevant population when importations were at their peak (Kulikoff 1986, 335). This entailed more continuity from the pre-eighteenth-century English the Virginians had developed. As argued by DeGraff (1999), Creole slaves were critical agents of feature selection in the emergence of creoles and undoubtedly other varieties now associated with descendants of slaves. They determined by their speech varieties, which would be targeted by the Bozal (African-born) slaves, what particular substrate influences were more likely to become permanent in the emergent colonial vernaculars.

The Virginia colony thus conjures up a setting very similar to that of colonial Brazil, with its numerous small sugarcane plantations, where no distinct language variety associated exclusively with the slaves emerged. Quoting H. Jones ([1724] 1956), Kulikoff (1986, 317) reports that “slaves born in Virginia ‘talk good English, and affect our language, habits, and customs.’” Likewise, Brasch (1981) reports advertisements in local newspapers about runaway slaves of the time that correlate “good English” with being born or having lived long in Virginia and “poor, bad,” or “unintelligible” English with recent arrivals from Africa. Virginia is critical to understanding the evolution of English in the United States because it provided the founder slave population for second-generation colonies such as North Carolina, which would develop on its model rather than on that of South Carolina. The northern colonies had very few slaves, 2 to 4 percent of the total colonial population within which they were integrated, though not with equal social status, as noted above.

It is especially noteworthy that the Virginia colony started before that of Barbados (founded in 1627). At the peak of the slave trade during the eighteenth century, American planters imported the overwhelming majority of their slaves straight from Africa. These were brought to them by New England merchants, whose ships could sail in a shorter time, straight from West Africa to Virginia and South Carolina, making the acquisition of slaves less expensive for Americans. During the eighteenth century, only 10 percent of the enslaved Africans were imported from the Caribbean (Rawley 1991).

Equally significant is the fact that the Virginia colony started a little over half a century earlier than South Carolina. Even if a creole had developed at the onset of the latter colony, it could hardly have influenced the evolution of English among the African slaves in Virginia, not only because it started later but also because the South Carolinians then interacted more regularly with Barbadians than with Virginians. Actually, it would also have taken substantial migrations of South Carolina slaves to Virginia for the latter’s slave population to change their own way of speaking. No such migration volume has been reported in the history of both colonies.

South Carolina itself evolved only gradually into a lucrative plantation colony. Although the first settlement from Barbados in 1670 included some slaves, they were a negligible proportion absorbed by the White population looking for alternative lands and resources, which they could not afford in the colony of origin.<sup>5</sup> Initially they engaged in fur trade and animal husbandry, including cattle ranching and swine raising. According to Edgar (1998, 133), 1,000 out of South Carolina’s slave population of 1,800 in 1708 were engaged in this economic activity. Even though rice cultivation had started already by 1700 and the slave population was then equal to that of the White population (Wood 1974), the figures indicate that, perhaps owing to insufficient capital, the fields must have still been very small and/or very few in number. As a matter of fact, rice cultivation, begun in the 1690s (Edgar 1998, 140), still competed with the production of indigo, wood, and naval stores. We cannot be surprised that historical records do not mention any Gullah yet, because the dominant homestead socioeconomic conditions did not foster the emergence of a separate English variety among the African slaves (Mufwene 1997a, b, 2000, 2001b).

Racial segregation was institutionalized in South Carolina in 1720 (Wood 1974), the year the slave population doubled that of the White population: 21,600 to 9,800 by 1730 (Wood 1989). The rice-cultivation industry was then booming again, after slumping in about 1712 (Edgar 1998, 138), and was turning the colony into the most prosperous one in English North America. The Black population would remain double that of the White population until about 1750: 40,600 to 20,000 (Wood 1989). It was only around 1760 that the White population started growing faster than the slave population: 57,900 slaves to 38,000 Whites, and it would become the majority by 1790: 108,900 slaves to 140,200 Whites, a proportion that would not be eclipsed again.

The above demographics raise the question of what made the emergence of Gullah possible at all, as the disparities in population size do not appear comparable to those reported for colonies such as Jamaica or Guyana. The answer lies in the population structure: most of the slave population in the eighteenth century was concentrated on the coast (Turner 1949; Wood 1974), where rice cultivation was developing and where the Africans constituted the overwhelming majority, at the ratio of nine to one. Another question that arises is: Why did Gullah not diverge from its lexifier to the same extent as Guyanese or Jamaican Creole? Part of the answer lies in the rate of population growth and population replacement (Mufwene 2001b): It was apparently slower in South Carolina than in Jamaica and Guyana, though future research may shed more light on this issue. By the time race segregation was institutionalized in 1720, there may have been a relatively large proportion of English-speaking Creole slaves who would serve as model speakers to the Bozal slaves. African linguistic influence would thus work its way only slowly to modify the colonial vernacular into Gullah, which probably would not become noticeably distinct until the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. The earliest attestations available are in William Gilmore Simms's *The Wigwam and the Cabin* (1845).<sup>6</sup>

We must also bear in mind Rickford's (1985) comparison of two speakers, White and African American, on Daufuskie Island, South Carolina, which highlights both differences and similarities between them that are generally consistent with observations about other former plantation colonies. White and Black Jamaicans sound more like each other than like their counterparts in North America, just like a traditional White Southerner sounds more like an African American Southerner than like a White New Englander or Midwesterner. If these observations about coastal South Carolina are correct, the two Daufuskie Island speakers must overall sound more like each other than like their hinterland counterparts. Southern English does not include the varieties that developed in coastal South Carolina and Georgia!

The other ecological explanation for why Gullah is less divergent from the construct "English" is to be found in population structure again. While Caribbean sugar cane plantations often grew into huge estates in the eighteenth century, as successful planters bought their neighbors out of business (Dunn 1972), South Carolina planters structured their rice fields more on the model of Brazilian sugarcane estates.<sup>7</sup> According to Edgar (1998, 142):

South Carolina planters seemed to have settled on 30 to 50 slaves as the ideal size for a working plantation. Large land and slave owners broke up their holdings into

smaller production units. Ralph Izard Jr., for instance, owned 342 slaves. There were 10 slaves at his Charleston town house and 69 at Burton. The remaining 263 were divided among five working plantations. Thomas Elliot of St. Andrews Parish had two plantations and evenly divided his 104 slaves between them. John Ainslie of St. George's Dorchester, who raised thoroughbreds as well as rice, had 134 slaves at his residence, Windsor Hill and working plantations in St. Paul's (51 slaves) and St. Matthew's (30 slaves).

So, if the number of slaves per plantation in South Carolina was not significantly different from that in Virginia, how did Gullah not develop in Virginia, or why did the coastal South Carolina slaves develop Gullah but not something closer to AAVE? In Virginia, the interior of South Carolina and Georgia, and everywhere else where tobacco or cotton became the main industrial crop, the slaves were in the minority and race segregation would start only in the late nineteenth century. In coastal South Carolina and Georgia, they were the overwhelming majority and did not socialize with Whites, even if they met in the work place. Segregated life left a lot of room for substrate influence to prevail, although the nature of this remains to be determined.

There is also a modern observation that bears on the above hypothesis: in South Carolina as in Georgia, there is a geographical continuum from Gullah on the coast to AAVE in the hinterlands, which may reflect variation in the kinds of settlements and the composition of the populations that inhabited them (Mufwene 2001a). The marshes and mosquitoes are the classic explanations for the small population of Whites on the coast during the colonial period and indeed for the frequent absenteeism of some planters during the summer months. The interior was more hospitable and attractive to indentured servants, who constituted 50 to 75 percent of the southern White population (Kulikoff 1986). According to Kulikoff (1991, 202), "as many as four fifths of all colonists, including their families, servants, and slaves, were farmers."

The position emerging here naturally challenges the claim by, for instance, Morgan (1993) that AAE developed as a "counterlanguage" intended to prevent White masters and overseers from understanding much of what its creators and practitioners said. This ignores or downplays the linguistic influence of the White indentured servants that the field hands interacted regularly with, especially during the homestead phase, although they did not socialize together during the plantation phase.<sup>8</sup> It does not explain why there are so many structural similarities between AAE and WASE and, ignoring prosodic features, various nonstandard English varieties in North America and the United Kingdom (Poplack and Tagliamonte 2001). The "decreolization" hypothesis, disputed below as inconsistent with the colonial history, cannot be invoked to account for the similarities. Nor can the Black-nanny theory (invented by British travelers), according to which the linguistic similarities between Blacks and Whites in the American South were due to White children being looked after by Black nannies. Only 5 to 10 percent of Whites, mostly on the coast, could afford Black nannies (Coleman 1978). We are left with what follows from the history articulated above.

The above remarks do not entail that African Americans could not have developed counterlanguages to confuse their masters and overseers. However, in the spirit of Halliday (1976), such varieties must have been parasitic developments from vernacular English and Gullah varieties that had already emerged naturalistically, just like professional jargons, for instance. They should not be confused with the vernaculars that emerged as the Africans were forced by the circumstances of their new places of residence to shift to English for communication not only with those who had enslaved them but also among themselves. It must indeed be informative to compare how English evolved among them with how it did among other relocated populations that appropriated English for usage among themselves, such as the Amish, although the latter had not come to North America in bondage and did not shift languages under identical communicative pressures.

### 3.3 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

#### 3.3.1 Indirect Documentation

The earliest characterizations of African slaves' English are to be found in ads posted in local papers for the recapture of runaway slaves during the second half of the eighteenth century (Brasch 1981). The quotations below suggest that their competence varied from one speaker to another, corresponding largely to whether they were locally born or African born, and, in the latter case, how long they had lived in the colony:

- (1) a. Ran away . . . the following negroe's viz. Sambo, a small, thin visaged Fellow, about 30 years of age, speaks *English* so as to be understood . . . Aron . . . can't even speak *English* . . . Berwick . . . can't speak English. They have been in above 8 months in the country. *Virginia Gazette*, August 24, 1751, p. 3.
- b. . . as he was imported very young he speaks very good English. *Virginia Gazette*, Dec. 12, 1755, p. 4.
- c. . . speaks plain for an *African* born, but avoids looking in the face of them he is speaking to as much as possible. *Rind's Virginia Gazette*, August 8, 1788, p. 3.

Stewart (1968) and Rickford (1980, 179) comment that, in characterizing the Africans' competence in English as "good," "tolerable," or "proper," the Europeans may have been lowering their standards. I think that these comments overrate the socioeconomic origins of the overseers who published these ads. Based on Lalla and D'Costa (1990), the kinds of English spoken in some of the plantation mansions, especially those where the masters married down in the lower class, was not particularly standard. English among the average Whites was itself predominantly nonstandard and of variable acceptability relative to native British standard norms, bearing also in mind that some of the

indentured servants were not from England. Some of those coming from Ireland may have learned English alongside the African slaves in the colonies.<sup>9</sup> Variation in the competence of the overseers is made more evident in Schneider and Montgomery (2001), even if we focus on the grammatical properties of some of the letters and ignore spelling inaccuracies in the examples below. The features include the zero copula, considered as “creole” in, especially, Rickford’s (1998, 2006) and Sutcliffe’s (1998) discussions:

- (2) a. and we [Ø] Not half Ready [Doyal 3]
- b. Henry arrive here on yesterday [Meadow 19] (No tense marking!)<sup>10</sup>
- c. tooke Seven day to cut [Carter 70] (No number marking with a numeral)

More evidence can be found in *Tarheel Talk* (Eliason 1956), which includes correspondence by various colonists that exhibits many of the same features associated with creoles and AAVE.

### 3.3.2 Direct Colonial Documentation

Additional supportive evidence lies in the court transcripts of the Salem Witch Trials (1692), in which, incidentally, the speech of an African slave other than the often-cited Candy, in the name of Mary Black, shows no divergence at all from the English of the European colonists, some of whom actually exhibit the same kinds of features now associated with either English creoles or AAVE, as shown below:<sup>11</sup>

- (3) a. she choake him (Deliverance Hobbs: no tense marker, or no person/number marking)
- b. Where was you then? (D. Hobbs’s prosecutor: no Subject-Verb agreement)
- c. you are become a tormentor (D. Hobbs’s prosecutor: auxiliary *be* instead of *have*)
- d. Where be those images, at your house? (D. Hobbs’s prosecutor: “invariant *be*”)
- e. we eate nothing but drunk (Mary Lacy: *eat* for *ate* and *drunk* for *drank*)
- f. how maney year (M. Lacy’s prosecutor: no plural marker with a quantifier)
- g. you say ye Mother was hurt this Spring at e Village (M. Lacy’s prosecutor: Gullah-like uses of possessive *ye* ‘your’ and *e* ‘his/her’)

Interested readers can find many more examples from the court transcripts, which are available at <http://saalem.lib.virginia.edu/texts/tei/BoySalCombined>. The point of citing all these examples is to underscore Mufwene’s (2000 et seq.) position that one must also ask oneself whether the so-called “creole features” originated exclusively in languages other than the European lexifier. The question must be addressed because it is not evident that CECs or Gullah emerged before AAVE (see below).

Negative attitudes already in place toward non-Whites during the early eighteenth century dispute Stewart’s and Rickford’s lowering-of-standards hypothesis. There simply were slaves who spoke varieties acceptable to Whites. This does not entail that all



slaves in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries spoke English natively or fluently, only that they need not have spoken creole(-like) varieties, even those that were African born. The Creole slaves on the tobacco and cotton plantations probably spoke like the locally born Whites. I am well aware of the inhumane conditions of slavery and of the abusive mistreatments of the slaves, but I also believe that slavery did not incapacitate the language-learning ability of slaves in immersion, as it were (Mufwene 2005). Nor should we ignore the important numerical size of White indentured servants in these plantation colonies, who were not necessarily native English speakers. They are the ones who then interacted regularly with the slaves and who, being the majority labor force, perhaps contributed as much to the emergence of earlier American Southern English (probably the ancestor of AAVE) as the Africans did.

### 3.3.3 First Indirect Postcolonial Evidence

An important body of indirect<sup>12</sup> evidence has been identified in offshoot varieties spoken in Samaná, Dominican Republic (see DeBose 1983), in Liberia (see Singler 1989, 1997), and in Nova Scotia (Poplack and Tagliamonte 2001), all identified by the latter authors as “Diaspora varieties.” The premise in invoking features of these varieties as evidence of what AAVE must have been like in the nineteenth century is that they have remained conservative. Thus, they might provide the missing links that have not materialized in the historical documentary evidence. (For difficulties regarding this assumption, see especially Singler 2007a.)

We must indeed speak of the “relevant varieties,” because the populations did not emigrate from the same places in the United States. According to DeBose (1983, 49), “the original settlers [in Samaná] were reportedly from Philadelphia, or a nearby location such as Baltimore or New Jersey.” Singler (2007b) adds to these places Boston, New York, and North Carolina. With the exception of the latter, they are all places outside the plantation colonies where, on average, the slaves constituted a tiny demographic proportion of at most 2 percent (Pennsylvania) per state in 1861 (McPherson 1991, 184),<sup>13</sup> and where overall they were not residentially segregated (Nash 1988, 169, cited by Singler 2007b, 324). To be sure, some of the Samaná settlers originated in southern states, although they were a small minority (Singler 2007b, this volume). The heterogeneity of places of origin thus underscores the need to consider the post-emigration evolution that took place in Samaná (Singler 2007b), as the settlers must undoubtedly have created a new local norm, in a process not unlike the koinéization of metropolitan English varieties earlier in North America.

If AAVE spread from the American Southeast to the rest of the United States with the Great Migration of the early twentieth century (see below), then, based on the information available on the settlers’ places of origins, Samaná English and similar Diaspora varieties must reflect a working-class American English that has changed in the homeland since some time in the nineteenth century. It need not reflect a creole ancestor of AAVE, contrary to DeBose’s (1983) conclusion. Regardless of whether or not the data

collected by DeBose and other students of Samaná English are truly vernacular (Singler 2007a), the features discussed by DeBose and other proponents of the “Decreolization Hypothesis” need not be characterized as exclusive creole peculiarities. They may represent homologous overgeneralizations after the institutionalization of race segregation in the relevant Anglophone territories, and, in the case of Samaná English, after geographical separation from its Anglophone homeland.

Thus, while the zero copula has survived in CECs and AAE, there is only partial evidence of it in White nonstandard English. Non-rhoticity appears to have been one of the variants in the United States. Rhoticity has been reported to be a late development, probably of the twentieth century, among White southerners. Subject-verb disagreement and consonant cluster simplification are still well attested in some White American nonstandard English varieties and elsewhere. On the other hand, features such as negation with *ain't*, *you is*, and *I'm never been* are not part of CECs' basilectal structural repertoires. Nor is the apparent reanalysis of the fusion of the contracted copula with the subject pronoun in constructions such as *I'm*, *dat's*, *it's*, or *what's* into a monomorphemic variant of the subject pronoun when they are followed by a nonverbal predicate (as in *that's nice* = PRONOUN + ZERO COPULA + PREDICATE ADJECTIVE). It is not evident why these particular structural peculiarities are invoked to argue for a creole ancestry of AAVE.

It is thus not surprising that, as they focused on a different subset of Samaná English features or on different aspects of some of the same features, Poplack and Sankoff (1987) drew a different conclusion, connecting Samaná to White nonstandard English. The bottom line is that, because the feature pools of the different communities share some of the features, similarities of all kinds are likely to emerge on the family resemblance model.

However, because some of the same languages contributed features (even if only by congruence) to English ethnolects associated today with descendants of Africans in the Caribbean, the Bahamas, and the United States, one should not be surprised by similarities in the particular structural features the ethnolects exhibit. Nonetheless, there is always the ultimate question of where the so-called “creole features” themselves originated. Some of them need not have (exclusive) African substrate origins, for instance, usage of bare nouns for generic reference, of periphrastic markers to pluralize nouns and to specify TENSE and ASPECT for verbs, of *no/na* or a variant of *ain't* to negate the verb, and of some form of the complementizer *for* to introduce non-factive clausal complements (infinitival complement clauses in English). Most of these strategies reflect partial congruence between the lexifier and **some** substrate languages, for instance, the use of *done* to mark PERFECT and *say* in creoles to introduce complement clauses that would be introduced by *that* in English.<sup>14</sup>

Although we can certainly not deny the determinative influence of *some* substrate languages in the selection of *say* for the role of complementizer even for verbs other than *verba dicendi*, we must also bear in mind that the emergence of creoles need not boil down to the simple substitution of African substrate features for those of the relevant European language (Mufwene 2010). The process was a complex one, indeed one that does not exclude the restructuring processes that have produced the structural divergence of many other varieties not identified as creoles. Since variation among creoles

may reflect variation in the numerical presence of different ethnolinguistic groups and in the time of their arrival in the colony, we need not rush to the “Decreolization Hypothesis” to account for differences between AAVE and its creole kin. African slaves could learn a European language like anybody else under similar social interaction conditions, notwithstanding inter-individual variation in language learning skills. There is thus no particular reason to ignore the cross-plantation variation articulated above (regarding population structure, demographic size, rate and pattern of population growth, and timing of race segregation) and to invoke “decreolization” to account for cross- and intra-colony variation.

### 3.3.4 Second Indirect Postcolonial Evidence

The other kind of diachronic evidence often adduced to bear on this debate is from the “Ex-Slave Narratives,” though they should not be interpreted to reflect faithfully how the former slaves or their descendants actually spoke, as the transcripts were usually edited (Dillard 2000).<sup>15</sup> The basic assumption in the use of these narratives is that which is associated with apparent-time data in discussions of language change (see Labov 1994; Bailey 2002), viz., the speech of older generations is assumed to be more conservative than that of younger generations and must reflect the state of the language at the time they developed their competence. Reality suggests, however, that speakers also adjust to various changes in their lifetime and preserve only part of their youth’s features. We should not ignore the adjustments that the “narrators” may have made to the outsiders who interviewed them, nor the particular ways the speech samples may have been edited (Dillard 1972, 2000; Montgomery 1991). However, this does not mean that the slave narratives are useless. The significance of these texts lies especially in revealing what particular features were then associated with AAE at the time the stories were transcribed (Mufwene 2004).

The narratives that have been discussed the most are those analyzed by German linguists, especially Schneider (1989), Ewers (1995), and Kautzsch (2002). Their unanimous conclusion is that “earlier Black English” (aka AAVE from the nineteenth century) was not more creole-like than it is today. They argue that the evidence supports the English-origins Hypothesis of the evolution of AAVE (i.e., that the particular features examined can generally be traced back to English nonstandard dialects). This conclusion suggests that the relevant similarities between AAVE and CECs are not proof that AAVE inherited putatively “creole features” from the latter, or a Gullah-like ancestor, or even a more remote ancestor common to all of them, but rather that all of them evolved in homologous ways from the restructuring of local nonstandard English koinés. This hypothesis does not at all exclude the influence of some substrate African languages either in determining the selection of the features or influencing how they were restructured, causing the divergence from White American English varieties.

Thus, one may also argue that Gullah and CECs themselves are among new non-standard English vernaculars, regardless of whether they are characterized as “creoles”

(Mufwene 2009). They are those vernaculars whose structures happen to have diverged farther away from their colonial koiné ancestors than AAVE and perhaps also the restructured vernaculars spoken primarily by descendants of Europeans, although this speculation is based on no systematic comparison.

### 3.3.5 Third Indirect Postcolonial Evidence

The “Ex-Slave Recordings” fall in a separate category of their own, constituting the most dependable indirect diachronic evidence there is for AAE. The most relevant issue other than reliance on apparent time alone is that we do not know to what extent the speakers’ grammar was affected by the interaction with the fieldworker, an outsider. There are enough nonstandard features in the recordings to conclude that the features were part of the speakers’ natural vernaculars. My own comparison of present-day Gullah with the speech of Mr. Wallace Quarterman recorded in the 1930s led me to conclude in Mufwene (1991, 1994) that Gullah has not at all changed in the direction of the acrolect and, thus, has not “decreolized” since the early twentieth century. In Mufwene (1991, 216), I observed:

It is also difficult to determine how much of WQ’s speech was the result of his interaction with the non-Geechee community (in the militia and in Savannah) since the Civil War and how much was part of his behavior since childhood. After all, there is so much variation today in Gullah communities, even among those whose experience outside the communities is very limited. At the same time, the Gullah which is the closest to the basilect is not restricted to the elderly, nor to those who have not moved outside their communities, nor to those without schooling. For instance, some of the most stereotypical Gullah, the closest to the putative basilect, is heard from Geechees who hold a college degree or have returned from the city but are emotionally attached to the language, seeing it as part of their identity. Since WQ accepted to be interviewed by various field workers (as evidenced by the samples discussed here), it is quite possible that he was not ashamed of his speech and, needing to be integrated back into the Geechee community, did not let his experience affect his speech. The samples we now have may be close to the way he normally spoke with other Geechees. Although this is pure speculation, it is part of the justification for the comparison undertaken here, in the absence of a more reliable corpus.

The particular Ex-Slave Recordings of interviewees in East and Southeast Texas that Sutcliffe (1998) examined, respectively, Billy McCrea and Laura Smalley, display occasional uses of “creole features” consisting especially of uses of the continuative marker *duh* [də]; the locative verb/copula *deh* [dɛ:]; the Gullah-like [ʌ] pronunciation of English first person singular pronoun *I*; the Gullah-like gender-neutral objective third person singular pronoun *um* [ʌm]; and the associative post-nominal plural *dem*. Accepting uncritically Joel Chandler Harris’s (1880) representation of “Gullah” in *Uncle Remus*, which is at variance with native-like representations in authors such

as William Gilmore Simms, Charles Jones, Ambrose Gonzales, and Albert Stoddard,<sup>16</sup> Sutcliffe concludes that Gullah, presumably its basilect, must have been widespread in the American South and that AAVE must reflect “decreolization” qua debasilectalization from it. The passages from *Uncle Remus* quoted by Sutcliffe include non-Gullah features such as: (1) *sez Brer Fox sezee*; (2) *I’m des in time fer ter wake ‘im up* (made more bizarre by the suggestion of rhoticity, though Troike [2010] says that this is only to indicate an r-less pronunciation of the schwa in the South!); (3) *I done hood/year* [‘hear’?], and the complementizer *for-to* [fə-tə].

Similar non-Gullah features also occur in Troike’s (2010) citations from Harris’s *Daddy Jack*, in which he claims to represent Gullah accurately: *Da’ lilly gal is bin tek dem t’ing*; stereotypical/caricatural additions of a paragogic vowel at the end of some words (*‘E no kin bite-a you, me killa-a you dead, B’er Rabitt tell-a too big tale*); *no kin* (instead of *kyaan* or *kiin* or *kehn* ‘can’t’); *‘e gwan fer bite-a me . . .* (instead of *E/He gwine bite me*); *Da mek we is kin* ‘that makes us kin’; *‘T is-a bin hu’t* (instead of *I/He bin (a) hurt*); and *Dey is bin lif one Mån* (instead of *(deh) bin a man* or *A man live/liß yah/deh*) “there lived a man.” Although, to be sure, there are normal features of Gullah and CECs in Harris’s representations, he appears to have caricatured the variety to meet his sentiment that this ethnolect is “the negro dialect in its most primitive state” (*Daddy Jack*, xxxii–xxxiii, quoted by Troike 2010, 293). Wasn’t Gullah once believed by some White Americans in the early twentieth century to be the worst English spoken anywhere in the world? In his writings, Harris managed to construct a Black dialect that is ultimately more distant from the basilect than Ambrose Gonzales’s exaggeration in *The Black Border* (1922), justifying Pederson’s (1985) observation that “the artistic license that Harris took in making tales works of literature rendered them problematic as valid historical representations of early AAVE [or indeed Gullah] syntax” (paraphrased by Troike 2010, 288).<sup>17</sup>

We are undoubtedly all guilty, to variable extent, of interpreting data in ways more compatible with the position we prefer, even when reality calls for more research or a more cautious disposition. Nonetheless, the economic history of the American Southeast casts doubt on claims of a generalized Gullah-like English that would have developed among African Americans in the region. Interestingly, William Gilmore Simms, the first to represent Gullah in writing, had to migrate from Mississippi to South Carolina to encounter the variety, much like Joel Chandler Harris, who relocated temporarily from hinterland Georgia, to get acquainted with Gullah in coastal Georgia.

On the other hand, Sutcliffe appears justified in invoking the speech of the East and Southeast Texas ex-slaves to highlight the fact that features traditionally associated with Gullah need not be its exclusive trademark. To the extent that they are modifications of colonial nonstandard English, they could surface at any place where the ecology of language contact favored them. Nonetheless, we should not overlook the fact that Texas was annexed to the United States in 1845, after the abolition of the slave trade; its slaves came from former English colonies. Some may have originated from coastal South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia (Long 1995). Some of those who originated in coastal South Carolina may have kept some Gullah(-like) features and perhaps transmitted them to some of their offspring. Thus, one need not invoke a generalized

Gullah-like ancestor of AAE spoken all over the cotton, tobacco, and rice plantation states in the nineteenth century to account for the presence of “creole features” in the speech of some of the speakers in the Ex-Slave Recordings. The evidence in support of this position should definitely not be drawn from writers whose primary goal was to demonstrate the “quaint”-ness and “primitive state” of the “negro dialect.”

### 3.3.6 More Direct Colonial Evidence

We will re-examine some of the transcripts from the Salem Witch Trials in this section. These trials took place in Massachusetts in 1692 and 1693, when, the presence of African slaves in the colony was negligible. Three slaves were indicted, one most likely a Native American woman, called Tituba, and the other two, African women called Mary Black and Candy (Ray 2009). Only the Native American was tried; the Africans were not and were eventually cleared of the charges (Ray 2009). Both ~~Mary Black~~ and Candy had been brought from the Caribbean and were accused of practicing witchcraft. Because their speech patterns allegedly diverged from those of the White colonists, some creolists have claimed that they spoke either a pidgin or creole, although they could in fact have been characterized as speaking interlanguages. Note that, except perhaps in Barbados and to some extent Suriname, no large plantations employing over one hundred slaves segregated from the European colonists had developed yet by this time, owing to the lack of capital, as explained by Dunn (1972) in the case of Jamaica and by Edgar (1998) in the case of South Carolina. No particular West African Pidgin English had emerged yet in Africa (Mufwene 2014), *pace* Dillard (1972 et seq.). Based on historical sources cited by Mufwene (2014), the slave trade (then also organized on the model of today’s capitalist global ventures) and the colonization of Africa until the early twentieth century relied heavily on intermediaries, who also served as interpreters. This corroborates in part Naro’s (1978, 1988) argument against the claim that a Portuguese pidgin was used in the trade. The slaves may not have spoken any pidgin during the Middle Passage and probably started learning English or whatever plantation language by immersion, after landing, thus first producing individual interlanguages until they developed some competence in it.<sup>18</sup>

The Europeans then traded with Native Americans in the latter’s trade languages, for instance, Delaware Pidgin and the Mobilian Jargon in North America, as well as *Lingua Geral* in Brazil and Quechua in Southwestern South America. Although Tituba allegedly came from Barbados, it is not clear how long she had lived there, as she had been bought in mainland Latin America. As for Candy, she appears to have just transited briefly in the Caribbean before being brought to Massachusetts. She refers to both the country where she was born and Barbados in her answers to the prosecutor. Because the Caribbean, in the seventeenth-century colonial context, did not provide the kind of ecology where a pidgin would have emerged, we need not assume that both Tituba and Candy would have learned a pidgin there. Although pidgins and interlanguages have similar features, they should not be confused. As explained above, a pidgin is a (stable)

communal variety, whereas an interlanguage is an individual speaker's transitional variety toward the acquisition of a target language.

Not much is reported of Candy's and Mary Black's testimonies. The following three utterances of Mary Black's do not sound particularly pidgin or creole: "I hurt no body," "I do not know," and "No, I pin my neck cloth." It's not evident that Candy's divergent utterances need be characterized as creole or pidgin either: "Candy no witch in her country," "Candy's mother no witch," "Candy no witch, [in] Barbados," and "Mistress bring book and pen and ink, make Candy write in it." Candy's speech also includes some features that are not expected in pidgin or creole English, viz., the possessive inflection in *Candy's mother* and the possessive pronoun in *her country*.

The most striking things in the limited speech sample are the zero copula, the absence of a determiner before *Mistress*, and the fact that Candy talks about herself in a child-like manner, as if she was speaking about somebody else. So, Candy's speech is not as creole as Cassidy (1986) claims; these very few utterances do not provide any particular evidence for putative creole origins of AAE. There is nothing particularly striking in Mary Black's examination either. She appears to have spoken the same kind of (nonstandard) English as the White colonists. Both Mary Black's and Candy's materials can be used to argue, after Chaudenson (1992, 2001) and Mufwene (2001b), that AAE, like the related creoles, evolved by basilectalization away from the closer approximations of the lexifier spoken by the slaves of the homestead phase.

### 3.3.7 Revisiting the Ex-Slave Narratives and Recordings

Rickford (2006) has reassessed the particular ways in which the contributors to Poplack (2000) have interpreted the Ex-Slave Narratives and Recordings, questioning their common conclusion that the origins of the relevant features of AAVE lie in colonial English. Although he acknowledges that colonial nonstandard English varieties have contributed features to AAVE, he still argues that the evidence is not sufficient for giving up the creole-origins hypothesis. He points out in a number of cases that at least some of the contributors could have drawn different conclusions if they had considered different bodies of data.

Note, however, that when it comes to language evolution, no two corpora that have not been collected from exactly the same speakers and/or the same communities will support exactly the same conclusions. Regarding linguistic phenomena that can be explained accurately only by adducing various relevant factors or constraints, I wonder whether different communities can be expected to be equally sensitive to all of them or to weight them in identical ways. Such variation alone can account for differences in the kinds of findings and conclusions questioned by Rickford about the studies.

My motto is that evolution is always local, even if general cross-community patterns obtain that apply regionally or cross-regionally. It is thus normal for evolutionary differences, minor or substantial, to obtain between any two communities. CECs themselves differ from each other in one respect or another. For instance, not every CEC uses *doz*

for HABITUAL or the durative combination *de a + V* for “busy *V-ing*” in English, features which are attested in Guyanese Creole (GC) but not in Jamaican Creole. Gullah has only the variant *duhz*, pronounced [dəz], like in British Southwestern dialects and in Newfoundland’s English, and with a similar HABITUAL function.

Rickford (2006) also highlights the extent of variation across the AAE Diaspora varieties and in different bodies of Ex-Slave Recordings and Ex-Slave Narratives, which proponents of the English-Origins or Creole-Origins hypotheses have perused in whichever way is compatible with their respective positions. The situation is somewhat reminiscent of the half-empty vs. half-full bottle dilemma. We thus must depend on which account is more compatible with the external history of the phenomenon, which I attempted in Part 2. *Pace* Baker’s (1997) hypothesis that the slaves deliberately produced their “medi[a] of interethnic communication,” this population did not have the luxury of planning for a common language in the way that, say, the founders of Israel did in planning Israeli Hebrew. Even in the latter case, things did not proceed as planned; in the main, Israeli Hebrew still evolved naturalistically, resembling its biblical ancestor only remotely.

Part of the problem in the controversy about the emergence of AAVE arises from a failure to make a useful distinction between ORIGINS and EVOLUTION. In their strongest forms, both the Anglicist and Creole-Origins Hypotheses have been articulated as if the Africans either retained English the way it was spoken by the lower-class Europeans that they interacted with (Krapp 1924) or, as a group, they first developed a pidgin and then a creole which would later decreolize into AAVE. Even studies such as Schneider (1989) and subsequent studies by other Anglicists that focus on specific features suffer from suggesting that the features were retained unmodified in the new language variety, leaving the critical reader to wonder indeed how differences between AAVE and other English dialects, traditional or (post)colonial, can be explained.

To begin with, the English features did not all originate in the same dialect, which conjures up competition and selection in the colonial pool of the English features themselves. As the statistics show, although the features discussed in this controversy are variable, they have higher frequencies in AAVE than in other White American or British English dialects. In some cases, such as with negative inversion and copula absence, the grammatical rules are not the same anymore. Thus, like its creole kin, AAVE was produced by the African slaves and undoubtedly bears influence from African substrate languages. However, the question remains of what kind of influence this is. When did it take effect, given part of AAVE’s common genesis with WASE? Which specific African languages prevailed for which features? Or could it be that AAVE’s peculiarities were already part of tobacco and cotton plantation English before Jim Crow and either White southerners lost them or African Americans amplified them? These open questions must be addressed in future research.

Again, I do not consider the English origins of AAVE’s features to be mutually exclusive with substrate influence, which must have played a role in shaping AAVE’s grammar, like those of its creole kin, as different from that/those of the lexifier. However, divergence from the target structures alone is not evidence of substrate influence. Mere

AQ: Does this refer to section 2 (which has been renumbered as “3.2”) of the present chapter? We thus must depend on which account is more compatible with the external history of the phenomenon, which I attempted in Part 2.



differences in details of the restructuring process qua feature recombination (Mufwene 2001b), even without substrate influence (compare, for instance, St. Helena and Falkland Englishes), would account for the divergence. While Rickford (1998, 2006) is correct in highlighting incontrovertible structural similarities between AAVE and CECs, the question remains open of whether these had already emerged by the time AAVE or tobacco and cotton plantation English was emerging. Colonial history militates for direct critical influence from African languages and for parallel homologous evolution with CECs, leaving still open the question of the specific ways in which African substrate influence operated.

Take, for instance, the *be* + *V-in'* construction, which is usually characterized inaccurately as a HABITUAL marker. I find the characterization inaccurate because there is a useful distinction in AAVE between the two utterances in (4):

- (4) a. *James be tellin' funny jokes every time I see him.*  
 b. *James tells funny jokes.*

Only (4b) is an unmarked expression of HABITUAL; (4a) describes a repeated transient state of affairs, presented as in process at the reference time. The grammatical distinction also highlights the difference between *Pat be sick all the time*, which may also be a put on, and *Pat sick all the time*. As pointed out by Green (1998, 2002), this *be* is an aspectual marker, different from the copula *be*, which is why it is negated differently, with *don't*. On the other hand, although it appears that Africans speaking languages that have a distinct HABITUAL marker would want to have this meaning expressed by a specialized form or construction in English, too (the case of *doz/duhz* in Guyanese Creole and Gullah), I am not aware of a particular Black African language that makes the kind of distinction articulated in AAVE, one that is in fact not attested in CECs either. Could African substrate influence have simply favored the selection from the feature pool of a distinction that is also attested in Irish English (Rickford 1986) but not have introduced it? Why selection operated this way for AAVE (perhaps also forging its meaning in a unique way?) but not for CECs is a question that can be answered largely with a more informed understanding of their respective ecologies of contact.

Actually, this divergent evolution is not an isolated incident. AAE in general has evolved some characteristics that are not attested in (most) CECs that have nothing to do with decreolization. For instance, Gullah has a schwa [ə] and a bilabial fricative [β] in variance with [v] and [w], as in [βeri βeɪ] “very well” and [βɛks] “vexed, angry.” The latter is produced as [bɛks] in Jamaican Creole. Both [β] and [ə] are not (commonly) attested in Black African languages. Likewise, Gullah expresses the habitual with [dɔz], but only Guyanese Creole has [dɔz] to my knowledge. African substrate influence is very likely in the present case, though the marker *does* [dɔz] is attested in some British English dialects and was selected also with the same function in Newfoundland English. It remains that CECs other than Guyanese have not selected it. Such facts, in addition to the considerations articulated in the next section, cast as much doubt on the Creole-Origins account of the emergence of AAVE as on the strong English-Origins Hypothesis.

### 3.4 WHAT ELSE UNDERMINES THE CREOLE-ORIGINS ACCOUNT OF THE EMERGENCE OF AAVE?

Some proponents of the Creole-Origins Hypothesis (see Dillard 1972 et seq.; McWhorter 2000) claim that the initial stages of every contact setting between Europeans and Africans either in Africa or in the New World produced a pidgin, which under favorable conditions would evolve into a creole. An important problem is that incipient pidgins are associated with sporadic contacts, with the relevant populations retaining their heritage languages as the vernaculars of their intra-ethnic interactions. Neither the homesteads that preceded the plantations nor the plantation settings of the New World provided these ecological conditions that would have favored the emergence of a pidgin, lest one confuses the individual speakers' interlanguages with pidgins as communal varieties. The other alternative, favored by McWhorter (2000), heeding Dillard's (1972) invocation of a West African Pidgin English, is that the pidgin(s) must have emerged on the African coast.

The relevant citations from Dillard (1972) are scant and date from the early eighteenth century, about a century later than the first effective settlement of Virginia in 1607, or the arrival of the first African in 1619, or the settlement of Barbados in 1627. Dillard's evidence is closer to nonstandard English than to a pidgin and no more convincing than Candy's testimony at the Salem Witch Trials. Although Hancock (1986) also invokes the existence of a Guinea Coast Creole English, which would have fed into the emergence of New World creoles, this may have been restricted to the mixed households of the European *lançados* and used perhaps also by the *grumetes* who served as their go-betweens in the trade with the African interior. The emergence of a creole in this setting seems dubious to me, though the English they spoke must have indigenized under the influence of the local languages spoken by the *grumetes* and the female partners of the *lançados*. However, I believe, like Berlin (1998), that a number of African Creoles or Mulattoes on both sides of the Atlantic commanded enough English (or any other European language) to act as power-brokers in the Euro-African trade for various commodities, including slaves (see below).

It has also been pointed out that until the eighteenth century, or the nineteenth century according to Huber (1999), Portuguese, rather than any other European language, served as the trade lingua franca along the African coast and all the way to Southeast Asia (Ostler 2005).<sup>19</sup> This suggests that the ancestor of Nigerian and Cameroon Pidgin English may have emerged relatively late in colonial history<sup>20</sup> and apparently later than the probable emergence of some CECs either in the late seventeenth century or in the early eighteenth century (Mufwene 2014). There is now also mounting evidence that earlier trade between Europeans and non-Europeans depended more on interpreters than on unmediated interactions. These typically

slighted agents of colonization are often identified in historical accounts as “linguists” (Fortbath 1977; Samarin 1982, 1989; Reader 1997; Northrup 2002; Fayer 2003; Lawrance, Osborn, and Roberts 2006). I surmise that it is only after trade intensified and there was a shortage of interpreters that less and less competent speakers of the European language were hired and the European trade languages spread, undergoing substantial restructuring. By then, CECs may have started to develop already without the African pidgin input.

English pidgins appear to be the outcomes of the gradual basilectalization of English from the closer approximations thereof spoken by the interpreters, either Africans (from royal courts) who were sent to England to learn the language before the trade started in earnest, or Europeans left behind as gages against the Africans taken to Europe, or lançados/“factors” and their children (Mufwene 2014).

The development of plantations from homesteads, on which the Africans were minorities and integrated, did *not* favor prior pidginization. Creoles emerged after the formation of large plantations, in a protracted process that depended on slow accumulation of capital (Dunn 1972) and involved gradual basilectalization. No wonder one has to wait until the early nineteenth century to see any documented evidence of CECs or Gullah.

Both Dillard (1972) and Alleyne (1980) were correct in arguing that creole continua date from the earliest phases of settlement colonization. Though they associated this phenomenon with the stratification of slaves on the plantations (e.g., house slaves vs. field hands), we may infer from Dunn (1972) that this phenomenon was due partly also to the fact that until the end of the seventeenth century, most of the slaves lived on farms, where the population ratios did not foster residential segregation and the emergence of different ethnolects spoken only by the slaves. Another contributing factor usually ignored is inter-individual variation in learning skills; populations may indeed vary in their proportions of skilled vs. less-skilled learners. In the United States, the late institutionalization of segregation and the subsequent divergence of AAVE as an ethnolect separate from the White American variety of the former tobacco and cotton plantation English are not consistent with claims of decreolization (Mufwene 1994).

If Rickford (2006) is right in arguing that the evidence for the English-Origins Hypothesis account of the emergence of AAVE is weak, weaker is even that for the Creole-Origins Hypothesis. My conclusion is for parallel, concurrent evolution of all colonial varieties, subject to local ecological conditions of population contacts, including the local population structure, not barring cross-territorial crossovers, which Rickford is well justified in pointing out. We should focus not just on similarities that obtain on the family resemblance model but also on differences ~~between not only~~ CECs and AAE but also between varieties within the two major groups. Rickford is also justified in underscoring the role of substrate influence, naturally expected in varieties that were shaped in the New World predominantly by Africans or their descendants, though it is a totally different ball game to articulate what the nature of the influence is.

### 3.5 CONCLUSION

Regarding the emergence of AAVE, the evidence appears to speak against some creole origins. Nor is it accurate to suggest the variety is just a conservative legacy of colonial nonstandard English. However, like any colonial offspring of English, including CECs and Gullah, AAVE selected materials for its grammar from English itself, albeit its nonstandard varieties, which were the actual targets for the African slaves. Much of the grammar came in fact with its vocabulary, as the model speakers used it. The grammatical features were recombined, thanks to competition and selection in the contact feature pool, under the influence of substrate languages into the new emergent variety. The documentary evidence shows that the modifications were less extensive in AAVE than in Gullah and CECs, though one may also argue that they were relatively less extensive in Gullah than in CECs. Under this scenario, no decreolization need be invoked for AAE, though some explanations are still needed for why, based on Rickford and Handler (2004), debasilectalization appears to have affected Bajan. This shows again that all evolution is local and the same trajectory need not be replicated elsewhere, despite similarities.

The colonial and postcolonial history of the United States suggests polygenesis for Gullah and AAVE as two distinct varieties of AAE, notwithstanding the geographical continuum between them as one travels from the coast inlands. Qualitative structural analyses to date suggest more substrate influence on Gullah than on AAVE. For instance, unlike the latter, the former has serial verb constructions; uses *say* and *fu* as complementizers; does not systematically distinguish between possessive and subjective pronouns; uses the objective forms *me*, *him*, and *dem* as subjects and the subjective *we* as object; and has a relative tense system. This is not to say that the features originated as such from African substrate languages, only that one can recognize the role of structural congruence in the selection of these features into Gullah's grammar. This differential evolution is consistent with the fact that the Africans constituted an overwhelming majority of the colonial population on the coasts of South Carolina and Georgia, where they were segregated from the European population about a century and a half earlier than their counterparts inland. However, the rice fields represented a different kind of contact ecology from those of the Caribbean, which accounts for evolutionary differences between Gullah and CECs, despite structural similarities between them.

Finally, the expansion of cotton cultivation in the eighteenth century, especially after the invention of the cotton gin in 1793, fostered the relocation of slaves from some plantation states, where forms of (the ancestor of) AAE must have already emerged, to others. Thus, we need not assume that a Gullah-like offspring of Colonial English was spoken all over the plantation South. Some of its features may have been spread to some new plantations of the nineteenth century. And, of course, the Great Migration appears to have spread (the ancestor of) AAVE before Jim Crow to other parts of the United States.

## NOTES

1. Every plantation settlement colony appears to have evolved gradually, from a homestead phase, during which capital had to be raised and the physical infrastructure had to be built. Dunn (1972) explains that in the case of Jamaica most English colonists either remained on small farms or worked for pirates, who had helped the Royal Navy win Jamaica over from Spain in 1655. The first handful of plantations did not emerge before the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The big difference from one colony to another lay in the duration of the homestead phase, which was shorter for second-generation colonies. The tobacco industry was in place in Virginia only by the late seventeenth century, whereas rice cultivation in South Carolina would not stabilize until the early eighteenth century. It would take less time in Georgia, settled in part from South Carolina.
2. Rickford (2006) objects that the distinction I make between the Africans going through interlanguages and speaking pidgins is like splitting hairs. No, because pidgins are communal varieties associated with sporadic contacts between those who brought the trade language with them and people who still speak their heritage vernaculars for intra-group communication but use the other party's language only for the purposes of their encounters, typically trade. This was not the situation that the early African captives in Virginia and other New World colonies were in. Interlanguages, on the other hand, are associated with the gradual nature of L2 acquisition as experienced by individual speakers, who may not even interact with other learners of the same language in this variety (as in the case of immigrant workers in Europe and the United States). They are considered as the transition to some level of stabilized competence in the target language. History actually suggests that Plag's (2008, 2009) hypothesis that pidgins are the outcomes of learners' interlanguages is mistaken (Mufwene 2010; Aboh 2015), as pidgins are more likely to have emerged by basilectalization, just like creoles (Chaudenson 1992, 2001; Mufwene 2001b) and perhaps also concurrently with, if not later than, the latter (Mufwene 2014).
3. After listening to a sample Gullah recording I played at a public lecture at the University of Georgia in the late 1980s, a Virginian colleague observed that traditional coastal Black Virginians speak with a similar accent. Although this may prove that isolation, rather than just the rice fields, contributed to the emergence of Gullah, nobody else to my knowledge has made a similar comment.
4. There are indeed other factors that complicate this plausible scenario and show how difficult it is for us to know the full story. Notwithstanding variation in language learning skills among the Africans, what kind of competence one developed also depended on whether or not the Europeans one interacted (more) regularly with were native or fluent speakers, as indentured servants were not all English and did not necessarily have acceptable levels of fluency.
5. Barbados, the point from which other, mostly Caribbean territories were colonized, was getting overcrowded, with its land becoming too expensive for many colonists since the mid-seventeenth century. The new, second-generation colonies included Jamaica and Suriname in the second half of the seventeenth century, Guyana in the late eighteenth century (acquired officially in 1814), and Trinidad in 1797.
6. In earlier work, I incorrectly gave the reference as *The Book of My Lady* (1833). There is no Gullah to be found there. There are several editions of *The Wigwam and the Cabin*; not all of them include the relevant parts: "The lazy crow. A story of the cornfield" and "Caloya: or, the loves of the driver."

7. Brazil launched sugar cane cultivation a century earlier than the Caribbean, produced more sugar than the Caribbean colonies until the eighteenth century, and had far more slaves than the latter. However, it did not produce a creole. The reason is that its population structure with small farms of thirty to forty slaves, with the planters sharing distilleries (Schwartz 1985), did not favor the emergence of a separate variety of Portuguese among the slaves, who remained integrated (Mufwene 2008).
8. Note that Jim Crow, which imposed race-based residential segregation in the former tobacco and cotton plantation colonies, was institutionalized only after the abolition of slavery. The former indentured servants had then lost the peculiarity of being the only people in bondage that were guaranteed freedom at the end of a specified term. One must wonder why this institution was set in place just at this time, if socialization across race boundaries had not been taking place and had not been accepted or tolerated until that late in the nineteenth century. The advantages conferred to Whites could still be implemented even without residential segregation, just like slavery had been institutionalized earlier without residential segregation. The only colonies that had institutionalized race segregation earlier were South Carolina and Georgia, presumably on the coast, where the rice fields were developed and the Africans were the overwhelming majority.
9. The settlement colonization of Ireland by England was just intensifying in the early to mid-seventeenth century, especially under the rule of Oliver Cromwell. It would take until the late nineteenth century before English became a widespread vernacular in Ireland, thanks to the textile industry (Corrigan 2010; Mufwene 2012).
10. The comments between the parentheses have been added by the present author.
11. I identify the speakers and the relevant grammatical features between the parentheses. Many more have been omitted in order to shorten this chapter.
12. The evidence in the following sections are framed as “indirect” because it is only inferred as characteristic of a particular earlier period, although it was obtained much later in the relevant history.
13. In the state of New York, most of the slaves were concentrated around New York City: 25 percent of the combined population of Kings, Queens, Richmond, New York, and Worcester counties (Harper 2003). It is not clear whether they lived in segregated communities of their own and spoke a then identifiable Black ethnolect distinct from White (nonstandard) varieties.
14. I have underscored “some” because the substrate languages in contact with English were not typologically identical. The speakers contributing to the emergence of AAE need not all have done the same thing. It is not evident which particular speakers exerted the most critical influence where and when (Mufwene 2010). On the other hand, typological diversity among the African languages may in itself have weakened the extent of possible substrate influence (Mufwene 2008).
15. Manipulations of data by the field workers or the editors may actually have worked in two ways, exaggerating the differences or reducing them, depending on the manipulator.
16. Joel Chandler Harris was born in Eatonton, Georgia, at least 150 miles inland, and relocated to Savannah, Georgia at the age of about 17, to work for the *Savannah Morning News*. He married a local Savannah woman and would move to Atlanta in 1876 (ten to eleven years later), to work for the *Atlanta Constitution*, where he started publishing the stories that would be republished together as *Uncle Remus* in 1880. In his own Introduction, Harris states that he wanted to capture the “quaint”-ness of the “the speech of the negro” (1880). He also notes, contrary to Troike (2010), “the difference between the dialect of the

cotton plantations [where no Gullah was spoken], as used by Uncle Remus, and the lingo in vogue on the rice plantations and the Sea Islands of the South Atlantic States” (8). Harris also claims that the variety he represents is no longer spoken.

Harris’s ideology is similar to that of Ambrose Gonzales’s early twentieth-century representations of Gullah, made more different from present-day basilectal Gullah, whose statistical distribution of “creole features” is more similar to his late nineteenth-century representations of the same language variety (Mille 1990). Gonzales’s declared intention was also to capture the same “quaint”-ness that interested Whites wanted to hear. Harris claims that his representation of cotton plantation AAE is more accurate than that of the “minstrel stage” (4) but he also endorses “Mrs. Stowe’s wonderful defense of slavery as it existed in the South” (4), as he would undoubtedly espouse Gonzales’s invocation of the “mental inferiority” of the African slaves and their alleged inability to acquire the European language. How can one not wonder whether Harris had not produced a cotton plantation variety of his imagination after having experienced Gullah in the Savannah area?

17. Although Troike appears to be aware of these problems, he prefers to forgive Harris and the like with the comment that “this stereotypification is a usual characteristic of literary representations.” This is certainly a good reason for not taking the renditions at face value.
18. This conclusion is consistent with the European colonists’ comments on the variable speech of runaway slaves published by Brasch 1981, discussed above.
19. The English, the French, and the Dutch joined the Portuguese and Spaniards in the colonial venture only in the early seventeenth century, a century and a half after the former two. Portugal had then established the monopoly of trade east of the Atlantic Ocean and in the Indian Ocean. Though the newcomers would confiscate the majority of Portuguese colonies, it would take longer before Portuguese would be replaced by other languages as the lingua franca of trade or diplomacy.
20. English was introduced to Cameroon, then a German colony, in 1847 (1845 according to Wikipedia 6/28/2012), by Baptist missionaries. While the Germans banned usage of English from their official institutions, they retained it for communication with the natives (Todd 1982, cited by Anchimbe 2006), which may have helped spread the new indigenized/pidginized variety as a lingua franca.

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