F. G. Cassidy and R. B. LePage, Dictionary of Jamaican English, Cambridge University Press, 1967, pp. lxxi, 489.

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According to the classification made by Cassidy himself,[1] this is a "branch" dictionary, a kind of extension from the trunk of the Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles. Fellow branches are such works as the Scottish National Dictionary and the Dictionary of Americanisms (DA). An avowed purpose of DJE is to "illustrate the loan element in the Caribbean branch of the English language."[2] Cassidy began the work "using a questionnaire based on that of the Linguistic Atlas of the U. S. and Canada."[3] We thus have a work whose roots are solidly in the tradition of Germanic philology and of the basically related dialect geography. The defects of the work are, therefore, not those of the knowledge of the authors -- which is quite impressive in most of the requisite areas -- but those of the tradition in which they have worked -- which is not. We have, in fact, a work on a Creole-related (decreolized, or post-creolized) language founded on just those traditions which have been most inimical to Creole studies.

The traditions of the dominant field of linguistics with which the two authors are associated are essentially the same which caused Hall to write of Sranan Tongo ("Taki Taki") as a Germanic language[4] and of Haitian Creole as a variety of North French.[5] There are certain assumptions associated with this approach:

[1] F. G. Cassidy, "Lexicographical Problems of the Dictionary of Jamaican English," in LePage, ed., Proceedings of the Conference on Creole Language Studies, London, 1961, p. 17.

[2] Ibid., p. 30.

[3] DJE, p. ix.

[4] "The Linguistic Structure of Taki Taki," Language 24 (1948), pp. 92-116.

[5] "The Genetic Relationships of Haitian Creole," Ricerche Linguistiche 1 (1950), 194-203.

1) Whenever possible, all forms of what is predominantly English-based in the vocabulary must be traced to British English and to Proto-Germanic
2) Whenever possible, differences between the "dialect" under consideration and British English must be explained in terms of phonological change
3) Variations must, wherever possible, be correlated with regional factors rather than other variables such as social stratification, ethnic group membership, etc.

I believe all three of these assumptions to be false. They have been, however, deeply engrained in American linguistic scholarship -- sometimes, indeed, to the absolute exclusion and even condemnation of any other set of assumptions. Cassidy's forthcoming Dictionary of American Regional English (DARE) will be committed even more strongly to those principles. It will, therefore, be all the more certain to "whitewash" the affinities of Negro Non-Standard English (Black English) to the Caribbean varieties.

A live alternative to the theory of migrating British isoglosses (traceable to earlier migrating Germanic dialects -- in the general tradition of the Völkerwanderung) as an explanation of the formation of certain varieties of English -- including, but not limited to, the Afro-American varieties -- is the theory of pidginization, creolization, and in some cases partial decreolization (i.e., incomplete merger with the standard or some non-standard dialect). This theory has been anathema to the linguistic Establishment in the United States and perhaps elsewhere. The Cassidy-LePage work does at least lip service to the pidgin-creole theory, dutifully taking into account the possibilities:

> . . . by the 1650's the pattern of Creole speech in these islands had already started to form, either independently, or on the common basis of a slave-trade pidgin English which in turn may have been influenced by an earlier Portuguese pidgin.
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> (pp. xl-xli)

But this not very bold commitment to one or the other, apparently indifferently, of alternate possibilities (citing Thompson's programmatic paper "A Note on Some Possible Affinities Between the Creole Dialects of the Old World and the New") is no more than a patch on the worn fabric of dialect geography. More typical of the work's orientation is

> The fact that the vowels of dare, deer, and fierce are pronounced with the same diphthong in JC reflects the situation in some dialects of English in the latter part of the seventeenth century . . . (p. xlvii)

The decreolization hypothesis does not, of course, preclude remodeling on dialects of British English; but it would be extremely early for the dialects of the latter part of the seventeenth century (when the Creole itself must have been in the stage of formation) to serve as such models. It seems rather more likely that the last quotation simply represents an earlier -- and, unfortunately, more basic -- stage of the theoretical preparation of DJE than the reference to pidgin influence. Within the body of the dictionary, the familiar prejudices in favor of British archaism are everywhere at work -- to the extreme detriment, in my opinion, of the DJE.

To illustrate this point, let me dwell -- with assurances that equivalent flaws may be found elsewhere -- on three words: savvy, grandy, and done. The relationship of the first two to the Portuguese Trade Pidgin is probably self-evident. For the benefit of those who are not familiar with the literature on Creole relexification, I shall try to explain that relationship by using done as an example.

The Portuguese Trade Pidgin (PTP) recent perfective form was pre-verbal caba (kaba), which is still to be found in "English-based" Sranan Tongo. The same syntactic function is served by done in some varieties (including Negro Non-Standard dialect in the United States), by post-verbal finish in Melanesian Pidgin English, and by the Hawiian loanword pau in Hawaiian Creole English (popularly known as "Pidgin"). For Jamaican English, DJE records it only post-verbally and traces it to "some such phrase as and am (or other part of the verb be) done." Yet Beryl L. Bailey's Language Guide to Jamaica records both me iit done and me done iit, forms which would fit far better into the English Pidgin-Creole tradition.[6] The alternation between pre-verbal and post-verbal position parallels not only finish/pau in relationship to kaba/done elsewhere among the descendants of Maritime Pidgin English but also the Seminole Pidgin English use of ojus (the relexification for heap): ojus Noun ~ Noun ojus. This is the kind of alternation which must be explained within the Pidgin tradition, and it would seem that considerations of parsimony are against dragging in British English phrases as sources.

For the sake of argument only, let us assume that the form is derived from British and be done. What rationale can be found for entering such a form in the DJE? Is it to be assumed that and be done was said for the first time -- apparently by a Britisher -- on Jamaica? Unfortunately, the traditions of Dialect Geography/Germanic Philology, which relegate syntax to a subsidiary position far below phonology and lexicon, leave many such unresolved issues in dealing with any Pidgin or Creole variety.

Was there ever a Pidgin involved in the formation of Jamaican Creole (or Jamaican English)? Or did the language/dialect/variety simply form itself by a kind of spontaneous creation? There are militant Jamaicans who, perhaps under the influence of the misguided notion that there is something

[6] 1962, p. 11.

shameful about having a Pidgin in one's language history, prefer the latter interpretation. But a great body of evidence, in the form of documents from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, establishes the existence of Pidgin English on Jamaica beyond any doubt -- except those that might rely on solipsistic reasoning. Many of the relevant documents are in the bibliography for DJE. Among them is Marly; or The Life of a Planter in Jamaica -- the earliest listed source in DJE for the second item in my demonstration, grandy.

Although DJE lists the word from Marly, the editors cavil that the examples "do not always ring true." It is rather hard to understand what is meant by "ring true," unless the authors mean to invoke the questionable hypothesis that there is a "normal" type of speech act. (Statistically, of course, all speech acts are "unlikely." Which occurs most frequently -- bawling out a cab driver on Seventh Avenue in a violent hailstorm or admiring the first tooth of a female infant in the suburbs?) Sermons -- the text in Marly is a sermon, by an African convert -- have their own stylistic characteristics, including a certain amount of fancification. This is probably why this text has possessive hims Noun (the -s undoubtedly in imitation of Standard English) rather than "normal" Pidgin him Noun. But what would qualify as a "normal" speech act for a Pidgin? Giving instructions on how to pull a one-legged boatswain through a porthole, perhaps?

But, anyway, grandy -- whether as a Pidgin or Creole form or simply as part of a text in some kind of English -- is attested much earlier than the Marly citation of DJE. Sarah Kemble Knight's Journal (1704-5) attests it and specifies that it is a "Negro" form (and thus inappropriate in a Pidgin English conversation with an Indian). Cotton Mather's Angel of Bethesda (1721) has grandy-many, attributed to "these Africans." Taking

the Jamaican and Massachusetts evidence along with other evidence, we might well conclude that grandy was a regular feature of African Pidgin English (if not of the presumably antecedent Maritime Pidgin English). But will the reader of dictionaries ever be able to learn this? Especially after grandy fails to make the DARE -- as it undoubtedly will -- the consulter of reference works will have considerable lexicographic "authority" against the occurrence of the Pidgin form in what became the United States. This, too, will not displease the dialect geographers.

This particular type of whitewashing of African or Pidgin forms has been regularly practiced in the philological traditions. Perhaps nowhere has it been done with such dexterity as in the case of the third word in my demonstration, savvy (vb).

DJE lists savvy "adj dial" but not "vb", despite the fact that the same Marly does frequently use savvy vb. The reason is a nifty one: the Exclusion Principle (which I prefer to call the Virginity Principle). By this principle, if there is an earlier entry of the same word in one of the "branch" (or "trunk") dictionaries, the word is not recorded. Now, OED records savvy vb from 1785, where it is attributed to the "negroe language -- with no way that I can discover of indicating that such language is not the language of Jamaica. The second entry is from that same Marly about which all the fuss has been made. Another "branch," the DA, chooses to list savvy vb also, although the first U. S. attestation which it could find was in 1878.

Into what "branch" has savvy vb been tossed? Well, by the Exclusion Principle, it seems to be the "negroe language." But, unfortunately, that language has no known geographic locale and can therefore be ignored in terms of "geographic reality." A bit of sleight-of-hand permits the overlooking of the Marly entry, since it's the second entry in OED. Of course, the subsequent entries are Excluded.

With a tiny bit more of legerdemain, one could find that the DA entry is, after all, the first. Who, then, "invented" the verb? Why, that fine (white) American writer Bret Harte. Who could be further from being Portuguese? How more effectively could one have prevented any other influences from sullying the Proto-Indo European to Proto-Germanic to West Germanic to Low German to Old English to Middle English . . . tradition?

The Exclusion Principle clearly relies on the Exclusion of a large part of the evidence. Neither DJE's first citation for done (1839) nor the DA's first citation of pre-verbal done "used colloquially or ignorantly" by Southern whites who just might have been influenced by Creole-speaking slaves (1827) is anything like the first one -- although again the DA obviously has an earlier entry than the DJE and the latter is bending, if not breaking, the Exclusion Principle. But it is quite easy to find earlier instances than either. The first text that comes to mind, A. B. Lindsley's Love and Friendship (1809) has the slave Phillis saying

Missy, Mr. Soldreer done come . . .

And there are undoubtedly earlier examples. One wonders, though, if slaves -- or Blacks -- count in the tradition represented by the DA.

DJE has a marvelous amount of material -- undoubtedly a complete representation of the source material -- on folk medicine, flora, and fauna. The only bird which seems to have suffered from its treatment is the Pidgin.