INTRODUCTION

1. Manly served as president from 1837 to 1855. In his role as Baptist minister, he wrote the “Alabama Resolutions”—a foundational document in the decision of state Baptist conventions to withdraw from the national convention and form the Southern Baptist Convention. Manly argued that the Baptist faith would foster the humane treatment of slaves and that slavery itself is merely a natural extension and component of social stratification.


3. Much has rightly been made of feminist theory’s problematic tendency to refer to a universal signifying “woman,” discounting the very material effects of race and class on a woman’s subjectivity. Scholars like Hazel Carby, Patricia Hill Collins, Evelynn Hammonds, Barbara Smith, and Claudia Tate, just to name a few, have aimed this critique at feminists who ignore race and class as well as race theorists who tether themselves to an essentialist and patriarchal notion of blackness and ignore feminist concerns of gender and sexuality. In “African-American Women’s History and the Metalanguage of Race,” for example, Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham takes a cue from Elizabeth Spelman by noting what is too often white feminism’s “double standard”: “White feminists . . . typically discern two separate identities for black women, the racial and the gender, and conclude that the gender identity of black women is the same as their own” (255). Implicit in white feminists’ frequent separation of gender and race—if not their failure to discuss race at all—is a feminist appeal to an “authentic” experience of womanhood. Such an appeal goes against the impulses of Third Wave feminist theory that would reject what is commonly portrayed as a “Second Wave problem” (typified by thinkers like bell hooks with From Margin to Center)—removing oppressive institutions of patriarchy from the center
rhetorically and simply replacing them with ideas of female empowerment. Third Wave feminism would rightly argue that pointing to a center at all is a problematic beginning.

4. This feminist notion of “becoming” is key to my own study of subjects that move from place to place. Whereas the emphasis for Butler and Grosz is one largely corporeal and phenomenological, I am interested in how identities are performed and articulated when their surrounding context changes again and again. With each new societal encounter, the women in the texts I discuss imbibe different sets of expectations and evaluations imposed on their bodies and subjectivities, different definitions of tropes like “womanhood,” “appropriateness,” and “sexuality.” Early in her narrative, Mary Prince says of her time with Betsey, the little girl to whom she belonged in Bermuda, “I was made quite a pet of by Miss Betsey, and loved her very much. She used to lead me about by the hand, and call me her little nigger. This was the happiest period in my life; for I was too young to understand rightly my condition as a slave” (187). Consistent travel and migration complicate the ability for Prince and characters like Condé’s Tituba and Hurston’s Janie to “understand rightly [their] condition[s]” since the condition changes in accordance with place.

5. Many feminists have begun to move forward in rethinking categorization and its effects. Rose Brewer, despite her tether to the political efficacy of categories, offers in her essay “Theorizing Race, Class and Gender” several ways that scholars and social theorists interpret race, thus exemplifying the multiplicity and heterogeneity imbedded in the very notion of “race.” Then, in Belabored Professions: Narratives of African American Working Womanhood, Xiomara Santamarina suggests something similar on a class level, that it is “counterproductive to ground analyses of texts [on Black women workers] in traditionally discrete categories of identity such as ‘working class’ or ‘middle class’” (167).

6. McClintock offers a nice metaphor, suggesting that “race, gender and class are not distinct realms of experience, existing in splendid isolation from each other; nor can they be simply yoked together retrospectively like armatures of Lego. Rather they come into existence in and through relation to each other—if in contradictory and conflictual ways. In this sense, gender, race and class can be called articulated categories” (5). At this critical crux, where inadequate classifications and individual subjects collide, women’s migration narratives present a point of access that helps navigate the complex theoretical spaces of and between these forces of identity politics.

7. Exploring how identity signifiers might become confounded in diasporic contexts provides possibilities for feminist readings of texts that present specific relationships between the categories “race,” “sexuality,” “gender,” and “class.” Rather than preserving these signs as singular classifications, a much more productive approach is available when considering Laura Alexandra Harris’s notion of queering categories and Rose Brewer’s understanding of them as “simultaneous forces” (16).

8. Laura Alexandra Harris in “Queer Black Feminism: The Pleasure Principle” rightly suggests that problematizing a seeming category is not an end in itself: “Once a system of knowledge is in place, once gender oppression is under scrutiny, the focus should include not only disrupting the stability of the category but finding methods of making one category always a discussion of another. It just doesn’t prove enough to add the themes—here’s race, a bit of class, and a touch of sexuality—without allowing them to disrupt the system in ways that reconstitute it. A dialogue on race is a feminist dialogue is a class dialogue is a queer dialogue already” (25).

9. Foster’s analysis focuses specifically on three autobiographies of free black women in the early and mid-nineteenth century: The Life and Religious Experiences of Jarena
Lee, A Coloured Lady (1836), A Narrative of the Life and Travels of Mrs. Nancy Prince (1853), and Our Nig; or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black (1859).

10. Lionnet suggests, “They rewrite the ‘feminine’ by showing the arbitrary nature of the images and values which Western culture constructs, distorts, and encodes as inferior by feminizing them. All the texts I discuss in this book interrogate the sociocultural construction of race and gender and challenge the essentializing tendencies that perpetuate exploitation and subjugation on behalf of those fictive differences created by discourses of power” (5).

11. To put it another way, Black and Third World feminisms should not be reduced as a product of academic essentialism that would confine them to a particular set of discourses. Higginbotham notes that even these dialogues have a reductive potential that does not exempt them from the problem of glossing-over difference: “Even black women’s history, which has consciously sought to identify the importance of gender relations and the interworkings of race, class, and gender, nonetheless reflects the totalizing impulse of race in such concepts as ‘black womanhood’ or the ‘black woman cross-culturally’ — concepts that mask real differences of class, status and color, regional culture, and a host of other configurations of difference” (255–56). Certainly it is likewise insufficient to try and complicate classifications like gender and labor if or while doing so with appeals to unproblematized notions of place or the body. Rather than replace one vocabulary of singularity with another, I mean to examine the ways in which specific constructions of gender and work are shaped and shifted in relation to travel and physical movement across geosocial boundaries. Especially when such movement is a result of coercion rather than an evidence of personal autonomy, “agency” becomes a fluctuating idea within varying societal constructs. Rather than insisting on a singular racial identification that falls into the rhetorical trap of making a monolith like Higginbotham warns against of “black womanhood,” I would refer to Claudia Tate, who, in “Reshuffling the Deck; Or, (Re)Reading Race and Gender in Black Women’s Writing,” notes the problematics of categories made too singular by the presumed exclusivity of race and gender, just for two examples: “Put in terms of feminist criticism, black feminist criticism: texts of black female authority = (white) feminist criticism: texts of (white) female authority. In addition to remembering these equations in critical logic, we must be careful not to allow the racial and sexual qualifiers to lead us into regarding black feminist criticism as a form of reader-response criticism in which the so-called ideal reader arises from the social construct of the black female” (119). The same distinction Tate emphasizes regarding the context of feminist criticism should be made in literary studies as well. In this sphere, Hazel Carby’s definition of black feminist criticism in Reconstructing Womanhood is useful. She sees it “as a problem, not a solution, as a sign that should be interrogated, a locus of contradictions” (15). The women in the texts that follow are subject to the definitions that their social contexts impose on them. Thus, “place”—as a trope with geographical but also sociopolitical and psychological significations—is key when considering not only the relationships between the spaces and the protagonists but also the ways that these women utilize various meanings of place and in their own interpersonal dialogues.

12. Scholarship has taken several important turns regarding critical conceptions of the South. Martyn Bone’s The Postsouthern Sense of Place in Contemporary Fiction (2005) not only posits the South as a complicated product of both pastoral nostalgia and modernized economies but also contextualizes the region as a transnational space. More recently, Thadious Davis has offered to the discussion Southscapes: Geographies of Race, Region, and Literature, which “is invested in understanding the persistent conceptual
power of the South as a spatial object and ideological landscape where matters of race are simultaneously opaque and transparent” (2).

CHAPTER 1

1. All quotes from Mary Prince’s History come from the 1987 reprint of the text as anthologized by Henry Louis Gates Jr. in The Classic Slave Narratives. This edition represents important textual migrations both geographically and ideologically as it moves into America and into mainstream conversations within African American Studies and literary theory.

2. Jenny Sharpe rightly notes that a fuller portrait of Mary Prince comes from intersecting and interrogating not only Prince’s narrative but also pro-slavery documents and court proceedings regarding her manumission and character.

3. The novels I look at throughout the rest of this book are also examples of this sort of textual migration. For example, in I, Tituba, Condé recuperates the story of a seventeenth-century slave and repositions it within an essentialist and exclusionary feminist rhetoric that Condé interrogates even as she articulates it.

4. Kremena Todorova points to “the contemporary critical concern with authorship” as a possible reason for the sustained focus on “voice” in readings of The History of Mary Prince (285).

5. I follow Whitlock’s reading of Prince’s narrative as production. She notes, “Here is a place to examine adjacency, intimacy, and the production of identity through relationship rather than authenticity, through intersubjectivity, and through reversals of attributes that attached to gender, race and class positions there and then” (13). Whitlock presents a way to think of the History as cultural product even as it remains a significant addition to the genre of slave narrative.

6. One such question involves how religion and sexuality act as both coerced and strategic forces. Religio-cultural notions of feminine “appropriateness” make several important dictates in Prince’s text. Her religious conversion, which allows for her English contacts and ultimate introduction to the Anti-Slavery Society, is also what provides her access to literacy. Her decidedly religious rhetoric throughout the text, then, gives her a particularly useful religious platform from which to offer a woman’s critique of the institution of slavery.

7. Prince’s depiction of her being sold away from Miss Betsey, the small child for whom she was bought as a gift, provides another moment of gendered and racial disruption. She writes, “The idea of being sold away from my mother and Miss Betsey was so frightful, that I dared not trust myself to think about it. We had been bought of Mr. Myners, as I have mentioned, by Miss Betsey’s grandfather, and given to her, so that we were by right her property, and I never thought we should be separated or sold away from her. When I reached the house, I went in directly to Miss Betsey. I found her in great distress; and she cried out as soon as she saw me, Oh, Mary! my father is going to sell you all to raise money to marry that wicked woman. You are my slaves, and he was no right to sell you; but it is all to please her” (189).

8. Prince extends the importance of the alliance to a familial level, stating, “Poor Hetty, my fellow slave, was very kind to me, and I used to call her my Aunt” (194).

9. In Ghosts of Slavery, Jenny Sharpe notes, “The slave woman acts, then, only inasmuch as she exhibits the moral agency of an enlightened individual. The slave narrative makes no mention of Prince attempting to gain freedom through extramarital relationships with white men” (120).
Barbara Baumgartner argues in “The Body as Evidence” that Pringle’s inclusion of a “slanderous letter from Mr. Wood in the supplement” shifts a focus from “the disabled-turned-resistant body (Prince’s portrayal) to a sexualized body (Pringle/Wood portrayal)” (262). While I believe the avoidances and elisions throughout the text are just as telling in a reading of Prince as a sexualized subject, Baumgartner provides an extremely compelling discussion of the strategic uses of corporeality in the narrative.


This is not to say presumptively that she does not, in fact, feel any actual shame. Rather I mean only to emphasize the place that her audience occupies imaginatively for her.

Thomas Pringle is an example, rebuking Mr. Wood, Captain I— and his wife, and Mr. D— for their harsh treatment of Prince: “The behavior of the slaveholder was often lacking in earthly consequences, but it could create difficulties in his moral and social acceptance by British society” (qtd. in Bracks 36).

Whitlock notes the way in which the narrative employs corporeal proof: “Here, as is so often the case, the body is seen to represent truth. Although what is taken from Mary’s lips remains suspect, her scars on her back, her flesh, cannot lie. Skin determines the deployments of other body parts. The marks of authenticity, which abolitionist look for her, are a quite specific requirement” (23).

CHAPTER 2

3. Bone nods to William Gleason’s socioeconomic critique of such readings: “William Gleason suggests the perils of ‘nostalgia for a rural community’ in Hurston scholarship when he wonders aloud: ‘[Does] knowing that black towns like Eatonville were in large respect labor farms for neighboring white towns that catered to wealthy northerners wintering in Florida dissipate the haze of nostalgia enveloping Hurston’s youthful recollections?’” (Bone 757).
4. “The representation of the storm in Their Eyes Were Watching God draws upon the Lake Okechobee hurricane of 1928. On 16 September 1928, a hurricane with winds of 140 miles per hour struck Florida, having already killed hundreds of people in Puerto Rico and the Bahamas . . . The official death toll was 1,838, but this figure has been disputed by scholars who believe that up to 6,000 people died and that “four-fifths of them [were] blacks working the fertile sugar cane and bean fields near Lake Okechobee” (Bone 767).
5. Locke’s review appeared in Opportunity in February 1939.
6. See Wright’s “Between Laughter and Tears” in New Masses, October 5, 1937.
7. See Ralph Ellison’s “Recent Negro Fiction,” New Masses, August 5, 1940.
10. Bone summarizes Carby’s position thusly: “Carby sees Janie’s migrations ‘from the southern states further south’ in Their Eyes Were Watching God as exemplifying Hurston’s discursive displacement of northward urban migration” (760).

11. He particularly critiques what he calls “Carby’s overly simple model of African American migration from the rural South to the urban North” (Bone 763).


13. This perception greets Janie upon her very arrival in Eatonville as Mrs. Joe Starks. Almost immediately, the townspeople argue over which of them might win her affections and over what “kind” of woman she is: “Aw, git reconciled! Dat woman don’t want you. You got tuh learn dat all de women in de world ain’t been brought up on no teppentine still, and no saw-mill camp. There’s some women dat jus’ ain’t for you tuh broach. You can’t git her wid no fish sandwich” (39).

14. Hurston describes how their relationship translates to the store: “[Janie] had her first taste of presiding over [the store] the day it was complete and finished. Jody told her to dress up and stand in the store all that evening. Everybody was coming sort of fixed up, and he didn’t mean for nobody else’s wife to rank with her. She must look on herself as the bell-cow, the other women were the gang” (41).

15. The issue of “good hair” is obviously at play here, with Janie’s authentic blackness coming into question and her hair serving as both a conduit of access into a more privileged sector of social rank and a signifier of the exploitation she encounters at the hands of her domineering husband Joe Starks, who is primarily invested in upward mobility regarding economics and race-consciousness.

16. However, also at work in these introductory pages is the offering of another option that comes in the form of Janie, specifically her relationship with Pheoby. Janie uses Pheoby as a mediating voice between her and the community.

17. The town’s gossip is evidence of this vision of Janie: “Tea Cake and Mrs. Mayor Starks! All the men that she could get, and fooling with somebody like Tea Cake!” (110).

18. Tea Cake is quick to reestablish traditional gender expectations, ensuring that he is still regarded as being able to take care of Janie: “You don’t think Ah’m tryin’ tuh git outa takin’ keer uh yuh, do yuh, Janie, ‘cause Ah ast yuh tuh work long side uh me?” (133). Janie responds with a comparison to Eatonville: “Ah naw, honey. Ah laks it. It’s mo’ nicer than settin’ round dese quarters all day. Clerkin’ in dat store wuz hard, but heah, we ain’t got nothin’ tuh do but do our work and come home and love” (133).

19. Bone makes a similar observation, but casts it in contradistinction to Hazel Carby’s reading: “The novel does not uncritically reproduce what Carby identifies in Mules and Men as the ‘stress on a continuity of [rural black Southern] cultural beliefs and practices with beliefs and practices in the Caribbean.’ Far from it . . . Hurston’s depiction of African American workers on the muck as initially aloof and condescending toward ‘the Saws’ and their dances suggests that she was more skeptical that Carby allows about the viability of a diasporic (or ‘displaced’ Southern cum Caribbean) rural black folk culture. Although Janie’s pioneering personal embrace of the Bahamians and their culture generates an inchoate transnational folk community, Tea Cake’s conversation with Lias indicates that there are still national(ist) barriers to the growth and survival of such a community” (773).

20. Citing Thadious Davis, Jan Cooper, and Patricia Yaeger as notable exceptions, Bone refers to what David McWhirter calls possibly “southern studies’ oddest and most
self-destructive feature: its strange divorce from African American literary and cultural studies” (qtd. in Bone 755). Bone notes, “Yet much recent work on Hurston by scholars working in Southern studies, whether moderately revisionist or more radically transnational, has remained disengaged from the heated debates over Hurston in African American studies. This is perplexing if one considers that Hurston’s representation of the South—and of the U.S. South in relation to the Caribbean—has been a major point of contention within these debates, in which Carby’s work has been central” (755).

CHAPTER 3

1. Also at stake are questions of ownership and statehood: “Willow Springs ain’t in no state. Georgia and South Carolina done tried, though—been trying since right after the Civil War to prove that Willow Springs belong to one or the other of them” (4–5).

2. In the geographical and thematic contexts, Mama Day finds an important parallel in Julie Dash’s Daughters of the Dust (1991). The film and subsequent book tell the story of the Peazant family, who live in a Gullah community off this same coastline shared by South Carolina and Georgia at the turn of the twentieth century. The film centers on Nana Peazant, the matriarch of the family, who, like Miranda Day, preserves the traditions and rituals of their ancestors. Inasmuch as the family has lived on the islands since being displaced as slaves, heritage and memory take on key importance within the framework of place. The film tracks the final days on the island for several members of the younger generation who are about to head north to modernity and a new way of life. There are many compelling ties to be made between Mama Day and Daughters of the Dust, including the presence of African and Afro-Caribbean themes and practices, the correlation between characters like Cocoa and Eula, and the responses to American industrialization and modern ethos. While I am unable to expand on such avenues of study in this book, Daughters of the Dust remains a key partner-text to Mama Day.

3. Ritual travels with Cocoa, too, in her comparisons of New York and Willow Springs. When she receives a package full of small gifts from the Candle Walk that Willow Springs celebrates, she regrets what she believes to be a lack of rituals in New York: “I was utterly . . . even more depressed when I got my Candle Walk package the next week. What in the hell was I doing in this city? It was cold and unfriendly. I took out the sweet orange rock Grandma had sent me and Mama Day’s eternal lavender water. Seven years away from that place and December twenty-second still didn’t feel right without my seeing a lighted candle” (122).

4. The effects of Ruby’s spell start taking hold at almost exactly the time that the hurricane hits Willow Springs (249–50). While they both surely represent supernatural power (hurricanes are, after all, simultaneously “natural” disasters and “acts of God”), what is also at work here is Cocoa’s physical relationship to place. Her body begins to deteriorate as the island itself endures the force of the storm.

5. Miranda’s thoughts of the North as represented on Phil Donahue’s show translate into ideas on race as well, especially regarding the show’s subject matter: “On all of these ‘fascinating topics’ she had one opinion and that could be summed up in two words: white folks. And when they found a colored somebody to act the fool . . . she expanded it to three words: honorary white folks” (38).

6. While outside my present focus in this chapter, an interesting comparative analysis might be made of Sapphira in Mama Day and the matriarch in Willa Cather’s Sap-
phira and the Slave Girl on the level of performative and political manipulations in the context of slavery from two opposing power positions.

7. The concern Miranda shows here for what information is transmitted across generations, and how, resembles the matriarchal worlds found in Morrison’s Song of Solomon and Beloved, in which race and history offer particular understandings of family identities.

8. This is a particularly difficult undertaking for George, who, earlier, reveals his uneasiness around Miranda’s chickens: “He kinda hesitates when the chickens . . . start flocking around his feet . . . He don’t seem any more comfortable inside the fence, tiptoeing around the pullets . . . And George looks about to break and run when her old brown rooster lets out a mighty crow” (194–95). When Miranda reminds him that he sees a lot of chickens in the normal course of things, just “wrapped up neat under cellophane,” George’s only reply is, “I think I like them better that way” (195).

9. George does refer to the difficulty of his literal trip through the west woods to meet Miranda in the other place to hear how to save Cocoa. His description of the woods changes from his initially calling them “a real pleasure” to his remembering “It was a long walk as I stumbled through the west woods, trying to step over fallen trees and around huge sections of gouged earth” (293).

10. There is an easy parallel here to Gayl Jones’s Corregidora, in which ancestral tales of slavery help to illuminate present circumstances and questions.

11. When Miranda awakes from her vague dream/sleep state, she knows she must go uncover the well where her sister Peace died. Her understanding of her own positionality as Daughter in the Days, then, reveals itself as paired with a description of her work.

12. John Indian makes a similar appeal to performance in I, Tituba, which I discuss in the next chapter. When Tituba asks if they will get into trouble if discovered in the middle of their dancing and laughing with other slaves, he tells her, “They expect niggers to get drunk and dance and make merry once their masters have turned their backs. Let’s play at being perfect niggers” (32).


14. Specifically, she tells him why their story is too complicated to tell her children. When she refers to the problems of telling her son what happened, she ironically explains, “Mama Day was right—give him the simple truth. And it’s the one truth about you that I hold on to” (311). The invocation of a “simple truth” speaks to the very impossibility of the same.

15. George buys books to “figure out” how to live with a woman and is disappointed with the non-answers he finds: “Women stayed on an emotional roller coaster: between being premenstrual, postmenstrual, and menstrual, they were normal only about seventy-two hours out of each month . . . Every time you snapped at me or refused to be reasonable, it wasn’t you—it was your estrogen . . . I made sure the next thing I read was written by a man. It was the same slew of depressing charts with another ongoing plea for tolerance: you were all, indeed, shrews through no fault of your own and men should try to be supportive . . . I found out very quickly that when living with a woman, the shortest distance between two points is by way of China” (141–42).

16. George attempts to approach the reductive subject of “what women want” using logic. His misogyny thus maintains the veneer of common sense: “I found out most women just didn’t have Mrs. Jackson’s pragmatism about the whole thing . . . And they’re all waiting with some form of that inevitable question, ‘What is it about me per-
sonally that turns you on? But you’re getting absolutely nowhere if you give them the truth: How can there be anything personal about you to turn me on? At this stage of the game, it’s my own hormones. See, then you’re a smart ass, and even one of those ‘liberated’ ladies will swivel around on her bar stool and find someone else to tell her what she wants to hear” (104–5).

17. In fact, it is the ritual itself that is a key part of the comfort Cocoa feels. She remembers the sayings about hair: “A ball of hair in my hands to be burned when we were through. A bird will take it and make a nest—you’ll have headaches all your life. All unspoken and by rote. I felt a void when she was done” (246).

18. Miranda shares the impulse to revert to an earlier familial space. As she cares for Cocoa and notices that “it was a grown woman’s body leaning over the table,” she “allows herself to wish that it wasn’t so, that [Cocoa had] never left to go beyond the bridge and still belonged only to them” (265).

19. Toward the end of the novel, when Abigail is dead, the call-and-response still continues: “Taking up her walking stick, [Miranda] hobbles out to the front yard and looks over at the yellow bungalow. No need to cross that road anymore, so she turns her face up into the warm air—You there, Sister?—to listen for the rustling of the trees. There’s never a day so still that at least one leaf ain’t moving” (312).

20. The blurring of borders between the women happens again when Cocoa tells her grandmother and great-aunt that she wants to leave Candle Walk and go back home to Abigail’s house. Miranda immediately responds to her by saying, “Then we’ll all go back” (307).

21. Discussing the “professional rivalry” between Miranda and Dr. Buzzard, George appeals to Miranda on the level of her service to others: “These little friendly rivalries go on in any profession. The important thing is that you’re both serving the community” (196). Furthermore, Miranda notes the different work thresholds in Willow Springs versus the mainland. When she needs to fix the roof on the family home in the other place, she notes that she will have to hire workers “from beyond the bridge . . . ’cause nobody in Willow Springs would come out to the other place” (254).

22. The novel was originally published in 1986 as Moi, Tituba, sorcière . . . Noire de Salem.

CHAPTER 4

1. For one example, see the writings of the mid-eighteenth-century governor of Massachusetts Bay Thomas Hutchinson. Specifically, see The History of the Province of Massachusetts-Bay, from the Charter of King William and Queen Mary, in 1691, Until the Year 1750, vol. 2.

2. I am thinking specifically of Hayden White’s groundbreaking work that sees history as having meaning only inasmuch as narrative form invests it with the present concerns and interests of those writing the histories. See especially Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe (1975) and The Content of Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation (1990).

3. She is able, then, to sustain a narrative emphasis on issues of gender in a text about a woman who is effectively, in Hortense Spillers’s words, “ungendered.” See Spillers’s “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book.”

4. My reading of Tituba’s importance as a speaking subject is more closely aligned with that of Robert McCormick Jr., who notes the significance of “I” in the title: “Tituba
is forced to say ‘I’ because as a black female slave from the Caribbean who lived in the seventeen century, she was invisible. The oft-stated goal of both Tituba’s first person narration and the author herself is to resuscitate that existence” (274–75).

5. Lionnet elaborates on her approach of attempted nonintrusion: “This technique might be labeled a noncoercive feminist practice of reading, since it allows text and reader to enter a dialogue that does not follow the usual rules of linear, agonistic, and patriarchal discourses. To read noncoercively is to allow my self to be interwoven with the discursive strands of the text, to engage in a form of intercourse wherein I take my interpretive cues from the patterns that emerge as a result of this encounter—in other words, it is to enjoy an erotics of reading somewhat similar to Barthes’s in The Pleasure of the Text” (28). I would submit that there is no such thing as a reading that is noncoercive or a text hovering in splendid isolation from its readership. While Lionnet admits that she can “never be a neutral observer,” she also suggests that “our lives are overdetermined by language and ideology, history and geography” and that her purpose is “to try to investigate how that larger context may be present in the text” (28).

6. Baker is referring to Elizabeth Bruss’s phraseology here of “autobiographical acts” from her 1976 book by the same name.

7. Specifically, Baker has in mind the detractions of Benedetto Croce and Rebecca Chalmers Burton, the former of whom notes the unavoidable egotism of the genre and the latter of whom discusses the inevitable limitations of memory.

8. Mortimer relies on “humanist and geographer” Yi-Fu Tuan, who defines “place” as rootedness and “space” as freedom in Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience.

9. Manzor-Coats provides an extremely useful history of the text’s publication development, especially noting the audiences to which the different editions appealed. The text first appeared in France as historical fiction. Manzor-Coats states, “In the Euro-American tradition, historical novels, or better yet ‘historical romances,’ have a readership of mostly middle-class white women” (738). The next Folio edition was the first to be translated into English, and the cover showed a “black woman’s face whose outline is achieved through variations of the colors red and orange out of what appears to be a wire fence” (738). Manzor-Coats explains, “There is no doubt that the targeted audience here is ‘angry women,’ more specifically ‘angry black women’” (738). Finally, Manzor-Coats describes the English-language edition published in New York: “The English translation has a foreword by Angela Davis, and the foreword is clearly marked/inscribed at the bottom of the front cover. If in the French editions Condé had to validate rhetorically Tituba’s voice even at the expense of reducing her own authorial position to a minimum, it seems that for the U.S. market another kind of validation needed to be made. In this case, Condé’s work, relatively unfamiliar to the insular African American literary and critical tradition—a tradition that generally focuses on U.S. material—needed to be ‘authorized’ by several ‘gatekeepers’ of this tradition: thus brief remarks by Charles Johnson and Henry Louis Gates Jr. on the back cover. I read the choice of Angela Davis to write the foreword as part of this same validating and authorizing effort. Not only does the U.S. audience in general need the connection of Condé with a larger African American tradition, but the U.S. feminist audience specifically also seems to need Angela Davis’s validating words in order to see the connections between Condé and women of African descent” (739).

10. In fact, Condé’s response in an interview to why she wrote the novel was simply, “Mme Gallimard from Mercure de France asked me to write a story about a woman from the Caribbean. I accepted immediately, because it was a challenge” (qtd. in Manzor-Coats 737).
11. In *Mama Day*, Miranda is described as being able to “stand so still, she becomes part of a tree” (81). As a child, she is similarly able to “disappear into the shadow of a summer cottonwood, flatten herself so close to the ground under a moss-covered rock shelf” such that “folks started believing [she] became a spirit in the woods” (79).

12. Manzor-Coats believes that “this parodic chapter should be taken seriously, for it stages the typical power relations existing between white liberal feminists and women of color in contemporary Anglo society” (742). More important to my own focus, “It also stages incongruities of their different experiences, different along both racial and class axes” (742).

13. Only three years after the American edition of *I, Tituba* was published, another moment of intertextuality between Tituba and Hester arrived in Roland Joffe’s poorly received film interpretation of *The Scarlet Letter*. In the modern filmic rendition, Demi Moore’s Hester Prynne receives the services of Mituba (played by Lisa Jolliff-Andoh), a slave girl who becomes inordinately devoted to her mistress. Conveniently, “poor, mute Mituba” has no voice with which to betray Hester; however, Roger Chillingworth uses her to get to Hester and Dimmesdale. In significant ways, Roger Chillingworth’s growing insanity in the film is overtly tied to his relationship with “native” rituals and traditions. At the height of his obsessive attempt to ruin his wife, Chillingworth (played by Robert Duvall) dances with a deerskin on his head and howls at the moon. His racial performance thus directly corresponds with the perception of his sanity. In a Conradesque move, the film depicts his sanity slipping away by making more frequent his interactions with the tribal Native Americans. As in *I, Tituba*, sexuality is central to the relationship between Hester and Mituba. However, the film presents this in a severely dichotomized power hierarchy. In one scene, Mituba watches as Hester seductively undresses and dwells on this image as she masturbates in the bathtub. Here, Tituba’s question “Was Hester showing me another kind of bodily pleasure?” is revisited. However, this pleasure is manifested from her voyeuristic onlooking rather than “from hugging a body similar to [her] own.” Perhaps this is why most reviews that bring up Mituba’s role in the film at all do so with a facetious nod to what critic Caryn James calls in her *New York Times* review “one of the most ludicrous sex scenes ever.” Part of what makes sexuality appear “ludicrous,” however, seems to be the very presence of this unlikely sexual agent. James complains, “[Joffe] intercuts glimpses of Hester and Arthur in the grain . . . with scenes of Mituba in the bathing tub and a little red bird that fills the screen often, for no apparent reason.” Mituba adds an uncanny element, apparently, because she masturbates—what critic Chris Hicks calls “her ritual”—while Hester and Arthur have sex in the granary. Discussing a different scene, Roger Ebert reveals why Mituba detracts from an otherwise sexual continuity in the film: “Hester’s comely slave girl, Mituba . . . prepares her bath, and then Hester slowly luxuriates in it by candlelight, while dreaming of Arthur. It is hard to see for sure, but I think she may be indulging in the practice that the nuns called ‘interfering with herself.’” Meanwhile, through a convenient peephole, Mituba watches lustfully, for no other purpose than to provide the additional thrill of one attractive woman observing another one naked. Will the sin that dare not speak its name make an appearance in Massachusetts Bay? Alas, no; the prospect of interracial lesbian love, appealing as it is to today’s filmmakers, would not quite fit into this story, even as revised and updated.” Apart from his over-the-top euphemisms, Ebert does not entertain what he views as Mituba’s “lust” as anything worth considering except in the guilty “thrill” it gives the audience. Thus, “interracial lesbian love” is a cheap convention rather than a complicated dynamic of gender, power, and race. The power dynamic between Hester and Mituba in the film is what I find most
interesting about this scene. Mituba’s presence in the film serves largely as a supportive foil for Hester’s own sexual desire. Her fierce loyalty is certainly not returned to any degree. Rather, she offers a portrait of a slave “staying in her place:” voiceless, loyal, and worshipping of her mistress.

14. Dukats shows, for example, that “Tituba narrativizes herself variably as mother, fetus, or newborn” (747). Furthermore, the “oppositional or revolutionary Tituba presents the other of that Tituba we have come to know, the West Indian slave who, under torture, confessed that she submitted to Satan’s control and had tormented children” (747). Tituba, clearly, appears and describes herself in many different ways throughout the novel. This reveals the ambiguity out of which her voice speaks.

15. Elaine G. Breslaw offers a fascinating look at another facet of Tituba’s ambiguity. She sheds light on evidence that Tituba was an Arawak Indian. While Angela Davis sees such debates as “hop[es] to stir up enmity between black and Native American women as we seek to recreate our respective histories,” I believe that conversations like these are productive inroads to an interrogation of strict understandings of Tituba’s identity and voice (xi).

16. Manzor-Coats suggests that this is strategic, that “In her sexual relations and lovemaking . . . Tituba constitutes herself as a desiring subject, her otherwise despised black body becoming a desirable body, a body she can enjoy” (742).

17. With “Demystifying Female Marooning: Oppositional Strategies and the Writing of Testimonios in the French Caribbean,” Pascale De Souza provides a compelling look at how Caribbean texts, including I, Tituba, use maroon communities strategically. It allows for an intriguing understanding of Tituba as a revolutionary during her time in the maroon community at the end of the novel.

18. In both cases, maternity is significantly not a fixed or stable force of gender identification. It is a volatile context that is subject to situational ethics and concerns.


CONCLUSION

1. Favor is referring to Carby’s essay “The Historical Novel of Slavery” in Deborah McDowell’s and Arnold Rampersad’s 1989 volume, Slavery and the Literary Imagination and Smith as presented in Gates’s “The Black Person in Art: How Should S/he Be Portrayed?”

2. In her essay “Realism, Form, Politics: Reading Connections in Caribbean Migration Narratives” (2011), Nicole Rizzuto deals with similar issues through analyses of ethnography and readership in relation to Lamming’s The Pleasures of Exile and The Emigrants as well as Rhys’s Voyage in the Dark.