Fighting spirit-thievery : acts of resistance in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and of cultural reappropriation in *Myal: a novel* : the importance of language and form in the generation of meaning

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The Importance of Language and Form in the Generation of Meaning

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To my beautiful and beloved daughters,

They shut me up in Prose–
As when a little Girl
They put me in the Closet–
Because they liked me "still"–

Still! Could themself have peeped–
And seen my Brain–go round–
They might as wise have lodged a Bird
For Treason–in the Pound–

Himself has but to will
And easy as a Star
Look down upon Captivity–
And laugh–No more Have I–

Emily Dickinson, 1862.[1]

[1] Dickinson, Emily. Lauter, Paul, and Richard Yarborough, editors. *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*. 5th ed, Houghton Mifflin Co, 2006, p. 3066

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Acknowledgments

Writing this mémoire has been a challenging experience, but has also allowed me to embark on a thrilling and enriching literary voyage. Indeed, it has led me well beyond what I had first expected to write about, which is probably the most rewarding part of this exercise, as it has turned into an intensive learning journey that has brought me into linguistics and narratology, literature, history, and above all human experience. That is why I would like to express my deep gratitude to Professor Puskás and Professor Leer for accepting to supervise my dissertation, and for devoting time for moments of discussion and feedback. Their advice has been very precious at every stage of this dissertation: in the choice of the primary and secondary texts, in encouraging me to analyze both novels by adopting a linguistic perspective, in helping me to narrow down my topic and arguments, and in giving me useful suggestions and constructive feedback during the writing process.

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As readers, some books touch us more than others, and raise questions and issues that we often keep reflecting on. That has been the case for me after reading *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Myal: a novel*. At one point of my life, my pluricultural familial circle was enriched by becoming a multiethnic one, and I am very grateful for the knowledge and awareness that this enlargement has brought to me. I would therefore like to thank my family for their support, and open-mindedness in encouraging me to take up my studies again, and particularly my daughters for all our fruitful discussions, and shared solidarity in our daily life as students. Finally, I would sincerely like to thank my colleague, Eliza Filip, for her kindness and investment in accepting to conscientiously revise this mémoire, as well as all my written assignments during these two years of studies.

Introduction

Scope and Purpose

An important feature of post-colonial and feminist literature is to give voice to those who have previously been silenced, and allow them to deconstruct the manners in which they have been represented in dominant discourses. Indeed, literature has become a means for social groups that have been left out of history books and other official documents, to tell their stories from their perspective and in their own words. To be effective in works of fiction, authors need to provide contexts for their protagonists that will confront them to the realities of life, and issues that individuals or groups of people had to face at the different timepoints when these stories are set. From a post-colonial perspective, Jean Rhys's novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*, published in 1966, has many common points with Erna Brodber's *Myal: a novel* (1988). The two novels share the similar setting of the West Indies during colonial time, when Jamaica and Dominica were still part of the British Empire, and each work portrays young female protagonists being subject to alienation and spirit-thievery, thereby addressing the issue of constructing one's subjectivity in a complex social and ethnical environment such as the one of the West Indies. Moreover, the authors have made the choice of not writing only in Standard English as their texts include varieties of Jamaican Creole. Besides, they have openly expressed, at least some of their purposes for writing their works, and among these, is the need to render more accurately the Caribbean, its people, and its culture. Finally, each novelist explores alternative modes of narration, wishing to set their work apart from the conventions of the English nineteenth century's novel, in order to avoid reproducing its typically monolithic discourse.

My purpose in this mémoire is therefore to focus on language and form. First, my dissertation examines how the linguistic choices made by each implied author contribute to the central theme of alienation and spirit-thievery in their respective novels. Second, it discusses

some of the narrative strategies adopted by each novelist in connection to this fundamental issue, and their contribution in conveying their respective purposes to their implied readership. My argument is that, as post-colonial texts, their end goal is to trigger a reaction in the real reader, which might even hopefully be converted into action. Interestingly, the conclusions I draw from the comparison of these two novels seem to parallel with the change of paradigm that occurred in post-colonial thought and theory between the 1960s and the end of the 1980s. While at first there was a need to write back in order to correct misrepresentations of colonized subjects, as in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, it later became important to define one's own identity as a culture and people. This involves moving beyond the binaries established by imperial power with the purpose of constructing a better future, as in *Myal*, in which syncretism, interculturality and multiethnicity are valued.

In *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin (2002) distinguish different stages in the emergence of post-colonial literature, and explain why the act of "writing back" remains crucial in order to counterpoise persistent Eurocentric power imbalance, even after the former colonies gained independence:

> Nevertheless, through the literary canon, the body of British texts which all too frequently still acts as a touchstone of taste and value, and through RS-English (Received Standard English), which asserts the English of south-east England as a universal norm, the weight of antiquity continues to dominate cultural production in much of the post-colonial world. This cultural hegemony has been maintained through canonical assumptions about literary activity, and through attitudes to post-colonial literatures which identify them as isolated national off-shoots of English literature, and which therefore relegate them to marginal and subordinate positions.
> (Ashcroft et al. 7)

Jane Eyre (1847) is a good example to illustrate what these scholars argue in the preceding citation. Brontë's novel is characteristic of the realistic novel of the nineteenth century in that much attention is given to the shaping of complex characters and to detailed description of settings to enable its readership to immerse itself in a story perceived as "almost real". In the nineteenth century, the novel appealed particularly to the middle-class, which had become

increasingly literate and could easily recognize itself in many of these stories. *Jane Eyre*'s form follows the conventions of the genre, having its protagonist tell her story entirely from her perspective and in chronological order. Brontë was certainly ahead of her time in her portrayal of *Jane Eyre*'s eponymous heroine, showing that women were courageous and able to decide for themselves. Nevertheless, from a post-colonial perspective, some parts of her text are highly problematic. Indeed, while it was originally published for an English audience, it is yet read by a much wider and more diverse one, as it is still part of the curriculum of many secondary and higher education institutions. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said (1994) underscores the strong link between the novel "as a cultural artefact of bourgeois society, and imperialism" (Said 84). His claim is that the novel participated in constructing "the idea of England …[a]nd part of such an idea was the relationship between 'home' and 'abroad'" (Said 85). Besides, he states that the novel conveys a conservative vision of the Empire, and that for the novelists of the nineteenth century, "outlying territories [were] available for use, at will, at the novelist's discretion, usually for relatively simple purposes such as immigration, fortune or exile" (Said 88). Hence, Brontë's references to the colonies as sources of income, and her notorious description of Mr Rochester's first wife have become controversial matters once it has been acknowledged that British colonies were territories of intensive exploitation and racial discrimination. Moreover, people from the colonies were often grossly misrepresented in these works, which upheld the prejudice that they were inferior to Metropolitans. For instance, Jane describes Rochester's creole wife in the following words: "[what] it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing; and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face" (Brontë 338). This quotation supports Said's thesis by revealing some of the racist and stereotypical representations that were being circulated, and that served as a justification for the existence of the British Empire.

Nonetheless, Ashcroft et al. point out that: "[w]riters such as …Jean Rhys have all rewritten particular works from the English 'canon' with a view to restructuring European 'realities' to post-colonial terms, not simply by reversing the hierarchical order, but by interrogating the philosophical assumptions on which that order was based" (Ashcroft et al. 32). In other words, Rhys felt the need to "write back" not only to correct Brontë's misrepresentation of the white creole woman, and to bring the colonial context to the foreground, but also to showcase that Caribbean culture offers alternative world views to the prevailing Western ones.

Furthermore, Ashcroft et al. explain that textual strategies in post-colonial writing do not only consist of abrogation, that is "[a]brogation [as] a refusal of the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetic, its illusory standard of normative or 'correct' usage, and its assumption of a traditional and fixed meaning 'inscribed' in the words"; but it is also "the act of appropriation which brings it under the influence of a vernacular tongue, the complex of speech habits which characterize the local language, or even the evolving and distinguishing local english of a monolingual society trying to establish its link with place" (Ashcroft et al. 37–38). Brodber's *Myal: a novel* is an emblematic example of an appropriation of the form of the novel. Indeed, the author explicitly mentions the genre of her text in its title, but disrupts the conventions of the realistic English novel, which usually relates the story of its protagonist from a single perspective and in a chronological order. Unlike the latter, *Myal* is a discontinuous narrative starting in *medias res*, in which the reader is immediately immersed into Jamaican culture by witnessing the protagonist's healing by the Myalist herbalist, and most of its chapters centre around the community of Grove Town in Jamaica, near Morant Bay. It privileges the dimension of space, as it is often the case in many post-colonial works (Ashcroft et al. 33–34). Indeed, it explores both physical events and spiritual ones affecting the community of Grove Town and Morant Bay that eventually will start its process of liberation from the imperialist oppressive system. Crucially, Brodber infringes the convention of having

an omniscient narrator reporting only in Standard English. Despite the heterodiegetic position of the narrator, the story is told by using the different "lects" of the Jamaican English Continuum, even in instances of free indirect discourse. Consequently, polyglossia becomes a means to render characters' authentic voices, and to convey more trustfully their multiple perspectives. Moreover, the narrator's omniscience extends to the non-physical space in which the Myalist spirits operate.

It is well known from her epistolary correspondence that Jean Rhys, who was a white Dominican Creole on her mother's side, reacted very strongly to the character of Bertha in *Jane Eyre.* She spent about twenty years trying to figure out how she should write *Wide Sargasso Sea* with the aim of restoring Rochester's first wife's dignity, by depicting more accurately the context and the issues that white creole women had to face after the abolition of slavery in the colonies. In a letter to Francis Wyndham, she writes that she found "her Bertha … impossible…[*w*]*hich she is*" (Rhys et al. 144), and in a previous one to Selma Vaz Diaz, she gives more details about what she thought was wrong with Brontë's lunatic:

> I've read and re-read 'Jane Eyre' of course, and I am sure that the character must be 'built up'. I wrote you about that. The Creole in Charlotte Brontë's novel is a lay figure –repulsive which does not matter, and not once alive which does. She's necessary to the plot, but always she shrieks, howls, laughs horribly, attacks all and sundry–*off stage*. For me (and for you I hope) she must be right *on stage*. She must be at least plausible with a past, the *reason* why Mr Rochester treats her so abominably and feels justified, the *reason* why he thinks she is mad and why of course she goes mad, even the *reason* why she tries to set everything on fire, and eventually succeeds. (Personally, I think *that* one is simple. She is cold – and fire is the only warmth she knows in England.)
>
> I do not see how Charlotte Brontë's madwoman could possibly convey all this. It *might* be done but it would not be convincing. At least I doubt it. Another 'I' must talk, two others perhaps. Then the Creole's 'I' will come to life.
>
> I tried this way and that, even putting her into modern dress. No good.
>
> At last I decided on a possible way showing the start and the Creole speaking. Lastly: Her end – I want it in a way triumphant!
>
> The Creole is of course the important one, the others explain her. I see it and can do it – as a book. About half is done. (Rhys et al. 136–37)

As shown in this letter, Rhys gives some hints about the characterization of Antoinette, and her choices of narrative strategy in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. She posits that several narrators might be necessary to fulfill her communicative intentions to her readership, and that their role would mainly be to serve the protagonist.

While Rhys explains that she feels the need to correct misrepresentations about white creole women and about the colonial Caribbean context, Brodber (2012) underscores that her fiction is an important component of her social activism. In her article 'Me and my Head-Hurting Fiction', she defines her novels as "lectures", in that she uses storytelling based on "situations, themes, and items known to the general public" (Brodber, 'Me and My Head-Hurting Fiction' 121), to convey social criticism and to promote political change. In *Myal* she chooses the story of Mr Joe's farm, which has been taught to every child in elementary school in Jamaica, to show how teachers need to be active in unravelling and correcting wrongful representations (Brodber, 'Me and My Head-Hurting Fiction' 122–23). Moreover, the novelist includes "bits of information" (Brodber, 'Me and My Head-Hurting Fiction' 123) from her research as a sociologist to encourage her readership to learn more about Jamaican history. She justifies the attention given to details by stating that in order "[t]o have people move along with me in these books of books, these social science treatises and these works of political propaganda, I had to pay special attention to the placement of words, those beautiful things that glisten like diamonds in the sun" (Brodber, 'Me and My Head-Hurting Fiction' 124). Indeed, in order to understand *Myal*, the reader has to reorder not only the chronology of events, but also identify the crossroads of its subplots. Besides, the latter has also to familiarize with the Jamaican Creole Continuum, as no glossing is provided by the author, even for the parts written in basilect. In addition, Brodber indicates that it is part of the design of her texts to have the reader "get into the work and contribute his own part to the story" (Brodber, 'Me and My Head-Hurting Fiction' 124). Reflecting on the possible audience(s) of *Myal*, Tiffin (1990) explains

how institutional knowledge was taught in the colonies, and highlights the deleterious effects it had on their people:

> Although the reading and study of English literature was being used *actively* for socio-political control, the orientation of the imported criticism was concentrated on meaning and interpretation. The construction of the colonial audience as English readers meant that Nigerians, Indians, Caribbean peoples or Aboriginal Australians were asked to read and internalize ethnocentric and racist representations and denigrations of themselves, their very climates, religions, cultures as if these were 'facts'. They were forced to read as if they were Englishmen and shared English economic interests and ethnocentric assumptions. That famous and false critical binary–universal versus local–had its *effective* basis in colonial control; but represented to the colonized reading public as a question of aesthetics, it could also act to repress 'local' literatures which might challenge the claims of that other governing local tradition, the imposed British one–to its universality, its greatness, its objectivity. (Tiffin 29)

Tiffin's quotation points to what is meant by spirit-thievery, and why it is such an important issue in post-colonial texts. Indeed, in this excerpt she denounces the fact that all over the colonies, the cultures of colonized peoples were either ignored or discredited. Consequently, the colonized peoples were prevented from constructing a positive image of themselves and of their cultures. On the contrary, they were encouraged to internalize British norms presented as the ones to adopt, even though they would paradoxically never be considered as English despite conforming to these standards. Since both Rhys and Brodber aim at disrupting canonical conventions, it is therefore worth considering some of their narrative choices in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and *Myal* respectively.

Among the several existent schools of narratology, I believe that the concepts developed by Bakhtin in *Discourse in the Novel*, and the ones of Booth in *Rhetoric of Fiction*, which were later slightly modified and refined by Phelan, are the most relevant to support my argumentation in this dissertation. Bakhtin's concepts of heteroglossia and dialogism apply particularly well to the analysis of the linguistic choices made by each novelist. Indeed, *Wide Sargasso Sea* has several homodiegetic narrators, and Antoinette's narrative voice is very often

made of what Bakhtin describes as double hybrid constructs, sometimes including varieties of Jamaican Creole. The complexity of her narrative voice becomes therefore a powerful device to exemplify the dialogism that takes place in every person in the process of constructing one's own identity. According to Bakhtin,

> [t]he tendency to assimilate others' discourse takes on an even deeper and more basic significance in an individual's ideological becoming, in the most fundamental sense. Another's discourse performs here no longer as information, directions, rules, models and so forth – but strives rather to determine the very bases of our ideological interrelations with the world, the very basis of our behavior; it performs here as *authoritative discourse*, and an *internally persuasive discourse*. (Bakhtin 342)

In Rhys's novel, this process is being impeded by the absence of love from Antoinette's mother, and by her problematic status as a white Creole in Jamaica after the abolition of slavery. Moreover, the narrator's frequent comments can be interpreted as an overt dialogical act of the latter towards its narratee/implied reader. Second, there are intertextual dialogisms occurring at the level of the aesthetic works between Antoinette's and her unnamed husband's respective subjective points of view in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and the very different portrayal of these characters by *Jane Eyre*'s eponymous heroine. These intertextual dialogisms do not only aim at correcting the misrepresentation of the white creole woman, but also at unveiling a darker side of Brontë's Rochester. Consequently, the reading experience of *Jane Eyre* is irreversibly impacted by the one of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia is also suitable to explore the linguistic diversity of the heterodiegetic and omniscient narrative voice in *Myal*, as well as instances of direct speech from its characters. In his essay, Bakhtin states that the thematic content of a novel is conveyed through the "diversity of speech types" and through "the differing individual voices" that intervene in the narration of the story. Thus, Bakhtin defines the novel "as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized", and sees in this "social heteroglossia" and "its dialogization" a means to allow the "movements of its themes" (Bakhtin

262–63). Hence, Bakhtin's definition differs significantly from the view of the nineteenth century realistic novel that grants authority to a single narrative voice. Another relevant concept developed by Bakhtin is the one of *Chronotope*, that "expresses the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space)". The essayist uses it to describe "[t]he process of assimilating real historical time and space in literature" (Bakhtin 84). The idea of chronotope seems the most insightful to refer to when discussing the manners in which each novel challenges these dimensions. Indeed, the boundaries between consciousness and dream, and between the spiritual and the physical world are recurrent motifs in these texts, and their liminalities are viewed very differently in African and European cultures.

Finally, as both authors have mentioned that their works are meant to impact their respective readerships, I have chosen to base my analysis on Booth's and Phelan's rhetorical approaches to narratives since they consider the communicative act occurring between an implied author and its audience(s) in fiction to be central. Booth coined the term "implied author", and defined it as "the narrative agent who 'chooses, consciously or unconsciously, what we read" (Liveley 148). In *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961), Booth states that "[i]n any reading experience there is an implied dialogue among author, narrator, the other characters, and the reader. Each of the four can range, in relation to each of the others, from identification to complete opposition, on any axis of value, moral, intellectual, aesthetic, and even physical" (Booth 155). In other words, this means that "[t]he *narrator* may be more or less distant from the *implied author*", …from the characters in the story he tells, … and from the *reader*'s own norms" (Booth 156). Booth uses the terminology *reliable* narrator "when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (…the implied author's norms), [and] *unreliable* when he does not" (Booth 158–59). Moreover, he notes that both reliable and unreliable narrators can be corroborated or contradicted by other narrators, as it is the case for instance in

Wide Sargasso Sea. Building on Booth's terminology and work, in *Living to Tell* (2005), Phelan's,

> conception [of narrative as rhetoric] assumes that texts are designed by authors in order to affect readers in particular ways, that those designs are conveyed through the language, techniques, structures, forms, and dialogic relations of texts as well as the genres and conventions readers use to understand them, and that the reader responses are a function, guide, and test of how designs are created through textual and intertextual phenomena. (Phelan 18)

As explained by Liveley, Phelan modifies and completes Booth's definition of unreliability in that he,

> observes two distinct kinds of unreliability in narration: one kind concerning ethical (mis)judgement and one factual (mis)representation, each kind impacting upon the relationship between the reader and the narrator differently….[In his model] unreliable narration is not … a binary but a spectrum, involving a range of resources and, most importantly, affects, raising important rhetorical and ethical questions about the way in which readers respond to narrators (mis)reporting and (mis)perceiving events" (Liveley 156).

According to Phelan, there is a "double communication involved in unreliable narration: the narrator's communication to the narratee and the author's quite different communication to the authorial audience". Thus, unreliability can occur "along the axis of characters, facts, and events, … along the axis of knowledge and perception, and … along the axis of ethics and evaluation" (Phelan 50). The readers might react differently depending on whether they notice that the character misreports or underreports an event, by for instance doubting his or her credibility, or if the latter misevaluates a situation and enters in conflict with the implied author's ethical values. These conceptual elements will be particularly relevant to the analysis of the unnamed husband as a narrator in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and to his comparison with the character of Mr Rochester in *Jane Eyre*.

Before turning to the scholarship section, I find it necessary to include in this introduction some historical and contextual information about Jamaica during the colonial

period. Indeed, the diversity of its population and of its social classes have led to the development of linguistic and religious continuums described (in the next sections) by Alleyne in *Roots of Jamaican Culture* (1988). The knowledge of these elements has been crucial for my analysis, interpretation, and comparison of the two novels, and for the writing of my thesis statement. At the end of this section of my dissertation, I will discuss what the concepts of spirit-thievery and zombification encompass, and explain why dezombification is a necessary step in the healing process that leads the Jamaican people to their self-assertion and cultural reappropriation.

The Jamaican Socio-Economic and Political Context

Jamaica was both a colony of settlement and of exploitation. During the first decades of the colony, Burton (1997) describes a highly heterogeneous white population in terms of occupation, ethnical origin, and language. These people came from various parts of England, Scotland and Ireland, as well as from other colonies, and spoke in different varieties and registers of English, depending on their origin and social position. While at first there was a majority of white people, by the end of the seventeenth century the Blacks outnumbered the Whites "as a result of massive importation of slaves directly from Africa or from elsewhere in the Caribbean" (Burton 15). During the first part of the eighteenth century the black population continued to increase, and according to Burton, there would be typically a ratio of one white for ten to twenty black people on plantations. Besides, many owners took advantage of the prosperity of their plantation to return to England, and delegated the overseeing of it to head drivers that would often move from one plantation to another. Therefore, even though "[i]n theory the Great House was the center of plantation existence, … the plantation's center of gravity … had shifted by [mid-century] from Great House to Negro Village" (Burton 20), because the slaves were the ones who always stayed and identified with "their" plantation. As

"few Whites would venture into the Negro village, … at night and on weekends slaves were able to lead a quasi-autonomous existence" (Burton 21).

During the second half of the eighteenth century, creole slaves became more numerous than African-born ones, and they played a crucial role in spreading their language, Creole, both "'downward' to the mass of African-born slaves, …[but also] 'upward' to locally born Whites and to those other Whites who remained in the colony long enough to be accultured to its mores". Burton quotes John Atkins who described the local whites in 1736 as "'half Negrish in the Manners, proceeding from the promiscuous and confined Conversation with their Relations, the Servants at the Plantations, and have a language especially pleasant, a kind of Gypsy Gibberish, that runs smoothest in swearing'" (Burton 24). He also points out the increasing separation between 'Town' and 'Country' Whites, and that of the expatriate British, who considered "the local white population as a whole, … only marginally different from the Blacks and the Coloureds" (Burton 35). Because "middle- and low-ranking plantation Whites had routine sexual access to the female slaves in their charge" (Burton 31), by the time of the Emancipation Act, there was an important coloured population in Jamaica. According to Burton, "[t]he position of this free colored buffer class was ambivalent in the extreme" because on the one hand they claimed to be the only true Jamaicans, but on the other hand "they set out to assimilate Englishness and so situate themselves in opposition both to white Jamaican who, whatever else they were, were undoubtedly creole, … and to the black masses" (Burton 35–36). Hence, the Jamaican society at the time of the abolition of slavery in Jamaica was a socially and economically stratified society according to people's skin colour, but also a very fragmented one.

Burton underscores the important role played by missionaries in the ending of slavery, and especially by some black American former slaves who encouraged their Jamaican brothers to request their freedom. In fact, by overhearing the conversations of their masters, who worried

about the political independence of Saint-Domingue and the end of slavery, many slaves either believed that slavery had already been abolished or was about to be (Burton 83). This led to the Baptist War, when thousands of slaves refused to return to work, declaring themselves to be free, just after the Jonkunnu celebrations of Christmas 1831-1832 (Burton 88), and accelerated the passing of the Emancipation Act one year later. After being freed from their masters, many Blacks went to live in free villages where they built strong communities. They were often helped by the Baptist Church through the buying of ruined plantations due to the labour crisis that the freeing of the slaves had engendered (Burton 92). However, land was also concentrated in the hands of foreign capitalists, for instance for the cultivation of bananas (Burton 96), and the end of slavery did not bring the black population much prosperity.

Burton observes that by 1862 "[a]s the influence of white preachers subsided that of their black rivals correspondingly grew, and with social and economic distress mounting throughout the whole island, the formerly 'apolitical' religious enthusiasm took on a radical and, still more alarmingly, overtly racial dimension" (Burton 102–03). This led to the Morant Bay uprising in 1865 when "several hundred men and women moved into the center of Morant Bay" under the leadership of the farmer and deacon Paul Bogle to revolt against the Government (Burton 109). It ended up in violence from both sides, and is thought to have been disproportionally repressed by the officials. Burton notes that "the Morant Bay uprising highlighted, … the disparity between the formal freedom the exslaves had acquired in 1838 and the concrete, meaningful freedom–freedom above all, from high rents and taxes, low wages, and arbitrary acts of justice–to which they legitimately aspired". Besides, it underscores once again "the symbiotic relationship in Jamaica between socio-political protest and Afro-Christianity, especially in that indeterminate zone where Christianity, Myalism, and Obeah shaded into each other" (Burton 111–12). That is why the Anglican Church and the public educational system "made strenuous efforts to curb the religious excesses to which the Afro-

Jamaican masses were by now believed to be congenitally subject" (Burton 115). Both the feminization of Jamaican Christianity and of the Jamaican educational system in the first decades of the twentieth century were part of a strategy to control black men (Burton 121).

Language and the Jamaican Creole Continuum

Alleyne (1988) retraces the cultural history of Jamaica and its connection to its African roots in *Roots of Jamaican Culture*. When turning to languages, Alleyne claims that "African languages were routinely used on slave plantations and have survived in Jamaica up to today" (Alleyne 120). Because it is most probable that "at first most slaves were Akan in Jamaica" (Alleyne 120), the Twi-Asante language was the dominant African language, and it is still spoken by the Maroons nowadays, although in a simpler form than in the past (Alleyne 123-125). The scholar explains that "[i]n multilingual situations the political dominance of the speakers of one of the languages involved is an important determinant of the nature and direction of language change" (Alleyne 121). In Jamaica, English was and still is the dominant language, but as mentioned previously, it was far from being standardized in society. Consequently, "[t]he dominance of English in Jamaica led inevitably to major changes in African languages, while English itself (as spoken by native speakers) changed little". However, "it changes drastically when acquired as a second language by speakers of the lower languages" (Alleyne 121). Similarly, as Twi-Asante was the African language most spoken in Jamaica, it led to its dominance over other African languages, which eventually disappeared (Alleyne 122). Interestingly, Alleyne also provides a socio-linguistic explanation to the different "levels [that] form what is called Jamaica's linguistic continuum", which "are modern representatives of the speech of drivers, artisans, and domestics" (Alleyne 137). These differences can be linked to the degree to which the former slaves were in contact with their masters, that depended on their occupation, and their access to privileges:

> Although slave society was highly homogeneous, it was hierarchically structured in terms of occupation, privileges, and access to the culture of the masters. This meant

> that some slaves began to think and behave – and to speak – differently from others. The main occupational difference was between domestic and field slaves; artisans (including 'drivers') occupied an intermediate position. Domestics were in close contact with Europeans; their cottages were even white-washed and located near their masters' houses …The masters favoured their domestics, especially those that bore them children (i.e. mulattoes.) The domestics developed forms of language and behaviour appropriate to their occupational needs and status. (Alleyne 136).

This social stratification of the slaves led to a linguistic stratification, as slaves working in the masters' houses spoke a variety of Jamaican English more under the influence of their masters' English, whereas field slaves' linguistic interactions were mainly between Africans. In other words, houseworkers speak a language that has more superstrate (English) influence, while the plantation workers' variety is more tainted by the substratum (West African languages) (Durrleman 1).

Alleyne exposes some of the factors that contribute to the maintenance of the Jamaican Creole Continuum. For example, "Africans in Jamaica developed what has come to be known as interlanguage, i.e. utterances that deviate from the norms of both languages in contact, … [because of] gradual decay of the 'lower' language through massive loss of structure and its replacement by importations from the 'upper language', … and the persistence of 'lower' language forms during the acquisition of the 'upper' language" (Alleyne 129). Moreover, Alleyne stresses the need to distinguish between the *bozal*, that was a slave born in Africa, and the *creole* who was a slave born in the colonies. Whereas the former had to change drastically her/his speech habits, the *creoles* "learned to speak like members of the group to which they or their parents belonged. Slaves who spent their lives among domestics spoke as domestics and their form of speech differed significantly from that of the field slaves" (Alleyne 136). Finally, while in the past slaves had to understand and master English to a certain extent mainly for matters of communication with the colonialists, after the Emancipation "the main driving force behind [mastering English] has been the realization by Blacks that command of English is a precondition for upward socioeconomic mobility" (Alleyne 133). Besides, acquisition of

English has also been favoured by access to education, as Standard English is taught in Jamaican schools.

To illustrate the different varieties of the Jamaican Creole Continuum, Alleyne gives the example of eight different forms of the sentence "He is eating dinner". While in deep Creole, this is expressed as *ĩ a nyam ĩ dina*, on the other end of the continuum it would be uttered as *hi iz iitin hiz dinner*. In the first example, "the pronominal system…has West African antecedents", in that it is neither marked for gender nor for case, as the use of *ĩ* does not allow to distinguish between the pronouns *he*/*she*/*it* and the possessives *his*/*her*/*its*; "[t]he lexical root *nyam*, the nasalised phoneme *ĩ*, and the reflex *a* (English *-er*) are also West African in origin" (Alleyne 138-39). In addition, the verb is not inflected and progressive aspect is marked by the free functional morpheme *a*. Apart from its spelling that reflects its pronunciation, the second example follows the rules of English syntax, and is lexically close to the superstrate language as well.

In *The Oxford Guide to World English*, McArthur compares "the standard varieties of many present-day languages… to the classical languages [because] [t]hey are institutionalized, geared to schools, colleges, and professions, and in many ways are distinct from everyday colloquial usage … Among the upper and middle class of a society they may be close to the language of the home, but among the majority in many populations they can be far removed from everyday life" (McArthur 10). It makes therefore sense for Caribbean authors to include Jamaican English in their novels, especially when conveying the speech of characters of African origin. Hence, paying close attention to the use of varieties of Jamaican Creole in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and in *Myal* might enrich these novels' interpretations and comparison. McArthur notes a change of attitude towards Jamaican Patwa, in that "a variety may … be regarded: as a language of its own right, if there is enough of a literary, religious, social, or national tradition behind it" (McArthur 7). Since Jamaica's independence its value is being reassessed through

its increasing use in literature and in music, and as a form of speech in opposition to Standard English. Besides, the publication of "*The Dictionary of Jamaican Creole* (1967, 1980) helped stabilize spelling in the national press and encouraged a fuller use of Creole by Jamaican writers" (McArthur 234). Thus, the important part given to the Jamaican Creole Continuum in *Myal* aims at recognizing and promoting its particularity as being part of Jamaican culture and its aesthetics.

African Religion in Jamaica

Alleyne points out that while African slaves were not able to import their political and economic institutions, they still brought with them moral tradition in the form of folktales that were crucial for African communal interaction, and ancestral religion that played an important role in slave resistance (Alleyne 21). Alleyne posits that religion can be approached within "the same historical-analytical framework" (Alleyne 24) as language. Indeed, "[t]his continuum of religious variation directly parallels the continuum of linguistic variation … [as] [i]n both cases the population has 'moved' in the course of history along the line of the continuum, 'losing' forms close to the base culture derived from Africa" (Alleyne 91). While it was the Akan religion that dominated during slavery, it has undergone various degrees of change, as it was open to incorporate elements from the culture of other ethnic groups such as Congolese Africans for instance for Kumina (Alleyne 74), and later was "influenced by contact with Christianity and loss of contact with Africa after the abolition of slave trade" (Alleyne 79). Thus, religion in Jamaica is characterized by its syncretism. Indeed, even at the most conservative end of its continuum, that is Kumina or the Convince religion practiced by the Maroons, "there was a great deal of syncretistic mixing of different variants of West African culture" (Alleyne 79).

According to Alleyne, "Myalism has come to be used to refer to the dominant form of Africa-derived religion that developed among the slaves in Jamaica" (Alleyne 85). Central to

Myalism is the belief in the "metaphysical nature of man", in that its spirit leaves the body upon death "to return to the ancestral land to dwell with the other ancestral spirits", known as *duppies*. There was also another spirit, the shadow, that "belonged to living people". This shadow could be caught by the Obeahman, which led to the deterioration of the person, and it was "[t]he Myalman's function …to pull the shadow from its imprisonment and ceremoniously restore it to the person in whom it once dwelled" (Alleyne 86). The Myalman is therefore a "magician [that] protects against sorcerers and invisible evil beings; he cures people … [and], [a]s a healer, he has expert knowledge of the pharmaceutical and spiritual uses of curative plants" (Alleyne 59). Alleyne notes that because Europeans were unwilling to understand African culture and religion, they tended to confuse the role of the sorcerer with the ones of the priest and of the medicine man (Alleyne 83–84). As the colonialists were afraid of being poisoned by their slaves, and because they noticed the link between religion and uprising after the Tacky rebellion in 1760, they passed an act in 1781 that prohibited the practice of Obeah (Alleyne 82–83). In the last decades of the eighteenth century, many slaves received Christian instruction, and as aforementioned, many Black American Baptist ministers encouraged the slaves to follow in their steps by requesting their freedom (Burton 37). Some Myalmen became active leaders in Baptist churches, and "some of these class leaders and their organisations were active in the rebellion of 1831 that sounded slavery's death knell in Jamaica" (Alleyne 90). Actually, Alleyne explains that syncretism with Christianity was also a strategy, as "the introduction of Christian forms into African cosmology can be viewed as a solution to the problem of how to legitimise religious practices in the eyes of the ruling class while forging instruments of group cohesion and identity, also for use in resistance and revolts" (Alleyne 91). Alleyne places Kumina at the African end of the religious continuum, and this branch uses the word *zombi* to designate "spirit", a skybound deity. A person can become possessed by a *zombi*, that is an ancestral spirit, which will allow his soul to join "all ancestral *zombi* spirits and can

return to duties of various kinds on earth". If the person "has never been possessed by a spirit (*zombi*)", her/his soul "goes directly to Oto King Zombi never to return to earth" (Alleyne 92–93). Both Kumina and Myalism attach "importance …to the silk cotton tree, [and] [s]pirits are believed to reside in the branches of this tree or in the chambers formed by its huge roots, which protrude from the earth" (Alleyne 95). More generally, Alleyne notes that in West African religion, "[t]he world is a vast spiritual arena, [and] [t]here is no rigid dichotomy between sacred and secular, between natural and supernatural … Beneath [the] supernatural god are a number of hierarchically organized immanent deities and spirits" (Alleyne 58) that interact with natural elements and phenomena, or with a special person such as a priest or a dancer. Therefore, in West African and Jamaican religions, people vision themselves as being in continuation with nature, with their ancestors and the spiritual world. Many of the elements mentioned above have their importance in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and in *Myal*, either in terms of their metonymic function, or because of the novels' references to other chronotopes than the one of the physical world, when describing the liminal settings of dreams, or meetings between spiritual doubles.

It is therefore obvious from what has been described above regarding language and religion, that in spite of their sudden and violent abduction from their homelands, the former slaves brought with them a substantial part of their West-African cultures to the Caribbean. Moreover, they developed diverse forms of solidarity and resistance in response to their exploitation and harsh living conditions during slavery, and to their persistent discrimination after its abolition. In fact, the dehumanization of the Afro-Creole people rather encouraged them to preserve their African roots as much as possible. That is why it is fundamental to address the theme of spirit-thievery in Caribbean literature, and more generally in post-colonial writing. Indeed, this issue not only denounces what really happened during the colonial period, but its discussion also aims at circumventing what still needs to be actively fought in order to

correct misrepresentation and achieve cultural reappropriation. As already discussed, Tiffin is particularly insightful in explaining the reasons and the processes behind spirit-thievery in the colonies. Likewise, Hall (1990) who focusses on the "traumatic character of 'the colonial experience'" in the Caribbean in 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora' (Ashcroft et al., *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* 435), describes the experience of his people in the following terms:

> The ways in which black people, black experiences, were positioned and subject-ed in the dominant regimes of representation were the effect of a critical exercise of cultural power and normalisation. Not only, in Said's 'Orientalist' sense, were we constructed as different and other within the categories of knowledge of the West by those regimes. They had the power to make us see and experience ourselves as 'Other'. Every regime of representation is a regime of power, as Foucault reminds us, by the fatal couplet, 'power/knowledge'. But this kind of knowledge is internal, not external. It is one thing to position a subject or set of peoples as the Other of a dominant discourse. It is quite another thing to subject them to that 'knowledge', not only as a matter of imposed will and domination, by the power of inner compulsion and subjective conformation to the norm. (Ashcroft et al., *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* 436)

Thus, spirit-thievery has a much wider scope of action, and power of nuisance than the practice of Obeah, which has nonetheless a strong negative connotation due to its demonization in Western discourse. As explained by Alleyne, Obeah magic leads to the zombification of one or several individuals, but does not affect entire populations and cultures. Even though the word zombification originally is connected to Obeah, Brodber uses it in her novel to refer to institutional processes of spirit-thievery as well. Thus, I will also adopt the word's broader meaning in my analysis. Yet, as aforementioned, the objective of Brodber in *Myal* is not only to denounce spirit-thievery by "writing back" to the former Empire, but is also very much about discussing the process of what she refers to as dezombification. As it is used in *Myal*, the meaning of this term encompasses not only the need of liberating oneself from the Western representation and discourse's grip, but coming to terms with the ethnical and cultural hybridization of the Caribbean as well. According to Hall, defining one's identity for the Jamaican is a complex process:

> The dialogue of power and resistance, of refusal and recognition, with and against *Présence Européenne* is almost as complex as the 'dialogue' with Africa. In terms of popular cultural life, it is nowhere to be found in its pure, pristine state. It is always already fused, syncretised, with other cultural elements… [It is therefore comparable to a] diaspora experience, … not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by *hybridity*. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference (Ashcroft et al., *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* 437-38).

In *Myal*, this dialogism is initiated, on the one hand internally within its coloured characters, but on the other hand also externally by the admittance of Maydene within the Myalist community of spirits. Indeed, in the world in which the latter meet and collaborate towards healing, there is no place for racial prejudice and discrimination, but only for syncretism and the acknowledgement of hybridity.

Scholarship

White Sargasso Sea

Wide Sargasso Sea has generated much criticism, and scholars have read it either as a modernist and feminist text, or as post-colonial literature. As pointed out by Ashcroft et al., interpreting the novel within either one of these theoretical frameworks is by no means contradictory because many of the claims of these theories are similar (Ashcroft et al. 7). Emery (1990) positions Jean Rhys's novels rather "in between", or at the intersection of these theories. Indeed, female characters such as Antoinette are not only marginalized as women, but also as white Creoles:

> They descend from a class that no longer exists and whose history is morally shameful. They feel close to black culture that they cannot be part of and that only resent them, and they may still look to a 'mother' country that long ago abandoned them and still considers them inferior. (Rhys et al. 161–62)

This alienation leads the protagonist "to mentally visit a place 'somewhere else' where she becomes something else. Not myself any longer". Emery therefore situates Rhys's

characterization closer to the ones of the Caribbean writer Wilson Harris, than to the ones of novelists following European conventions (Rhys et al., 1999: 165-6).

Likewise, Ramchand (1976) perceives relevant parallels between Rhys's writing and the ones of Wilson Harris and Derek Walcott in examining the question whether *Wide Sargasso Sea* should be considered as a West Indian novel or not. For example, Rhys is able to "bring to the reader's senses a landscape felt and recognised by a West Indian as his own", and she "explore[s] its impact upon human consciousness", as illustrated by the fact that "[t]he different stages in the changing relationship between English husband and White West Indian wife are marked by the husband's changing and confused attitudes to the landscape" (Rhys et al. 178–79). Ramchand also refers to Rhys's ability to provide her characters with different varieties of language to give it "an authentic ring to the West Indian's ear" (Rhys et al. 180). He concludes that what makes the novel West Indian is its "lyric intensity" that "suggests the existence of something much more personal to the author and to the reader imbedded in the fiction" (Rhys et al. 183).

Drake (1990) highlights the importance of the novel's historical context, as it is set just after the Emancipation Act of 1833, a time when "[i]ndigenous American, Black slave, woman, colonial, and child were considered by the colonizer to different degrees to be by nature dependent and inferior (Rhys et al. 190). She sees in Christophine "a model of female independence and self-reliance for Antoinette" (Rhys et al. 193), to which she is unable to respond, and the affirmation of Afro-Caribbean culture in the figure of the zombie which symbolizes spiritual and cultural theft by colonization (Rhys et al. 198). This leads her to interpret the end of the novel as Antoinette's zombie awakening, as she sees in the "burning Antoinette-Zombi", a means to "[free] Antoinette for her real life–her reverse trip back across the wide Sargasso Sea" (Rhys et al. 199)

More recent criticism has focused on language and on the narrative structure of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. For instance, Russel (2007) examines Christophine's use of language, which has been described by other scholars either as "English-based patois", "French patois" or "Martinican patois" (Russell 88). He compares "the narrators' representations of Christophine's speech", and observes that "two prominent patterns emerge: the repetitive nature of her speech and her use of colloquial Caribbean expressions and dialects" (Russell 89). He refers to Glissant's *Caribbean Discourse*, in which the author reports that linguists have noted that traditional Creole tends to imitate "the speech of the child" (Russell 89). By the multiple references to Christophine's language and the reporting of her words, he tries to determine how many different varieties she master: "Antoinette asserts that Christophine has at least four languages: 'good' English, French, a patois of some sort, and the local dialect around Spanish Town, which is probably a Caribbean Creole" (Russell 91). By studying some of Christophine's expressions, he identifies several ones' belonging to Caribbean Creole and notes that "Christophine's speech is filled with many more Caribbean expressions in sections narrated by Antoinette than in passages narrated by her husband". Russel interprets this finding as an intention that "serves to further divide Antoinette and her husband" (Russell 92–93). Besides, Christophine's ability to adapt her language is an illustration of Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia, and more particularly of double-voiced discourse ("an utterance that belongs, by its grammatical (syntactic) and compositional markers, to a single speaker, but that actually contains mixed within it two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two 'languages', two semantic and axiological belief systems (304-5)") (Russell 95). Finally, he emphasizes Christophine's important role because her "words and presence are in the minds of Antoinette and her husband, and because of her ability to overpass post-colonial binaries: "[d]ue to her seamless merging of a wide variety of languages, Christophine transcends boundaries and

dichotomies: she is servant and master, native and non-native, voiceless and voiced" (Russell 101).

Eventually, Capello (2009) considers *Wide Sargasso Sea* as "a product of the modern postcolonialism and [in] the use of language [Jean Rhys] does represent her extraordinary ability to subvert the ideologies of the West, deconstructing the European discourse and monocentrism" (Cappello 47). Besides, she claims that by taking "a different structural approach to the first-person narrative technique employed by Charlotte Brontë" (Cappello 51), the novelist uses the husband's narrative as a "device to introduce Rochester's European point of view, the point of view of someone who considers inferior what is not European". According to Capello:

> Antoinette's husband is not depicted as a demonic tyrant, but as a victim himself belonging to a patriarchal society, a victim of prejudices, incapable of understanding and acknowledging the ties linking his wife with the black culture and community, thus unable to appropriate and understand the complex personality of Antoinette, (Capello, 2009: 51)

Capello concludes that the novel's address of, "several themes …from voodoo to customs, to dialects, to race relations and displacement, and even to the detailed description of the island" (Cappello 53), is representative of post-colonialist writing.

Myal: a novel

Published in 1988, Erna Brodber's *Myal* was awarded the Commonwealth Writer's Prize for Canada and the Caribbean a year later, and aroused rapidly enthusiasm among scholars. One of them, O'Callaghan (1990), discusses the role that western texts, and more particularly those with an omniscient narrator, have had in representing the 'Other'. In her analysis of *Myal* she shows the novel's effectiveness in unravelling strategies used by imperial discourse to shape the colonized subject, thereby transforming the latter into a zombie. Focusing on the character of Ella, she details the process by which Selwyn depletes his wife of her past by turning her memories of Jamaica into a grotesque coon show. Paradoxically, this

caricatural portrayal of her life initiates Ella's process of healing by Mass Cyrus and the other Myalists active in the community. O'Callaghan addresses also the question of gender in her article, by drawing a parallel between binaries such as colonizer/colonized and male/female subjects. In her discussion, she agrees with Waugh in that Ella is re-constructer "(as integrated agent rather than alienated zombi) by the communality of her society" (O'Callaghan 100). Finally, O'Callaghan contrasts the way *Myal* is narrated with that of "[t]he omnipotent omniscient narrator…[who] solicits the reader's absolute trust in authorial placing or definition of characters" (O'Callaghan 93). She highlights the importance of the narrative voice, which she describes as "a 'diffusion' of omniscient narrator's power of representation, through the employment of an 'alternative' … mode of telling which must, because it draws on the oral creole tradition …be communal", and she emphasizes the importance of "*language*" for meaning (O'Callaghan 100-102).

Likewise, Puri (1993) also addresses the question of narration and argues that an "omniscient narrator, linear narrative, transparent language, centered individual subject – are not necessarily features of a realist narrative any more than their 'opposites'–fragmented narrative, decentered or unstable individual subject, problematization of representation–are necessarily features of a post-modernist narrative" (Puri 98). Referring to Glissant's argument that it would be a contradiction for a Caribbean writer to adopt the literary conventions of the western realistic novel, she argues that Brodber is in accordance with Glissant in "her commitment to a realist epistemology [which] leads her away from formal realism. Like Glissant …Brodber doubles the meanings of objectivity, science, and realism" (Puri 99). Puri notes that "the novel functions at least partly in the tradition of the Bildungsroman …[but] does not proceed in the linear fashion of the traditional Bildungsroman, but through a complex series of halvings and doublings" (Puri 99). She identifies several sources of spirit thievery, such as the church and the colonialist education system through the allegory of "Mr Joe's Farm", and

draws a parallel between Ella's and Anita's zombification by male characters. Moreover, she points out that "[s]pirit possession in the novel thus represents not only domination and theft but also the possibility of connection with the half that has not been told: ancestral beliefs, oral traditions, religions, and healing practices" (Puri 101). Besides, she emphasizes the importance of "those moments and spaces where differences meet", symbolized for example by Maydene's "cusp", and claims that "[i]n its affirmation of the productive powers of hybridity, *Myal* belongs to that tradition of Caribbean writings that claims a future which neither imitates Europe nor longs for Africa, but draws its energies instead from the historically syncretic reality of the Caribbean" (Puri 104–05).

In her article 'Redeeming the Word: Religious Experience as Liberation in Erna Brodber's Fiction', Forbes (2007) remarks that with her novels *Myal* and *Louisiana* (1994) Brodber was a precursor in the discourse shift "away from nationalist thought", and that she brings a "religious perspective" to "her non-nationalist voice" (Forbes 3–4). According to Forbes, Brodber "inserts Caribbean metaphysics into the heart of globally dispersed communities and seeks to replace not only nationalist thought but also the hegemony of history with … the 'hegemony of spirit'", particularly in *Louisiana* (Forbes 6). Thus, she finds parallelisms between Brodber's world view and the one of Glissant in *Poetics of Relation* (Forbes 12). Forbes describes the religious experience in *Myal* as transcendental, and notes that:

> spiritual input [comes] from a range of religious persuasions: Afro-Jamaican (Myalism, Kumina), Jamaican-Christian (syncretized Baptist) English-Christian (Methodist), and from a range of racial and cultural figures: the ancestral Ole African shares redemptive agency with the white Christian Maydene Brassington. Brodber's eclectic religious vision and her refusal to stereotype (Europeanism, like myalism is a state of mind and spirit, not a matter of race or of a particular religion) effectively redefine myal, making it a concept of spirituality rather than a particularized, localized practice. (Forbes 13).

Besides, Forbes stresses that Brodber's discourse is oriented towards the removal of other boundaries such as gender and race (Forbes 14). Finally, she acknowledges the central role that the author gives to the community, which she believes to contrast with for example with *Wide Sargasso Sea*, where "the focus may not be on nation but neither is it on community – rather on the singular female protagonist" (Forbes 16). Thus, Brodber's social organization is in line with Glissant's concept of rhizomes.

In 'Text and Context', Walker-Johnson (1992) addresses the important question of social history in works of fiction. She states that context is particularly relevant in post-colonial writing because it "recreate[s] the emotional dimension of historical experience … [and] attempts to give a fuller picture of the historical experience of the society" (Walker-Johnson 48). Brodber's *Myal* exemplifies not only "how materials of history and local tradition" can be used to provide context, but also how "traditions of story-telling" is part of its "rhetorical structure" (Walker-Johnson 50). The choice of the title of the novel is significant in that it refers to Myalism, a traditional practice that connects the former slaves to their African roots. In her article, she underscores the importance "of the style and structure of the narrative", as well as the use of language, which imitates the "linguistic behaviour in the community she describes" (Walker-Johnson 54). Besides, she sees in the setting of the story, the first decades of the twentieth century, a historical reference to emancipation for Jamaicans from African origin that was in progress at that time.

Likewise, Adams (2010) highlights that the choice of Grove Town near Morant Bay is significant since it points back to a historical fact, the Morant Bay rebellion in 1865. In her publication, she discusses how Brodber's novel is on the one hand a criticism of the colonial education system: "far from filling untutored minds, colonial education operated as an emptying agent", but on the other hand is also a demonstration of "how the balance of power might be tipped through subversive strategies" (Adams 164). Moreover, Adams acknowledges

Brodber's ability in giving a more positive connotation to the theme of hybridity by viewing it as a form of syncretism.

Thesis Statement

The central argument of this mémoire is that Jean Rhys and Erna Brodber explore the related themes of alienation and spirit-thievery by imagining innovative narrative forms for their novels, *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Myal: a novel,* respectively. My claim is that both authors adopt a post-colonial perspective in terms of language and narrative structure, by intentionally distancing their texts from the typical conventions of the realistic English novel of the nineteenth century, as exemplified by *Jane Eyre*. In doing so, they invite the active reader to enter the Caribbean context and its culture. In this dissertation, I will begin by focusing on the characterization of each novel's protagonist, and analyze how their respective voicings connect to the central theme of spirit-thievery. In doing so, I will consider each text, not only from a literary angle, but also from a linguistic one, by reflecting on the metatextual significance of the inclusion of Jamaican Creole varieties in each work. Then, I will discuss and compare some of the narrative strategies adopted by Rhys and Brodber to fulfill their individual communicative purposes towards their implied audiences.

My argument in chapter one is that the voicing of Antoinette is communicated by two different narrators. While the first one is Antoinette as a young woman soon leaving the convent, the second is the more mature protagonist. The narrator of part one conveys feelings of fragility and alienation, which get reinforced by the use of double-hybrid constructs in her narrative, but also expresses her strong sense of belonging to Coulibri. I will argue that the protagonist undergoes a form of spirit-thievery in that she faces the unsolvable contradiction for her social group, the white Creoles: the request to conform to English culture and its norms by the denial of their hybridization; yet at the same time they face prejudice and suspicion about their whiteness. In parts two and three of the novel, my argument will be that the more

mature Antoinette mainly voices her resistance to this spirit-thievery, and to her husband's denial of her subjectivity, by ultimately finding a way back to the place she belongs to. In chapter two, I will focus on the character of Ella, who undergoes both institutional and individual spirit-thievery. I will argue that her awakening and her struggle to merge her split identities is triggered by the description of her village in her own words, that is in Jamaican Creole. In order to be cured from her hysterical pregnancy, the participation of the other coloured characters is required by Mass Cyrus, and the prayers of the Myalists are directed towards the healing of the entire community so that it can initiate its process of dezombification. This involves identifying sources of spirit-thievery and dismantling them in order to recover one's own culture. Obviously, Brodber's message is that this can only be achieved through syncretism. The future of Jamaican culture lies therefore not only in the reappropriation of its African roots, but also in the acknowledgment of its hybridization.

In the final chapter, I will compare my findings from the two preceding ones, and discuss the narrative strategies adopted by each author to portray the novels' respective main English character. My first claim is that in both novels institutional and cultural sources of spirit-thievery are juxtaposed with the practice of Obeah. While their common point is the exercise of power over individuals, the reach of the formers is much wider and far more problematic than the one of the latter. Nevertheless, it is only in *Myal*, that the diversity and the overlapping of Christian and Afro-Creole religions are portrayed, and that the issues of dezombification, cultural reappropriation and redefinition are addressed. My second claim is that, while each work includes Jamaican English, the sense that it is a continuum is uniquely conveyed in *Myal*. My argument is that Brodber explores an original form of narration, by having her omniscient narrator move along the different "lects" while accessing both characters and spirits' consciousnesses, and by showing how characters rely on code-switching to adjust to diverse communicative situations. Finally, I will argue that the two authors have chosen

opposite narrative strategies for the portrayal of their respective English characters, and that the latter's representations strongly influence the overall interpretation of their works. On the one hand, Rhys turns the figure of Rochester into an antagonist in that he becomes Antoinette's spirit-thief by denying her subjectivity and renaming her Bertha. Moreover, he is crafted into an unreliable narrator, whose credibility is low and whose values deviate from the ethical ones of the implied author's. In his narrative he reproduces the stereotypes of imperial discourse, but fails in embodying the English gentleman portrayed in *Jane Eyre*. On the other hand, Brodber imagines Maydene's character as an unconventional English lady, who not only denounces institutional spirit-thievery, but strives to change her husband's convictions about his role as a parson, and his perception of the villagers of Grove Town. She is already endowed with the ability to communicate with other spirits, and will later be admitted into the circle of the other Myalists. As a result, she is perceived as a character who is in accordance with the implied author's values. Thus, these opposite narrative choices have different outcomes: while there seems to be no other escape than death for Antoinette in the fragmented colonial society portrayed in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, *Myal* ends with the prospect of a better future involving syncretism among the different members of its community, and in which the value of an intercultural and multiethnic society is recognized.

Chapter 1

Alienation and Resistance of the White Creole

Scope and Purpose

As already mentioned in the introduction, one of Jean Rhys's purposes in *Wide Sargasso Sea* was to correct the wrongful image of Antoinette/Bertha Rochester, who is depicted as a lunatic in Charlotte Brontë's novel. The novelist chose to give this minor and silent character in *Jane Eyre* a voice so that Antoinette/Bertha could tell her story from her perspective, and bring to the forefront some of the challenges that white creole women had to face during the colonial period. In order to emphasize the societal complexity of the Caribbean context, Rhys set the beginning of her prequel to *Jane Eyre* just after two important events: the Baptist War in 1831-1832, that had started with the strike of the black slaves claiming more freedom and wages for their work; and the passing of the Emancipation Act in 1833, that decreed the end of slavery in the British colonies. Thus, the protagonist's tale begins at a timepoint when the socio-political context in Jamaica is particularly tense. Indeed, white creole plantation proprietors have to face economic hardship and uncertainties resulting from the loss of access to free labour, and they are very often hated by their former slaves. Moreover, they are despised by the newly arrived English settlers since they bear the stigma of their shameful past as slave-owners.

In this section, I will argue that the implied author's intention in *Wide Sargasso Sea* is not to alter the plot of *Jane Eyre*, but rather to bring to the foreground her problematic representation of Bertha Rochester, and to offer this character another fate. By depicting the West Indies in a more accurate way, and by raising the issue of arranged marriages for Englishmen in need of an income, Rhys enlightens her readership about the realities of the Empire and encourages them to revise their conception of marginality. As a result, she succeeds in turning things round in that Brontë's Bertha ceases to be a degenerate, but instead becomes

the victim of an imperialist and patriarchal society. The novelist had to meet the challenge of crafting a protagonist that would arise the implied reader's sympathy and indulgence, and the one of imagining a development for this character that would keep its empathic disposition despite her supposed madness and the firing of Thornfield Hall. In the following section of my mémoire, I will focus on the analysis of Antoinette's narrative voice, and link it with the central theme of alienation and spirit-thievery. My objective is to highlight and analyze linguistic features that make the heroine's voice so particular. My argument is that Antoinette is a narrator at two different timepoints of her life: while the narrator in part one is the young lady that is soon going to leave the convent, the narrator of some sections of part two, and most of part three is the more mature protagonist who is locked in at Thornfield Hall. The younger narrator in part one expresses, on the one hand, her feelings of fragility due to rejection by her mother, and of alienation as her in-betweenness makes her unable to determine to which social groups she belongs. On the other hand, she struggles to resist, and her sense of belonging to Coulibri, and the people she is close to, increases as the reality in which she was brought up is inevitably vanishing with the impoverishment of the white Creole former slaveowners. The heroine's narrative voice is skillfully constructed so that it arises the implied reader's empathy: admitted into the heroine's intimacy, s/he will be inclined to perceive her progressive alienation, and prone to be revolted by her husband's treatment when reading the two subsequent parts of the novel. Then, I will turn to the analysis of the narrative voice of the more mature protagonist that intervenes in parts two and three. In these sections, it is mainly the stream of consciousness of the narrator that is being represented. My thesis is that this narrative voice operates in different chronotopes which cannot be defined by the conventional dimensions of space and time. It appeals to the chronotopes that refers to the state of unconsciousness while dreaming, and to the one of the spiritual world which allows the return of her soul to Coulibri. This could be one way to explain the double metalepsis that occurs at the end of the novel, which

constitutes an intertextual transgression to *Jane Eyre*, and reminds also the readership of the fictitious nature of realistic novels.

The Voicing of Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea*

At first glance the novel seems to be nicely divided into three chronological parts, each of which being mainly told either by Antoinette or by her unnamed husband. Yet, a closer reading of the text reveals that it is far more complex in terms of narrative voices and chronology. Indeed, Antoinette is a different first-person narrator in part one than in the other ones of the novel. While she is a young woman turning adult at the end of the first part, the narrator of part three, who also briefly intervenes in part two, is more mature. The novel starts with Antoinette retrospectively narrating her childhood and adolescence while she is still at the convent, just after she has experienced her second dream. This is shown by the inclusion of the adverb of time *now* twice in the last paragraph of part one: "[n]ow Sister Marie Augustine is leading me out of the dormitory", and "[n]ow the thought of her is mixed up with my dream" (Rhys et al. 36). The first section therefore ends on a metalepsis, the time of the story being merged with the one of the discourse, as mimesis and diegesis coexist. The implied reader expects to be told about Antoinette leaving the convent and getting married next, but instead it is her unnamed husband that takes over most of the narration of part two. At this point, there is an ellipsis in the story, as his narrative starts at the beginning of their honeymoon. This missing part will progressively be filled by fragments of information revealed either by his own narration or by the means of the voice of the more mature protagonist. Finally, in the last part of the novel, Antoinette's narration turns into her stream of consciousness while she is being locked in at Thornfield Hall. In the narrative of the more mature heroine, the boundaries between reality and other states become blurred, making it more and more difficult to distinguish between moments of consciousness and of fantasy, and between the physical world and the spiritual one.

Antoinette's sense of isolation is already suggested by the opening lines of the novel, which show how other voices populate young Antoinette's narrative: "They say when trouble comes close ranks, and so the white people did. But we were not in their ranks. The Jamaican ladies had never approved of my mother, 'because she pretty like pretty self' Christophine said" (9). The narrative device referred to as a double-styled hybrid construction is used in this excerpt, which is described by Bakhtin as "the speech of another … introduced into the author's discourse [the story] in *concealed form*, that is, without any of the *formal* markers usually accompanying such speech, whether direct or indirect" (Bakhtin 303). Here, the voices of *The Jamaican ladies*'s gossip, *when trouble close, close ranks*, are reported as the words heard by Antoinette, while the one of Christophine corresponds to the words she uttered in Jamaican Creole, and includes a feature characteristic of Jamaican Patwa, that is the reduplication of the adjective *pretty* to emphasize her mother's beauty (Durrleman 141). Moreover, the presence of Christophine's explanation for the Jamaican ladies' disapproval of Antoinette's mother suggests either that the child previously asked her why their status was not the same as the one of the gossipers, or that she has overheard her nurse's words in a conversation.

The protagonist's feeling of alienation is strongly connected to the figure of her mother, and is expressed through language in the discourse of the narrator from the beginning. Indeed, she presents Annette to the implied reader in the following words: "[s]he was my father's second wife, far too young for him they thought, and, worse still, a Martinique girl" (Rhys et al. 9). This quote reveals how Antoinette makes a linguistic contrast between her father for whom she uses the possessive *my*, and her mother who is introduced with the pronoun *she*. Like the opening lines of the novel, this sentence is a hybrid construct, again reporting gossip, this time about her mother's origins and age difference with her father. Thus, the narrator expresses a distance from her mother, and it is being suggested that Annette is partly the cause of their social alienation. Besides, her mother is not only a source of chatter for the white

Jamaican society, due to her appearance and origins, but also a provocative figure for the black people living near Coulibri, as she desperately clings to the illusion that she can go on living as before: "[s]he still rode about every morning not caring that the black people stood about in groups to jeer at her, especially after her riding clothes grew shabby (they notice clothes, they know about money)" (10). The preceding citation exemplifies how the narrator's discourse, here implications about black people in the form of a comment, is very often interwoven with the telling of her story. Thus, it adds a metatextual level to the novel, in which the narrator directly communicates with her/his implied reader, with the aim of giving the latter access to her intimacy. In the recollection of her childhood, the narrator expresses on the one hand her indulgence for her mother's nostalgia: "[s]he was young. How could she not try for all the things that had gone so suddenly, so without warning"; but on the other hand, she remembers her judgmental attitude and words towards Godfrey after the death of the horse: "'You're blind when you want to be blind', she said ferociously, 'and you're deaf when you want to be deaf. The old hypocrite,' she kept saying. 'He knew what they were going to do'" (10). Likewise, when Antoinette asks her mother about Christophine and their former slaves, Annette voices again her prejudice against all of them except Christophine, as shown in the following excerpt:

> 'They stayed', she said angrily, 'because they wanted somewhere to sleep and something to eat. That boy Sass! When his mother pranced off and left him here–a great deal *she* cared–why he was a little skeleton. Now he's growing into a big strong boy and away he goes. We shan't see him again. Godfrey is a rascal. These new ones aren't too kind to old people and he knows it. That's why he stays. Doesn't do a thing but eat enough for a couple of horses. Pretends he's deaf. He isn't deaf–he doesn't want to hear. What a devil he is! (12-13)

Hence, one of the consequences of slave abolition, according to Annette, is to have to deal with opportunistic and two-faced servants. Her controversial nature is confirmed after the visit of the doctor: "I don't know what the doctor told her or what she said to him but he never came again and after that she changed. Suddenly, not gradually. She grew thin and silent, and at last she refused to leave the house at all" (10).

Nevertheless, for the narrator as a child, it is not their social isolation from the white community that makes her suffer, but the fact that she is constantly being rejected by her mother. While Annette shows openly her love and affection for Pierre, she never does so for Antoinette. For instance, when her daughter wants to touch her to manifest her support, the narrator remembers how she was rejected by her: "[b]ut she pushed me away, not roughly but calmly, coldly, without a word, as if she had decided once and for all that I was useless to her", and she also recalls that her mother kept repeating "let me alone" (11). In another instance Antoinette reiterates her need to be close to her mother, which is again declined: "I started to fan her, but she turned her head away. She might rest if I left her alone, she said". However, she adds that this is no longer the case: "[o]nce I would have gone back quietly to watch her asleep on the blue sofa – once I made excuses to be near her … *But not any longer. Not any more*" (emphasis added; 13). The end of this passage is a comment that prefigures the change that has taken place since then in the narrator's life. Indeed, a year after her marriage to Mr Mason, Annette urged him to leave Coulibri because she felt more and more the hatred of the black people, but he did not take this threat seriously. His failure to listen to his wife had dramatic consequences for the family as the local people set fire to the house and Pierre perished shortly thereafter. The last time Antoinette meets her mother, the latter has lost her mind; she dismisses her daughter violently when she realizes that her son is dead:

> But I recognized her hair, one plait much shorter than the other. And her dress. I put my arms round her and kissed her. She held me so tightly that I couldn't breathe and I thought, 'It's not her.' Then, 'It must be her.' She looked at the door, then at me, then at the door again. I could not say, 'He is dead.', so I shook my head. 'But I am here, I am here,' I said, and she said, 'No,' quietly. Then 'No no no' very loudly and flung me from her. I fell against the partition and hurt myself. The man and the woman were holding her arms and Christophine was there. The woman said, 'Why you bring the child to make trouble, trouble, trouble? Trouble enough without that.' (28-29)

This excerpt shows that Antoinette is still eager to express her love to her mother, even though she has trouble recognizing her after her nervous breakdown. But Annette is incapable of

welcoming her daughter's affection once more, and makes it clear that she does not count in her eyes. It might explain why later in the story, and unlike Christophine, Antoinette is unable to cry at her mother's funeral. Noticeably, in the passage quoted above, the lady's words are reported in Jamaican Creole, as there is no do-support, and reduplication of the word *trouble* is used to add emphasis.

Being constantly dismissed by her mother, Antoinette turns to Christophine for affection and support, and the nurse does her best to nurture the young girl. She sings to her in patois, and she is the one who helps her after Antoinette has been mocked and called a *white cockroach* by one of the local girls. Christophine arranges for her to play with Tia, who is the daughter of Maillote, the nurse's only friend. In Tia's company, Antoinette's daily life resembles the one of the black children that live close to Coulibri, as shown in the next passage in which the first sentence includes two frequency adverbs to underscore the habitual nature of the scene described:

> Sometimes we left the bathing pool at midday, sometimes we stayed till late afternoon. Then Tia would light a fire (fires always lit for her, sharp stones did not hurt her bare feet, I never saw her cry). We boiled green bananas in an old iron pot and ate them with our fingers out of a calabash and after we had eaten she slept at once. I could not sleep, but I wasn't quite awake as I lay in the shade looking at the pool–deep and dark green under the trees, brown-green if it had rained, but a bright sparkling green in the sun. The water was so clear that you could see the pebbles at the bottom of the shallow part. Blue and white and striped red. Very pretty. Late or early we parted at the turn of the road. My mother never asked me where I had been or what I have done. (13-14)

Here again, comments are inserted in the narrative: the first one is clearly marked and reveals the narrator's admiration for Tia *(fires always lit for her, sharp stones did not hurt her bare feet, I never saw her cry)*; the next, *[v]ery pretty*, is the acknowledgment of the beauty of the nature surrounding Coulibri, and the last one, *My mother never asked me where I had been or what I have done*, the confirmation of her mother's lack of concern for her.

However, Antoinette and Tia's friendship is an impossible one: it is impeded by mutual racial prejudice, resulting from the exploitation of black people by slave-owners for over a

century. The gulf that separates these two children surfaces in the scene when the two girls quarrel about the pennies that Christophine had given to Antoinette:

> They shone like gold in the sun and Tia stared. She had small eyes, very black, set deep in her head.
> Then she bet me three of the pennies that I couldn't turn a somersault under water 'like you say you can'.
> 'Of course I can.'
> 'I never see you do it,' she said. 'Only talk.'
> 'Bet you all the money I can,' I said.
> But after one somersault I still turned and came up choking. Tia laughed and told me that *it certainly look like I drown dead that time*. Then she picked up the money.
> 'I did do it,' I said when I could speak but she shook her head. *I hadn't done it good and besides pennies didn't buy much. Why did I look at her like that?*
> 'Keep them then, you cheating nigger,' I said, for I was tired, and the water I had swallowed made me feel sick. 'I can get more if I want to.'
> *That's not what she hear, she said. She hear all we poor like beggar. We ate salt fish – no money for fresh fish. That old house so leaky, you run calabash to catch water when it rain. Plenty white people in Jamaica. Real white people, they got gold money. They didn't look at us, nobody see them come near us. Old time white people nothing but white nigger now, and black nigger better than white nigger*. (emphasis added; 14)

It is well known that children often repeat the words of adults. In this scene, the protagonist, by designating her friend as a *cheating nigger,* calls on the trope that black people are deceitful. In this excerpt, Tia's words are reported in a variety of Jamaican Creole (emphasis added to the text). There is for instance an absence of copula *be*, as in the expressions *we poor*, *That old house so leaky*, *Old time white people nothing*, or *black nigger better than white nigger*. Existential *there* is also missing, as shown by *Plenty white people in Jamaica*. According to Durrleman (Durrleman 4), this is characteristic of basilect. However, the use of the nominal pronouns *she*, *we*, and *they* or of accusative ones (*us*, *them*) are rather features of mesolect, a variety that, unlike basilect, keeps case marking. Another characteristic of basilect is that "[v]erbs are not conjugated via inflectional morphology in Jamaican Creole" (Durrleman 25). According to Durrleman, only the default setting for non-stative verbs is the past tense (Durrleman 28), but here there are many stative verbs such as *see*, *look like*, *hear* that refer to

the past. Moreover, free aspectual markers are not present, such as *a* for example to add a progressive feature to express duration (*it rain*), or on-going activities (*you run calabash*) (Durrleman 25), or such as *e(h)n* or *did* that indicate perfective aspect (*she hear, they got, nobody see*) (Durrleman 28). One can therefore suppose that Antoinette as a child does not only express herself in Standard English, but masters most of the Creole continuum, and probably uses basilect herself when playing with Tia. However, the implied author has made the choice to keep Antoinette's direct speech interventions in Standard English, and seems to have included only some of the features specific to basilect, probably to make the text more understandable for its audience.

This scene marks the end of Antoinette and Tia's friendship, the latter stealing the protagonist's dress. This gesture could be read as a foreshadowing for what will happen a few months later, when the family is being forced to leave Coulibri after the villagers have set fire to the estate. Both Annette and Christophine react, although for different reasons, when they see Antoinette wearing Tia's dress. Annette, who is hosting English relatives of Mr Lutrell, is embarrassed by her daughter's behaviour. Indeed, when Antoinette notices that the visitors are wearing "beautiful clothes", she runs into her room in order to hide her scruffy appearance. Her mother's resentment is hard for the child's self-esteem, and leads her to conclude that she is indeed not worth of respect: "[a]ll that evening my mother didn't speak to me or look at me and I thought, 'She is ashamed of me, what Tia said is true.'" (Rhys et al. 15). Just after this scene, Antoinette will experience her first nightmare; it functions as a motif in the novel, in which she is followed by "[s]omeone who hated me" (15), and wakes up crying. When her mother comes to check what is wrong with her, "[s]he sighed and covered me up. 'You were making such a noise. I must go to Pierre, you've frightened him" (16), she is not being supportive since her main concern is about her son and not about her daughter.

Christophine's reaction in seeing Antoinette in Tia's dress is of another nature than the one of Annette since she says, "Throw away that thing. Burn it" (15), indicating that she perceives the dress as a malefic object. Racial prejudice and tensions that are present during the protagonist's childhood are brought to the front by Annette and Christophine's argument about the dress. For example, Annette's questioning about its origin, "Which one of them is Tia?" (15), highlights her failure to consider most of her black neighbours as individuals. Moreover, the narrator reports the words her mother used in the form of a comment: "('Marooned,' said her straight narrow back, her carefully coiled hair. 'Marooned')" (15). The adjective *marooned* in this context implies much more than its current lexical meaning: it has a strong socio-political connotation as it refers to the Maroon populations of Jamaica, which were founded by slaves having managed to escape from their masters, and who lived in independent communities. In fact, it is an example of how the lexical content of Standard English can be enriched by a word that was first coined in the Caribbean. However, the two women are not only arguing about the dress, and the fact that Christophine reacts to Annette's lack of concern about her daughter. In the following quotation, the nurse's words about the visitors are insightful in that they pinpoint the paradoxical consequences of the abolition of slavery in Jamaica: "[t]hey called themselves Lutrell, but English or not English they were not like old Mr Lutrell. 'Old Mr Lutrell spit in their face if he see how they look at you. Trouble walk into the house this day. Trouble walk in'?" (15). Christophine's statement is discerning as she stresses that black people were even more prejudiced after the abolition of slavery. Indeed, the new colonialists, who mainly came to make profit, and had no experience of living next to the slaves, were often more racist than their previous masters. In the above quote, Christophine's Jamaican Creole is similar to the one of Tia in that there are no verbal inflections, and in that it keeps case for pronouns. As previously, she uses repetition for emphasis.

It is after this episode that the narrator describes how she manages to escape these tensions by finding solace in the familiar world of Coulibri and its surroundings: "I lay thinking, 'I am safe. There is the corner of the bedroom door and the friendly furniture. There is the tree of life in the garden and the wall green with moss. The barrier of the cliffs and the high mountains. And the barrier of the sea. I am safe. I am safe from strangers.'" (16). In this passage, I suggest that Antoinette implies that both the *cliffs* and the *sea* are there to protect her from the people from abroad like the ones coming from England with whom she is unable to identify. Even though the environment around her house might sometimes be hostile, in her perception real danger does not come from nature but from people:

> I went to parts of Coulibri that I had not seen, where there was no road, no path, no track. And if the razor grass cut my legs and arms I would think 'Its better than people.' Black ants or red ones, tall nests swarming with white ants, rain that soaked me to the skin – once I saw a snake. All better than people.
> Better. Better, better than people.
> Watching the red and yellow flowers in the sun thinking of nothing, it was as if a door opened and I was somewhere else, something else. Not myself any longer.
> I knew the time of day when though it is hot and blue and there are no clouds, the sky can have a very black look. (16)

It is worth pointing out that some adjectives referring to colours can be given a metonymic interpretation in this passage. First, there are the *black* and *red* ants, that could represent the African slaves and the indigenous people of the Caribbean respectively, whereas the *white* ones' *swarming* could allude to the exploitation of these people by the colonizers. There is also the use of bright colours in the contemplation of the *red* and *yellow* flowers in the *sun*, an imagery which allows her to enter into a world that is different from the physical one, and that comes back at the end of the novel in connection to the imagery of fire and of the tree of life. Finally, there is a strong contrast between the *blue* sky with no clouds, and her perception of it as *having a very black look*.

Whereas Annette first believes that her marriage with Mr Mason marks the end of her problems, her daughter does not perceive it as such. On the contrary, Mr Mason's arrival at

Coulibri increases her alienation, and signals the beginning of the protagonist's zombification. In fact, Antoinette is very much aware of the persistent slander that goes on after her mother's wedding, as illustrated in the following passage:

> I was bridesmaid when my mother married Mr Mason in Spanish Town. Christophine curled my hair. I carried a bouquet and everything I wore was new–even my beautiful slippers. But their eyes slid away from my hating face. I had heard what all these smooth smiling people said about her when she was not listening and they did not guess I was. Hiding from them in the garden when they visited Coulibri, I listened.
> 'A fantastic marriage and he will regret it. Why should a very wealthy man who could take his pick of all the girls in the West Indies, and many in England too probably?' 'Why *probably*?' the other voice said. '*Certainly*.' 'Then why should he marry a widow without a penny to her name and Coulibri a wreck of a place? Emancipation troubles killed old Cosway? Nonsense–the estate was going downhill for years before that. He drank himself to death. Many's the time when–well! And all those women! She never did anything to stop him–she encouraged him. Presents and smiles for the bastards every Christmas. Old customs? Some old customs are better dead and buried…. As for those two children–the boy an idiot kept out of sight and mind and the girl going the same way in my opinion–a *lowering* expression.' (16-17)

In this excerpt, the narrator underscores the ephemeral nature of this happiness by juxtaposing the description of the new clothes she was wearing at the wedding with what is being said behind her family's back. Thus, the hope for a better future becomes almost immediately undermined by the child's eavesdropping. Indeed, when listening to the two ladies' conversation, the protagonist realizes to what extent they are being despised by the white community of Jamaica, and considered as lower-class people. Besides, it also contrasts the way of living of the former slave-owners with the one of the newly arrived colonizers. Here, the description of old Cosway's unfaithfulness to his wife, but at the same time of Annette's acceptance of his illegitimate coloured children, brings forward that plantation owners often maintained close relationship with some of their slaves. This is not the case for the colonialists arriving after the Emancipation Act. Their purpose was different: they had no real attachment to the island, and they mainly pursued the objective of becoming rich, as it is the case for Mr Mason. In this part of the novel, Annette's description as a skillful dancer, "Yes, what a dancer

… There was no need for music when she danced" (19), could be interpreted as the transition between these two worlds, as suggested by the narrator's words:

> I was remembering that woman saying 'Dance! He didn't come to the West Indies to dance–he came to make money as they all do. Some of the big estates are going cheap, and one unfortunate's loss is always a clever man's gain. No the whole thing is a mystery. It's evidently useful to keep a Martinique obeah woman on the premises.' She meant Christophine. She said it mockingly, not meaning it, but soon other people were saying it–and meaning it. (17-18)

In fact, Annette's marriage with Mr Mason reinforces the protagonist's sense of alienation: "Coulibri looked the same when I saw it again, although it was clean and tidy, no grass between the flagstones, no leaks. But it didn't feel the same… Mr Mason engaged new servants–I didn't like any of them excepting Mannie the groom. It was their talk about Christophine that changed Coulibri, not the repairs or the new furniture or the strange faces. Their talk about Christophine and obeah changed it" (18). The three preceding passages all highlight Antoinette's increasing unease because the adult figures that should normally allow the child to feel secure are all presented as being flawed. The last quotation implies as well that the nurse has, at least from a Western point of view, a notorious reputation for practicing malevolent magic comparable to witchcraft, and prefigures the consequences of the Obeah night.

After the marriage of her mother with Mason, the daily routines of the family at Coulibri are altered and replaced by the ones of the English colonialists, as exemplified by the description of the dinner: "Myra, one of the new servants, was standing by the sideboard, waiting to change the plates. We ate English food now, beef and mutton, pies and puddings" (21). Mr Mason is perceived as the "white pappy" in the protagonist's eyes, and she underscores how different he is from the former plantation owners:

> So I looked away from her at my favourite picture, 'The Miller's Daughter', a lovely English girl with brown curls and blue eyes and a dress slipping of her shoulders. Then I looked across the white tablecloth and the vase of yellow roses at Mr Mason, so sure of himself, so without a doubt English. And my mother, so without a doubt not English, but no white nigger either. Not my mother. Never had been. Never could be. Yes, she

> would have died, I thought, if she had not met him. And for the first time I was grateful and liked him. There are more ways than one of being happy, better perhaps to be peaceful and contended and protected, as I feel now, peaceful for years and long years, and afterwards I may be saved whatever Myra says. (21-22)

In this passage, the narrator makes it clear that the white Creoles do not identify with the English. Yet, some of them, like Annette for instance, refuse to accept the societal change resulting from the emancipation of the slaves. Moreover, Annette and Mr Mason's constant arguments about leaving Coulibri reveal that the newly arrived colonizers are not only more racist than the already established white community, but also very naïve in failing to perceive the resentment that their superior attitude provokes in the black population. Whereas Annette and Aunt Cora clearly sense the danger of staying at Coulibri, Mr Mason does not. This is implied several times in the text, for example by the narrator's comment after imagining traces of an Obeah ceremony in Christophine's room, "Mr Mason would laugh if he knew how frightened I had been. He would laugh even louder than he did when my mother told him that she wished to leave Coulibri" (18-19); by his way of considering the black people as *children*, or by his lack of caution when he speaks aloud about importing indentured workers in the presence of their servant Myra, or finally by the derogative words he uses when referring to them: "[y]ou imagine enmity which doesn't exist. Always one extreme or the other. Didn't you fly at me like a little wild cat when I said nigger. Not nigger, nor even Negro. Black people I must say'" (19). The narrator is being very lucid about this situation as she remarks that "[i]n some ways it was better before he came though he'd rescued us from poverty and misery. 'Only just in time too.' The black people did not hate us quite so much when we were poor. We were white but we had not escaped and soon we would be dead for we had no money left. What was there to hate?" (20). Unlike her mother, Antoinette does not feel saved by Mr Mason because his presence at Coulibri increases the socio-economic discrepancy between the white and the black people. Actually, his assumptive attitude in refusing to listen to his wife and Aunt Cora's

multiple warnings, and the fact that he has got money, are the two provocative ingredients that will lead their black neighbours to set fire to the estate.

Their flight from Coulibri is a traumatizing experience for Antoinette and represents an additional step in her alienation. Indeed, she is forced to leave the place of her childhood to which she is so attached, she is definitively rejected by her former friend Tia, her mother tips into madness after the death of Pierre, and Christophine decides to live with her son. The protagonist expresses this estrangement in the scene when she runs towards Tia and her mother, hoping that they will welcome her, but ending with the black girl throwing a stone at her face: "[w]e had eaten the same food, slept side by side, bathed in the same river. As I ran, I thought, I will live with Tia and I will be like her. Not to leave Coulibri. Not to go. Not… We stared at each other, blood on my face, tears on hers. It was as if I saw myself. Like in a looking-glass" (27). This quote exposes the protagonist's feeling of closeness to the locals, and shows that racial barriers can be overcome when sharing the same experiences. Antoinette clearly feels more affinity with her black neighbours than with the white Jamaican community, and would have wished to stay with them. But she is obliged to leave this part of her life behind. Just after this scene, Antoinette is compared to a zombie for the first time when she is being bullied by a boy and a girl on her way to the convent:

> 'Look the crazy girl, you crazy like your mother. Your aunt frightened to have you in the house. She send you for the nuns to lock up. Your mother walk about with no shoes and stockings on her feet, she *sans culottes*. She try to kill her husband and she try to kill you too that day you go to see her. She have eyes like zombie and you have eyes like zombie too. Why you won't look at me.' (29-30)

Antoinette's alienation and zombification are juxtaposed in this passage. Again, she is confronted to slander about her mother; as her daughter she is a target for mockery, this time coming from the black children. In this excerpt, the girl expresses herself in an intermediary form between basilect and mesolect, as can be seen by the absence of copula *be,* like in *you crazy*, *your aunt frightened*. Besides, non-stative verbs such as *send*, *walk*, *try*, *go*, are not

inflected but all refer to the past. The last sentence of this excerpt, despite the fact that it keeps case and gender for the pronouns, remains rather ambiguous: indeed, it could either be interpreted as a question lacking auxiliary-verb inversion, or as a conclusive statement in which the demonstrative *that* and copula *be* are omitted before the question word *Why*. The second interpretation could suggest that Antoinette already appears as having been depleted of her soul after the loss of her place of belonging. The girl also uses the French expression *sans culottes*, which refers to the lower-class people who were the instigators of the French Revolution. Eventually, it is Antoinette's cousin Sandi who saves her from this unpleasant situation. While recalling this episode, the narrator indirectly denounces another form of spirit-thievery. In effect, she implies that Mr Mason has been openly racist about some of the family's relatives: "I knew who he was, his name was Sandi, Alexander Cosway's son. Once I would have said 'my cousin Sandi' but Mr Mason's lectures had made me shy about my coloured relatives. I muttered, "'Thank you'" (30). The use of the word *lectures* in the narrator's discourse is a hint at her stepfather's racist words, likely expressing his wish to have her disown part of her kinship because of the colour of their skin. It shows how the colonizer aimed at denying the processes of ethnical and cultural hybridization that inevitably resulted from having white Creoles and black slaves living close to each other for over a century. This denial could be compared to an act of spirit-thievery, in that Mason's request entails an additional estrangement for the protagonist.

Hence, it is at the convent that the young Antoinette finds some relief, although she is exposed to some of the many incoherencies that arise when applying Eurocentric education and Christian discourse to the multicultural and complex context of Jamaica. In fact, Antoinette is being perspicacious in pinpointing some of these contradictions. For example, she questions humorously how "the skeleton of a girl of fourteen under the altar of the convent chapel" got there by saying "But how did the nuns get them out here, I ask myself? In a cabin trunk?

Specially packed for the hold?", and notes that "[t]he saints we hear about were all very beautiful and wealthy. All were loved by rich and handsome young men" (32). When learning the prayers, she wonders about happiness, and uses oppositions in her description of the convent: it is for instance "a place of sunshine and of death", and "[e]verything was brightness, or dark" (33-34). She underscores the simplicity of the nuns' teaching, and the narrator's ironic tone in the following passage suggests that she needs to free herself from oppressive religious discourse:

> That was how it was, light and dark, sun and shadow, Heaven and Hell, for *one of the nuns knew all about Hell* and *who does not? But another knew all about Heaven* and the attributes of the blessed, of which the least is transcendent beauty. *The very least. I could hardly wait for all this ecstasy and once I prayed for a long time to be dead. Then remembered that this was a sin. it's presumption or despair, I forget which, but a mortal sin. So I prayed for a long time about that too, but the thought came, so many things are sins, why? Another sin, to think that*. However, *happily*, Sister Marie Augustine says thoughts are not sins, if they are driven away at once. You say Lord save me, I perish. *I find it very comforting to know exactly what must be done*. All the same, I did not pray so often after that and soon, hardly at all. I felt bolder, happier, more free. But not so safe. (emphasis added; 34)

What this excerpt highlights is the difficulty for the narrator to make sense of the undebatable religious truths being advanced. Even though it is not explicit in the text, the religious discourse to which she is exposed can be viewed as a source of spirit-thievery as well. In this passage Antoinette ironically emphasizes the binary oppositions inherent to Christian discourse, and the fact that it does not value *transcendent beauty*. She also questions why so many emotions and thoughts are defined as sins. Thus, the nuns' teachings seem disconnected from her reality, and more generally from the one of the multi-cultural and -ethnical Caribbean society. It only inclines her to feel guilty, and does not offer her any help in coming to peace with the hardships she has experienced. It is certainly not the piece of advice she has been given: "my mother, whom I must forget and pray for as though she were dead, though she is living" (33) that is going to reduce her pain. It is paradoxically at the convent, where people normally turn to find

spiritual salvation, that Antoinette is unable to put words on how she should feel, in order to initiate the healing process indispensable for her recovery.

In the eyes of the protagonist, the convent is hence more a means to protect herself from the outside world then a place in which she is able to find solace. Thus, when Mr Mason suggests that it is time for her to leave the nuns to be presented to his English friends with the idea of finding a husband for her, Antoinette expresses her distress, and experiences her second nightmare:

> They are safe. How can they know what it can be like outside?
> This was the second time I had my dream.
> Again I have left the house at Coulibri. It is still night and I am walking towards the forest. I am wearing a long dress and thin slippers, so I walk with difficulty, following the man who is with me and holding up the skirt of my dress…I follow him, sick with fear but I make no effort to save myself; if anyone were to try to save me, I would refuse. This must happen. Now we have reached the forest. We are under the tall dark trees and there is no wind. 'Here?' He turns and looks at me, his face black with hatred, and when I see this I begin to cry. He smiles slyly. 'Not here, no yet,' he says, and I follow him, weeping. Now I do not try to hold up my dress, it trails in the dirt, my beautiful dress. We are no longer in the forest but in an enclosed garden surrounded by a stone wall and the trees are different trees. I do not know them. There are steps leading upwards, It is too dark to see the wall or the steps, but I know they are there and I think, 'It will be when I go up these steps. At the top.' (35-36)

This dream follows the same motif as the first one, but is much more precise in foreshadowing her future husband's feeling of hate at the end of part two, and her imprisonment in the attic at Thornfield Hall. In addition, the man's words 'Not here, not yet', and the image of the dress trailing in the dirt are elements that will come back in part two. The first part of the novel ends on a metalepsis since the use of narrative present tense to indicate that the nun coming into her room results in the merge of the time of the story with the one of the discourse: "[s]he looks as usual, composed and neat, and I want to ask her if she gets up before dawn or hasn't been to bed at all" (36). After her marriage and in the next section of the novel, Antoinette loses temporarily her authority over her story, as she is mostly portrayed by her unnamed husband in part two.

As suggested previously, it is no longer through the voice of the narrator of part one that the protagonist expresses herself in parts two and three, but mainly through the stream of consciousness of the woman who has been named Bertha and who is locked in the attic. However, it is first through the focalization of the unnamed husband that their honeymoon stay at Granbois is narrated. Once married, Antoinette loses her independence as all her rights are transferred to her husband. Interestingly, this is symbolically shown in the text by the shift of first-person narrator: for most of part two, the protagonist is no longer a subject and an *I*, but becomes rather an object of representation seen through the lens of the figure of Rochester. Most of the time the latter uses the pronoun *she* when describing his wife. In doing so, he underscores the fact that he considers her as alien and inferior to him because she is a white Creole: "Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either" (39). The fact that he does not even consider her as European implies that he mainly sees in Antoinette the figure of the "Other". Besides, the use of the pronoun *they* when referring to the Creole points to his failure to recognize her individuality, which constitutes an act of spirit-thievery.

Yet, even though the protagonist was reluctant to marry this unknown English man, she tries to do her best to turn their arranged marriage into a success. He has asked her to trust him, and promised her peace, happiness, and safety, making her feel for the first time confident, while showing him around Grandbois. She drinks "to happiness" (43), and when she questions him about his perception: "'Don't you like it here? This is my place and everything is on our side'" (44), she tells him that they are spending their honeymoon in a place that is extremely precious to her. In fact, Antoinette would like to share with him her love for the dramatic nature around Granbois. When he expresses the feeling of loneliness that the surroundings of the estate engender in him, she answers, "'I love it more than anywhere in the world. As if it were a person. More than a person" (53). With this reply, Antoinette affirms again her attachment to

the Caribbean nature, which, unlike human relationships, is immutable. During the first weeks of their honeymoon, Antoinette manages to make him appreciate the place, and even believes that she has at last found happiness:

> If I have forgotten caution, she has forgotten silence and coldness.
> Shall I wake her up and listen to the things she says, whispers, in darkness. Not by day.
> 'I never wished to live before I knew you. I always thought it would be better if I died. Such a long time to wait before it's over.'
> 'And did you ever tell anyone this?'
> 'There was no one to tell, no one to listen. Oh, you can't imagine Coulibri.'
> 'But after Coulibri?'
> 'After Coulibri it was too late. I did not change.'
> …
> 'Why did you make me want to live? Why did you do that to me?'
> 'Because I wished it. Isn't that enough?'
> 'Yes it is enough. But if one day you didn't wish it. What should I do then? Suppose you took this happiness away when I wasn't looking …'
> 'And lose my own? Who'd be so foolish?'
> 'I am not used to happiness,' she said. 'It makes me afraid.'
> 'Never be afraid. Or if you are tell no one.' (54-55)

The protagonist exposes her vulnerability in this excerpt: she has not been used to feeling close to someone, and she is frightened that this joyfulness might not last. Unfortunately, the implied reader is aware that this state of felicity is ephemeral as s/he has access to the unnamed narrator's thoughts. As expressed by Antoinette's words, "Here I can do as I like" (55), she opens herself and enjoys this moment of freedom. But she stays under the scrutiny of her unnamed husband, and he reproaches her for being too familiar with Christophine or with the other inhabitants of the island.

In fact, the heroine's moments of joy end abruptly with the arrival of the letter written by Daniel Cosway. For Antoinette's husband it functions as the signal he had been expecting: the confirmation that, according to him, he has been tricked into a marriage with a woman from a controversial family background. Christophine's decision to leave Granbois, Amélie's words, "'Your husban' he outside the door and he look like he see zombi. Must be he tired of the sweet

honeymoon too'" (60), and her song in which she calls Antoinette a "white cockroach", are all events that inform the protagonist that something is wrong. Nevertheless, she is not yet aware that her husband is going to turn against her when she explains to him why she has got angry at Amélie:

> 'It was a song about a white cockroach. That's me. That's what they call all of us who were here before their own people in Africa sold them to the slave traders. And I've heard English women call us white niggers. So between you I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all. (61)

This excerpt is crucial in that it highlights the futureless status of white Creoles after the abolition of slavery. Indeed, they are either considered as *white cockroaches* or as *white nigger*s; consequently, they occupy an in-between social position which is despised by both the colonizers and the former slaves. After having lost his way in the woods, her husband starts reading about Obeah, and about the figure of the zombie, both being diabolized, as they are represented from an outsider's Western perspective. Strikingly, it is at this point of the novel that Antoinette recovers her function as a first-person narrator, by abruptly interrupting his narrative just before the plot's crucial moment of the "Obeah night". This is significant as it allows the implied reader to evaluate the turning-point of the novel from two different perspectives, and thereby to question the reliability of the husband's narrative.

With the intervention of the more mature protagonist, the intertextual link with *Jane Eyre* becomes more salient, and I argue here that it is from this point of the novel that Brontë's silent lunatic voices her resistance to spirit-theft. In the scene recalling her visit to Christophine, the narrator mixes different temporal references, by referring to Antoinette's past, present and future, with the effect of merging the three different timelines of her story. First, when Antoinette sees Christophine, the smell of her clothes brings back the memory of seeing the women doing the laundry back in Coulibri, and of her thoughts at that moment: "'This is my place and this is where I belong and this is where I wish to stay'" (65). Thus, she expresses her

strong sense of belonging to places of her childhood once more. Then, there is the reporting of their conversation on that morning. Christophine advises Antoinette to leave her husband, but she refuses to do so. Finally, when she says that she would like to go to England, she interrupts her narration, again by reporting her thoughts: "I must know more than I know already. For I know that house where I will be cold and not belonging, the bed I shall lie in has red curtains and I have slept there many times before, long ago. How long ago? In that bed I will dream the end of my dream" (67). The dimensions of time and space are challenged in this excerpt by the employment of different tenses. The use of present simple in *I know that house* entails that it is a place to which she has already been; the future of *I will be old and not belonging* prefigures the last part of the novel; finally, the present perfect in *I have slept there many times before* implies that she has already been to this place physically. Yet, the addition of the adverbial *long ago* at the end of this sentence, followed by its repetition in the question *How long ago?*, and the next sentence, *In that bed I will dream the end of my dream*, reconnects in fact this passage to the motif of the dream introduced in part one. Consequently, the reader is led into another chronotope, being invited into Antoinette's intimacy, by having access to the narrator's stream of consciousness, and thereby becoming connected to her emotional state. The blurring of the dimensions of time and space, but also of the liminality between dream and reality, have a bewildering effect on the implied reader as it conveys the impression of a dematerialized narrative voice speaking from above.

Antoinette's narrative in part two brings important information about the arrangement of her marriage with the figure of Rochester, and about his behaviour after the reception of Daniel's letter. Indeed, in this scene it is revealed that Richard did not respect the will of his father by arranging for the protagonist financial independence. Antoinette overheard the conversation between Aunt Cora and Richard, in which the former reproached him for not arranging a settlement for his sister. It is also in this passage that the implied reader learns that

the unnamed husband has rejected his wife: he always sleeps on his own, and has decided to deplete the protagonist of her identity by renaming her Bertha, her mother's second name. Despite being maltreated, Antoinette's wish is to rewin his love and not to leave him. Therefore, she has come to Christophine requesting her to practice Obeah. She refuses to listen to her nurse's advice and the racial prejudice she has internalized from her mother's discourse resurfaces at this moment as shown by her comment: "I stared at her, thinking, 'but how can she know the best thing for me to do, this ignorant, obstinate old negro woman, who is not certain if there is such a place as England?'" (67). Even though Christophine warns her that Obeah "is not for *béké*. Bad, bad trouble come when *béké* meddle with that" (68), and that it does not work on white people, Antoinette insists on being helped by this means. At the end of this passage, Christophine notes that the young woman's eyes are "red like *soucriant*" (70), comparing her therefore to a zombie. This would imply that it is not the nurse's magic that has transformed her into a zombie, but rather her husband's rejection and his denial of her identity. In this passage, the nurse uses words such as *béké* and *soucriant* that come from French Creole, thereby reminding the implied reader that she is not a native Jamaican. I believe that this scene is also crucial in underscoring the precarious status of women at that time. As a former slave, Christophine is unaware that Antoinette has lost her financial independence with marriage. Obeying to social conventions, and misled by her own racial prejudice, Antoinette is unable to choose the path leading her to independence, and rather endorses the role of the victim. She chooses to stay with the man who mistreats her, hoping to seduce him in order to be loved by him again. It is rather Christophine and not the protagonist who embodies the figure of the independent woman in the story, as pointed out by Drake (1990).

As predicted by Christophine, the practice of Obeah is unable to restore Antoinette and her husband's relationship. Instead, it accelerates the protagonist's process of zombification, as seen by the description of her appearance after her second visit to her nurse, which for the

first time is reminiscence of the one of the lunatic in *Jane Eyre*: "When I saw her I was too shocked to speak. Her hair hung uncombed and dull into her eyes which were inflamed and staring, her face was very flushed and looked swollen. Her feet were bare. However, when she spoke her voice was low, almost inaudible" (87). After discovering that her husband has been unfaithful to her with Amélie, Antoinette expresses her suffering before withdrawing into her inner world. She starts by pointing out that "'Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name, I know, that's obeah too'" (88). What the heroine means is that the power he exercises over her, which consists in the denial of her subjectivity by renaming her Bertha, is an act of spirit-thievery comparable to Obeah. Hence, the juxtaposition of these two forms of spirit-thievery highlights that the psychologic violence he inflicts on his wife is at least as deleterious as the controversial practice of Obeah. As a result, Antoinette clarifies why she will never be able to pardon him:

> 'If my father, my real father, was alive you wouldn't come back here in a hurry after he'd finished with you. If he was alive. Do you know what you've done to me? It's not the girl, not the girl. But I loved this place and you have made it into a place I hate. I used to think that if everything else went out of my life I would still have this, and now you have spoilt it. It's just somewhere else where I have been unhappy, and all the other things are nothing to what has happened here. I hate it now like I hate you and before I die I will show you how much I hate you.' (88-89)

What makes him unforgivable in her eyes is that he has destroyed her fondness and sense of belonging to Granbois by being unfaithful to her with Amélie. Antoinette's narrative voice is heard one last time in part two while overhearing the conversation between Christophine and her husband, in which she recalls the night it happened: *"(I lay awake all night long after they were asleep, and as soon as it was light I got up and dressed and saddled Preston. And I came to you. Oh Christophine. O Pheena, Pheena, help me.)*" (93). When her husband hears her voice again, he notes, "I scarcely recognized her voice. No warmth, no sweetness. The doll had a doll's voice, a breathless but curiously indifferent voice" (102). This suggests that the protagonist has definitely retreated into her inside world, the only one in which she has the

strength to survive in his presence, and her comparison to a doll attests to her state of zombification.

The last part of the novel begins with Grace Poole's reported conversation with Leah, before Antoinette takes over the telling of her story. There are hints in Grace Pole's narrative that the protagonist is in a very poor physical state: "[*f*]*irst when I answered your advertisement you said that the person I had to look after was not a young girl. I asked if she was an old woman and you said no. Now that I see her I don't know what to think. She sits shivering and she is so thin. If she dies on my hands who will get the blame?*" (105). Mrs Eff reproaches Grace for having spread gossip about her master and his wife. Antoinette, as a first-person narrator, confirms that she is being talked about: "[s]o there is still the sound of whispering that I have heard all my life, but these are different voices" (107). Hence, she perceives the outside world as a place of hostility once more. By bringing her to England, the figure of Rochester has not only stripped her of her identity, as shown by the narrator reporting her thoughts: "[n]ames matter, like when he wouldn't call me Antoinette, and I saw Antoinette drifting out of the window with her scents, her pretty clothes and her looking-glass" (106-107), but also brought her to a place which does not correspond to her conception of England: "[t]hey tell me I am in England but I don't believe them. We lost our way to England. When? Where? I don't remember, but we lost it" (107), implying that the real England is very different from its constructed image. Hence, at a more general level, England represents more a myth than a reality for white Creoles since on the one hand, they are asked to identify with the mother country, but on the other hand they will never be considered as equal to the English people. Having failed to escape from this alienation when asking for help during her journey over the sea, the only way for Antoinette to stay herself is to retreat into her subjective world. As she says, "[t]ime has no meaning", and it is only to her senses that she appeals:

> As soon as I turned the key I saw it hanging, the colour of fire and sunset. The colour of flamboyant flowers. 'If you are buried under a flamboyant tree,' I said, 'your soul is lifted up when it flowers. Everyone wants that.'
> She shook her head but she did not move or touch me.
> The scent that came from the dress was very faint at first, then it grew stronger. The smell of vertivert and frangipanni, of cinnamon and dust and lime trees when they are flowering. The smell of the sun and the smell of the rain. (109)

Thus, it is the sight and the smell of her red dress that transport her to the place where she belongs, and allows her to reconnect to her happy memories when she was kissing with Sandi back in Jamaica. It is to the Caribbean and its people, independently of their ethnic origin, that Antoinette expresses her belonging, and not to England which is in her eyes a cold and unfriendly place.

Wide Sargasso Sea is a text that can be read independently of Charlotte Brontë's one, yet it is in the last part of the novel that the intertextual link with *Jane Eyre* is the most salient. Even though it is doubtless that the protagonist who is locked in at Thornfield Hall conforms to the lunatic of *Jane Eyre*, I would argue that she voices her resistance to zombification until the end. Rhys expressed her wish for a "triumphant ending" to her novel, and the implied author achieves this by reshaping the scene in which Bertha sets fire to the mansion in *Jane Eyre*. Interestingly, there is a *mise en abyme* of Brontë's text, as this scene is only dreamt by Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The passage starts with the protagonist recalling the motif of the dream: "[t]hat was the third time I had my dream, and it ended… In my dream I waited till she began to snore, then I got up, took the keys and let myself out with a candle in my hand." (111), and continues by referring to Bertha setting fire to Thornfield Hall. However, in her dream the protagonist is someone separate from the lunatic of *Jane Eyre*, as she recalls that: "it seemed to me that someone was following me, someone was chasing me, laughing. Sometimes I looked to the right or to the left but I never looked behind me for I did not want to see that ghost of a woman who they say haunts this place" (111). Whereas I disagree with Emery that "Antoinette for a moment, in fact, becomes someone else in her dream, someone who might

be Jane Eyre" (Emery 57), I believe she is right in considering the possibility that the protagonist's elevation is "fulfilling the traditional slave wish for wings with which to fly 'home'" (Emery 57). Likewise, Drake suggests that as "[f]rangipani, vertivert, cinnamon and lemon are the Caribbean salts which awoke the zombi from its slumber", Antoinette identifies "with the flamboyant tree [and] converts Thornfield Hall itself into a flamboyant (flaming tree) [so that] her soul rises up as it 'blooms'" (Rhys et al. 199). As mentioned in the introduction, Alleyne underscores the importance of the silk cotton tree in Afro-Creole religions, and the belief that a person's spirit leaves its body upon death returning to where s/he comes from. He also explains that in "the traditional African idea of the soul, … [w]hen a person sleeps, this soul may wander; thus, dreams are the experiences of the wandering soul" (Alleyne 87). Hence, I posit that Rhys relates to Afro-Creole credos in this scene to set her protagonist's final destiny. Unlike Antoinette's body that is empty and has taken the form of a zombie, her soul is still present and travels home to where she belongs. Indeed, her senses bring her back to Aunt Cora's room, and the colour of the flames reminds her of the ones of the flamboyant tree that will uplift her soul when it flowers. Interestingly, the colours of the flowers of the silk cotton tree are yellow and red, thus the same as the ones she watched when "a door opened and I was somewhere else, something else. Not myself anymore" back in Coulibri (16). While walking into the hall, she sees the ghost, "[t]he woman with streaming hair" (111-112), which makes her drop her candle. At this moment, it is to Christophine that she calls for help, and she feels protected by the "wall of fire". Finally, it is while sitting on the roof that she achieves her reconnection to her locus:

> I sat there quietly. I don't know how long I sat. Then I turned round and saw the sky. It was red and all my life was in it. I saw the grandfather clock and Aunt Cora's patchwork, all colours, I saw the orchids and the stephanotis' and the jasmine and the tree of life in flames. I saw the chandelier and the red carpet downstairs and the bamboos and the tree ferns, the gold ferns and the silver, and the soft green velvet of the moss on the garden wall. I saw my doll's house and the books and the picture of the Miller's Daughter. I heard the parrot call as he did when he saw a stranger, *Qui est là?*

> *Qui est là?* And the man who hated me was calling Bertha! Bertha! The wind caught my hair and it streamed out like wings. It might bear me up, I thought, if I jumped to those hard stones. But when I looked over the edge I saw the pool at Coulibri. Tia was there. She beckoned to me and when I hesitated, she laughed. I heard her say, You frightened? and I heard the man's voice, Bertha! Bertha! All this I saw and heard in a fraction of a second. And the sky so red. Someone screamed and I thought, *Why did I scream?* I called 'Tia!' and jumped and woke. (112)

Seen from the angle of intertextuality, what is described in the realistic novel *Jane Eyre* becomes only an illusion in Rhys's text. Therefore, it allows the protagonist to return to the place of her childhood, and her memories of Coulibri are vivid and are enhanced by the colours of the fire. She uses the image of *the tree of life in flame*, and imagines that her visions are strong enough to lift her above the *hard stones* of Thornfield. The implied author resorts to a double form of metalepsis in the last paragraph of the novel, by not only merging the boundary between the time of the story with the one of discourse, but also by converting into action what the protagonist had first done in her dream: "I waited a long time after I heard her snore, then I got up, took the keys and unlocked the door. I was outside holding my candle" (112). Emery writes that "[a]lthough the conclusion repeats the fire in *Jane Eyre*, in *Wide Sargasso Sea* it occurs as a dream", and that "[t]he novel ends here with the dream foreshadowing its 'real' conclusion" (Emery 37). In fact, the implied reader is left with a final image of Antoinette walking down the corridor, meaning that the story ends without a resolution. Consequently, the dramatic death of Bertha related by the host of the inn near Thornfield Hall has yet not occurred (Brontë 493), and leaves the reader free to provide her/his own interpretation.

Conclusion

Antoinette's story is a good illustration of how a toxic familial and unsolvable socio-political context makes someone vulnerable, and prone to identity theft. In this chapter I have argued that Antoinette is a different first-person narrator at the beginning of the novel than in the two next parts of it. While recalling her childhood, the narrative voice of the protagonist is inhabited by many other voices. Among them are the ones of people spreading gossip about

her family, particularly about her mother, and the one of her nurse Christophine. The heroine's sense of alienation increases with time: she suffers first from lack of attention from her mother, and after Annette's marriage with Mr Mason, the latter imposes on them his English lifestyle. In fact, the protagonist feels much more intimate with her black nurse Christophine, with whom she exchanges in Patois, and with her black friend Tia, even adopting her ways of playing and probably of speaking too. However, their friendship ends because of social and racial prejudice expressed from both sides, and the protagonist turns to the exploration of the wild beauty of Coulibri's surrounding for relief. Even though the character of Antoinette always uses Standard English in the novel, from a linguistic perspective it is suggested that she masters different Jamaican lects and uses them to communicate with the black people. The reporting of the language of black characters, such as Christophine and Tia, retains certain features of Jamaican Creole basilect: verbs have lost their bound inflections, and *copula be* is omitted. Other features, such as case and gender for pronouns are kept, which is generally the case for mesolect. As Rhys does not seem to make any particular distinction between the Jamaican Creole spoken by Christophine, and by Tia for example, apart from the inclusion of French Creole words, Jamaican Creole is not represented as a continuum in the novel, and there is neither any socio-linguistic distinction based on occupation as previously described by Alleyne. As a result, there is mainly a distinction between the language of the black characters and the white ones in the text. Plausible explanations to this simplified representation of Jamaican Patwa could be that Rhys, as a white Creole, did not master the basilect, and that the characterization of English Jamaican Creole as a continuum by linguists was still only partial at the time the novel was written.

After her flight from Coulibri, Antoinette becomes even more isolated and uprooted. After having been imposed English habits by her stepfather, he discourages her to remain close to her coloured relatives. Likewise, the protagonist is presented with a religious discourse at

the convent that is still based on binaries, and fails to make sense in a context of plurality such as the Caribbean. She is unable to find answers to her concerns when being submitted to this purely descriptive discourse that does not favour any questioning. While institutional sources of spirit-thievery are not made explicit in the novel, they are repeatedly alluded to. The convent becomes therefore only a means of protecting herself from the outside world. Yet, when she becomes adult, she has to leave her shelter and is left defenseless to her future husband. Indeed, marriage depletes her of her individual rights and economic independence. In terms of narration, this is symbolically shown by the loss of her subjectivity, as she becomes an object of representation seen through the focalization of her husband. He first seduces her, but then violently rejects her because of his prejudice against her being a white Creole. However, unlike *Jane Eyre*'s lunatic, the protagonist resists and recovers her voice. I have argued that it is the more mature Antoinette of part three that also intervenes in part two, at the crucial moment of the Obeah night. This second narrator functions in a different chronotope that does not only disrupt the conventions of the realistic novel, but also affects Bertha's destiny in *Jane Eyre* since there is no real closure in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Indeed, at the end of the novel, it is only the world of Coulibri that is vividly being recalled by the protagonist, suggesting that her soul has been preserved and separate from her emptied body, and is expressing its strong sense of belonging to her home island. According to Afro-Creole spirituality, after death the soul returns to its homeland, meaning that in her elevation above Thornfield Hall her soul would fly back to the garden of Coulibri. In this other dimension of space and time, intertextual transgression to Brontë's text becomes possible: Bertha takes the form of a ghost, the scene of the fire only exists in a dream, and Antoinette's subjectivity is restored. Emery states "that only in the context of African Caribbean history and culture can we solve the narrative puzzle of Antoinette's place. And by addressing the question 'where', instead of 'who', we can begin to understand how Rhys's modernism reconceptualizes our conventional notions of the

individual" (Emery 37–38). The implied reader is therefore left with a very different image of the character of Antoinette/Bertha than in *Jane Eyre*, and is free to imagine another ending to the story than the one reported by its eponymous heroine.

Chapter 2

Subjectivity: from Denial to Cultural Reappropriation

Scope and Purpose

As stated in the introduction, Bakhtin views the novel as a polyphonic and dialogic text, in which the themes are developed by the means of social heteroglossia and dialogism. In this section, I will argue that Brodber's choices are in line with Bakthin's definition, and constitute a counter-discourse to the authorial text of the nineteenth century. Firstly, Jamaican Creole is presented as a continuum in *Myal*, and both its heterodiegetic narrator and characters use code-switching as a strategy to adjust to different communicative situations. Secondly, *Myal* is a discontinuous narrative of subplots that demands the active participation of the reader to restore chronology and organization, in order to make sense of the story and be able to interpret the novel. As previously mentioned, sources of spirit-thievery, but also the processes by which they can be countered are central themes in Brodber's text. I will argue that the novelist's linguistic and narrative innovative choices contribute to make the theme of resistance to spirit-thievery and culture reappropriation more salient in the text. Hutchings (1996) notes that because of its complex narrative structure and technique, *Myal* is "a difficult reading experience ...[but] it can offer rewarding insights to the carefully engaged reader" (Hutchings 104). He points out that "Brodber's use of numerous literary devices and techniques, including tonal variations which modulate between the formality of 'objective', documentary reportage and the self-involved intimacy of community gossip, linguistic fluctuations from vernacular to metropolitan forms of English, and striking contrasts between first-person monologues and interactive dialogues … help to emphasize the wide range of cultural perspectives available in *Myal*'s Jamaican setting" (Hutchings 105). O'Callaghan states that "the narrative voice in *Myal* is elusive", because "[i]n so far as one can occasionally identify an authorial voice, it speaks the language of the community", and it is therefore close to "oral creole tradition" (O'Callaghan

100-01). Thus, both scholars underscore the particularity of the narrative voice in the novel. The multiple code-switching in *Myal* implies that the heterodiegetic narrator is capable of moving along the entire Jamaican Creole Continuum, also in free indirect discourse, as her/his reporting is not only conveyed in Standard English. Hence, code-switching becomes an additional source of meaning since socio-political components are encoded in the different "lects" of Jamaican Creole. Here, Standard English represents the language of the colonialist, whereas Jamaican Creole varieties have arisen from the former African slaves' more or less close contact with their masters' language, and its influence on their respective native tongues. In her study of the syntax of basilect, a variety of Jamaican Creole, Durrleman-Tame (2008) describes the Creole Continuum as:

> a situation often arising in Creole societies, where a number of "lects" tend to exist. The coexisting speech-forms of such societies oscillate between two extremes. One of these extremes is the acrolect, which enjoys social prestige. One could classify this variety as the local Standard, as it is that variety which shows the most "superstrate" influence. Superstrate refers to the language spoken by the dominant group at the moment of language contact which in the case of Jamaica is English, the lexifier language. At the other extreme of the continuum is the basilect or "deep Creole". The latter variety lacks prestige, and manifests most substratum influence. In the case of Jamaican Creole, substratum influence refers to influence from West African languages, the native tongues of the slaves. Situated between the two poles of the continuum are numerous varieties known as mesolectal, which share features with both the basilect and the acrolect in several combinations. Speakers of opposite extremes (without access to the mesolect) may be mutually unintelligible – however this is very rare as most people can adjust their variety upward or downward on the continuum. (Durrleman 1)

Interestingly, Hutchings observes that "[a]lthough Brodber employs a third person omniscient narrator to relate her story, for example, the narrative point of consciousness continually shifts among the culturally diverse characters and frequently gives way to first person dialogue so that differing personal and cultural perceptions may be considered in relation to one another and in their mutual engagement" (Hutchings 105-6). In *An Introduction to Narratology*, Fludernik describes the authorial narrator, usually referred to as *omniscient*, as being "located,

godlike, above and beyond the world of the story; s/he sees and knows everything even if s/he does not reveal all s/he knows – at least, this is how it seems to the reader". As explained by Fludernik, originating from Western traditional storytelling, "[s]uch a narrator often assumes the role of an historian or a chronicler. S/he floats above things, as it were, and looks down on them knowledgeably" (Fludernik 92). One would therefore expect of such a narrator to only use Standard English when relating a story. As pointed out by Hutchings, the narrative situation in *Myal* is very different, as the telling persona shares the language of the Jamaican people, and does not only use the one of the colonizers. In this chapter, I will argue that language is given a metonymic function: first, because the use of different varieties of Jamaican English in the novel is significant in situating not only the social position of a character, but also in showing its wish to welcome or not its African origins; second, by having the omniscient narrator adopt a counter-discursive position in choosing to narrate her/his tale in Jamaican Creole.

In this section of my dissertation, I have chosen to focus on the character of Ella, firstly since her story describes how she is being zombified, both by institutionalized knowledge and through spirit theft by her husband Selwyn; secondly, because it explains how she becomes conscious of the need to acknowledge her multiethnic origin, and is able, with the help of the Myalist healers, to initiate her process of dezombification; finally, since her healing leads to awareness about institutional spirit-theft, and to the development of strategies of resistance. My aim is to show how this thematic content is conveyed in terms of language and narrative strategy, by analyzing several instances of narration presenting the protagonist, her coming of age leading to her awakening, and describing how she is being helped by the Myalists and encouraged to find her own voice and subjectivity. I will argue that Brodber addresses the important issue of dezombification by suggesting how institutional sources of spirit-thievery need to be fought through cultural reappropriation. This not only involves restoring the

centrality of Jamaican Creole and of Afro-Creole spirituality, but also coming to terms with the country's history by valuing interculturality and syncretism.

The Voicing of Ella in *Myal: a novel*

The character of Ella O'Grady-Langley is introduced in the opening chapter of the novel through the description of her healing by the herbalist Mass Cyrus and the other Myalists of the community. Yet, she is first given a voice only in chapter two, when the timeline of the story moves backwards to the moment she was, at the age of thirteen, reciting Kipling's poems to honor the Anglican parson's visit at Morant Bay. As observed by Smyth (2002) (Smyth 6), even though it is Ella speaking, "[t]he words were the words of Kipling but the voice was that of Ella O'Grady aged 13" (Brodber, *Myal* 11–12). Indeed, this passage reveals to what extent the young girl has been zombified by institutional knowledge taught at school. Interestingly, while the first five stanzas she recites are from Kipling's poem 'Big Steamers', published in 1911 and written to be read by young schoolchildren in Fletcher's *A School of England*, the last one comes from another poem: 'The White Man's Burden'. The fact that a young coloured girl innocently does her best to recount this stanza, in which the people from the Philippines are referred to as "sullen peoples / Half devil and half child" (6), highlights how powerful the process of zombification through institutional knowledge could be. It denounces the fact that colonized people were forced to internalize a self-denigrating discourse. This is emphasized by the reporting of Reverend Simpson's great distress at witnessing this scene: "And whose burden is this half black, half white child? These people certainly know how to make trouble" (6). It is also confirmed at the end of the chapter, by the narrator's description of Ella's reaction when she learned that she had been chosen to recite Kipling's poem: "[i]t was nothing, nothing at all. All she was doing at Teacher's rehearsals was to open her mouth and let what was already in her heart and her head come out" (12). Ironically, it is by the means of poetics, that is according to Bakhtin "a unitary language [that] gives expression to forces working toward

concrete verbal and ideological unification and centralization" (Bakhtin 271), that Ella first expresses herself in the novel, thereby emphasizing her assimilation to the colonizer's culture. Nevertheless, even though in her mental representations the protagonist feels at home in England and Scotland, having travelled there several times with her imaginary friends Peter Pan and Dairy Maid, she becomes uneasy when she dreams that, with Peter, they get teased by people on the streets because they have been covered with soot: "[s]he remembered that trip very well for it was the first time she felt real but then they had walked along the streets and people had teases them and said 'Look at the little blackmoors' and she didn't like it because she didn't think a person's colour was anything to make a joke about" (Brodber, *Myal* 11–12). Hence, in this quote Ella expresses her discomfort regarding racial divide; besides, it reveals her suffering at being bullied by the other children of Grove Town because of her fair complexion.

Ella's origins are exposed in the same chapter by a third-person narrator that does not take overtly part in the diegesis, but that must have a close connection to Grove Town's community as shown by his/her ironic and sarcastic comments in the following passage, and by his/her increasing informal tone, and code-switch into basilect at the end of the second quoted paragraph:

> The little girl had been born to Mary Riley from Ralston O'Grady, one of those Irish police officers whose presence the authorities must have felt, kept the natives from eating each other. *As is usual*, this new officer came to town with no wife and needed a housekeeper. *As is also usual*, the housekeeper was before long in the family way. *What was unusual*, was for said housekeeper to refuse to move to Kingston's anonymity to be kept by her baby-father and to opt to go back to her country bush of yam vines, coco roots and coconut trees. *A big man in a police officer's uniform would stick out a mile there. Poor pink O'Grady, dissonant as a skinned bull, didn't feel he could cope, so although he did have every desire to do right by Mary, things had to finish, done, end: they had was to part, my dear.*
>
> *Those who always knew*, knew that it shouldn't have end up that way. Mary should have did make the officer gentleman set her up and gone to Kingston with the stomach. But they mostly said it to themselves. Who dared to face her, talked, when it came, about the child and its future: "Mary you no see say this is a no nowhere fi

> bring up a little brown skin girl chile like that. If it was even a boy it coulda manage perhaps. But is a girl. The chile must study for nurse, or typist or something. You no see dis a no bush mout' pickney?' (emphasis added; 6-7)

As underscored by Puri (1993), in the first paragraph "sentences consistently use the passive voice, and offer us events unconnected with agents, suggesting that neither Mary Riley nor Ralston O'Grady are fully the authors of events in their lives; rather, the actions of both are inscribed in a larger text" (Puri 105). Puri's observation is clever in that it highlights how the linguistic choices made by the author directly have an impact on meaning and interpretation. Indeed, in this colonial setting, individuals are not masters, at different degrees, of their own destiny. Language represents therefore one of the means by which one can regain agency, and in Jamaica this implies giving to the Jamaican Creole Continuum its rightful place. Bakhtin's concepts of heteroglossia and dialogism are relevant to analyze the narrative voice in *Myal* because of its use of double hybrid constructs, and the inclusion of varieties of Jamaican Creole. Indeed, both the clause "kept the natives from eating each other", and the sentence "Mary should have did make the officer gentleman set her up and gone to Kingston with the stomach", are not the narrator's own words, but the ones of *the authorities* and of *those who always knew*, respectively. This excerpt is also very insightful in terms of register and varieties of English. Indeed, while the first lines of the passage are rather formal, language register becomes more familiar, as exemplified by the use of the phrasal verb *stick out.* The narrator even adopts a sarcastic tone when commenting on O'Grady's physical appearance and on his reaction to Mary's pregnancy. Besides, both the sentence *"Mary should have did make the officer gentleman set her up and gone to Kingston with the stomach"*, and the quotation of those who talked: *"Mary you no see say this is a no nowhere fi bring up a little brown skin girl chile like that. If it was even a boy it coulda manage perhaps. But is a girl. The chile must study for nurse, or typist or something. You no see dis a no bush mout' pickney?"*, are mixtures of

different forms of Jamaican Creole, and aim at giving a more authentic touch to the reporting of the villagers' voices.

Since Jamaican Creole is a continuum, variations are present within the basilect and the mesolect. Language has therefore a metonymic function in identifying not only the social position of a character, but also to what extent s/he wishes a distancing from the colonial language. The first sentence of the excerpt quoted in the preceding paragraph differs from Standard English by the presence of several auxiliaries following the subject, *should have did make* in this example, which is licensed in basilect as long as it respects a certain order (Durrleman 27). Moreover, the clause *gone to Kingston with the stomach*, which is still grammatical but not semantically felicitous in Standard English, clearly implies that Mary should have gone to Kingston because she was pregnant and expecting a coloured child. The second quotation differs even more from Standard English, and is lexically and grammatically closer to basilect, as shown by Durrlemann-Tame (Durrleman 4). Indeed, in this passage there are both a grammatical move and a lexical one down the continuum. According to Durrleman-Tame, the combination of the verbs *see say* is a construction found in West African languages and basilectal varieties of Creole (corresponding to *se*). Durrleman-Tame points out that some scholars have argued that *se* is a grammatalized form of the lexical verb *say*, which has become equivalent to the complementizer *that*, and thus introduces an embedded clause. Yet, Durrleman argues that *se* has kept its lexical meaning as it does not display all the properties of *that*. She therefore favours a "Serial Verb Constructions" for *se*, which "involve[s] a series of verbs which together describe one event and share logical arguments" (Durrleman 91-2). At the lexical level, Ella is first referred to as being a *brow skin girl chile*, but then becomes a *pickney* which means child in Jamaican Patois[2]. Similarly, *mout* stands for mouth in basilect.

[2] *"Jamaican Patwah, Patois and Slang Dictionary"*, Jamaican Patwah, Copyright 2022, accessed on May, 26, 2022, Jamaican Patwah - Patois/Creole and Slang Dictionary.

When considering the syntax, there is an absence of do-support for negation (*no see* instead of *don't see*, *this is a no nowhere* instead of *this isn't a place*), and the last sentence (*You no see dis a no bush mout' pickney*) corresponds to pure basilect, as *this* becomes *dis*, and as copula *be* has been replaced by equative *a* (Durrleman 132). Obviously, this sentence, which means that the village is not the best place for the upbringing of a girl of mixed-ethnical origins, would be difficult to understand for a speaker who is only familiar with Standard English. The fact that the implied author does not provide any glossing for it, implicates that some readers would need to familiarize with Jamaican Patwa in order to fully understand the text.

In this chapter, the narrator reports that Ella's mother was already considered as an outsider by the people of the village because of her appearance. The omniscient narrator includes Jamaican Creole varieties in the description of Ella's family, in free indirect discourse as well. Mary Riley's parents, Bada D and Catherine Riley, are depicted respectively as having "thin lips, pointed nose and the hair thick and strong and curly like a coolie royal through Indian was nowhere in his strain for he step straight off of a African boat" (Brodber, *Myal* 7), and as "[s]ickly woman. Same fine bone, thin lip kind of being. Must be he show her she was Moor and that they could go back home to Tanja together" (7), respectively. The description of Mary's parents is made in a mixture of mesolect, as shown by case-marking on pronouns and the presence of *was*, and of basilect as the subject pronoun is missing before *must* for instance. Hence, in the eyes of the villagers, both do not have the typical physical traits of black people. Their encounter and the birth of Mary are also conveyed through the use of a mixture of varieties of Jamaican Creole close to basilect, as none of the verbs are marked for tense and there are no plural marking or noun-adjective distinctions: "[s]o Catherine team up with Bada D. Smooth skin Catherine. Colour barely turn. Something like tan tuddy potato. And out of them come Mary to make three long face, thin lip, pointed nose, souls a round face, thick lip, big eye country!" (7-8). The narrator comments on Mary's decision to stay on her land in Grove

Town, and its consequences in the following words: [i]t was hard for Ella. It was hard for the district people" (9). Indeed, Ella's physical appearance, which could allow her to pass for a white person, becomes a source of mockery from the other children, and her otherness is further enhanced by the teacher's indelicacy at introducing the new dance from Kingston, associating the name O'Grady with a woman of low morality.

It is important to emphasize that, in the context of this small Jamaican village at the beginning of the twentieth century, Ella is not only rejected because she looks different from the other children, but because her fair skin is perceived as being an advantage for her future in comparison to black people's prospects. The narrator alludes to this social reality when s/he describes why the teachers first chose to close their eyes on the bullying going on, and in the end decided simply to ignore Ella:

> 'That child is odd. No fight at all. Suppose the colour will carry her through.' And they were more than a little vexed at that and built up resentment against her. For it was true. With all the books they had read and exams they had sat around trying to pass, and the men they couldn't enjoy because they might disgrace the profession, no one was going to give them with their black selves any job as a clerk anywhere in Kingston or Morant Bay or any other town anywhere in the world. It didn't make any sense beating out themselves on this child and having the embarrassment of seeing welts on her from the slightest touch of the strap, when she was going to get through anyhow. So they stopped seeing her and she stopped seeing them. (10-11)

Consequently, it is no wonder why Ella becomes more prone than any other pupil to zombification by institutionalized knowledge. The narrator describes how the young girl uses her imagination to visualize the concept of "OSMOSIS" that is being taught: "[o]nce more unrecognized, Ella would stare through the windows and guess what? She would see the thin liquid struggling to pull the tick one and all of this within the membrane of the little leaf" (11), and to identify with characters of the European fairy tales that are read at school: "[s]he met Peter Pan and she met the Dairy Maid who could pass for her sister – same two long plaits and brownish" (11). Importantly, in the preceding quotations, the implied author juxtaposes the physical phenomenon of water movements across cell membranes with the process of

constructing one's subjectivity. By doing so, these excerpts shed light on the controversial fact that colonized people were solely exposed to English culture through institutional knowledge, and on the issue that the latter was defined as their benchmark. As a result, most of the pupils were being presented characters that they were unable to identify with, while their own culture was being totally ignored by the school system.

The next time the character of Ella is mentioned is in chapter three in connection to Maydene Brassington's approaches to have her come to their house in Morant Bay. The parson's wife feels uneasy about her husband's relationship with the local people, and decides to take action: "'Now' she began in her head, 'William and this place. They have an unhealthy relationship. And that is bad for him.' Maydene saw herself as the monitor of her husband's soul" (14). Since, while listening to Ella's recitation, "she ceased to see her and saw William instead. There was good reason. William was of the same kind of mixture as this girl" (15), she believes that by taking care of Ella, she would also be helped in better understanding what William is missing: "'But she is not happy up there in the sky. She wants to be real. Is that it? Does William want to be real? Has he become real and doesn't like it?'" (17). Maydene's questioning raises the important issue of building one's own identity for people of mixed ethnical origins, especially when these ethnicities are not given the same social value. The narrator directly quotes Maydene's thoughts to emphasize her resolution regarding Ella: "'She will be my daughter. After all, I have always wanted to have a daughter'" (19). Maydene's intentions are confirmed in the next chapter when she explains to Amy Holness what motivates her for enquiring about Ella:

> That's true. I really don't know what I want. I can say though that I am not looking for a maid. Cook is quite competent. You should know though that I fell in love with the little girl that day when I saw her reciting. You do know that my husband is Jamaican. – Amy knew she meant 'not full white' and at another time would have feigned surprise, 'But Mrs Brassington, how extraordinary.' Today she was silent and Maydene went on. – There are things about him that I therefore cannot easily understand. When I saw that child, I saw him. You don't need to tell me that

> that child's colour makes her uncomfortable in a district like this. That much I can see. What I am only now beginning to see is the enormous size of the pain my husband must have lived through as a child. That doesn't tell you what I am asking. I know that. (23)

In this excerpt, Maydene' sincerity manages to overcome the barrier that so often separate white and black people in the colony as Amy eventually agrees to present her to Mary, and is later convinced that this set up would even be beneficial for Ella. Actually, she does not share her husband's opinion that Ella has got "talent": "[s]he wasn't bright. Definitely wasn't bright. And was strange. More, people still didn't know what to do with her. That recitation was just chance." (Brodber, *Myal* 26). Besides, she thinks that it would be a way of making up for Ella's father's lack of support, and she hopes that the girl's complexion might allow her to get a good job. Finally, she draws a parallel between Maydene's request and her wish to take care of Anita, imagining that it would initiate a virtuous circle.

As already suggested, Brodber has chosen to disrupt conventions in *Myal* by narrating the story in a discontinuous way and in non-chronological order. Thus, although the implied reader is told about Ella's husband Selwyn, their encounter, marriage, and Ella's sickness in chapter seven, the years preceding the protagonist's departure to the United States are only alluded to in the form of the conditional at the beginning of chapter twelve, and related in more details in chapters eight, nine, twelve and thirteen. It is first Mary Riley's motivations for agreeing to share Ella with the Brassingtons that are reported: Ella's mother, seeing that her daughter is becoming an adolescent and is still a target for mockery, is afraid that one of the village boys might abuse her. Moreover, she wishes to respond positively to Taylor's courting and thus needs more time for herself. The narrator conveys her feelings and her vision of Ella through Mary's own voice in a hybrid construction, in which Standard English and forms of Jamaican Creole are intertwined:

> So it was deliverance when the lady asked about Ella. She couldn't give Ella what she needed. She had faced that. Ask Ella to scald the little milk and you would hear the

> phew-phew and smell the milk going down the side of the pot and being burnt by the flames. Ella was right there in the kitchen but she had made the milk boil over! Nothing left in the pot. Or simply ask her to roast two cocoes. By the time you call Ella to bring them to the table, you would get nothing but a loud silence because Ella fraid to tell you she can't find the cocoes. Can't find? The cocoes turn bright red fire. Is true what people did tell her. Ella was not bush mout pickney. So the lady was going to fit her for life. That good. And she would have Ella with her for two more years every weekday. In any case whatever path God had chosen for her, it would not be long before all kinds of calls of nature would separate them from each other and she would be left without a soul to call her own. And according to Taylor she would lose him too. (51-52)

In this passage, Jamaican Creole is used in free indirect discourse to report Mary's thoughts: she is ascertaining her daughter's lack of practicality, in which she sees the confirmation of the villagers' low esteem of her by repeating the villagers' words (*Ella was not bush mout pickney*). Even though she loves and cares for her daughter, she is neither aware that Ella's clumsiness might be caused by her need to escape into her familiar imaginary world, nor that Ella's *fitting for life* would not be necessarily beneficial for her as it involves repressing her African origins.

It is only at the beginning of chapter nine that the story comes directly from Ella's voice. In the next excerpt, she explains to Selwyn the reasons behind Parson Brassington's decision to send her away, first from Grove Town, and then abroad. Ella tells him innocently about what happened to Anita in the variety of Jamaican Creole she used to speak back home:

> It was really the Anita business why Parson decided to take me and send me to train at Port Antonio. Then Mrs. Shard see me and love me and ask Parson to let me stay in her house and get the training there while keeping the company of the children and going to school. Then she and the children leaving going back home to England and I finish with school and they figure I train enough and she and Parson speak to Mrs. Burns and she say, Yes, she could do with a companion, so that is how I come here. – (54)

Ella's language is a mixture of mesolectal and basilectal varieties, as case is kept for pronouns, but there is no bound morphology on verbs. Following this passage, the narrator emphasizes Selwyn's thirst for exotism, but also his pejorative judgment of Jamaican English by adding just after Ella's lines, three very short sentences, the first one being only a fragment: "[w]hen she was telling her stories of back home. Ella always fell into broken English. It excited

Selwyn" (55). Likewise, the impression that Selwyn is draining and depleting Ella of her substance is accentuated by the fact that her tale in direct speech is interrupted by moments of narration highlighting Selwyn's wonder at what he hears, as illustrated by the following quote:

> And his eyes popped … She told him about the blood on the steps and his eyes popped wider. … And she had to pull every little bit of information that she had anywhere in her head on Ole African, out of him. Poltergeists he had heard about but a little village full of black people and one living in the hills and twice as wise as they were old, had never before dawned on Selwyn's consciousness. (54)

This passage is crucial in that the narration of Ella and Maydene's encounter with Ole African not only highlights Ella's inability to perceive the African spirit, "I didn't see Ole African though. But people say that he stops at the front door of the house with his hands stretched out like a cross" (54), unlike Maydene, who kneels down and prays when she sees the stiltman. Additionally, it makes explicit another form of spirit-thievery by exemplifying how the colonized people were forced to repress their own culture. Indeed, Ella has been taught to deny knowing about African spirits, such as the figure of the stiltman, in front of white people: "Ella knew the right question and the right answer and deliberately chose to respond to Mrs. Brassington literally: – No, I do not know him. –" (55). The use of a formal language register to answer Maydene's question could be read as a metonymy for the need to respect the social injunction of repressing one's African roots in the presence of the colonialist, due to prejudice held against Afro-Creole spirituality. Finally, it pinpoints that the narration of the story of her village, in her familiar variety of Jamaican English, will allow Ella to progressively reconnect with her "other half", as suggested by the following quotation: "[h]er story seemed to her now to have some part missing but she dismissed the thought and passed on to give Selwyn her version of how Anita's story came to make the Reverend Brassington decide to take matters into his hands and send her off to Port Antonio" (56). This is emphasized by the narrator mentioning twice in this chapter the recurrent motif, "The half had indeed not been told", and

the fact that Ella had not told the half [because] [s]he did not know it" (56). However, the "other half" of Ella will remain repressed until her real awakening occurs, which will be triggered by the reconnection of her body to her mind in the process of coming of age, and by witnessing the grotesque portrayal of her hometown in Selwyn's coon show.

Ella's alienation from her African origins is reported by the narrator in chapter seven, when s/he describes how Selwyn manages to persuade her to lie about her past and to change her appearance in order to erase all traces of black physical traits. Ella's naivety, as stated by the narrator's reporting: "[i]n the same preoccupied way that she had trotted around behind Mrs. Brassington, totally unaware that there were places the parson's wife could sit that she couldn't, Ella had trotted pass the immigration clerk behind Mrs Burns with nary a glance and come into the United States of America as white." (43), and her acceptance to deny her origins once Selwyn has explained to her the meaning of being coloured, "Ella played well. She had a lifetime of practice and her little just-me-come methodist soul told her there was no harm. Just one teeny little lie: her parents had come from Ireland, had succumbed to a tropical disease … And if he wanted her to be full Irish girl, well what of it?" (43), stress that Ella is encouraged to identify with a white person. Moreover, her alienation is amplified by the protagonist's passivity in the hands of Mrs Burns, "Ella was Mrs. Burns sidekick, her little dolly baby and she dressed her in warm finery" (46), and in the ones of her husband: "Selwyn occupied himself with one production: the making of Ella O'Grady" (43). Nevertheless, it is also because Ella is being objectified that she increasingly experiences discomfort, as "[t]his trip to Baltimore was the first time Ella was travelling with her body" (46), and becomes homesick: "[s]o it was only on the odd occasion that she got a fleeting sensation of something lost – the yellow fire of the sun in St. Thomas, Jamaica" (46). Besides, she wonders why she is not pregnant after one year of marriage: "[t]here was just one little thing that she couldn't brush off. No big thing yet …after the whole year, there was no little Ella forthcoming. This was beginning to disturb her,

but just" (43-44). Hence, zombification is not only a process that affects her mind; it is also experienced by her body, and it is because of its physical reaction to this spirit-theft that Ella's suffering will later surface through her hysterical pregnancy.

As shown in this chapter, Selwyn plays an important part in Ella's process of zombification. O'Callaghan (1990) explains that it is also her husband, without doing it on purpose, who paradoxically initiates Ella's awakening: it starts by the connection of her body to her mind, and by the "melting of the gauze" which had separated "one section of her mind from the other – the top of the head from the bottom of the head" (Brodber, *Myal* 80). Yet, it is only when zombification is brought to its paroxysm by the representation of her story in a coon show that Ella realizes how much Selwyn has taken away from her. Indeed, this form of entertainment involved the inclusion of the worst tropes against black people, who were being grossly caricatured in terms of appearance and behaviour. While watching *Caribbean Nights and Days*, the protagonist is confronted to her husband's misrepresentation of herself, her home village and of its people. The coon show reveals the extent to which Selwyn has misunderstood her story, by fantasizing the island's seasons, and despising the Jamaican people, projecting on them his own sexual fantasies. Besides, although Ella is ignorant about prophylactics, his resolution of not having children with her is betrayed by the heroine's whiteness, and by the show's insistence on Grove Town's fruitfulness, something that she will only acknowledge later on: "[m]onths later it was to become: "'He has given fruit to everyone except me'" (83). In Selwyn's eyes, Ella is exciting because she brings exotism into Baltimore's grey and cold winter season: "he wanted to be in that room alone with her, to light a fire and have her take him into a tropical December and have her show him its jungle and tell him its strange tales" (46), but not good enough to give him a descendance. This quote underscores not only his selfishness, but also his extremely stereotypical representation of Ella and of her home country. When discussing heteroglossia in the novel, Bakhtin emphasizes the importance of the *word*,

and points out that "[t]he way in which the word conceptualizes its object is a complex act–all objects, open to dispute and overlain as they are with qualifications, are from one side highlighted while from the other side dimmed by heteroglot social opinion, by an alien word about them" (Bakhtin 277). For him, in a conversation:

> an active understanding, one that assimilates the word under consideration into a new conceptual system, that of the one striving to understand, establishes a series of complex interrelationships, consonances and dissonances with the word and enriches it with new elements. It is precisely such an understanding that the speaker counts on... The speaker strives to get a reading on his own word, and on his own conceptual system of the understanding receiver; he enters into dialogical relationships with certain aspects of this system. The speaker breaks through the alien conceptual horizon of the listener, constructs his own utterance on alien territory, against his, the listener's, apperceptive background. (Bakhtin 282)

However, in a dominated/dominating binary, it is precisely this active understanding that does not occur, because the listener does not *strive to understand*. S/He rather uses her/his own system of representation to interpret what has been said.

Therefore, when watching *Caribbean Nights and Days*, Ella does not only react to her zombification by Selwyn, but to the grotesque misrepresentation of her intimate story. In the following passage, the narrator introduces this episode with an ironic comment, and emphasizes Selwyn's ignorance about the Caribbean setting and its people:

> Ella had told her stories well and Selwyn had listened well. The breadfruits looked like breadfruits and the breadfruits trees like breadfruit trees. The star-apples were nice shiny balls, some purple, some green. You could eat them. The rose-apples were there, tiny and pale yellow and there were some luscious mangoes. But this Grove Town in which Selwyn set his play, had to be the most fruitful place in the whole world and one which respected no seasons. There were breadfruits at the same time as there were star-apples as there were mangoes. Selwyn knew nothing about Easter as star-apple time; mid-summer for mangoes and the end of summer, the breadfruit season. Nothing at all. It was unnatural and it shook Ella but all her obsessed soul could register was: 'Everything is a fruit except me'. Months later it was to become: 'He has given fruit to everyone except me'. Tonight she watched his play. They were all there. Anita, Mammy Mary, Teacher, Miss Amy, Miss Gatha, the Baptist Reverend, Ole African. Everyone of them Grove Town people whom Ella had known was there. Like and old army boot, they were polished, wet, polished again and

> burnished. The black of their skins shone on stage, relieved only by the white of their eyes and the white chalk around their mouths. Everybody's hair was in plaits and stood on end and everybody's clothes were the strips of cloth she had told him Ole African wore. Ella groaned. Where was Mammy Mary's cool tan-tuddy-potato skin? The major character was a white-skinned girl. Ella was the star. He had given her flowing blonde hair. Our heroine was chased by outstretched black hands grabbing at her and sliding, and being forced into somersaults as they missed their target throughout the *Caribbean Nights and Days*. "It didn't go so", she said under her breath. And these were the last words that escaped her lips for sometime. But long conversations between her selves took place in her head. Mostly accusations. (83-84)

A hallmark of colonial writing is its stereotypical representation of the "Other". Black people are no longer seen as individuals, but are being caricatured: in Selwyn's coon show, they all have the same skin colour, hairdo, and are wearing ragged clothes. Thus, they are all represented as Ole African, the most exotic figure of Ella's tale. The protagonist is shocked because she does not recognize *Mammy Mary's cool tan-tuddy-potato skin*. Moreover, the play is loaded with sexual symbolism and represents black people as unable to control their libido when seeing a white woman. Besides, the show's unnatural representation of the Jamaican fruit trees could be read as a metonymy to pinpoint the discrepancy that exists between Selwyn's conceptual representations (Lexicon) (Hawkins 306), and the ones of Ella. While in the imagination of Selwyn, breadfruits, mangoes, and star-apples all belong to the category *exotic fruits,* in the eyes of Ella they are real fruit trees that give star-apples at Easter, mangoes at mid-summer, and breadfruit at the end of the summer. This highlights that sharing the same language is not necessarily sufficient to establish real communication since mental lexicons do not necessarily correspond. Thus, taking for granted that one's own conception of the world should become the universal norm constitutes an obstacle to establishing constructive exchanges between cultures.

Even though Ella becomes mute after watching the coon show, as stated in the preceding quote, her awareness of having been zombified by her husband initiates an intense interior dialogue. Interestingly, the protagonist's thoughts are not conveyed in the form of an

interior monologue or a stream of consciousness, but rather as "a long conversation" between the young woman's "selves", occasionally pervaded by Christian morality, each of them blaming the other for having confided to Selwyn:

> – He took everything I had away. Made what he wanted of it and gave me back nothing. – Selwyn was in the dock. Then the child who had been taught: "Speak the truth and speak it ever/ Cost it what it will/ He who hides the wrong did/ Does the wrong thing still", turned on her:
> – It was you who let him take everything. You gave him everything. – To which she replied in her defence:
> – But I didn't even know when I was giving it, that it was mine and my everything. – and then the other got really angry at her.
> –How could you not know? Mule. With blinders on. You wouldn't listen, you wouldn't see. – (84)

Hence, Ella's two halves have not yet been reconciled, but the use of the word *mule* triggers the acknowledgment of what she really thinks she is, and comes out in the form of the sentence: "– [m]ammy Mary's mulatto mule must have maternity wear–" (84), which she keeps repeating to justify her hysterical pregnancy, until Selwyn becomes so frightened that he contacts the Brassingtons with the intention of sending his wife back to Jamaica. Interestingly, Ella's motif is rich in significance, as the alliteration of the letter *m*, and the repetition of the syllable *ma* are reminiscent of the first consonant and syllable respectively that a child utters when s/he starts speaking. However, it also reveals her suffering since the word *mule* denotes a hybrid between a donkey and a horse that ends up being sterile. Feng (2002) specifies that "[t]he etymological origin of the word 'mulatto' refers to the sterility of mule, which makes the epithet 'mulatto mule' linguistically redundant. This epithet reveals how Ella sees herself as a sterile surplus product of a colonial history" (Feng 162). Strikingly, the etymology of this word unveils its despicable connotation. After listening to Selwyn's explanations and having grasped what is wrong with Ella by watching the coon show, Maydene, who in the meantime has become initiated to Myalism and whose spiritual double is White Hen, requests the help of the other Myalists of the community in order to cure Ella. Nevertheless, the success of Ella's

healing requires the active participation of the other coloured characters, as stated by the herbalist: "Mass Cyrus said to bring the child down. He would see what he could do. His only stipulation was that the father and the brothers if they were there would have to come too. He explained: – Curing the body is nothing. Touching the peace of those she must touch and those who must touch her is the hard part. The family will have to come too–" (Brodber, *Myal* 93).

Hence, it is at the end of chapter thirteen that the story reconnects with the beginning of the novel, in which the process of Ella's healing by Mass Cyrus' is described. It does this also literally, as the significance of the Myalist healer's thoughts, expressed in basilect, can finally be understood: "[c]uring the body is nothing. Touching the peace of those she must touch and those who must touch her is the hard part. And you can't do that unless you can touch their spirits. My people woulda humble them spirit and let them reach them: but this kind of people, … spirit too sekkle pekkle. Best let them keep their distance after all'" (1). My argument is that Brodber's decision to begin the novel with the scene of Ella's healing constitutes an act of cultural reappropriation. Indeed, this moment, could be perceived as the climax of the novel, since it showcases what Myalist healing is about. In this opening chapter, the reader is literally immersed into Mass Cyrus's world, by having his thoughts conveyed in basilect, and by experiencing intense visual and aural imageries to illustrate the healer's total communion with nature. The trees start shaking noisily in the presence of the young woman's body, thereby emphasizing the strong connection between the spirit of people and nature on which Myalism, and other animistic systems of belief are based. This intense tension is conveyed in the text on pages two and three through several literary devices: repetitive references to electricity, that is transmitted from one tree to the other, and to metallic sounds; the alliteration of the letter *s* as in *Shook, shimmy and shake*, repeated twice; by the personification of natural elements such as *Nettie was shocked*, Nettie's search for *family and friends,* the branches of mango trees *reared their heads and kicked their feet, wild-jennies with*

no stockings to their can-can, and the fact that Mass Cyrus placed on the *shoulders* of the trees "the sin-generated afflictions of the human world" (2); and finally through the interweaving of the lexical fields of *pain* and *afflictions* (with words such as *infected*, *infection*, *hurt*, *tears*, *bleed*, *weeping*, *haemorrhaged*, *collapsed*) with the one of trees, that are representative of the wisdom acquired over the centuries that their life cycles last. When initiating the process of Ella's healing, Mass Cyrus turns into his spiritual double, Percy the chick, who when he utters "Lightning" (Brodber, *Myal* 3), is at the origin of the big storm that causes casualties and destruction to Grove Town, and even spread to nearby districts in 1919. Thus, the curing of the protagonist from her hysterical pregnancy first engenders destruction, as if the disruption of the old order is a prerequisite to the establishment of a new society. The intense shaking occurring during this natural disaster is reminiscent of Glissant's concept of "tremblements"[3], which he uses to refer to the creolization of Caribbean cultures and people, and as a metaphor for the process of their opening up to syncretism and hybridization.

Indeed, once Ella has been emptied of the stinking grey mass that was inside her womb, her process of dezombification can continue. With the acceptance of her origins, Ella has become more lucid. That is why, when she is employed as an assistant teacher at Grove Town's school, she finally becomes able to read between the lines of the apparently innocent story of Mr Joe's Farm that she has to teach the children. As she used to do previously when she was herself a pupil, this perceptiveness starts with the description of Ella's staring. Yet, this time she does not stare in order to escape, but because she is intensively thinking in search for awareness that might come from the ability she has gained to connect with nature:

> This time her staring had a clearer pattern. She would do something with every bit of her energy and then pause for some moments of staring. Like there was a conductor in her head – one, two, three, stare; one, two, three, stare…"M-a-s-te-r, Master, Master Willie had a roll in the mud. 'How nice,' he said." Then Miss Ella would stare and the

[3] Glissant, Edouard, interviewed by Laure Adler, *Tropismes*. France O, June 2015, accessed on May 22, 2022, https://youtu.be/Gfi0nVHVQO4.

> whole class of forty children with her. Like Miss Ella was doing, then listening for the earth's response to what she was doing. (96-97)

This passage shows that the protagonist has now adopted an animistic view of the world, a view that brings her closer to natural elements, and is more in line with the one of the villagers. Indeed, she is "listening for the earth's response", hoping for guidance. Feeling more and more uncomfortable with the story of Mr Joe's farm, she decides to talk it over with Reverend Simpson:

> – Reverend Simpson, have you read this book? –
> – Can't say I have Miss Ella. They didn't use it when I was in school, but I have inspected children and heard them read some parts of it – The Reverend said to her.
> – They treat them as sub-normals who have no hope of growth, Reverend Simpson –
> – And that bothers you? – The Reverend asked.
> – Yes. But don't ask me why because I don't know –
> – Yet – he added for her.
> …
> – The children are invited into complicity – she continued.
> – And you still don't know why it bothers you. –
> …
> – That's a most extra-ordinary observation you have made. Think of it and get right back to me – He saw her to the door, watched her go down the steps then closed the door. (97-98)

Even though Reverend Simpson realizes that Ella is close to grasping the reason for being so disturbed by the content of this child story, he prefers to let the protagonist find its explanation on her own. But Dan, his spiritual double, is eager to share this news with Percy and Willie, and to tell them his hope that Ella's insight might become an "antidote" to colonial discourse. It is finally when Ella is preparing her scheme for the following weeks' lessons that she understands that what is wrong with Mr Joe's story is its allegorical content. She feels revolted and depressed by the fact that "Mr Joe and Benjie had consigned [Percy and Master Willie] to idleness" (101), and by its plot, as the animals in the story return to Mr Joe, believing they are incapable of being independent. In other words, Ella has decoded the insidious meaning of the story's discourse by understanding its underlying message. Brought to the level of

institutionalized knowledge, it denounces the strategy employed by imperial power to justify the necessity of their dominance.

Mass Cyrus's treatment and the other Myalist prayers have not only cured Ella, but have also changed William: "– Don't you see it Maydene? It is a negative lesson. She has picked up that. I see that May. And now like her, I wouldn't want to teach that lesson –" (103). Thus, with Ella's grasping of the implications of institutionalized zombification, and Williams's wish to learn more about it, and to focus on the problematic content of Mr Joe's story, Reverend Simpson's spiritual double is pleased to share his optimism with the other Myalists. Addressing himself to White Hen, he says:

> – But that is not what makes me happy White Hen. Two people understand, White Hen. Two special people. My people have been separated from themselves White Hen, by several means, one of them being the printed word and the ideas it carries. Now we have two people who are about to see through that. And who are these people, White Hen? People who are familiar with the print and the language of the print. Our people are now beginning to see how it and they themselves, have been used against us. Now, White Hen, now, we have people who can and are willing to correct images from the inside, destroy what should be destroyed, replace it with what it should be replaced and put us back together, give us back ourselves with which to chart our course to go where we want to go. (109-110)

Myal ends therefore on a positive note: individuals' plural identities are no longer considered as a burden, but as something to be valued. By saying that both Ella and William are people *familiar with the print and the language of the print*, Reverend Simpson affirms that their proficiency in Standard English will be essential to unravel and neutralize elements of discourse that prevent Jamaicans from emancipating from colonial domination. The acceptance of White Hen into the Myalist community, the healing of Ella and her wish to serve her community rather than to pass for a white person, as well as the protagonist's and William's awareness of how colonial discourse is being conveyed through the education system, are all elements bringing hope for change and a better future for Grove Town. This is worded in Mother Hen's poem: "Different rhymes for different times/ Different styles for different

climes/ Someday them rogues in Whitehall/ Be forced to change their tune" (111). It announces symbolically, in Jamaican English, and in the traditional literary form of the poem, that creole culture can serve as a counter-discourse, and as an alternative to British imperialism.

Conclusion:

The preceding analysis aimed at discussing how the character of Ella is exposed and developed in *Myal*, and at linking the theme of spirit-thievery with the implied author's linguistic choices. To sum up, I have argued that, except for the moment when Ella recites Kipling's poems in chapter two, the protagonist's own words are only conveyed through direct speech at the beginning of chapter nine, that is in the middle of the novel. Before this episode, the protagonist is exposed and described either by the unnamed narrator, or through the voices of other characters of the story. Yet, the language of the omniscient narrator in *Myal* is very unconventional. The telling persona does not adopt the usual "godlike" position found in Western canonical texts, but relates the story in Jamaican Creole instead of Standard English. Hence, the heterodiegetic narrator of *Myal* remains close to the people of Grove Town, and could even be perceived as one of them, endowed with the ability to access the world of spirits as well. S/he becomes the historian and chronicler of the Jamaican people, telling their story from their perspective and in their language.

Ella is portrayed by the narrator as a character who, in order to cope with the hardships she experiences at school, evades and identifies with the fantasy heroes of the British stories read at school. Being a young coloured girl in a small Jamaican village in the first decades of the twentieth century is tough. First, because of her fair skin colour, the protagonist is seen as the embodiment of domestic and sexual exploitation of young Jamaican women by white colonizers, who are often abandoned by these men once they become pregnant. Second, her presence induces resentment as people's social position is highly dependent on their skin colour. Indeed, only white individuals, or the ones who could pass for white, have access to

higher education and socially valuable jobs in the colony. Before her encounter and marriage with Selwyn, Ella is depicted as a naïve and passive character, fantasizing that her home is in England. Except for Teacher, who believes that she has got talent, Maydene first sees in her a means to better understand her husband William, Amy does not share Teacher's judgment of Ella, and Mary complies with the general opinion of Grove Town's people that her daughter lacks ingenuity.

Even though Ella's process of zombification is brought to its paroxysm by Selwyn, it is paradoxically her marriage that initiates her coming of age. Being faced with the contradictory demands of having to deny her African Roots, while at the same time the request to entertain her husband's fantasy with the stories of her hometown, the protagonist reconnects with her body and progressively removes the "gauze" that had been splitting her mind in halves. Ella utters her first words in "broken English", according to Selwyn. In fact, linguistic analysis of her variety of Jamaican Creole is more a mixture of basilect and mesolect. More importantly, it is the variety which comes the more naturally to her when describing and talking about Grove Town, and for expressing her longing for Jamaica. However, the use of this pejorative expression to refer to her language, underscores Selwyn's prejudice and his misrepresentation of her story. Hence, she becomes mute after the traumatizing experience of watching what Selwyn has made of her tale in his coon show. After being sent back to Jamaica and healed by Mass Cyrus, Ella reconnects with her African roots and wishes to serve her community. She is at last acknowledged as a valuable member of Grove Town. Since she has finally recovered her subjectivity and accepted who she really is, she gains confidence and turns into an active character. As an assistant teacher, she progressively understands the power which lies behind words and narration. Ella's, Parson Williams, and Maydene's spiritual double White Hen become key figures in the countering of the British colonizer's devaluing discourses and strategies. *Myal* brings therefore a message of hope, suggesting that the future of the

community, and more generally of the Jamaican people lies in syncretism. It claims that "the burden" which Reverend Simpson was referring to in chapter two is not a fatality, but rather a question of mindset. In this process, the *in-between people*, such as Ella and Williams, play an essential part: they have been exposed to both cultures, and they master the different forms of Jamaican Creole and Standard English, the language of the colonizer. As shown previously, Reverend Simpson states this in the last pages of the novel by underscoring the importance of the "new people", and their role in deconstructing imperial discourse. Indeed, once white and black people, who often used to designate the other group as *these people*, or who stigmatized the *in-between* ones, are willing to go beyond their prejudice and resentments, and to acknowledge that cultural diversity is mutually beneficial, they have the opportunity to build an inclusive and solidary community that will allow them to emancipate from colonialist condescendence.

Chapter 3

Comparative Approach to some Narrative Choices

Scope and Purpose

Even though *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Myal* share the common theme of zombification, the reader is left with a very different impression at the end of each novel. Indeed, while Antoinette is walking alone along a somber corridor, the Myalists are celebrating the fact that the colonizers back in Whitehall might have to acknowledge institutional sources of spirit-thievery in the future. On the one hand, *Wide Sargasso S*ea remains a sad story in that it highlights how Antoinette's marriage is undermined from the start by social and racial prejudice, and underscores the divisions that persist between the colonial subject, the white colonialist and the English colonizer. On the other hand, *Myal* ends on a note of hope, by suggesting that the building of a new form of society is possible, provided that there is a change of paradigm: sources of division need to be overcome by syncretism, and the interculturality of the Caribbean multiethnic creole population should be recognized as an added value.

In this section, I will start by discussing the theme of spirit-thievery in light of the arguments developed in the two foregoing chapters, and compare how each novel sets side by side institutional cultural dominance and zombification through the practice of Obeah magic. I will also take into consideration the manner in which the Jamaican Creole Continuum is included in each text, and reflect on how these linguistic choices might impact textual interpretation. Then, I will discuss and compare the putatively divergent narrative strategies adopted by Rhys and Brodber to portray their main English characters, and underscore how their respective characterizations affect the overall message of each work. I will firstly argue that the two texts have in common the juxtaposition of institutional and cultural sources of spirit-thievery with Obeah, and as a result, they highlight that zombification is a universal process connected to power, rather than the result of the obscure practice of Afro-Creole magic.

Yet, only Brodber's novel addresses the issue of dezombification by suggesting a path towards cultural reappropriation. Secondly. as shown in the two prior chapters, both novelists innovate in terms of language by crafting complex narrative voices for their protagonists and characters. However, my argument is that it is only in *Myal* that the narrator's discourse is expressed in Jamaican English as well. The narrative persona becomes the chronicler of the Jamaican people's counter-discourse to imperialism by telling their story in their language instead of the one of the colonizer. Moreover, the implied author succeeds in representing Jamaican Creole as a continuum encompassing a socio-economic dimension, and in showing how speakers switch code when adapting to different communicative situations. Finally, I will argue that the two authors have chosen antithetical narrative strategies to depict their respective English characters. On the one hand, the figure of Rochester, who acts as a spirit-thief, is a highly unreliable narrator, both in opposition with the protagonist and the norms of the work. On the other hand, Maydene is perceived as reliable in that the parson's wife's characterization conforms to the implied author's system of values by joining in the fight against institutional spirit-thievery. As a result, these dichotomic portrayals are influential in conveying what I assume could be, their implied authors' divergent views of West Indian society.

Cultural Dominance and Obeah as Processes of Zombification

Wide Sargasso Sea and *Myal* share the common theme of alienation that not only affects individuals, but more generally all colonized people. In both novels, the exercise of power, and the concomitant spirit-thievery that results from it, are juxtaposed with the Caribbean practice of Obeah, which turns people into zombies once they have been depleted of their soul. In their own way, both implied authors stress that cultural hegemony from the colonizer leads to the denial of the culture(s) of the colonized people. While *Wide Sargasso Sea* sheds light on the fact that Obeah was declared illegal in Jamaica mainly because Europeans failed to understand Afro-Creole religions, the implied author in *Myal* denounces proselytism from the Anglican

and Methodist official churches. Yet, Brodber's novel also brings to the forefront the different Afro-Creole Jamaican religions, which can be placed, according to Alleyne, along a religious continuum according to their being closer to Christianity or to African creeds. Moreover, much emphasis is put on syncretism in the novel, as spirits from different religions can join in Myalism. Finally, there is probably also a didactic intention from Brodber, at least for a Western audience, in helping the implied reader to differentiate Myalism from Obeah.

As discussed in chapter one, in the first part of *Wide Sargasso Sea* Antoinette narrates how she becomes progressively alienated from the place and the people of Coulibri, to which she expresses her belonging. Even though institutional spirit-thievery is not explicitly mentioned in the text, it is alluded to several times, initially by having Mr Mason imposing his English lifestyle and expressing the point of view of the colonizer regarding the estate and its former slaves. As aforesaid, Antoinette is first compared to a zombie when she is being bullied by two youngsters on her way to the convent. Her estrangement from Coulibri is therefore associated with the practice of Obeah. I would argue that another source of spirit-thievery in Rhys's novel is religion, though it is only being implied in the text. Indeed, the are several instances when the heroine expresses her skepticism about religious discourse. For example, the protagonist questions the impartiality of the Christian God, when the family is forced to flee from their estate: "Mr Mason stopped swearing and began to pray in a loud pious voice. The prayer ended, 'May Almighty God defend *us*.' And God who is indeed mysterious, who had made no sign when they burned Pierre as he slept–not a clap of thunder, not a flash of lightning–mysterious God heard Mr Mason at once and answered *him*. The yells stopped" (emphasis added; Rhys et al. 25). The tone of the narrator is rather sarcastic in this passage, and she contrasts Mason's use of the pronoun *us*, with the use of *him* for God's answer. One might therefore assume that Antoinette is unable to acknowledge this "Almighty God", since no divine power intervened to prevent the death of her helpless brother. Ironically, in the end

it was not God but the vision of the burning parrot that brought the attack to an end. Another instance happens at the convent, when the protagonist remembers Mother St Justine's incoherent lectures, which consisted of a mixture of readings about the lives of the Saints, of mottos, and of day-to-day instructions, often ending with a threat if these injunctions were not obeyed. Antoinette describes her teaching as a "flow of words" (32), and her interest in Miss Hélène's coiffure suggests that the nun's sayings are mostly unintelligible to her. As already argued in chapter one, the religious discourse to which Antoinette is exposed does not really make sense for her since it is ineffective in helping her to heal. More generally, its binary rhetoric seems inappropriate in a diverse society such as Jamaica.

Yet, it is marriage and the psychological violence she is forced to endure from her husband that are the most striking sources of spirit-thievery in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and the ones that will lead the heroine to be compared to a zombie at the end of part two. Marriage at that time was a patriarchal institution that depleted women of their freedom and of their income. The figure of Rochester has come to Jamaica with the sole purpose of serving his own interests, and his prejudice against his wife being a white Creole surfaces as soon as he receives Daniel Cosway's letter. Thus, even though Antoinette has done her best to turn their arranged marriage into a love relationship, she is rejected by him because he considers her to be inferior and degenerate. It is therefore the denial of her subjectivity that will lead Antoinette to seek help from Christophine. Since it is well known that her nurse has got power, she hopes that she will help her in winning back her husband's affection. Thus, it is not Christophine's wish to practice Obeah on him, and the protagonist recognizes that "[s]he did not want to do this. I forced her with my ugly money" (71). In fact, Christophine seems to use her supposed powers mainly for self-defense, and her generosity is acknowledged by Antoinette when she explains that it was thanks to her that the family survived after the abolition of slavery:

> It was Christophine who bought our food from the village and persuaded some girls to help her sweep and wash clothes. We would have died, my mother always said, if

> she had not stayed with us. Many died in those days, both white and black, especially the older people, but no one speaks of those days now. They are forgotten, except the lies. Lies are never forgotten, they go on and they grow.'" (79).

The nurse is therefore portrayed in a positive way and presented as the most sensible character in the novel. In the end, it is because of prejudice and fear of her power that the unnamed husband unjustly accuses her of having practiced Obeah on him and on his wife. Hence, after that the nurse was dismissed, the only means by which Antoinette can resist zombification is to withdraw into her inner-world. As I have argued in chapter one, my thesis is that Rhys uses the literary strategy of metalepsis at the end of the novel to suggest that Antoinette's soul has returned to the garden of Coulibri.

In *Myal*, it is first and mainly institutionalized sources of spirit-thievery that are exposed. Actually, they are, on the one hand the ones that impact most people, and on the other hand the most difficult to counter due to their institutional legitimacy. First, education is identified as a source of spirit-thievery, as shown by Reverend Simpson's reaction while watching Ella recite Kipling's poetry, totally unaware of its imperialist content (Brodber, *Myal* 6). Second, the colonial church is another source of spirit-thievery. Indeed, as Afro-Creole religions are essential parts of the Jamaican people's culture, the imposition on them of the imperial church's norms and values equate with the denial of this culture. This is well illustrated by having Maydene reflect on the fact that women were obliged to wear a hat instead of their head-dress in church, and had to replace their colourful-clothes by white ones. This makes Maydene raise the following questions, "Why does William do these things? And why do people allow him to get away with it", and that is why she eventually accuses him of being, "a spirit thief. You keep taking away these people's spirit" (18). Unlike her husband, the parson's wife is being very perspicacious in her analysis of what institutional spirit-thievery is about:

> Maydene paused. She had never truly seen herself before from William's point of view. "I don't think I like at all being held up as the thing with which to fill those sacks which he has emptied. I don't approve at all. I see old men who must know by now how to live their lives, sitting empty in church, unable to read the responses, just waiting for the word that comes out of William's mouth. I wouldn't like that power. He has reduced them to children. Much better if he could find a way of linking what they know with what he wants them to know. They wouldn't seem so inadequate"… Maydene smiled at the thought of Miss Gatha. "No way he could take away her head-dress" and congratulated her silently. "So that is it!" She felt she now held the germ. "That is why he would need a sledge hammer. Grove Town people would resist his efforts to separate them from their understanding of life. But he doesn't even try which is strange for William," she said. (18-19)

This passage is insightful as it pinpoints that cultural imposition is both illusory and counterproductive. Indeed, it either leads to apparent obedience without conviction, and thus to emptiness, or to active resistance. In both cases, communication is interrupted and there is no exchange between people. Moreover, in reflecting on this scene, Maydene realizes that this spirit-thievery affects her through the patriarchal system as well.

The other source of spirit-thievery is the one that occurs at the individual level. The description of Mass Levi's attempts to recover his manliness by taking possession of Anita's soul sheds light on the practice of Obeah, but also on the means by which it can be thwarted by Myalism. I argue here that the inclusion of this subplot serves at least two purposes. First, it gives the implied author the opportunity to distinguish spiritual rituals that are maleficent from the ones that are performed for other reasons, such as healing or for rites of initiation. Second, it establishes a parallel between Mass Levi's Obeah on Anita, and Selwyn's spirit-thievery in the form of the distorted portrayal of Ella's Jamaican village in his coon show. Spirit possession and theft are therefore shown to be universal strategies of domination, and the Caribbean practice of Obeah is only one means among others to gain power over someone.

Yet, sources of spirit-thievery are not only exposed in *Myal* since the narrator also shows how they can be actively fought. Mass Levi is for instance defeated both by Miss Gatha's

performance at the tabernacle and by the Myalists' prayers, and in this process Maydene's spiritual double White Hen is admitted into the circle of the Myalists. Likewise, Ella is relieved from her hysterical pregnancy by the herbalist Mass Cyrus who acts in collaboration with the other Myalists. After having recovered, and as an assistant teacher, Ella becomes aware of the allegorical nature of Mr Joe's Farm, and on its deleterious effects on her pupils. The sharing of her findings with Reverend Simpson and William induces the latter to question the impartiality of institutionalized knowledge, and to participate in the development of strategies of resistance against colonial discourses. Thus, the novel suggests that institutionalized spirit-thievery can be neutralized by approaches that identify and circumvent its colonial rhetoric. As in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, imperial power is shown to be far more problematic than Obeah, and as a consequence, it is its hegemony that necessitates to be overcome by counter-discursive strategies.

Language and the Jamaican Creole Continuum

In my discussion of the voicing of Antoinette in chapter one, I have pointed out that white and black characters are contrasted in terms of language. Whereas the former express themselves only in Standard English, the latter use a variety of Jamaican Creole that displays features of basilect (copula *be* is missing, verbs are not inflected for tense, and there are instances of reduplication), and of mesolect as case is kept for pronouns. Moreover, there is no marked linguistic distinction between the way the different black characters express themselves. The only coloured character whose English is apart is Daniel Cosway. However, the syntax of his speech and letters is often inconsistent and therefore cannot be considered as a variety of Jamaican Creole. He is rather trying to use Standard English, but is not very proficient at it yet. Thus, *Wide Sargasso Sea* presents a very simplified form of Jamaican English, in that it fails to render Jamaican Creole as a continuum that ranges from acrolect to basilect. Additionally, the communicative function of code-switching, and thus the socio-

linguistic dimension of the Jamaican Creole Continuum is missing as well. Hence, I posit that the implied author's main point regarding language in *Wide Sargasso Sea* was to show that another variety of English than Standard English was spoken in Jamaica, especially by its black population.

Nevertheless, this does not imply that Rhys's intention was to represent Jamaican English as "broken English" and to stigmatize her black characters. Firstly, even though the protagonist uses only Standard English, there are many indications in the text that Antoinette exchanges with her servants in Patois, whether in Jamaican or in French at Granbois, or with her nurse Christophine. It is also very likely that her conversations with Tia are held in Jamaican Creole. As pointed out by Alleyne, children of plantations owners were brought up by black nurses, and thus, a significant part of language input came from Jamaican Creole. This is well illustrated in the text by the numerous songs and words that the protagonist uses, usually in French Patois, and by her understanding of Christophine's Jamaican Creole. For instance, when recalling her childhood years, Antoinette says that, "[w]hen evening came she sang to me if she was in the mood. I couldn't always understand her patois songs–she also came from Martinique–but she taught me the one that meant 'The little ones grow old, the children leave us, will they come back?' and the one about the cedar tree flowers which only last for a day" (Rhys et al. 11). Besides, her mother originates from Martinique, so it is likely that French Creole is spoken at Coulibri too, at least as an everyday language. This is confirmed by the fact that, Coco, the green parrot, that "didn't talk very well, [but] could say *Qui est là? Qui est là?* and answer *Ché Coco, Ché Coco*" (25), uses *Ché*, a feature of French Patois, instead of the standard form *C'est* when repeating what it has heard. In addition, Christophine refers to Hilda as "'*Dooudou, ché cocotte*'" (43) at Granbois, and Antoinette tries to teach her husband songs, whose lyrics, "[*a]dieu foulard, adieu madras*, or *Ma belle ka di maman li*" (54), are in French Creole. Interestingly, Antoinette details Christophine's language skills in the following words:

"She had a quiet voice and a quiet laugh (when she did laugh), and though she could speak good English if she wanted to, and French as well as patois, she took good care to talk as they talked" (12). This indicates that Christophine is fluent in both languages and uses code-switching when needed. Moreover, it corroborates the nurse's portrayal as an intelligent woman, since it shows that she handles her linguistic skills judiciously. In fact, Christophine is the one who gives both Antoinette and her husband the wisest pieces of advice, but who, unfortunately, is not listened to. Russel (2007) acknowledges the importance of Christophine's character and draws a list of her expressions. He identifies a repetitive pattern in them that, according to him, mimic babytalk and has been associated with "linguistic models for the origin of pidgins: empowered classes would use simplified language to communicate with lower classes". His claim is that "Christophine is a speaker of Creole, not pidgin, although her English as represented in the text might be classified as pidgin" (Russell 90). I find his analysis of Christophine relevant, but I disagree with the previous statement since all the sentences he quotes are consistently structured and thus, cannot be considered as pidgin. As aforementioned, the function of repetition in her speech is rather there for emphasis.

Myal differs from *Wide Sargasso Sea* in that the novel foregrounds the specificities of Jamaican Creole, and strives to undo the pejorative image of backwardness associated with the latter. As pointed out by Durrlemann-Tame, Jamaican Creole is still associated with lack of education nowadays, since she observes that "the subjective notion that Jamaican Creole is a corruption of Standard English is to this day passionately upheld by most of the very speakers of the language" (Durrleman 7). This prejudice is invalidated in *Myal*, by the proficiency of the narrator and of other characters to perform code-switching and to move along the Jamaican Creole Continuum. As shown in chapter two, a character like Ella O'Grady contributes to the deconstruction of this negative connotation, and to its replacement by a more positive view of the use of the different Jamaican 'lects'. Indeed, Ella certainly masters Standard English very

well, as shown by her insightful reading of the corrupt allegory of Mr Joe's farm, but she uses a form close to basilect when she tells Selwyn about her homeland. It is very likely that it is the local varieties of the language which are the best fitted to convey an authentic description of her village, its people, and the Jamaican landscape. Likewise, Mrs Holness's code-switch ability is well illustrated by her first meeting with Maydene. While she sees the parson's wife coming towards her house, her thoughts are the following: "'[t]his blasted white pillow case with a string tied in the middle. These white people just wan tek people pickney fi practice pon. Want Mary good-good pickney fi pasture out to her two red-face son. Is pumpkin belly dem wan send this one back home with too?'" (Brodber, *Myal* 20). The language of her thoughts is conveyed first in Standard English, but soon slips into basilect as shown by the absence of subject before the verb *want*, the lack of inflection on verbs and adjectives as in *red-face*, the use of reduplication in *good-good*, the replacement of *child* by *pickney*, the absence of nominative case-marking in *dem*, and the omission of unpronounced letters like for *wan*. But of course, the important social position of Mrs. Brassington prevents Amy Holness from speaking up her mind, and therefore she ends up saying in Standard English: "'Why Mrs. Brassington how nice to see you. What a coincidence! Someone just called your name to me. They say you are wanting to take Mary's child into your house'" (21). According to Tiffin (1990), Brodber's novel "addresses a primarily Jamaican and generally West-Indian middle-class audience whose education, like that of one of the central characters, Ella O'Grady, has proceeded along certain lines, and it aims at the disidentification of its readers" (Tiffin 31). One of Brodber's objectives is therefore to present an alternative to the English used in canonical texts. By highlighting the specificities of the Jamaican Creole Continuum, and by having a narrator that has integrated code-switching in her/his discourse, the cultural value of Jamaican Creole is brought to the foreground, and is given its rightful place in literature. Thereby, the implied author in *Myal* encourages her fellow citizen to be proud, to value and to

preserve the essence of the Creole Continuum, which is the diversity of its varieties. I would like to add that the inclusion of different forms of Jamaican Creole in the novel contributes to value this linguistic continuum in the eyes of a larger English audience as well, that is readers and scholars that are not necessarily connected to Britain's imperial past. Indeed, the various mesolectal and basilectal forms present in *Myal* are full of witty imagery, providing the text with a genuine Jamaican identity, and are rich in metonymic significance regarding the socio-political issues that the colonized people had to face during the Empire.

English Characters: The Figure of Rochester in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and of Maydene in *Myal: a novel*

The Figure of Rochester

As aforementioned in the introduction, *Wide Sargasso Sea* is in dialogism with *Jane Eyre* at the level of the aesthetic work. The characters of Antoinette/Bertha and the one of the unnamed husband/Mr Rochester are both in intertextuality with Brontë's novel. While writing, Rhys expressed the purpose to correct the misrepresentation of the white creole woman, but felt that it would not be sufficient to grant Antoinette/Bertha a voice to do so. She rather believed that several narrators were needed to allow her to convey her purpose to her readership. In a letter to Mr Windham, she wrote: "[e]ven when I knew I *had* to write the book–still it did not click into place–that is one reason (though only one) why I was so long…Only when I wrote this poem–then it clicked–and all was there and always had been" (Rhys et al. 139). Thus, she explains that it was thanks to the writing of the poem "Obeah Night", that is fictionally signed by Edward Rochester or Raworth and dated 1842, describing the night when Antoinette tries to win back his love by the means of Obeah magic, that the author realized that her story would be much more powerful if Rochester was given a narrative voice as well, even though he remains unnamed throughout the novel. This resulted in having him narrate most of part two, and it is through his focalization that the couple's honeymoon in Dominica is related.

In this section, my argument is that this choice of narrative strategy fulfills two functions in the novel. First, the novelist turns this character, who becomes Antoinette's spirit-thief, into a highly unreliable narrator due to his multiple misjudgments and misrepresentations. As a consequence, he positions himself as a clear antagonist to his wife, and as a character in total opposition with the implied author's values of the work. Second, it allows the implied author to characterize him very differently from how he is presented in Brontë's text, where Rochester is only seen through the lens of Jane Eyre. My aim is to show, through the portrayal of the unnamed husband, how Rhys deconstructs the concept of Englishness, central to many canonical novels of the nineteenth century. As a result, the reader is left, at the end of his tale, with the image of a young man full of hatred and regrets for what he has lost, or rather for what he has never been able to find. Indeed, his despising of the people from the West Indies, and his incapacity to question his world conceptions, and learn about other cultures, turns his voyage to the Caribbean into an utmost failure. At the metatextual level, Rhys ironically denies his identity by omitting to name him, which could be read as the implied author's disapproval of his deeds, and as a response to Bertha's silencing in *Jane Eyre*.

In *Jean Rhys*, Howells (1991) reads *Wide Sargasso* Sea "as a post-colonial statement of resistance to an imperialist text" (Howells 21), and observes that, "[t]hrough her colonial education [Rhys] was encouraged to construct an idealised model of Englishness, as the standard against which her own place and culture was measured. By definition within the discourse of imperialism, colonial culture was invariably found to be inferior – suffering either from lack or from excess" (Howells 23). The above quotations pinpoint many elements that are present in the discourse of Antoinette's unnamed husband. His characterization clearly deviates from the norms of the work, and is therefore in line with Booth's and Phelan's definitions of an unreliable narrator. As aforesaid, the most striking divergence is his misjudgment that white Creoles such as Antoinette are "not English or European either" (Rhys

et al. 39). This shows that along the ethical axis he is described as being in opposition with the values of the implied author. Moreover, it is obvious that he has got English norms against which he evaluates the West Indies, as on many other occasions he uses England as his benchmark to describe what he sees and feels, or to express his opinion. For instance, when he sees Granbois he describes it as "an imitation of an English summer house" (42), and he points out that "the evening meal was served much later than in England" (53). Later, when Antoinette questions him on England, and tells him that one of her friends compared London to "a cold dark dream", he replies: "'Well', …that is precisely what your beautiful island seems to me, quite unreal and like a dream'" (47-48). He also comments on Christophine's language and habits by affirming that "'[h]er coffee is delicious but her language is horrible and she might hold her dress up'" remarking that it is not a "'clean habit'" (50), an image that echoes the one present in Antoinette's second dream. Likewise, he reacts very strongly to Antoinette's question "'You frightened'?" because he thinks that she is "imitating a negro's voice, singing and insolent" (78). Strikingly, he refuses to question his English standards when replying to his wife's accusation, "'You abused the planters and made up stories about them, but you do the same thing'", by stating that "'[s]lavery was not a matter of liking and disliking … [I]t was a question of justice'" (88). Finally, when he is writing to his lawyers and planning his future, he symbolically sketches an "English house" and "English trees", and he compares the change of weather in Dominica to "an English summer" which he describes as "cool, calm and cloudy" and "so cool, so grey" (98-99). Hence, Rhys positions him as a clear antagonist to the heroine, and subverts Brontë's text by turning him into the embodiment of imperialistic tropes. When using Phelan's fine-grained evaluation of unreliability, I argue that the unnamed husband fails both on the axis of knowledge and perception, and on the one of ethics, since he persists in applying his English norms and values despite their unsuitability in the Caribbean context.

The fact that colonial culture, in Howells's words, is "suffering either from lack or from excess" is particularly salient in the discourse of the narrator when he describes the Caribbean and its people. For example, he perceives the Dominican nature as excessive since he depicts it as being "[t]oo much blue, too much purple, too much green. The flowers too red, the mountains too high, the hills too near", and he breathes "an intoxicating freshness" on the veranda (43). Likewise, the land crabs are "[h]orribly looking creatures" (52), the forest is "hostile" (62), and he refers to the honeymoon island as a "damned place" (77). Personification is also recurrently present in the narrator's discourse to convey his feeling of oppression by the landscape: first at his arrival, when he sees "sad leaning coconut palm trees" (38), and "the sea [as creeping] stealthily forwards and backwards" (38), or when he perceives the landscape as being "menacing" as he feels that "[t]hose hills would close in on you" (41); later, he experiences this feeling of oppression again as, "the trees closed over [his] head", and are perceived as "enemy trees" (62) when he is in the forest; similarly, while sketching his future he associates his feeling of revenge with the imagery of hurricanes, imagining a scenery in which royal palms "stand–defiant", while the "contemptuous wind passes, not caring for these abject things …[h]owling, shrieking, laughing the wild blast passes" (98); finally, at his departure he predicts "that the dark forest always wins" (100). I argue here that the personification of the landscape signals his misevaluation of the environment due to lack of knowledge and one-sidedness. Indeed, all the previous quoted descriptions converge to underscore his inability to welcome a new place and context, and his failure to view Dominica as merely different from England, and not as inferior to it.

The discourse of the unnamed husband is also loaded with racial prejudice, as he uses mostly derogative adjectives to describe the coloured or black people, whom he often associates with his negative perception of the place. Besides, he is persuaded that he is being the victim of mockery by the servants. For example, Amélie is introduced in the following

terms: “a little half-caste servant”, and his first impression of her is that “[s]he was laughing at me I could see. A lovely little creature but sly, spiteful, malignant perhaps, like much else in this place” (38). Likewise, the young servant Hilda has got “a savage appearance” (43) because her braided hair is uncovered, and he judges her as a “[s]tupid little girl” (53), even though Antoinette corrects him by explaining that she is only shy. His feeling of being judged by the local people surfaces again when he meets Christophine for the first time. After having at first thought that “she seemed insignificant”, he later recalls that he felt evaluated by her, when “[s]he looked at me steadily, not with approval, I thought”, and notices that “she smiled to herself” (43) when he was unable to maintain her gaze and was the first to look down. After criticizing her language, he remarks that “she looks so lazy” (51), but is again contradicted by Antoinette. His racial prejudice is particularly striking when he asks Antoinette “‘Why do you hug and kiss Christophine?’”, and to her answer, “‘Why not?’”, he replies “‘*I* wouldn’t hug and kiss them’, I’d say, ‘I couldn’t’” (54). The fact that the pronoun *I* is italicized in the text, and that he replaces the deictic *her* to refer back to Christophine by the pronoun *them*, signals that he does not consider the nurse in her individuality, but only as belonging to the group of black people whom he considers inferior. All the preceding examples are illustrations of his misjudgments of the people, and the fact that Antoinette contradicts some of his sayings corroborates the reader’s impression that he is not a reliable narrator.

His feeling of being judged by the servants gets stronger after the reception Daniel Cosway’s letters. For instance, when Baptiste finds him in the forest, he notes that “[i]t was as if he’d put his service mask on the savage reproachful face I had seen” (Rhys et al. 63). Likewise, he believes that both Hilda and Amélie are making fun of him, since while watching Amélie, he interprets her body language as a sign of mockery: “[l]ike Hilda she put her hand over her mouth as though she could not stop herself from laughing and walked away” (73). However, this does not prevent him from having sex with her during the Obeah night.

Eventually, it is in his final confrontation with Christophine that his contempt becomes the most salient:

> ‘Of course I laugh at you–you ridiculous old woman. I don’t mean to discuss my affairs with you any longer. Or your mistress. I’ve listened to all you had to say and I don’t believe you. Now, say good-bye to Antoinette, then go. You are to blame for all that has happened here, so don’t come back.’
> She drew herself up tall and straight and put her hands on her hips.
> Who you tell me to go? This house belong to Miss Antoinette’s mother, now it belong to her. Who you to tell me to go?’
> ‘I assure you that it belongs to me now. You’ll go, or I’ll get the men to put you out.’
> ‘You think the men here touch me? They not damn fool like you to put their hand on me.’
> ‘Then I will have the police up, I warn you. There must be some law and order even in this God-forsaken island.’ (95-96)

Here, Christophine has just reminded him of his responsibility in turning his wife into a zombie. Nonetheless, he decides to blame her for his wife’s affliction, and discards her by threatening to accuse her of Obeah.

The unreliability of the unnamed husband is not only ethical, as shown by his misjudgments, but also factual in accordance with Phelan’s notion of misrepresentation. Both in Brontë and Rhys’s novels, he presents himself as being the victim of an arranged marriage, which is in contradiction with parts of his narrative in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Indeed, in the fictitious letter addressed to his father, he writes that “[t]he thirty thousand pounds have been paid to me without question or condition. No provision made for her (that must be seen to)” (41), and he recalls that the day prior to the wedding, Richard had informed him that Antoinette did not wish to marry him anymore. As he “did not relish going back to England in the role of rejected suitor jilted by this Creole girl” (46), he had insisted, “kiss[ing] her fervently, promising her peace, happiness, safety” (47), even though Antoinette had told him that she was afraid of the future as he did not know anything about her. Later, while watching her sleep, he remembers that “she had given way, but coldly, unwillingly, trying to protect herself with silence and a blank face” (54). Hence, the implied author’s use of dramatic irony emphasizes

his unreliability, since it foregrounds the fact that he is misreporting events. As a result, this makes his accusations that Antoinette and her family have deluded him implausible: "[t]hey bought me, *me* with your paltry money. You helped them to do it. You deceived me, betrayed me, and you'll do worse if you get a chance… (*That girl she look you straight in the eye and talk sweet talk–and it's lies she tell you. Lies. Her mother was so. They say she worse than her mother*.)" (102). Even though Antoinette has told him the truth about the story of her childhood, and of what happened at Coulibri, which is also known to the reader and consistent with the protagonist's narrative in part one, it is Daniel Cosway, whom he has only met once and who is blackmailing him, that he chooses to believe.

The narrative of the unnamed husband is also crucial in the production of a counter-discourse to *Jane Eyre*. As already stated in the introduction, Said closely associates the novel as a genre with imperialism. Thus, many canonical English novels have problematic contents since the colonies are usually only briefly mentioned in connection with a purpose that serves England. In *Jane Eyre* for example, the heroine inherits from her uncle a fortune he has made in Madeira (Brontë 440); likewise, Rochester refers to Jamaica only to explain why he has hidden the fact that he is already married. He portrays himself as a victim of a social practice that was current at that time, the one of arranging a wealthy marriage for the younger son(s) in a family in order to avoid property division (Brontë 351). While in *Jane Eyre* this part of the plot mainly serves to confirm that Jane marries Rochester in the end purely for love since she is now financially independent, the consequences of this social practice for women are brought to the centre in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. In fact, the unnamed husband's narrative sheds light on another form of exploitation than slavery that was recurrent in the colonies. Indeed, he is representative of the white metropolitan male who has come to the West Indies mainly to marry a young creole woman for financial reasons.

Rhys takes advantage of Rochester's confession to Jane, telling her that when he was young, he was "ignorant, raw, and inexperienced" (Brontë 352), and of his pretense that he thought he loved this young beautiful girl, to deconstruct the image of the English bourgeois embodied by the more mature Rochester in *Jane Eyre*. In Brontë's novel, Mrs Fairfax tells Jane that Mr Rochester "has gentleman's tastes and habits, and he expects to have things managed in conformity to them", and that "he has travelled a great deal, and seen a great deal of the world" (Brontë 124). Being very much impressed by him, Jane depicts him in the following terms:

> I am sure most people would have thought him an ugly man; yet there was so much unconscious pride in his port; so much ease in his demeanour; such a look of complete indifference to his own external appearance; so haughty a reliance on the power of other qualities, intrinsic or adventitious, to atone for the lack of mere personal attractiveness, that, in looking at him, one inevitably shared the indifference, and, even in a blind, imperfect sense, put faith in the confidence. (Brontë 155).

Hence, Rochester is portrayed as a respectable gentleman with a mysterious side, who has gained maturity and assertion as he has travelled the world and supposedly acquired wisdom in his voyages. The implied author of *Wide Sargasso Sea* establishes a sharp contrast with Brontë's characterization in the second part of her novel. Indeed, in the first pages of his narrative, when the unnamed husband presents himself as a victim of his father and brother's arrangement, emphasis is put on passivity in his discourse. For example, the use of passive forms such as in the sentences, "It had been arranged that we would leave Spanish Town immediately after the ceremony", and, "I was married a month after I arrived in Jamaica and for nearly three weeks of that time I was in bed with fever" (Rhys et al. 39), reinforces the narrator's deference. This is confirmed by his confessions to the narratee about the planned wedding, "I agreed. As I had agreed to everything else" (39), and by he imagines writing to his father: "I have sold my soul or you have sold it, and after all is it such a bad bargain? The girl is thought to be beautiful, she is beautiful. And yet …" (41). Nonetheless, the fact that *And yet*

is added at the end of his reporting implies that he is not totally convinced about this marriage. It exposes him as an unreliable narrator, as the reader might posit that his lack of conviction will in the end have negative consequences for his wife.

Indeed, even though the narrator seems at first rather forbearing, there are many cues in his discourse beckoning the implied reader to question this character's sincerity and intentions. There are for instance several elements that are only communicated to the reader, and not revealed to the protagonist. There is a first example showing that the narrator underreports when, just after that Antoinette has told him that Baptiste is a very good overseer, his answer is in fact in contradiction with his thoughts: "I'd agree, keeping my opinion of Baptiste, Christophine and all the others to myself. 'Baptiste says …Christophine wants …' She trusted them and I did not. But I could hardly say so. Not yet" (53). Another example occurs after breakfast, when the narrator observes that "[s]ometimes a sidelong look or a sly knowing glance disturbed me, but it was never for long. 'Not now,' I would think. 'Not yet.' (53). The inclusion of *Not yet* in the two preceding quotations signals that he is underreporting. In doing so, he is, according to Grice's Cooperation Principle formulated in 'Logic and Conversation', violating one of Grice's maxims of quantity ("Make your contribution as informative as is required") (Jaworski and Coupland 63–64), by not sharing everything he knows with his interlocutor. While the above repetitions of *Not yet* in his discourse seem to be directed against the black servants and imply that he might be planning a change, other instances question his intentions regarding his wife. This is supported by the fact that the same words were present in Antoinette's second dream. Actually, even before he receives Daniel's first letter one can ponder his good faith: first, when he recalls Antoinette's coldness and unwillingness to marry him, and notes that it was "[p]oor weapons, and they had not served her well or lasted long" (54); second, in his comments following his wife's talk about death, "I watched her die many times. In my way, not in hers" (55); finally, in his evaluation of their

relationship: “As for the happiness I gave her, that was worse than nothing. I did not love her. I was thirsty for her, but that is not love. I felt very little tenderness for her, she was a stranger to me, a stranger who did not think or feel as I did” (55).

After the reception of Daniel’s letters, he becomes hostile to his wife and in his most violent manifestations he denies her subjectivity by renaming her Bertha, and by openly betraying her with Amélie. Although the main reason that he gives for his wrath is that he has been cheated into marrying someone from a degenerate family, the narrator’s sincerity can once more be doubted. First, after his meeting with Daniel, Antoinette has to insist on telling him her story, and there is a discrepancy between what the narrator answers her and what he really thinks, as illustrated by the following quote: “‘I do not hate you, I am most distressed about you, I am distraught,’ I said. But this was untrue, I was not distraught, I was calm, it was the first time I had felt calm or self-possessed for many a long day” (76). Again, Grice’s Cooperative Principle is infringed here, as his reply violates the supermaxim of Quantity, which includes the specific maxim “Do not say what you believe is false” (Jaworski and Coupland 64). He then evades her request of giving a reason for his hatred by asking if Antoinette’s mother is still alive. During their conversation he continues to transgress the supermaxim of Quality since, while listening to her story, he pretends to console her by saying, “‘Antoinette, your nights are not spoiled, or your days, put the sad things away. Don’t think about them and nothing will be spoiled, I promise you”, but at the same time recalls that “[his] heart was heavy as lead”. This explains why, at the end of her tale, he persists in calling her Bertha instead of showing her any compassion (80-81).

As Christophine suggests, he has the choice of leaving the West Indies without his wife if he provides for her, but he does not decide to do so. There might likely be another element in Daniel’s slander that triggers his need for revenge, and here I would suggest that it is the former’s insinuation that Antoinette had had a relationship with her coloured brother Sandi. It

makes the unnamed husband jealous, not only of Sandi, but of Antoinette's ability to ignore racial barriers. Actually, the figure of Rochester's narrative is full of contradictions. For example, he pretends that he does not have strong feelings for the protagonist, and that he dislikes the place and its people; yet he admits that for some weeks of their stay he felt passion and was thrilled by it. Likewise, he describes their bathing place as "a beautiful place–wild, untouched, above all untouched, with an alien, disturbing, secret loveliness. And it kept its secret. I'd find myself thinking, 'What I see is nothing–I want what it *hides*–that is not nothing'" (51-52). Later, he concedes in the following words his attachment to Granbois's inhabitants: "I grew to like these mountains, people, silent, reserved, never servile, never curious (or so I thought), not knowing that their quick sideways looks saw everything they wished to see" (55). This reveals that he is experiencing new and strong feelings, as shown for instance by the passion he feels at seeing his wife's dress on the floor that makes him "breathless and savage with desire", or by his admittance that "[i]t was not a safe game to play – in this place. Desire, Hatred, Life, Death came very close in the darkness. Better not know how close. Better not know how close. Better not think, never for a moment. Not close. The same…" (55-56). It seems as if the unnamed narrator has come under the spell of their honeymoon place, and is afraid of losing control. Even after meeting Daniel, and just before drinking the wine with the Obeah potion, he remembers his desire, "I longed to bury my face in her hair as I used to do", and his thoughts are ambiguous: "She need not have done what she did to me. I will always swear that, she need not have done it" (82), in that they could either mean that the "loving potion" was unnecessary because he felt still attracted to his wife, or that he could never forgive her for having tried to bewitch him with Obeah. The preceding examples all point to another form of unreliability, the one that Phelan has identified as underreading since it affects the axis of knowledge and perception. It suggests that the unnamed husband is resisting the fact that hybridization is unavoidable in the context of the West Indies.

His refusal to lose control, and to open up to something new have consequences as it affects his mental state. Indeed, after his final confrontation with Christophine, his discourse gets more and more disjointed and contradictory, as it becomes dominated by feelings of revenge and hatred. In his eyes, his wife has become "a drunken lying lunatic" that "thirsts for *anyone* – not for me…", and consequently "she'll have no lover, for I don't want her and she'll see no other", and "[s]he said she loved this place. This is the last she'll see of it" (99). But then he reaffirms the need to possess her while recalling her songs: "Always *adieu* (and all songs say it). If she too says it, or weeps, I'll take her in my arms, my lunatic. She's mad but *mine*, *min*e. What will I care for gods or devils or for Fate itself. If she smiles or weeps or both. *For me*" (99). While leaving Granbois, his voice is full of nostalgia for their lost passion, and he finds himself in a state of mental confusion: "So I shall never understand why, suddenly, bewilderingly, I was certain that everything I had imagined to be truth was false. False. Only the magic and the dream are true–all the rest's a lie. Let it go. Here is the secret. Here" (100-101). Eventually, his frustration for having spoiled his marriage turns into an intense feeling of hatred for everything:

. I was tired of these people. I disliked their laughter and their tears, their flattery and envy, conceit and deceit. And I hated the place.
I hated the mountains and the hills, the rivers and the rain. I hated the sunsets of whatever colour, I hated its beaty and its magic and the secret I would never know. I hated its indifference and the cruelty which was part of its loveliness. Above all I hated her. For she belonged to the magic and the loveliness. She had left me thirsty and all my life would be thirst and longing for what I had lost before I found it. (103)

Hence, the figure of the "young Rochester" of *Wide Sargasso Sea* challenges the credibility and the respectability of *Jane Eyre*'s character, and as a result, forever affects the interpretation of Brontë's canonical text. I would tentatively suggest, that the preceding quote implies that there is much about the West Indies that the English have never been capable of understanding. Indeed, the English imperialists were socialized and educated in a way that led them to be convinced of their superiority, and thus prevented them from acknowledging other cultures and alternative conceptions of the world. I am therefore inclined to suggest that, ironically, an

ideology that conditions its people to believe that they represent the norm to reach for everyone else results in another form of spirit-thievery, since it impedes these people from learning from other cultures.

Maydene Brassington

Unlike Rhys, Brodber has chosen to craft an English character very different from what could be expected. Indeed, Maydene Brassington is a white English woman who is married to the Jamaican coloured minister in charge of the parish of St Thomas. While the typically British wife usually remains confined to a representative role, Maydene is portrayed as an intellectual and active character who identifies and denounces institutional spirit-thievery early on in the novel. In my argumentation, I will discuss what makes her unconventional, and show how, by her numerous actions, she strives to become accepted by the other Myalists, and ends up succeeding. The implied author has given her important functions in the story: as a wife, Maydene helps her husband to accept his multiethnic origins; and as White Hen, her spiritual awareness brings even more syncretism to the community. The exposition of her character begins with her struggle to resolve a linguistic dilemma in "[her] effort to be true to any place or situation that she found herself in" (Brodber, *Myal* 13). Indeed, while watching the transition that marks the end of the day and the beginning of the night, she finds that none of the words, *gloaming*, *twilight*, *dusk* or *nightfall* accurately describe what she feels. Eventually, she identifies *cusp* as the right word, since its definition, "[a] point where two curves meet", matches the sense "that she was at the beginning of a new phase of creation. Felt as if God particularly wanted her to watch Him change scenes" (13). This quote reveals that there is a spiritual dimension in Maydene's questioning, and she is convinced that the fall of the day is the most propitious moment for her meditative walks. In particular, she hopes that heading down to Grove Town will allow her to understand how she can help her husband in coming to peace with the place:

> It bothered Maydene that William's bother was so deep-set that he feared to let it surface, and if it didn't, how was she to help him as she ought? It bothered her that it was something simple and that any woman born in Jamaica would have been able to fathom it, in which case, the mirror was showing a clash, not a joining of cultures and there went one mark against her marriage and a telling blow to her faith in the intrinsic beauty in the meeting of unlikes. The bother bothered her continually." (15)

This passage shows that, while William conceals part of his ethnical origins, Maydene values the meeting of different people and cultures, and the mixtures that ensue. She is aware that this is a source of suffering for her husband, because of his "invisible mother. Possibly half-caste" (15), and later, while watching Ella recite Kipling's poetry, the young girl's attitude reminds her of him. But Maydene reckons also the problematic nature of William's ministry. Since it involves, "to exorcise and replace", she accuses her husband of spirit-thievery: "'William, you are a spirit thief. You keep taking away these people's spirit" (18). In other words, she pinpoints religion as a form of institutionalized zombification that could be comparable to Obeah.

Actually, quite early in the novel there are hints that Maydene is aware of the existence of spirits, and that she can exchange with them. For example, on her way to Grove Town, she feels the presence of Miss Gatha and "[s]he loved her and felt that she was loved" (17). Even though it is too dark for her to see the woman, she is able to describe her appearance in details, which suggests that their encounter takes effect in another dimension as well, likely in the chronotope in which spirits operate. She also seems to be endowed with an unusual awareness of the presence of spirits, and wishes to meet them. This is shown by her motivations of going earlier to Grove Town than usual because she has heard of the presence of Ole African: "Maydene wanted to be on spot to feel and see the things with her own senses and that was why she was on her way to Grove Town" (37). When on this Friday evening, with Ella she sees the figure of the stiltman, she cries out: "'My God, this is really possible?' Mrs. Brassington said aloud. She had heard of Africa's stiltmen and Ole African had been all about her ears recently. Here he was before her very eyes". At this sight, Maydene's reaction is to kneel down

and to pray, asking the Lord for strength which comes out in the quiet utterance of the single word "Leave" (55). In fact, the narrator reveals later in the novel that she had recognized "the spirit of the forest with a clear invitation to a meeting", and through her prayer, signaled her joining in to the other Myalists: "'Yes I am in', she said to herself, I have something to give'" (69). Therefore, when she overhears talk about Obeah, she decides to offer her help to Mrs. Holness, revealing to her that, "[s]ome clergymen in the Christian church are taught how to handle spirits. My father was one, - and she continued more gently – Don't reject my offer. I'll help you to pray while you fight" (65). While at first both Mrs. Holness and Reverend Simpson are confused by Maydene's revelations and behaviour, Dan, the spiritual double of Reverend Simpson, finally accepts her into the Myalist community of Grove Town, once her status as a spirit has been validated both by Ole African and Miss Gatha. Indeed, in his smile Maydene reads the following message: "'Master Willie and Mother Hen have acknowledged you. Why should I resist'" (78). Dan's hope is that she will contribute in fighting the "bigger" spirit thief, which according to him is colonial power. Maydene's incarnation is described just prior to this scene in the novel. As she had sensed that something was happening on Miss Gatha's day, but was unaware "that spectating around drums and drummers, spirits and spiritualists was out" (77), she had headed to the tabernacle. It is her empathic exchange with Miss Gatha that leads the latter to recognize her as a spirit: "The spirits had finally acknowledged each other. White Hen became incarnate. Maydene was in seventh heaven" (Brodber, *Myal* 77). Hence, being accepted by Mother Hen, who is the spiritual double of Miss Gatha confirms that even the most African side of the Jamaican religious continuum, that is Kumina, is open to welcoming other forms of belief.

Nevertheless, it is the first resistance that Maydene encounters from the villagers in her attempts to bridge the gulf separating the different people of the district. The narrator is very skillful in conveying how gossip about the parson's wife circulates. For instance, s/he reports

that “[p]eople didn’t know what to make of her. If she were of their tribe, they would say that she was dealing in darkness or that like Miss Gatha, she could see. But the lady was lily white, English and high. Mrs. Reverend William Brassington. They dismissed her as strange” (13). In short, the villagers are perplexed by her behaviour which neither fits with the one of white people nor with her social status. Moreover, years of exploitation by the English have made black people very suspicious of the colonizer’s good intentions, and this is why Mrs. Holness is at first very distrustful when Maydene comes to inquire about Ella. Likewise, Reverend Simpson monitors Maydene’s comings and goings closely. While he is preparing his Sunday sermon, he gets possessed by his spirit and becomes angry at the thought of how much the colonizers keep taking away from his people. He tries to calm down, but the sight of Maydene brings back his anger: “[h]e was walking around the room and massaging his neck and shoulders trying to calm himself, … but Maydene Braddington brought his ire to the fore again. ‘Off on her stout pretentious little walk to Grove Town again.’ He had rightly guessed her destination and there was some pretence in her business. He wondered what was going on” (37). As aforesaid, it is only after that Mother Hen and Ole African have accepted her spiritual double, White Hen, that he gives in. According to Kortenaar (1990), “Maydene finds it difficult to meet the people of Grove Town across the lines drawn by race and speech until spirit communion allows her to transcend the body. The parties in the Kumina spirit caucus can transcend language and speech markers altogether: all speak the same enhanced jive eloquence” (Kortenaar 56). This quotation is relevant as it highlights that in the space where spirits meet, which is only populated by immaterial souls, stereotypical representations connected to bodies are left behind. Yet, I would nuance Kortenaar’s statement by arguing that what characterizes Maydene is that she is not afraid of what her husband calls “silly linguistic rituals”, and more generally of the “Other”, as underscored by the narrator: “She had got her foot into one Grove Town house and she was not going to miss the chance to breathe in its

essence, savour it, analyse it, and co-exist with it. Nothing that God made was going to frighten her" (Brodber, *Myal* 21). Her spiritual awareness gives her enough confidence to believe that barriers can be overcome, and that boundaries represent rather opportunities of encounters.

In her ambition to change her husband's relationship to the villagers, Maydene needs to convince him that she has joined the team of Myalists. But when she tells him about her encounter with the necromancer, and later of her experience at the Kumina tabernacle, he first thinks "his wife is having an early menopause" (88). However, although he remains skeptical about the Myalists, he recognizes the fact that "[e]vil spirits do inhabit people and can be cast out", and has to ascertain that Maydene's praying works, as stated by the narrator: "most of [her clientele] did not even know they were her clients but it worked" (91). Thus, with time, and especially after having been included in Ella's healing process, the parson becomes aware of institutional spirit-thievery as well, as shown by his questioning of the meaning of zombification and his encouragements to Ella's attempts to counter it. Besides, Mr Dan, the spiritual double of Reverend Simpson acknowledges the essential contribution of White Hen in helping them to fight the spirit-thieves in Whitehall at the end of the novel. Thus, the main English character in *Myal* is depicted as a source of cohesion rather than of division.

Tiffin (1990) believes that *Myal*'s implied readership is not only a Jamaican one, as through the character of Maydene Brassington and her spiritual double White Hen, another audience is implicitly addressed by the text: "[t]his is the English 'audience'–publisher, reviewer, critic, tourist, whose historical and textual past is bound up with the Jamaican… Brodber seems to suggest a possible audience reading position for the former imperialists which is not of absolute exclusion" (Tiffin 33). Maydene's strive to overcome barriers that separate different ethnic and religious communities, and her will in having William reconnect to his past and come to peace with his "in-betweenness", is a good illustration of Tiffin's statement as it shows that even the English can bring valuable contributions to the Caribbean.

The welcoming of Maydene's spiritual double, White Hen, can be read as a sign that racial and cultural barriers can be overcome, and that the overstepping of traditional binaries opens up to syncretism. Booth uses the concept of "privilege" to discuss the extent to which a narrator has access to other characters' thoughts and feelings, and when considering the notion of "inside view" he observes "that any sustained inside view …temporally turns the character whose mind is shown into a narrator" (Booth 163–64). According to this principle, and since *Myal* is a highly polyphonic text, Maydene could therefore be viewed as a reliable narrator, particularly along the ethical axis, as she is very much in line with the norms of the work.

Conclusion

As post-colonial texts, *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Myal* bring to the forefront the colonial context of the Caribbean, and the issues engendered by imperialism, which contrast with English canonical novels such as *Jane Eyre* in which these territories are only alluded to. I have argued that the novels' respective settings have a metonymic function in that they refer to crucial timepoints and places in Jamaican history. By deciding to begin Antoinette's story just after the passing of the Emancipation Act, Rhys sets her protagonist in a conflictual situation: while the West Indies remain the place she feels belonging to, it also becomes the one where white Creoles are despised and rejected. Similarly, Brodber's choice of relating a story that is happening near Morant Bay points back to the uprising that ended up in bloodshed in 1865. Besides, the district of St Thomas is, according to Alleyne, known to be the location of Kumina and Convince, and is situated in a part where there is an important group of Maroons (Alleyne 92). Thus, Reverend Brassington is facing an almost impossible challenge in trying to "exorcise and replace" people's beliefs since he is confronted to Afro-Creole religions that have been strongly associated with resistance to the colonialist ideology, as previously pointed out by Alleyne and Burton. In this environment, it is particularly "tough" for Ella to grow up as her multiethnic origins remind people of the power imbalance between white men and black women, and more generally between the colonizer and the colonized.

I have also argued that both authors have chosen to juxtapose the theme of spirit-thievery with the practice of Obeah in their respective novels. While Rhys only alludes to institutional sources of zombification but does not name them, Brodber identifies them explicitly as coming from the church and the educational system. There are also examples of individual exercises of power in each book: the unnamed husband's denial of Antoinette's subjectivity because she is a Creole in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Selwyn's request that Ella should lie on her origins, and Mass Levi's resort to Obeah in order to take possession of Anita's spirit

in *Myal*. The two first examples can be extrapolated to a higher level in which it is the culture of the colonizer that imposes itself on the one(s) of the colonized people, and all three are instances of gender domination. When being set side-to-side, however, it becomes obvious that spirit-thievery happening through institutional channels are far more deleterious than spirit possession by Obeah magic. Indeed, while the latter occurs between the possessor and her/his victim, the former affects entire populations of different ethnical and cultural backgrounds. Yet, it is only in *Myal* that the issue of dezombification is addressed. As shown by the description of Ella's healing by Mass Cyrus and the other Myalists, this process involves the reconnection of the colonized people to their ancestral roots, and the need to correct wrongful representations of themselves that have been imposed on them by the educational system and the church.

Even though Rhys and Brodber both originate from the West Indies, they belong to distinct social and ethnical groups. Consequently, they do not write from the same perspective. Being a white Creole, Antoinette is portrayed as, on the one hand feeling closer to her black nurse's, and friend's culture, than to the one of her English stepfather or husband, but on the other hand as being conditioned to keep racist prejudice and obey social conventions. Hence, she finds herself in an unsolvable position, tangled in the "*Wide Sargasso Sea*" that separates her home island from the idealized image of England she has been exposed to. Even though she feels that she belongs in the West Indies, she is unable to follow Christophine's advice of leading an independent life, and in her last resort to resist alienation, it is eventually to Afro-Creole spirituality that she appeals by imagining her soul flying back to Coulibri. After the end of slavery, the white Creole seems therefore condemned to occupy an outsider position in the colonial society of Jamaica. The English, on the other hand, as embodied by the figure of Rochester in the novel, remains a foreigner to the West Indies: being convinced of the superiority of his culture, he is incapable of grasping the richness of the diverse creolized

Caribbean context resulting from the encounter between different cultures and ethnicities. Rhys succeeds in imparting a more accurate image of the Caribbean than Brontë's text, by portraying the complex relationships that plantation owners and their families had with their former slaves, and contrasting them with the ones of the English capitalists. *Wide Sargasso Sea* offers therefore an accurate portrayal of the diverse, sometimes overlapping, but fragmented nineteenth century Jamaican society described by Burton. In doing so, Rhys accomplishes in a way what Said judges to be crucial when analyzing many novels from the imperial period, that is a contrapuntal reading ("reading a text with an understanding of what is involved when an author shows" (Said 78)) of *Jane Eyre*.

Brodber places her own culture, that is the Afro-Creole one, at the centre of her novel in *Myal*, both in terms of language and religion. Ashcroft et al. stress the crucial role played by language in the process of reappropriation of voice by the colonized people: "the most distinctive feature of the Caribbean novel is the narrator who 'reports' in standard English, but moves along the continuum in the dialogues of the characters (Ashcroft et al. 71). My argument is that Brodber goes even a step further in this reappropriation of the voice. Indeed, she innovates by having the heterodiegetic omniscient narrator switch code and adjust to different varieties in free indirect discourse as well. Likewise, Afro-Creole religions are represented as being part of the culture of the black people, and as a way of working together for the well-being of the community. Brodber chooses to begin her novel by immediately immersing the implied reader into Afro-Creole culture, with the description of Ella's healing by Mass Cyrus. Likewise, Miss Gatha's gathering of the drummers, dancers at the tabernacle for the Kumina ceremony is depicted in great details. This scene is placed as a crucial moment in the story: it represents the point of convergence between Anita and Ella's subplots, and at the end of this scene emphasis is put on its religious syncretism as shown by the incarnation of Maydene into White Hen. Thus, *Creolization* is central in *Myal*, even though the concept is anachronical to

the novel's setting. Indeed, Creolization is a concept developed by Glissant who distinguishes it from "crossbreeding, because creolization adds something new to the components that participate in it". According to him, it is comparable to creole language in that "[a]s long as [it] continues to combine the forms of two (or more) linguistic traditions, the product of this synthesis is a new kind of expression, a supplement to the two (or more) original roots, or series of roots, from which this creole language was born" (Glissant 82–83). Likewise, Hall, while reflecting on the significance of cultural identity, acknowledges that "'cultural identity' [can from one position be defined] in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self'… which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common". Yet the scholar argues that it is necessary to take into account, "since history has intervened – 'what we have become'… as "the ruptures and discontinuities which constitute, precisely, the Caribbean's uniqueness, cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past" (Ashcroft et al., *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* 435).

Hence, Brodber's claim that her activism appears in her fiction, as shown by the following citation, encompasses the necessity to come to terms with the past in order to look ahead and define a better future for the West Indies. Emancipation involves the dismantling of notorious past representations of its people, to allow them to reconstruct a more positive image of themselves:

> *Myal* was my working of Best's notion that 'thought is action for us,' by which I took him to mean that there is a task for the intellectual: it is developing a philosophy, creed, myth, ideology of our own on which to build our social and spiritual life and above all to correct the ugly images of ourselves that the colonial experience has given us, wittingly or unwittingly, and which we have actually or otherwise absorbed. Myal's task was to urge intellectuals to see their purpose and to use their skill and their position to rewrite works offensive to us. (Brodber, 'Me and My Head-Hurting Fiction' 122)

Brodber encourages therefore her fellow writers to practice contrapuntal reading, like Rhys has done, and to write back by foregrounding the creolized society that the Caribbean has become.

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