

UNIVERSIDAD DE SALAMANCA

FACULTAD DE FILOLOGÍA

Departamento de Filología Inglesa



CREOLISATION AND CARIBBEANNESS: THE ASSERTION OF IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH CARIBBEAN FICTION

Zenaida Seguin Pedraill

2003

UNIVERSIDAD DE SALAMANCA
FACULTAD DE FILOLOGÍA

Departamento de Filología Inglesa

CREOLISATION AND CARIBBEANNESS: THE ASSERTION
OF IDENTITY
IN CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH CARIBBEAN FICTION

Vº Bº

LA DIRECTORA

Trabajo que para optar al Grado de
Salamanca, presenta **ZENAIDA**
SEGUIN PEDRAILL, dirigido por la Dra.
OLGA BARRIOS HERRERO

Salamanca, septiembre 2003

CONTENTS

Introduction	5
Chapter One	
Theoretical Approaches to Caribbeanness and Literature	17
Creolisation and Cultural Identity	20
Some Considerations on Caribbean English Creole	31
An Approach to the Short Fiction in the English Caribbean	41
Chapter Two	
The Liminal Caribbean Identity in “Summer Lightning”, by Olive Senior: A Reading Between the Lines	53
Chapter Three	
The Alienated Sociocultural Self: <i>Karl</i>, by Velma Pollard	72
Chapter Four	
Self-pride and the Expression of an Afro-Creole Identity in “A Brief Conversion”, by Earl Lovelace	91
Conclusion	108
Appendix	
A Brief Exchange of Ideas With the Authors	113
Works Cited	118

Introduction

Identity has become a major issue of debate in contemporary literary theory and cultural studies within postcolonialism¹. It has been approached by sociological and anthropological sciences within the context of multicultural communities, as well as from the standpoint of writers, critics, and artists living in multicultural and transculturated social contexts. The importance of the question of identity in cultural and social studies can be viewed as a consequence of the *internationalisation*² of cultures, a process that has been taking place after the major events that have marked the history of humanity—from the *rediscovery*³ of the New World, through the colonial experience, the two World Wars, the independence of countries under colonial rule, and to recent political and geographical reorganization of states. All these events have been accompanied by processes of migration, disintegration, transformation, and the formation of diasporic cultural communities worldwide. As a result of such transformations, the human being, whose life experience develops in *transforming* sociocultural contexts, may be frequently confronted with the dilemma of inhabiting two spaces, two cultures at a time. The tensions generated by this social and cultural dilemma are intensified when these two cultures share a history of antagonistic

¹ The term *postcolonialism* or *post-colonialism* has incited and still incites much theoretical and interdisciplinary debate. Several critics use it to “signify the political, linguistic and cultural experience of societies that were former European colonies” (Ashcroft et al 186), whereas others disagree with the *post* quality of the term, alleging that post-colonial societies have not undergone serious transformation to get rid of the very colonial status. Besides, the use of the hyphen is meant, sometimes, to indicate the historical period after colonial countries were granted independence. Although I agree with this polemical character of *postcolonialism*, I use the term to refer to these new literatures coming from ex European colonies, since it is already a widely acceptable term in cultural and linguistic studies. However, I deem necessary to add that, in my dissertation, I consciously rely on my personal experience as a Caribbean subject, in an attempt to avoid the homogenizing aspect of Eurocentric notions in the field of postcolonial studies.

² This *internationalisation* of cultures responds to the multiculturalism of today’s world. But the term is related to postcolonial critic Homi K. Bhabha’s theory of hybridity, in which he pillories the idea of the existence of pure cultures and traditions, and advocates for the hybridized or multicultural nature of contemporary societies, for an “*international culture, based . . . on the inscription and articulation of culture’s hybridity*” (38). This notion of hybridity in postcolonial theory alludes to the mixture of cultures and is, thus, similar to those of transculturation and creolisation; whereas the notion of multiculturalism generally alludes to the presence of several cultures not necessarily intermingled in a social context. These issues will be examined in Chapter One.

³ Here I mean that the Spanish *conquistador* Christopher Columbus actually rediscovered the New World, because America was at the time of the *discovery*—the fifteenth century— inhabited by indigenous peoples. They came to the region centuries before from the Asian continent, and thus became the real *conquistadores* of the land.

relationships to one another, i.e., the dominating stance of one upon the other (as is the case of postcolonial societies) or when domination still operates through a set of economic, cultural, and ideological mechanisms (what has been known as neocolonialism).

Certainly, the postcolonial, neocolonial state derives from a history of colonialism in which European countries or cultures exerted political and cultural domination upon countries/cultures from Africa, Asia, and America. This cultural domination in Third World countries during the colonial era continued to be exerted on postcolonial societies through other more subtle mechanisms of imperial domination and sociocultural perspectives inherited from their colonial history. Within this colonial and postcolonial context of cultural domination, the individual has been forced to appropriate the ways and values of the dominating, colonizing culture. Most of the times, such appropriation has taken place through the mimicry of European Western cultures. This mimic stance of the colonial and postcolonial subject might have been given consciously or not, but, as some critics assert, the mimicry of the European culture by colonized subjects has usually entailed some kind of subversion against the social and cultural order imposed by the colonizer⁴. Consequently, despite the dominating stance of the European Western culture, the colonized man or woman has tried to oppose the impulse of assimilating into the dominating culture by maintaining his/her own cultural heritage. The maintenance of one's cultural heritage has actually being the ground for a rebellious position that has aimed at asserting a cultural legacy marginalized by a dominating European Western discourse, which has been fundamental in the colonized individual's assertion of cultural identity.

My interest in the way the postcolonial subject asserts his/her identity is concerned with the negotiation he/she has to undertake in order to cope with the reality of his/her hybridized society. By negotiation I mean the reconciliation of and accommodation by

⁴ In postcolonial theory, mimicry is understood as the colonized subject's imitation of the colonizer's cultural values and customs. The mimicry of the colonized has been analyzed as an ambivalent phenomenon, because his/her imitation of the colonizer's culture may also entail a passive rejection or mockery of this culture. Therefore, the colonized will never be like the colonizer; and it is in this sense that some critics, such as Homi Bhabha and Bill Ashcroft, perceive the mimic colonized man as a flawed copy and a menacing identity to the colonial system: "This identity of the colonized subject means that the colonial culture is always potentially and strategically insurgent" (Ashcroft 141).

agreement to the different sociocultural elements provided by a hybridized or creolised social context. Certainly, postcolonial societies provide a social and cultural reality that forces the individual to develop his/her sociocultural experience while participating in different sociocultural discourses, and his/her personhood and cultural identity must be formed through the individual's multiple relation to these different sociocultural discourses or milieus. Generally, the relation of domination/subordination that has characterized the cultural interaction in colonial and postcolonial societies has determined the quality of the individual's relation to these various milieus shaping his/her social and cultural reality. However, recent cultural studies within postcolonialism reveal that the assertion of cultural identity may disavow the traditional disagreement between sociocultural milieus created by the colonial relation of domination/subordination. In these cases, the process of negotiating these different sociocultural discourses within postcolonial social contexts tends to be a necessary social and cultural experience.

My specific interest focus precisely on those postcolonial societies formed through a process of creolisation —understood as the intermingling of cultures— because here the individual is bound to go through a process of negotiation despite his/her affiliation with an original ethnic group. In this line, the Caribbean context is, in my personal opinion, the most suitable one, because in the formation of the different communities that conform this region several cultures —being the European and the African the main contributors— were brought into interaction in an entirely new stage (the Caribbean basin) which some scholars have purposely named “tabula rasa” (Dash 46), or “primal scene” (Hall 1997, 119). Since neither the colonizer nor the colonized were native to the land, the newness and foreignness of the place made them establish an internal⁵ and probably unconscious co-operation for the sake of survival. This situation of internal and unconscious co-operation provided a suitable framework on which creolisation would develop.

⁵ Internal in the sense of the inner-self because, externally, the boundaries between colonizer/master and colonized/slave were well fixed.

My analysis will focus specifically on the English Caribbean⁶, where the process of colonization offered some singularities, like the fact that the new societies emerging in this new space were preconceived on the basis of a socioeconomic system known as the Plantation System⁷. Imported by Europe to this New World, and directed as well by and from Europe, this system was established around the supremacy of one power, one class, one culture, and one race upon the others. White Europeans came to form the dominating/colonizing group, and black slaves and indentured servants⁸ the dominated/colonized ones. Such configuration of roles would fix the dynamics of the cultural interaction to take place in the area.

However, when describing the process of creolisation that gave birth to Caribbean societies, the Barbadian poet, critic and cultural historian Edward Kamau Brathwaite has referred to it as “a cultural action —material, psychological and spiritual— based upon the stimulus/response of individuals within the society to their environment and . . . to each other” (1971, 202). Creolisation, then, was a mutual process of cultural mixture out of which the mimic colonized man/woman emerged, providing a new element in the process of social and cultural development in Caribbean societies. Generally, those

⁶ Although *West Indies* has been a widely used term when referring to the Anglophone Caribbean, I prefer to use the term English or Anglophone Caribbean when referring to this region for several reasons. On the one hand, the term *West Indies* constitutes a misnomer, since the Caribbean is located in the American continent and not India, and bears an imperialistic and colonial connotation. On the other hand, since this is a postcolonial era and these Anglophone islands are presently inserted within the political and socioeconomic panorama of the region —the Caribbean and/or Latin America— the term *West Indies* comes to be out-of-date and somehow controversial. The English Caribbean is formed by two sociopolitical entities (countries) located in continental mainland: Belize, in Central America, and Guyana, in South America; and by sociopolitical entities located in the Caribbean Sea: Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, St. Lucia, Barbados, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Granada, and Trinidad and Tobago.

⁷ An economic system originally conceived for the exploitation of the land and its resources in the places where it was established. In the English Caribbean, the economic activity centered on the cultivation of tobacco, and later, sugar and cocoa. This system required a large number of labor force supplied mainly by the slaves brought from Africa. But *Plantation* came also to signify the type of society that developed from such practice. One of its early characteristics was absenteeism: the European men who owned the plantations remained in Europe while an attorney or administrator represented them in the colonial territories.

⁸ Indentured servants were an essential component in the functioning and maintenance of the Plantation System. They were brought to the Caribbean in an attempt to find an alternative labor source when the emancipated slaves refused to continue working for their ex masters. From 1838 to the first decades of the twentieth century thousands of indentured servants were imported to the region. Although their provenance is diverse —including the African and European continents— the majority of them were East Indian, Chinese, and Javanese (Casimir 83). The largest numbers went to those territories with free land for cultivation: Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Jamaica.

colonized subjects in closer interaction with the colonizer who mimicked the colonizer's culture came to form a Caribbean middle class, whereas those colonized subjects that remained closer to their African or Asian cultural legacy came to form the lower classes. As a matter of fact, in the context of Caribbean identities, the factor of social class has been an essential signifier of sociocultural identification. Therefore, the formation of Caribbean identities has not only entailed the interaction of cultural elements from the several cultures that have formed these societies, but also the interaction of signifiers or categories that necessarily converge —such as class, race, color (color of the skin), and gender. However, it is usually class that predetermines the other categories.

The history of the region under study has provided a social configuration in which, generally, those in the higher position were white; those in the lower position were mainly black or belonged to other ethnic groups (Indian, Chinese, etc.); and the middle class was mixed race⁹. Moreover, several Caribbean scholars have asserted the convergence of class, race, and color categories in the formation of Caribbean identities. In this sense, Jean Casimir has analyzed the sociopolitical situation of the region, asserting that the European powers imposed the social categories, norms and institutions that formed the matrix of Caribbean societies to preserve colonial interests¹⁰. The principal groups —planters/masters and slaves— became the landowners and the peasants of the post-emancipation period, respectively; while a middle class emerged and gradually moved toward the upper class. For the oppressed and dominated ones to improve their social status, it was necessary to adopt Western social and cultural values. This kind of mimicry entailed the appraisal of a European culture, and the rejection of the other ethnic cultures that informed the local sociocultural context as well. Moreover, the movement from rural to urban spaces often meant a shifting to a better class position, and, thus, the breach between the various sectors of society was expanded. In sum, the division between social groups in the English Caribbean was determined by

⁹ This was particularly true of Jamaican society, where interracial relations between whites and blacks caused the upsurge of a mixed raced or mulatto population; the mulatto, due to his/her upwardly social aspirations, became eventually, a complex middle class.

¹⁰ Jean Casimir has been Ambassador of Haiti to the United States, and has worked in projects of the Organization of the United Nations (ONU), like the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPALC). His book *La invención del Caribe* renders a comprehensive analysis on Caribbean societies.

England's purpose of conceiving the region and the colonies as a factory of raw material and other means to complement its economy, rather than as economical and political entities based on a societal system. These social groups were given the task of keeping the *Machine* —to use Antonio Benítez Rojo's term— functioning, thus securing the upper class' interests¹¹.

On the other hand, white colonizers were reluctant to see and accept their black slaves as social beings; in so doing, they were enacting the division between the two groups not only on the basis of class but also on that of race, and the ideal of cohesion was too remote. In the English Caribbean, the colonizer's discriminatory feelings have been interpreted as one of the main obstacles for the construction of nations with actual economic and political self-determination. Had they conceived winning political autonomy through the joint action of whites and blacks, masters and slaves —as in the case of Cuban struggle for independence— the Anglophone islands would have evolved into modern societies with a solid political awareness to face the challenges of an uncertain future. Colonial power has for long remained the arbiter in both, external and internal affairs. Such hindrance has been exposed by Brathwaite who has taken the sociocultural experience of Jamaica as a case-example. Brathwaite perceives the negative consequences of the racial conflict on the sociocultural domain, coming directly onto the political domain:

The failure of Jamaican society was that it did not recognize these elements of its own creativity. Blinded by the need to justify slavery, white Jamaicans refused to recognize their black labourers as human beings, thus cutting themselves from the one demographic alliance that might have contributed to the island's economic and (possibly) political independence. What the white Jamaican elite did not, could not, dare accept, was that true autonomy for them could only mean true autonomy for all; that the more unrestricted the creolization, the greater would have been the freedom (1971, 204).

Therefore, the unprejudiced interaction between white and black races in the Caribbean would surely have paid off political dividends, like the outcoming of free, self-confident

¹¹ Cuban writer and critic Antonio Benítez Rojo has furthered the view of the Caribbean as a complex, multifarious scenario, on which several machines or socioeconomic systems were tried to suit Western and imperialistic purposes. He considers the Plantation as the very Caribbean machine, that produced the Caribbean, and later influenced transformations all over the world. He has also claimed that such machine with all its sub-products still exists, and that, like the Caribbean as a sociocultural entity, repeats itself continuously. For further information see Antonio Benítez Rojo's "The Repeating Island".

nations. However, the conflicting relations between cultures, races, and social groups handicapped the sociocultural, political and economic development of Caribbean societies¹².

The year 1962 marked the beginning of the decolonization process in the region with the independence granted to Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. These were the first colonies to emerge as independent nations and members of the British Commonwealth. But the long desired autonomy did not mean complete economical and political self-determination, since the new independent societies emerged within the framing of economic and administrative structures derived from colonial patterns. Consequently, the social relations and cultural action to be developed in these new societies were predicated on the social structures of a postcolonial time. In the context of class and race, the less privileged sectors in the English Caribbean would realize that the main structure of the conflict between upper and lower classes, between whites and blacks — “the combatants, the ideological content, and discourse”— remained the same, and a positive solution was not yet envisaged (Holt xxv).

My emphasis on the nature of class and race categories and how they developed in the English Caribbean sociocultural context is due, on the one hand, to the fact that they offer important signifiers in the process of asserting cultural identity; and, on the other hand, to the fact that the irreconciliation between races and sociocultural groups in the Caribbean has been manifest in the process through which the Caribbean individual asserts his/her identity, as it will be demonstrated in my analysis of three literary works that belong to the Afro-Caribbean context: “Summer Lightning”, by the Jamaica-born writer Olive Senior; *Karl*, by Jamaican writer Velma Pollard; and “A Brief Conversion”, by the Trinidad and Tobago much appraised writer Earl Lovelace. Two of them are short stories, while *Karl* is a novella. The process through which the main characters of these texts construct an identity reveals differences in its fulfillment. On the one hand, the protagonist in Olive Senior’s short story, the boy (as he is called), enacts his process of asserting identity from an in-between position in relation to different sociocultural discourses (two of them based on the European cultural legacy

¹² The particular case of Jamaican society may well reproduce, with some different specifics, the evolution of other societies in the English Caribbean.

and another based on the African cultural legacy). On the other hand, Karl, in Pollard's story, is not capable of taking the process of cultural negotiation necessary to forge his Caribbean identity to satisfactory ends. He unconsciously rejects his Afro-Caribbean rural sociocultural background and cannot effectuate, thus, the negotiation of the two sociocultural milieus grounding his life experience and personhood, which leads him to suffer a mental breakdown. Finally, Travey, the protagonist in Lovelace's short story, is to grapple consciously with the creolised nature of his sociocultural reality, although his assertion of his rural Afro-Caribbean community's sociocultural context proves to be the cornerstone of his process.

There have been specific reasons for choosing the authors under study. In the cases of Pollard and Lovelace, both are based in their Caribbean communities, which means that they have been and presently are participants in the social and cultural transformations that have been taking place in their societies. Since they have remained in the Caribbean, their perspective toward their societies would surely provide a valid subjective standpoint with regard to the assertion of identity. Senior, on the other hand, lives in Toronto, Canada, but her literary and critical works are grounded on the Caribbean, portraying and analyzing Caribbean (Jamaican) reality from a detached and perhaps more critical and objective perspective. Furthermore, choosing Senior as an expatriate Caribbean writer has served the purpose of analyzing the vision of the expatriate writer with regard to the assertion of Caribbean identity¹³. Therefore, the

¹³ Here it is important to say that, even though many of the works written by expatriate postcolonial writers tend to move toward a multicultural context (afforded by the metropolitan centers where they live), a considerable number of them still maintain thematic links with their native backgrounds. Caribbean expatriate writers such as the Trinidad-born V. S. Naipaul and the Guyana-born Jan Carew follow a more cosmopolitan approach in their works. But others, like the St. Lucia-born Derek Walcott who works and divides his time between Boston and Trinidad pursue the connection to the native region not only on the thematic, but on the personal terrain as well. In the same line, Caribbean women writers credit their connection to their native land in their works, which stands for a source of nourishment for their literary works and their lives. Something similar can be said of the feelings of many Afro-Caribbean writers and artists toward Africa, which they see as a metaphorical motherland. These writers' identification with their *motherland* may be given even unconsciously in their literary and personal cosmos. They look toward the native land and its past in search of the roots upon which to ground their sense of being. Furthermore, the view of the expatriate writer can prove to be an alternative and useful way to examine the sociocultural reality of the native country. The importance of this exile perspective is acknowledged by Karl in Velma Pollard's story: "I had to leave my land, Masters, to see my land" (*Karl*, 138), —the vision of a Caribbean-based intellectual crediting a positive side of the migrant experience. In this regard, postcolonial scholars, such as Elleke Boehmer, have looked critically at the literature of expatriate writers. Boehmer praises the creativity and "cultural openness" of migrant writing, and its increasing popularity in the West, but warns that the writer's relation to his/her Third World background seems to have become "metaphorical", seen as an opportunistic, literary stance of an intellectual elite uncommitted to its original society. However, she characterizes the "generic" postcolonial writer as being

subjective vision (from within) of the Caribbean writer living in the Caribbean and the objective vision (from outside) of the expatriate writer may complement each other when analyzing the issue of Caribbean identity.

In addition, my choice of literary works from Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago is due to the fact that these are the two English Caribbean countries that have most contributed to the development of English Caribbean literature. Moreover, the reason for choosing male and female writers is that of comparing and contrasting male and female perspectives in relation to the issue of asserting identity. Thus, Lovelace, for instance, seems to regard the assertion of identity and selfhood in close relation to the assertion of maleness or self-pride in male characters, since his protagonists are generally male. In contrast, Senior and Pollard reveal a universal treatment of the same issue usually tackling the sociocultural problems of their Jamaican society without emphasizing the issue of gender, which is revealed in the fact that the main characters in their works under analysis here are male. However, on a general context, both male and female Caribbean writers reveal in their works their concern with the issue of asserting identity as well as with the social, political, and cultural experience in the Caribbean.

Furthermore, the literary short fiction texts chosen show different forms of creative narrative styles, which suggests the idea that Caribbean fiction is developed by writers who have lived a multifaceted sociocultural experience provided by the creolised context of their societies. The difference in their narrative styles is revealed, for example, in the way in which the characters' voice/discourse is given expression within the narration, and in their language usage as a narrative strategy.

For the analysis of the texts, I have relied especially on the theoretical postulates by Jamaica-born cultural critic Stuart Hall, concerning the production of cultural identity in a diasporic and creolised context, which view Caribbean identity as a constant process of transformation and as a non-static category, something that "is" and that is still "becoming". For him, the Caribbean space is a place of cultural negotiation per se, where the African, the European, and the other cultures were and still are negotiated

"ex colonial by birth", and "*Third World* in cultural interest", adding that "he or she works within the precincts of the Western metropolis while at the same time retaining thematic and/or political connections with a native background" (232-43).

(1990, 110-21). This is a perspective that confirms the synergistic quality of the Caribbean social context.

On the other hand, the assertion of identity in a creolised colonial and postcolonial society may imply conflicting states within the individual. The dual character of the sociocultural context in which the individual develops his/her social experience may reflect internally a divergence between his/her self and his/her other, the other that he/she comes to be at some time and place. This dichotomy of self and other within the individual is especially ratified in the character of Karl. Therefore, I have deemed necessary to rely on the theories by Homi Bhabha and Martinican scholar and psychiatrist Frantz Fanon on the quality of the (post)colonial subject's *Otherness*. Bhabha's theory is relevant to understand the (post)colonial subject's Otherness inscribed in an ambivalent, in-between space of cultural negotiation pertinent to all colonial, diasporic condition; and to explain how this space functions in the development of identity in creolised societies. However, when studying Caribbean societies, it is equally necessary to pay attention to political, ideological, and cultural specifics that ground Caribbean subjectivities¹⁴. Therefore, the views of Caribbean scholars like Fanon would prove to be a valuable, objective theoretical source. Fanon's theoretical postulates center on the quality of Otherness in the (post)colonial Afro-Caribbean subject, and he interprets it as the cause of a colonial cultural imposition that may affect the psychic state of the individual—all of which has been taken into account when analyzing the three literary works of my study.

When analyzing the process of creolisation pertinent to the formation of Caribbean societies, I have particularly relied on Brathwaite's theoretical postulates mentioned earlier. Moreover, my study of the English Caribbean Creole is supported by the theoretical analysis of several linguists, being those made by Le Page and Lise Winer the most relevant ones, as well as Pollard's study on the speech of Rastafarians. Finally, I have grounded my approach to short fiction on Caribbean critic Kenneth Ramchand's examination on this genre, and on that of Spanish scholar Ana Bringas López on

¹⁴ Critic Ania Loomba, when discussing hybridity in postcolonial theory, argues that dense contextualizations are necessary to avoid homogenization, i.e., "to discriminate between the diverse modalities of hybridity". She contends Bhabha's notions of a universal, ambivalent, and hybrid colonial subject, and rightly advocates for relating "the psychic splits engendered by colonial rule to specific histories and locations" (173-83).

contemporary fiction by Caribbean women writers. Here it is important to underscore that the short fiction genre has received sparse literary analysis as an independent field of study in English Caribbean literature. Consequently, while there is an important number of serious critical studies on short fiction written by women because of their narrative's tremendous input since the 1970s and 1980s, short fiction by men writers has received little critical attention—all of which ratifies the need to expand the critical studies on this literary genre.

For a better understanding of the process of asserting identity in these literary works, my study is essentially divided into a theoretical section and the individual analysis of the texts. First, in Chapter One I, offer a theoretical basis for the analysis of the texts, in which I propose a personal approach to *Caribbeanness*, creolisation, and the issue of identity in the Caribbean. My approach to identity serves to support the idea that, as these texts demonstrate, the assertion of identity is a constant process of transformation that is developed in different ways by Caribbean individuals. Chapters Two, Three and Four are dedicated to the analysis of each individual text. Here I examine the way in which the process of asserting identity is illustrated by the authors through the stories of their main characters and through the creation of these narrative texts. Consequently, I have analyzed the use of the Creole language and the writers' purpose of using Creole as a discursive/narrative strategy. Moreover, I analyze the way in which these writers appropriate the European and African cultural (narrative) traditions for the creation of their works, being the oral storytelling tradition the cultural element that has most influenced the narrative of these writers, and provides them with a distinctive oral quality. The influence of the storytelling tradition in these works will be examined through the writers' crediting of the presence of an audience—that resembles the audience of storytelling practice—and of a received oral tradition or narration, and through their use of narrative strategies proper of oral narration, among other elements. Finally, I also examine the different styles in which these texts are created which, as it was suggested previously, may reveal the multifaceted nature of these writers' creolised cultural identities.

In addition to the chapters dedicated to the analysis of the texts, I have included an appendix that shows an exchange of ideas with the writers about their works analyzed here conducted via email, and that has served to support and re-consider some of my

early views in relation to the nature of these authors' cultural identities and the way in which they are asserted in their texts. Finally, I offer my general conclusions on how these Caribbean writers have tackled the issue of asserting identity. By using the Caribbean short fiction as a model for studying the assertion of identity, I hope to contribute to a further understanding of this sociocultural region and its contemporary writing, especially short fiction, as well as contribute to the ever-growing field of study of postcolonial literatures and how they assert a literary aesthetic/identity.

Chapter One

Theoretical Approaches to Caribbeanness and Literature

When one thinks about the Caribbean as an entire social, cultural and geographical entity it is impossible to grasp an accurate and definite image of it, because the Caribbean is composed of disparate sociohistorical and sociocultural elements and signifiers. Geographically, the region extends itself beyond the archipelago to include mainland territories that were former English colonies, such as Belize (in Central America), and Guyana (in South America); and in cultural studies, for example, New Orleans and Miami (in North America) and R o de Janeiro (in Brazil) are also included within the Caribbean. Moreover, the Amerindian, European, African, and Asian cultures that inform Caribbean reality are not conceived as monolithic and homogeneous entities by themselves.

Firstly, the indigenous inhabitants of this region, the Arawaks and Caribs —the latter being the etymological ancestors of the region’s name— came both from the Guyanas; but they developed separately as ethnic communities comprising at the same time sub-communities, as is the case of the Tainos and Siboneyes in the Arawak Greater Antilles. These communities or social groups were established around specific cultural, religious and political lines of organization. While the Arawaks were seen as peaceful people, the Caribs were feared warriors and raiders of Arawak territories, conquering all the Lesser Antilles. It is possible that Caribs’ warlike and aggressive character, together with their anthropophagous behavior, contributed to the coinage of the term *cannibal* by Europeans to refer to these people. Secondly, the European *conquistadores* and settlers of the Caribbean came from different European communities: Spanish, Portuguese, English, Irish, Scottish, Dutch, French, and Jewish, among others. The European presence in the Caribbean stood for different sociocultural and linguistic systems that were brought into interaction as these islands experienced domination by diverse European powers at various times. Thirdly, the African slaves imported to the region belonged to several African communities distinguished by different sociocultural, religious, and linguistic systems. However, the diversity of elements forming the Caribbean sociocultural context appears to be more tangible when studying the linguistic features of Caribbean Creole languages. Scholars have attempted to trace a linguistic history of these syncretic languages, which have served to raise the status of

the Caribbean Creole languages as real linguistic systems, as well as they have helped to identify the stages and peculiarities of the sociohistorical processes that gave birth to these linguistic communities¹⁵.

In sum, the complexity and diversity of the process of cultural blending in the Caribbean constitute the most accurate validation of the theories of hybridity and transculturation within postcolonial studies. Therefore, it is the play of disparate cultural elements, of cultural continuations and discontinuations, of rupture and transformation, of amalgamation and re-creation, what lies at the core of any act of identification in the Caribbean, what can be called *Caribbeanness*. Because *Caribbeanness* implies and describes everything born in, shaped in, coming out of, and related to a transculturated and multifarious Caribbean, it is hardly impossible to find a precise definition of the term. I would rely on the term's quality of *openness* to signify, within *Caribbeanness*, everything that is created within the sociohistorical, sociopolitical, and sociocultural Caribbean universe. It is important to say *universe* and not *context* for the sake of reaching an all-embracing perception of the phenomenon, unrestricted to geographical and national dimensions. As we acknowledge and celebrate the presence of an African diaspora in European and New World societies, it is also time for us to accept and celebrate the idea of a Caribbean diaspora, with all the troubling implications this diasporic condition entails¹⁶. Then, I propose to hold an ample conception of all that the term *Caribbean* may imply

¹⁵ R. B. Le Page has been one of the first scholars to develop a study of English Caribbean Creole languages. In *Acts of Identity*, he and Tabouret-Keller stage the sociohistorical events that shaped the process of transculturation in the formation of these Creole languages. In their analysis, one can perceive the complexity and heterogeneity of the process of cultural blending. Although we know, for example, that the African presence in the Caribbean derived from different Sub-Saharan African sociocultural groups, these linguists suggest that the linguistic input of African languages was permeated by Portuguese words already transculturated, linguistically, due to the interaction between African slaves and Portuguese slave traders along the West African coast, which was pursued in the Caribbean through the slave trade developed by the Portuguese. This example serves to pillory any idea that credits the formation of Caribbean creolised societies grounded on homogeneous cultural bases.

¹⁶ In his article "Diasporas and Multiculturalism", Victor J. Ramraj refers to expatriate Caribbean writers such as Caryl Phillips, Dione Brand, M. Nourbese Philip, Fred D'Aguiar, among others, as double diasporans, i.e., they share a first diasporic consciousness as Caribbean subjects with respect to Africa or India, and a second diasporic consciousness in their host societies as Caribbean subjects. Then, they are Afro-Caribbean and Indo-Caribbean expatriate writers living in a second/double diaspora (221-6).

whenever the issue of identity is broached, which will enable us to trace Caribbeanness in those Caribbean communities established in the United States, Canada, and European countries throughout the twentieth century. Moreover, holding this conception of Caribbeanness is relevant to every purpose of analyzing identity in the literary works of Caribbean expatriate writers, as most of them credit—in life and work—their Caribbean-based identities.

It is within the universe of Caribbeanness that I intend to analyze the concept of creolisation according to the theoretical assumptions of several scholars on the study of cultural syncretism in the region. Understanding the dynamics of creolisation is fundamental for any cultural analysis in the Caribbean. In the literary works I analyze this creolised nature of the Caribbean is present in the theme that pivots around the articulation of identity and in the form—the language and the narrative mode with which they are created. Moreover, I will provide a theoretical insight into the issue of identity, favoring Stuart Hall's characterization of the process of identity articulation; his approach to the issue of identity is one of the most accurate ever made. Hall's theories about the process of identity articulation are manifest in the experiences of the protagonists of the literary work under analysis here.

Furthermore, I will offer an insight into the linguistic manifestations in the English Caribbean through the English Creole. The use of English Creole by Olive Senior, Velma Pollard and Earl Lovelace reveal the importance of Creole not only as the language spoken by the majority of the population in the English Caribbean, but also as the linguistic medium that enables the writer to assert cultural identity and to contribute to the formation of a Caribbean literary aesthetic. Finally, my approach to the short fiction genre will assist the analysis of these three stories in how they reveal and assert a Caribbean aesthetic; besides, the analysis itself will contribute, I hope, to the development of critical theoretical approaches to Caribbean short fiction, a genre that has not yet been thoroughly defined.

Creolisation and Cultural Identity

Several terms have been coined to refer to the process of cultural blending in postcolonial and cultural studies: hybridity or hybridisation, transculturation, syncretism, *mestizaje*, creolisation, and synergy. They all refer to this process and slightly differ from each other. A serious critical approach to these terms has been made by Bill Aschroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin in *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. Although the conceptualization of these terms by ethnologists and cultural studies scholars is not utterly fixed, Aschroft and his colleagues agree on *creolisation* as the term that specifically characterizes the cultural blending in the Caribbean. Creolisation stems from *Creole* that derives from the Spanish *criollo*, a word used to describe those of European descent born in New World colonies. Eventually *criollo/Creole* came to designate someone born in the colonies, regardless of race and class, as well as some new cultural and linguistic forms created from the juxtaposition of cultures in these territories (Dash 1996, 46).

Perhaps, the most accurate description of the process of creolisation in the Caribbean has been made by Edward K. Brathwaite. He has described creolisation as the interaction of four main cultural presences: Amerindian, European, African, and Asian, in the New World, establishing two kinds of creolisation:

a *mestizo-creolization*: the inter-culturation of Amerindian and European (mainly Iberian) and located primarily in Central and South America, and a *mulatto-creolization*: the inter-culturation of Negro-African and European (mainly Western European) and located primarily in the West Indies and the slaves areas of the North American continent (1970, 344).

Brathwaite has also noted the main differences between these two kinds of creolisation. In the *mestizo-creolisation* developed in Central and South America the European cultural element was the only one immigrant to the area; here there was an established aboriginal culture that had to be colonized mainly by force. However, in the *mulatto-creolisation* developed in the Caribbean the two main cultural elements in the process of interculturation —African and European— were immigrant to the area, (the indigenous inhabitants of the Caribbean had been almost practically exterminated), which contributed to establish the imprint of the colonizing European culture on the environment and the cultural orientation of the area (1970, 344). Brathwaite describes

the *mulatto-creolisation* in the Caribbean as the first stage in the process of cultural blending, in which Europe and Africa provided the main cultural presences that shaped the culture of the English Caribbean. However, he is aware of the participation of the other cultural presences in the cultural interaction produced in this area. Then, his definition of *mulatto-creolisation* may be re-categorized attending to the complexity and heterogeneity of creolisation in the English Caribbean.

The process of creolisation that gave birth to Caribbean societies was marked by the presence of dominant European cultural groups and subordinated cultural groups from America, Africa and Asia. But the fact that this cultural interaction was effected in an alien space —the Caribbean— permitted the development of the process on primarily equal terms, i.e., the European colonizers and the colonized people from Africa and Asia had to adapt themselves to a new sociogeographical space. In this line, Brathwaite has defined creolisation as a mutual intercultural action developed in a new space that had to be possessed also culturally. Taking the Jamaican sociocultural context as the case-example for his analysis of creolisation, Brathwaite describes this process as a cultural action that began with the “culturation” (or adaptation) of whites and blacks to the new Caribbean environment. Then, because of the superiority imposed by the Western world upon African cultures in the context of slavery, African forms were acculturated to Western norms, and at the same time, “a significant interculturalisation” was established between the African and the European (qtd. in Aschroft 59). Moreover, Brathwaite affirms that this domination/subordination relation between the European and African cultures did not hinder cultural blending from being a “two-way process” in which both cultures were creolised (1971, 203).

Accordingly, African slaves were apparently deculturated by what Brathwaite names processes of “seasoning” (initiation into the Plantation world mainly through slave labor) and “socialisation” (interaction within the social world of the Plantation). He describes the creolisation of the black slaves under the domination of the European colonizers as follows:

For the docile there was . . . the persuasion of the whip and the fear of punishment; for the venal there was the bribe of gift or compliment or the offering of a better position, and for the curious and self-seeking, the imitation of the master. This imitation went on, naturally, most easily among those in closest and most intimate contact with Europeans, among, that is, domestic

slaves, female slaves with white lovers, slaves in contact with missionaries or traders or sailors, skilled slaves anxious to deploy their skills, and above all, among urban slaves in contact with the “wider” life . . . (1971, 203).

As an Afro-Caribbean scholar, Brathwaite regrets that the black slave’s creolisation causes the emergence of mimic-men seeking to identify with the European cultural tradition; but he proceeds to suggest that this imitation performed by those in intimate contact with Europeans equally favored the white master’s establishment of the process of creolisation. This intimate contact between African slaves and Europeans forced the latter to partake of the cultural and social universe of the former, and contributed, then, to the socialization of the masters/colonizers in the new sociocultural context provided by the Plantation society.

On the other hand, this cultural interaction was produced, as I said before, in a context of domination/subordination relationship. It is reasonable, then, to think that in societies where there was a European political, economic, and cultural domination the European colonizing culture dictated the guidelines in the process of creolisation. However, what we see in reality is that in contemporary Caribbean cultures usually the African element has been the predominant one. The reasons for this are to be found in the various strategies of resistance developed by the subordinated culture(s)¹⁷. The resistance of these subordinated culture(s) —though mainly passively performed— was to affect the pace of creolisation definitely. According to Michael Dash in his analysis on the concept of creolisation, the resistance developed by the oppressed culture in the Caribbean played an important role in the dynamics of creolisation:

the oppressed and exploited were not merely the passive victims of an oppressive system but rather, through a pattern of apparent consent, opposition and overt resistance, managed to create unprecedented cultural transformations from a series of dialectical relations that united oppressor and oppressed (1996, 46-7).

Therefore, the resistance of subordinated cultures to European domination in the Caribbean functioned at different levels. At one level is the very process of creolisation, facilitating cultural interchange and transformation through an apparent subordination. At the other level is the cultural assertion of their denigrated cultural traditions within

¹⁷ The resistance maintained by the subordinated cultures or sociocultural/ethnic groups in the Caribbean is explained in the opposition to European colonial cultural domination, to postcolonial sociocultural malformations derived from colonialism, and to the hegemony of European/Western cultural discourse.

the context of creolisation provided by the new Caribbean sociocultural context. Thus, the resistance maintained by these subordinated cultures was essential for the process of creolisation because it ensured their positive input of these other subordinated cultures in the formation of Caribbean societies; otherwise those cultural traditions would have fallen into oblivion.

Within the Afro-Caribbean context, the cultural resistance of black slaves and their descendants to Western domination can be traced in regard to various issues. Firstly, Afro-Caribbean religions are perhaps the most notable example because the African religious cults and deities have retained their African essence and suffered little transculturation —mainly determined by the newness and difference of the Caribbean sociogeographical context. Besides, it is in the religious sphere where most African or African-like words have been preserved through the songs that accompanied the rituals and dances performed to invoke those deities. Many of these dances and their respective leading figures have been incorporated to popular dances and are performed nowadays in Caribbean Carnivals and festivals¹⁸. Secondly, the maintenance and cultivation of the African oral tradition through the folk tale, songs, riddles and proverbs in the Caribbean which has contributed significantly to the development of Creole languages and the tradition of short fiction as we will see later. Thirdly, the survival of African social values and mores, such as the extended family (a form of kin grouping that, contrary to the Western pattern of nuclear family, includes relatives other than parents within the family unit), the system of exchange labor, and the marital union without benefit of the church (Ramchand 1983, 118-21)¹⁹.

The survival of these African cultural forms in the Afro-Caribbean sociocultural context derives from the resistance of black slaves and their descendants to be acculturated to

¹⁸ Trinidadian scholar Pearl E. Springer has affirmed that the masquerade-playing tradition in Trinidadian carnival has close links to African dances and to traditional African religion *Orisa*. She also claims that the stickfighting tradition in Trinidad derives from African martial arts, in which the deities are invoked by warriors or stickfighters as protective spirits. For further information see P. E. Springer's "Carnival: Identity, Ethnicity, and Spirituality".

¹⁹ For example, in the Afro-Caribbean community depicted by Lovelace in *A Brief Conversion and Other Stories* this kind of marital union and the exchange labor are traditional social practices of this community, that is why the protagonist/narrator of this collection of stories feels uneasy when his parents, unlike his friend's parents, decide to get married in the local church. Certainly, the Afro-Caribbean community depicted by Lovelace in this work reveals the stronger sense of Afro-Creole identification when compared to the Afro-Caribbean communities depicted by Senior and Pollard in the works analyzed in my study.

European cultural forms; it demonstrates that the process of creolisation in the Caribbean was not homogeneous, for each community and each region negotiated their transculturation process in different ways. Therefore, for instance, the case of Jamaica shows that black slaves largely outnumbered their white masters, whereas in Barbados the figures of black and white inhabitants were balanced; thus, the African cultural influence in the sociocultural development of Jamaica was certainly stronger than in that of Barbados.

The differences in the transculturation process within the Caribbean may be also explained in a context of social relations through what Velma Pollard has called “Afro-creole” and “Anglo-creole socialisations” (1997, 93). Pollard uses these terms to describe the social life the Afro-Caribbean individual experiences in his/her upbringing. According to Pollard, the Afro-Creole socialization implies that the individual has grown up in a sociocultural context strongly influenced by the African cultural traditions, while the Anglo-Creole or Euro-Creole socialization implies that the individual’s upbringing has been strongly influenced by European culture—it usually occurs through school education, since it was the most effective vehicle for inculcating the European culture in colonial and postcolonial subjects. In my analysis I will also use the terms Afro-Creole and Euro-Creole to refer to the sociocultural contexts where the influence of the African and the European cultures, respectively, has been more powerful. Furthermore, the construction of identity of an Afro-Caribbean individual often implies the convergence of the Afro-Creole and Euro-Creole social experiences because the individual develops social interactions in both the Afro-Creole and the Euro-Creole sociocultural contexts.

In this line, and as shown in the three stories analyzed here, the protagonists’ creolised identities are formed, initially, in an Afro-Creole sociocultural context, and subsequently and forcefully re-defined through their social interactions in a Euro-Creole sociocultural context. This Euro-Creole sociocultural context is represented by a rural middle class household in “Summer Lightning”, by school education and the urban middle class context of Kingston in *Karl*, and by the social norms of school education, mainly, in “A Brief Conversion”. The protagonists of these stories must negotiate the social and cultural elements from the Afro-Creole and the Euro-Creole sociocultural contexts in order to construct their cultural identities, which are “continually examined

and re- defined” in terms of the different cultural elements provided by the creolised social context in which they are constructed (Dash 1996, 47), as well as by the kind of social interactions developed by these individuals. The results of each individual’s negotiation are manifold and unpredictable; and the process of negotiation is usually difficult and sometimes traumatic, as the story of Karl, narrated by Pollard, demonstrates. Therefore, the construction of a Caribbean identity must necessarily attend to the peculiarities of the process of creolisation that gave birth to Caribbean societies. That is why any analysis on the articulation of identity in the Caribbean should be based on the cultural context of creolisation, taking into account the heterogeneous nature of this process.

Identity in the Caribbean is, then, as complex and protean a question as it is the process of creolisation that has led to the formation of Caribbean cultures. For the Caribbean subject, the problem of asserting selfhood and identity lies on how to accept, juxtapose and reconcile the different cultural elements forming his/her identity. In this sense, Caribbean scholars, such as Elaine S. Fido, have remarked that Caribbean writers tend to convey the complexity of this question in their works because they themselves have to live a multifaceted experience provided by their creolised societies: “Caribbean identity is not just a matter of ethnicity, or race, or gender, or class, or nationality or linguistic register, but of their shifting interactions” (1995, 100). Usually, the most positive approaches to the question of the articulation of Caribbean cultural identities reveal an impartial perspective toward the manifestation and the dynamics of this process. It is in this objective line that Stuart Hall offers a critical insight into Caribbean identity. Hall has addressed identity as a construction or production that is never completed, that undergoes constant transformation (1997, 112). Hall’s article “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” has been, in my personal opinion, a meaningful contribution to the understanding of the dynamics of identity as a process. This is why I will mainly focus on his article when discussing identity in Caribbean literature.

Hall has identified two ways of thinking about cultural identity in the Caribbean. His first definition of cultural identity implies the presence of a collective cultural entity or community with which the individual identifies. He understands cultural identity

in terms of one shared culture, a sort of collective *one true self*, hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed selves, which people

with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Within the terms of this definition, our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as *one people*, with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history (1997, 110-11).

In this definition, Hall establishes a link between the individual and a sociocultural tradition or collective *one true self* that provides him/her with sociocultural *frames of reference and meaning*. This collective *one true self* becomes the community or sociocultural group, and the frames of reference that it provides are given within the cultural values, ethnicity, history, and traditions found at the base of any community's articulation of identity. Within the Afro-Caribbean experience, these frames of reference come from Africa as a sociocultural entity relocated in the Caribbean through slavery, since the African cultural tradition has been the cornerstone in the assertion of an Afro-Caribbean universe. Moreover, as Hall asserts, the recognition of the long-marginalized African tradition in the New World was the cornerstone of the movement of Négritude promoted in the Francophone Caribbean by intellectuals like Aimé Césaire (Martinique) and León Damas (French Guyana), in the 1930s. For these Afro-Caribbean intellectuals, the validation of the African cultural legacy entailed an "act of imaginative rediscovery" of what Africa had culturally offered the New World (1997, 111). This recovering of an African cultural heritage in the Caribbean has been and still is a strategy of cultural resistance and self-assertion pursued by many Afro-Caribbean and Black British intellectuals²⁰.

But Hall readily affirms that the African presence in the Caribbean must be understood as that wide world of African elements transculturated within the Caribbean and that remains creolised in the sociocultural context of the Afro-Caribbean community: "This is the Africa we must return to . . . : what Africa has *become* in the New World, what we have made of Africa: Africa as we re-tell it through politics, memory and desire" (1997, 117). What Hall is affirming here is the impossibility of recovering what is truly African in Caribbean identity because the very process of creolisation renders it impossible.

²⁰ Paul Gilroy, an Afro-Caribbean diasporic writer living in England, has frequently celebrated his connection to Africa as a member of the African diaspora. This connection has been explored in his works and has led him to propose a conception of black ethnicities in the New World and Europe imaginatively connected by an extended oceanic mass of cultural signification. In his work "The Black Atlantic", he suggests that the Atlantic stands not only for a component of the Triangular Trade established by European colonizing powers and that united Europe, Africa and the New World in commercial interaction, but also for an entity that provides historical and sociocultural signifiers.

Therefore, the articulation of identity within the Afro-Caribbean community—which is, in the Afro-Caribbean context, the collective *one true self* that Hall refers to—is grounded on a creolised *Africanness*. Consequently, the view of cultural identity in relation to the Afro-Caribbean community must necessarily attend to the creolised nature of the Caribbean context, and Hall does not neglect that fact. That is why he also mentions “the many other, more superficial . . . imposed selves” hidden within this community or collective self (1997, 110-11). These other selves stand for the other, non-African cultural elements that along sociohistorical and sociopolitical transformations are brought into play within Caribbeanness.

Despite the presence of these other cultural elements within the Afro-Caribbean sociocultural context, the Afro-Caribbean individual may credit the African, or rather, the Afro-Creole cultural elements over the others in his assertion of identity. He/she may see the Afro-Creole culture as the grounding on which to construct his/her identity. This Afro-Creole culture is what Hall calls the essence of Caribbeanness of the black experience (1997, 111). In fact, this Afro-Creole culture/essence is fundamental for Travey—the protagonist in Lovelace’s “A Brief Conversion”—in his negotiation of the Afro-Creole and the Euro-Creole cultural elements. On the other hand, the lack of assertion of this Afro-Creole culture is what causes Karl—in the story narrated by Pollard—to fail as a social being and die.

Hall’s second definition of cultural identity arises from the recognition of the diverse cultural elements forming Caribbean identity:

This second position recognizes that, as well as the many points of similarities, there are also critical points of deep and significant *difference* which constitute *what we really are*, or rather—since history has intervened—*what we have become* . . . Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of *becoming* as well as of *being* (1997, 112).

This other notion of cultural identity ratifies the formation of identities through a non-static process in which the new and different cultural elements are inevitably appropriated and re-created. But it also introduces us, as Hall asserts, to the traumatic character of the colonial experience, because the becoming of Caribbean identity was patronized by a colonizing European culture. It was the condition of slavery and colonialism that permitted the imposition of a European culture and tradition to the detriment of Amerindian, African, and Asian cultural traditions in the Caribbean. From

this situation of cultural domination and subordination emerged the controversial post-colonial *Other*²¹. As Hall states, the colonizer had the power to make the colonized see and experience him/herself as Other. The culturally marginalized colonial self was gradually depersonalized. He/she became his/her Other, colonized, by what Hall calls “an inner compulsion and subjective conformation to the [European cultural] norm” (1997, 112-13). This is the process regarded by Brathwaite as the acculturation of blacks to white norms, since the subjective assimilation into the white colonizer’s cultural values and traditions was the only way for the colonized to gain social recognition. But, despite the negative consequences of this cultural marginalization for the colonized subject, his/her acquiring this Otherness is interpreted by Hall as the beginning of the construction of his/her creolised identity. Therefore, the dynamics of the colonial domination/subordination relation in the Caribbean produced a creolisation and a mixture of cultures. That is why we presently have Caribbean creolised societies and not ethnically plural societies²².

Like Hall, Homi Bhabha has rendered equal importance to the role of the Other regarding postcolonial identities in his theory of hybridity. Bhabha asserts that the notion of the Other suppresses the idea of original and pure cultures, and suggests that there is no real opposition between self and other:

The place of the other must not be imagined . . . as a fixed phenomenological point opposed to the self, that represents a culturally alien consciousness. The Other must be seen as the necessary negation of a primordial entity —cultural or psychic— that introduces the system of differentiation which enables the cultural to be signified as a linguistic, symbolic, historic reality (51-52).

Accordingly, in his/her assertion of identity, the colonial and postcolonial subject must grapple with this Other or *Othering* quality of his/her experience. It is the recognition and acceptance of the Other that leads him/her to acquiring sociopsychological wholeness and to the positive acceptance of one’s creolised or hybrid reality.

²¹ The notion of the Other in colonial and post-colonial identities has received several critical analyses by scholars like Edward Said in *Orientalism*, Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*, and Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*. It refers to the ambivalent nature of postcolonial identities, since the colonized subject suffered from a continual depersonalization as a consequence of the action of a dominant European cultural discourse.

²² Michael Dash has argued that the plural society opposes the theory of creolisation, in that it focuses on racial difference and social confrontation rather than on *contact* and *interdependence* (1996, 47. Emphasis added).

A positive acceptance of the Other and of the European cultural tradition being asserted through it is what has enabled many Caribbean subjects to overcome cultural irreconciliations and to assert a personal, creolised identity. In this line, the Afro-Caribbean intellectuals who refuse to adhere to one or another of the cultural traditions grounding their identities tend to give equal relevance to the African and the European, and frequently their works reveal the liminality of their position as social beings and writers²³. Derek Walcott, for example, has attempted to reconcile his European and African heritage through his poetic universe. His attempt has often placed him in an in-between position of confusion and detachment, from which he has enacted his own liberating epic as a New World primordial man nurturing from the fragments of several traditions and without being constrained by a historical past. Olive Senior, on the other hand, takes a critical liminal position to effect this cultural reconciliation. She receives the past —the historical memory— with all its historical truth, and then tries to construct a creolised identity with a critical attitude toward the experience of an African and European interculturalisation within the Caribbean and its aftermath. Her liminal position is ratified by the story of the child protagonist in “Summer Lightning”, who becomes a liminal conscious little being that observes and reflects on the three different sociocultural contexts between which he is placed. Therefore, the liminal position of these Afro-Caribbean intellectuals derives from their attempt to recognize the European and the other cultural legacies, which Hall calls *points of difference*, as part of their creolised identities. Their attempt to recognize the various cultural legacies present in their Caribbean social context and to equally accept the European and the African cultural legacies forming their identities ratifies that, as Hall asserts, Caribbean cultural identity is constructed through a constant process of transformation or *becoming*.

However, the position of liminality in terms of cultural identity tends to provoke ambivalent or insecure relationships between the individual and his/her sociocultural reality. For the Afro-Caribbean individual, the assertion of cultural identity has always entailed the confrontation with a wider creolised sociocultural context strongly influenced by the European cultural tradition. This situation, assisted by that other situation of historical, officially-set disagreement between the European and the African cultures, has made the articulation of identity for the Afro-Caribbean subject a

²³ The idea of liminality implies an in-between position in terms of the assertion of cultural identity; this issue receives further treatment in the next chapter.

troublesome process. It poses the apparently dilemma for him/her of how to come to terms with the European presence in Caribbean reality. In this regard, Stuart Hall has claimed that the colonial relation of domination and subordination/resistance has made the dialogue between the European or *Euro-Creole* and the African or *Afro-Creole* a complex one: “How can we stage this dialogue so that, finally, we can place it, without terror or violence, rather than being forever placed by it?” (1997, 118).

In an attempt to reach a comprehensive view of the process of articulating identity, Hall seems to combine his two conceptions of identity to propose a theory that views cultural identities as *positionings* (1997, 113-16). This idea springs from Hall’s argument that every person speaks from a particular place and from a particular history, experience, and culture but without being contained by that position. Therefore, our cultural identities come from a past/history that is necessarily re-experienced through the categories of the present (1996, 447-48). According to Hall, the Afro-Caribbean subject must enact his/her articulation of identity from his/her primary Afro-Creole social context and to accept and negotiate the other cultural legacies that also inform his/her sociocultural reality, as well as through the categories of class, gender, color, nationality, etc. This conception on cultural identity speaks for the position adopted by Afro-Caribbean intellectuals such as Earl Lovelace, who asserts an Afro-Creole sociocultural milieu while accepting and negotiating the European and other cultural legacies of his Trinidad and Tobago’s social context. This position that validates the articulation of a creolised identity grounded on an Afro-Creole sociocultural milieu is expressed by Lovelace in “A Brief Conversion”.

In sum, the Afro-Caribbean subject must necessarily articulate his/her cultural identity in a process of negotiation by means of which he/she must try to reconcile and juxtapose in the best possible and personal way the different cultural elements forming his/her creolised identity. Moreover, his/her articulation of identity is always effected from the background of his/her Afro-Caribbean experience. Language, on the other hand, plays an important role within this process of articulating identity because it is the individual’s speech behavior that usually reveals the quality of the socialization in his/her upbringing, and denotes his/her social attitudes conditioned by his/her identity. Language, then, is an essential element that denotes identity and, consequently, needs to be more clearly examined.

Some Considerations on the Caribbean English Creole

“I must be given words to refashion futures
like a healer’s hand.”

E. K. Brathwaite.

Caribbean English Creole is a general term used to refer to the many varieties of English Creole languages spoken in the Caribbean. These Creole languages are syncretic linguistic systems formed through the interaction of European, African, Asian, and, in a lesser degree, Amerindian languages. However, they differ from each other due to the variability of the converging sociohistorical, cultural and political factors in their process of development in the different territories. Some of these factors are: the variability of colonial administration, since Anglophone Caribbean territories experienced colonial domination by different European powers at various historical times; the variability of the importation of African slaves in number and in provenance in the different territories; the presence of Amerindian populations in Guyana and Belize, while it has practically disappeared in the Caribbean islands; the importation of indentured servants from Asia in the largest territories (Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Jamaica), among others. These factors contributed to the development of different Creole languages in the region with English as their main linguistic base. That is why we can speak, for instance, of a Jamaican English Creole or a Barbadian/ Belizean/ Trinidadian English Creole, among other Creole languages in the region.

In a general sense, these Creole languages were formed through an act of appropriation, modification, and adaptation of the English language of the colonizer, performed by the colonized. This appropriation of the colonizer’s language was a gradual process developed unevenly among the colonial population. Kenneth Ramchand, a prominent critic and historian of Anglo-Caribbean literature, has stated three stages in the development of Creole languages. The first stage corresponds to the early period of colonization, when the language spoken by black slaves living in the slave community within the Plantation was a kind of dialect in which African languages were slightly influenced by a flawed English. This flawed English was a kind of *minimal* English invented for practical uses by the European colonizers:

To make orders understood, the Whites would have had to invent a species of essential English, partly made up of a number of formulaic words and phrases

. . . showing fewer inflectional variations than would occur in exchanges between Whites. There would . . . be a compensatory increase in the reliance of extra-linguistic context, upon word order, and upon intonation to make necessary discriminations and fill out meaning (1983, 83-4).

Ramchand suggests that the existence of this *minimal* or abbreviated English language that was to be practiced among black slaves might have been one of the sources of the sparse inflexional content of contemporary English Creole. Moreover, this *minimal*, practical English might be regarded as the primary source of the syntactical structures of Creole, in which the word order does not necessarily follow the grammatical norms of standard English. In a Creole syntactical structure the direct complement may precede the subject and the verb of the utterance or phrase; examples of this Creole structure are “*Good good dresses, she used to give away*” (24. Emphasis added), from “A Brief Conversion”; or “[*S*]ame ting dem did tell im madda [the same thing they told his mother]” (174. Emphasis added), from *Karl*.

In the second stage —approximately at the turn of the eighteenth century, the linguistic base of Creole was already English and the quantity of African linguistic elements (Africanisms) was lesser. The Englishness of the Creole language in this second stage was determined by the social contacts between black slaves and whites. Those slaves in closer interaction with the European colonizers were to develop a Creole with a higher degree of approximation to the standard English spoken by their masters. As Ramchand suggests, this second stage marks the beginning of English Creole. The third stage is produced by the increased social contacts between black slaves and whites, which provoked a growing influence of Creole in the English language of the masters. Then, the language of the colonizers and their descendants living in the Caribbean was to be altered by the influence of Creole. This situation contributed to the emergence of a Creole variety much closer to the standard English; this closeness was to be perceived mainly in the vocabulary of this Creole variety. In spite of its increasing closeness to standard English throughout its development, the Creole developed a peculiar grammar that came to characterize the contemporary Creole language. Besides, the closeness of Creole to standard English was conditioned by the establishment of mandatory English education in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. This event caused the emergence of a non-white sector of the population

educated in the English language: “[A] class of educated speakers of English” (1983, 82-7).

This process of development of Creole was parallel to the development of Caribbean societies: those social sectors in which the exposure to English was greater due to their social contact with the European colonizers that formed the upper class came to form the most privileged social classes; while Creole, in its most dialectal form, became the language of the lower classes. The existence of several varieties of Creole conditioned through social interactions has caused the presence of a linguistic variation within the society that has been explained through the theory of a Creole continuum, and has led several scholars to claim the close relationship between language and social class in the Caribbean (Ramchand 1983, 90; Craig 71; Bringas López 194); something that is represented in the stories by Senior, Pollard, and Lovelace, as will be examined later. For those who wished to improve their social status, the rejection of English Creole forms and the approximation to the standard English became a necessity. Thus, the linguistic attitude of the Caribbean individual was to be conditioned by a social attitude. The social attitude of the Caribbean individual of rejecting the Creole to the favor of the standard English has been portrayed in literature, being the finest example, perhaps, V. S. Naipaul’s *The Mystic Masseur*, in which the protagonist begins a small campaign in order to improve his English language, which would correspond with his social position’s improvement (Ramchand 1983, 90). Consequently, Creole was stigmatized as flawed or *bad English* in spite of being the language spoken by the majority of the Anglophone Caribbean population.

As I said before, the emergence of Creole entailed for the black slave the necessary task of appropriating and modifying the English language in order to satisfy his/her needs of communication in a new and hostile environment. Marlene Nourbese Philip, a prize-winner Afro-Caribbean poet, has described the way in which black slaves appropriated and modified the English language as an assault upon this language, compared, metaphorically, to the assault made by the colonizers upon the black slave’s social and cultural universe (Philip 275). Philip sees the relation of the black slave to the colonizer’s language as that of a wordsmith carrying his/her word-making craft in the silencing context of slavery:

The formal standard language was *subverted*, turned upside down, inside out and sometimes even erased. Nouns became strangers to verbs and vice versa; tonal accentuation took the place of several words at times; rhythms held sway. This used to be and sometimes is referred to as bad English, broken English, patois, dialect or idiolect, but it is also the living legacy of an experience, . . . of a people trying and succeeding in giving voice to their experience in the best and sometimes the only way possible (275. Emphasis added).

According to Philip, Creole was the language the black slave created to survive in his/her New World reality, and to narrate his/her experience within that reality since English, as the language of the master/colonizer, could have never served such a purpose. The black slave created a new language of his/her own combining, abrogating and modifying elements from the English and African linguistic traditions. English provided the basic lexicon, grammar, and syntactical structures; while African languages provided other lexical elements, intonation and rhythm. The combination of all these linguistic elements took place within the context of creolisation which ensured that, once transformed, these elements did no longer follow the original linguistic patterns found in the English and African languages. But, as Philip affirms, the black slave's attitude toward English was subversive; he/she appropriated the colonizer's language while inserting within it elements from the African languages that were devalued and sometimes forbidden to use. Creole was, then, a linguistic medium that enabled the slave to keep alive the African oral cultural legacy in his/her new sociocultural reality. This assertion of the African cultural legacy through the Creole language ratifies, once more, the subversive character of the black's slave sociocultural response to the Eurocentric worldview imposed on him/her.

Despite the stigmatization of Creole languages with respect to standard English, they are recognized as language systems in their own right, with syntax and lexicons of considerable sophistication (Donnell and Welsh 11). The several linguistic studies on Caribbean English Creole languages made from the 1960s onwards have contributed to such recognition. These linguistic studies generally agree on a theory of a Creole continuum to describe the relationship between English and English Creole varieties in the region. This concept of a Creole continuum alludes to various forms of language usage—in this case of Creole—that overlap in the subject's or speaking community's speech behavior. In her approach to Trinidad and Tobago English Creole, linguist Lise Winer describes this concept as follows:

In its simple form, the notion of the creole continuum describes the presence of varieties of language: the *basilect* —the purest, broadest, deepest, most conservative forms of the Creole, furthest from the standard; the *acrolect* —the local internationally acceptable variety of the European lexifier language (in this case English); and the *mesolect*, intermediate varieties. The continuum encompasses these varieties, with two distinct grammatical systems at its poles (5).

As it is generally accepted, the two poles of the continuum of varieties of Creole are the basilect (that comprises the deepest forms of Creole) and the standard English. However, this standard English is the Caribbean Standard English (CSE) not be confused with the standard English spoken in England.

The CSE shares with standard British English its grammar and vocabulary, though with lexical differences given in the presence of words that belong to the Caribbean sociolinguistic reality. In this regard, Ramchand states that these words or *West Indianisms* —from West Indies— passed from the Creole into CSE; but he states that the most obvious differences between CSE and standard English are to be found in the level of pronunciation, explained by the presence of different intonation patterns; and the intonation patterns of the CSE seem to have derived from the Creole²⁴. In literature, the CSE has been the linguistic code preferred by Caribbean writers as their means of narration, while varieties of Creole have been normally used to introduce the speech of characters in dialogues. And it has been precisely in dialogues where the use of these Creole varieties has frequently served to render a social characterization of characters, due to the relation between language and social status, which I have referred to previously.

As a general rule, the Caribbean subject moves freely within the Creole continuum of expression, being capable of switching from one variety of Creole to another according to the requirements of a given situation. In *Acts of Identity*, Le Page and Tabouret-Keller provide, as an example, the way in which a Belizean old woman, when reporting a

²⁴ In order to illustrate the difference of pronunciation between the standard English and CSE, Ramchand cites the linguistic study of Jamaican language made by F. G. Cassidy, in which the intonation and accentuation patterns of the English spoken in the Caribbean is described as differing from “the levelness of many Americans on the one hand and the hilliness of many English men on the other” (1983, 93). Cassidy’s characterization of Caribbean English languages as an accidental way of speech is ratified and illustrated by Marlene N. Philip with the Creole “with hills and valleys” spoken by a Caribbean child girl in her novel *Harriet’s Daughter* (10).

story, freely switches from a linguistic form closer to standard English to Creole, then to Spanish, and then to Creole again. Her use of a linguistic variety closer to standard English in the first part of her report is due to the fact that it is addressed to non-Caribbean educated speakers on English; then she switches to a Creole variety which she feels more comfortable with. On the other hand, her use of Spanish reveals the Spanish influence in the formation of her linguistic and cultural identity (13-14). This act of switching between different speech varieties according to the social context is known as *code-switching*; and the switching of linguistic codes demonstrates that the Caribbean subject's attitude toward the language is social.

The linguistic phenomenon of code-switching is widely illustrated in Caribbean literature serving several purposes. Firstly, it implies a switch in social roles since the Caribbean individual switches linguistic varieties depending on the social context. For example, in Pollard's story, Karl narrates his monologue in a variety of Creole much closer to standard English (CSE) conditioned by his Western education, but when he talks to his mother (who speaks a mesolectal variety of Creole) he uses also a mesolectal variety: "Aunti, a taking a walk roun church [Aunti, I am taking a walk round the church]"(170). Secondly, the code-switching reveals a change of social attitude, as it is perceived in the attitude of Travey's mother toward his upbringing as it will be shown later in the analysis of "A Brief Conversion". Thirdly, the code-switching may serve the purpose of articulating identity through language, as it is demonstrated in Karl's linguistic behavior which reveals a shift from a middle class social perspective to a lower class social perspective that aims at a re-definition of his identity. Finally, a code-switching is manifest in the writers' use of Creole varieties to depict their characters; the use of several linguistic varieties in the narration ratifies the creolised and multifaceted nature of the writers' cultural identities, since they can make use of several linguistic codes that stand for different social/literary attitudes or sociocultural perspectives.

Certainly, the most significant linguistic analysis on Caribbean English Creole languages have been based on the essential statement that language is a social act and an aspect of the human behavior, something that has been ratified by the theories of the Creole continuum and code-switching. By adapting his/her linguistic behavior to the needs of a given situation, the Caribbean subject is utilizing the language as a vehicle

for identification. Therefore, the linguistic behavior of Caribbean subjects can be perceived, as Le Page and Tabouret-Keller propose, as a series of acts of identity in which people reveal their personal identity and their search for social roles (14). Language, then, denotes the cultural identity of an individual, a group, a community or a region. The close relationship between the use of language as an assertion of identity and social attitudes has led Le Page to perceive language as a means of expression more than a means of communication (1978, 124). Therefore, Creole in the Caribbean, as a syncretic linguistic system, reveals the convergence of the several sociocultural and sociohistorical factors in the formation of Caribbean cultural identity. Accordingly, the Creole speaker articulates his/her creolised identity through the use of and code-switching between the different varieties of Creole, which reveals the multifaceted character of their identities. Moreover, the Creole speaker is also capable of modifying these Creole varieties according to his/her social, political, and personal needs, which, at the same time, may produce new linguistic forms or sub-systems. Rastafarian speech, for example, has become a linguistic sub-system of Jamaican Creole with its own lexical and grammatical patterns, and has been analyzed as a sociolinguistic act of cultural resistance and sociopolitical identification²⁵.

The close relationship between language and the assertion of identity in the English Caribbean has been ratified through the attempt of several Afro-Caribbean intellectuals like Louise Bennett, Edward Brathwaite and Merle Hodge, to validate the use of Creole as a way to reassert a Caribbean cultural identity. Louise Bennett's intellectual activity, for instance, has centered on the use of Creole as the language of the people, which has made her a leading promoter of a genuine Jamaican culture. But the major defender of Creole is, perhaps, Brathwaite, who coined the term *Nation Language* in an attempt to counteract the derogatory connotation of *dialect* and raise the status of Creole as the language of Anglo-Caribbean peoples. Others have preferred to re-appropriate the term *patois* and redress it with a powerful sociocultural semantic quality, as *patwah*, which the Jamaican theatre group Sistren Collective validates as a signifier of Jamaican

²⁵ In her analysis of Rastafarian speech, Velma Pollard refers to the combinations within the grammatical and lexical levels in the transformations/innovations made by Rastafarians. In the pronominal system, the first person pronoun *I* acquires great relevance because it is related to the name of the Emperor of Ethiopia Haile Selassie I (regarded as a prophet by Rastafarians) and replaces the pronoun *me*, whose objective case is deemed to express subservience and submission. *I and I* is used instead of the pronouns *you*, *they*, *them*, and *us*. Moreover, words are transformed and acquire new sociopolitical meanings, like oppression becoming *downpression* and politics becoming *politrics*, among others. For further information see Velma Pollard's "Innovation in Jamaican Creole: The Speech of Rastafarians".

cultural identity: “Not to nurture such a language is to retard the imagination and power of the people who created it” (Katrak 257). To Sistren, as well as to many Caribbean writers, the use of Creole entails a political stance toward the validation and defense of an authentic cultural identity. In the same line, Marlene Nourbese Philip perceives Creole as the sole linguistic means with which to re-tell and transcend the Afro-Caribbean experience and to overcome the silences imposed by a Eurocentric (English) discourse. To Philip, Creole is the language that will enable the Afro-Caribbean writer to re-create the long-disdained images of the Afro-Caribbean cultural universe, considering that the writer must dismantle the logos of a “father tongue” (English) to create a mother tongue (275-7). And it has been especially through literature and the use of Creole in it that the Caribbean writer has aimed at making the people know, accept and enjoy their personal Caribbean experience. As a result, a stronger sense of cultural identity is attained and a collective consciousness —cultural, social, and political— is developed, contributing, in this way, to the development of Caribbean societies²⁶.

Certainly, many Caribbean writers have used Creole as the most effective linguistic means with which to portray Caribbean reality. In short fiction, for example, the use of Creole has not been restricted to dialogues, but Creole may become the language of narration itself, as is the case of Selvon’s short story “Working the Transport” whose narration in Creole shows a profuse lack of inflexional content in the indication of the past tense —something described by Pollard as the unmarked verb. In fact, the conscious use of the Creole language in this short story might hint at the author’s intention of narrating the story as a kind of oral story, since Creole is the language of the cultural practice of storytelling in the Caribbean that has greatly influenced Caribbean writers, as it will be seen later. Moreover, at other instances, the Creole language is sometimes fused with the standard CSE of the narration, which may occur unconsciously since Caribbean writers are usually speakers of both Creole and CSE — as shown in “Summer Lightning”, examined later. Besides, more recently, Creole has proved to be a powerful, effective narrative code whose usage intends to portray Caribbean social reality and assert cultural identity from a truly political perspective. The literature of women writers from the 1970s onward, for example, validates an oral tradition received from their grandmothers and elder figures in the community, which is

²⁶ See Merle Hodge’s “Challenges of the Struggle for Sovereignty”.

ratified by their use of Creole. Their use of different varieties of Creole has helped to create new modes of narration grounded on linguistic variation, such as the polyvocal narrative mode or “multiple-voiced” (Davies and Fido 4), which describes a narrative context in which several voices (those of the characters) are given expression and shape. Usually, these voices express different varieties of Creole speech according to the sociolinguistic development and social status of the characters behind these voices, as is the case of *Karl*, examined in Chapter Three.

On the other hand, men writers also reveal a received oral legacy in their works, but their appropriation of this oral legacy and their use of Creole is generally produced in other creative ways. In Lovelace’s “A Brief Conversion” for instance, the protagonist/narrator expresses the Creole voice of his mother but he does not grant her the word to express herself directly in the narration; whereas in *Karl* Pollard deliberately grants the narrative word to the characters so that they appear to speak for themselves and construct, thus, the fictional text. In my opinion, the reasons for the difference in the narrative mode in terms of Creole usage of female and male writers lie in the fact that male writers have been generally more attached to the European narrative tradition (in the English language) that permitted the development of Caribbean literature, which was to be produced mainly by male writers. It is not until the 1970s that Caribbean literature begins to show a growing presence of women authors. That is why, perhaps, the use of Creole as an effective means of narration seems to be more freely developed by women authors than men authors, but whatever the peculiarities of their use of Creole, these Caribbean authors are surely asserting, in personal ways, a cultural identity through fiction.

Therefore, it is clear that the use of language in the Caribbean is closely related to the articulation of identity, and that the Creole language is important for the Afro-Caribbean individual’s assertion of selfhood and cultural identity. In order to be able to trace the way in which the assertion of a Caribbean identity manifests itself in the Creole usage in the three works I study, I deem necessary offer some of the characteristics of English Creole. Firstly, most of its vocabulary derives from English, and comprises words derived from other European languages: Portuguese (such as *pickney* meaning child),

Spanish (*pantaloons*²⁷, *serenading*²⁸), French (*fete*²⁹); and words derived from African languages, Hindi, Chinese, and Amerindian languages³⁰. Secondly, on the grammatical level, omissions are the most frequent feature. For example, inflexional suffixes such as the possessive marker ('s), the past tense of regular verbs (-ed), and the third person singular of present tense (-s) are frequently eliminated³¹. As it was referred to previously, the dropping of inflexional forms and other grammatical elements might have a historical origin in the abbreviated forms of English used by whites to make slaves understand their orders and instructions (Ramchand 1983, 83-84). Thirdly, in the phonological level, the several Creole languages spoken in the Caribbean share similar patterns such as the change of English *th* for *d* or *t* (e.g., *them/three* for *dem/tree*), or for *dd* and *tt* in intervocalic position (e.g., *brother* for *bredda*); the simplification of final consonant clusters, like in *an* (and) and *roun* (round); and the full vowel quality in unstressed syllables, such as in *sista* (sister) and *fedda* (feather)³².

Furthermore, Creole has both an inner rhythm and musicality that derive from the African oral tradition that was creolised and re-created in the Caribbean social context. Certainly, songs were an essential component of this oral tradition and their influence in the development of Creole has been ratified by Brathwaite, who claims that Creole or Nation Language has sounds that are part of its meaning. These sounds of the Creole language derive from the fact that, as Brathwaite asserts, Creole is “based as much on sound as it is on song” (1984, 311). In addition, the songs of the Afro-Caribbean oral culture functioned as encoded messages used by slaves to communicate among themselves in the working fields —something that will be examined in the following section. The musicality of Creole is perceived through the intonation and stress pattern which, as Brathwaite states, is dactylic and not iambic (1984, 312)³³. The dactylic stress pattern of Creole is better perceived in poetry and song; whereas in written prose form, the musicality of Creole is perceived mainly through the repetition of lexical and

²⁷ *Karl*, p. 130.

²⁸ “A Brief Conversion”, p. 14.

²⁹ *Karl*, p. 153; “A Brief Conversion”, p. 13.

³⁰ For examples of words derived from languages other than English see Le Page and Tabouret-Keller’s *Acts of Identity*, pp. 20-21.

³¹ Examples of these omissions are: “you will hear that Miss Elvy(’s) son study(-ied) till (h)im tu(r)n fool” (*Karl*, p. 174), and “Somebody have(has) to keep up these things” (“A Brief Conversion”, p. 9).

³² For further information on these phonological aspects of Creole see Hellinger’s “On Writing English-based Creoles in the Caribbean”, pp. 58-64.

³³ The dactyls or dactylic stress pattern consists of a stressed syllable followed by two light syllables, whereas the iambic consists of a light syllable followed by a stressed syllable.

syntactical forms, and rhymes. An example of this repetition are reduplications: lexical constructions formed by the repetition of the same lexical item and derive from African linguistic features (Ramchand 1983, 85). The literary works analyzed in this work show examples of these reduplications: *bake-bake* and *happy happy* (*Karl* 121, 153), or *poorly poorly* (“A Brief Conversion” 18), among others.

In conclusion, I would say that the most essential feature of Creole is its orality, due to the fact that for a long time this language remained a language of oral speech and to the influence of the African oral tradition. The oral nature of Creole is, according to Brathwaite, what makes this language a linguistic expression of collectiveness: “[Caribbean people] come from a historical experience where they had to rely on their very breath rather than on paraphernalia like books and museums and machines. They had to depend on immanence, the power within themselves, rather than on the technology outside themselves” (1984, 312). Its collective nature is revealed through the interactions that occur, at social and linguistic levels, in the act of storytelling within the group or community, and is produced due to the collective quality of Caribbean social experience. This oral and musical quality of Creole and the oral tradition re-created and developed in Creole have proved to be major contributors to the development of the short fiction in the literature of the region, which will be examined in the following section.

An Approach to the Short Fiction in the English Caribbean

Before engaging in the analysis of short fiction proposed in this section, I want to briefly discuss my assumptions about the term *short fiction* within the context of Anglo-Caribbean literature, and the reasons why I use it. First of all, I propose to use this term to refer to the prose fiction that do not reach the extension of the novel. Within short fiction we could speak of two main sub-genres: the short story and the novella. The short story is a work of prose fiction that is short in length, whereas the novella —also known as short novel— is a work of prose fiction longer than the short story and shorter than the novel. Both literary genres are placed under a single denomination firstly

because both genres share a common origin —both derive from the folk tale³⁴; and their historic-literary precedents are the stories of *Decameron* (1353), by Italian writer Boccaccio (Cuddon 452, 624). Furthermore, both genres may be comprised into the category of short fiction because, on the one hand, it does not yet seem to exist a definite statement on the length of the short story and that of the novella, which would allow us to see them as totally separate genres of prose fiction; and, on the other hand, the short story and the novella present great similarities probably because, in the Caribbean, they also developed from the same sources —here I take the novella *Karl* as the case-example to analyze.

In regard to the short story I would like to underscore J. A. Cuddon's description: "When it comes to classification this is one of the most elusive forms . . . , there are extremely long short-stories (longer than the average *novella*) and very short ones" (623). The novella, on the other hand, can be a long short story or a middle-distance type of prose longer than a short story and shorter than a novel (Cuddon 622). In fact, both genres have been seen as parts or sub-genres of short fiction. In this line, M. H. Abrams uses the term *short story* to "cover a great diversity of prose fiction, all the way from the *short short story*, which is a slightly elaborated anecdote of perhaps five hundred words, to . . . long and complex forms", which he identifies as novellas (173). Moreover, the main difference between the short story and the novella lies on the length factor and not on the level of narrative construction³⁵. Therefore, Pollard's novella *Karl* is, in my opinion, a story that is long, i.e., a long story, but it is a story whose narrative style resembles much that of some short stories by Pollard and that of other Caribbean short story writers. Besides, the fact that *Karl* introduces Pollard's second collection of short stories adds to my assumption that the short story and the novella —at least in this case— cannot be seen as separate genres but rather as types of short fiction. In this sense, when analyzing Caribbean short story, Kenneth Ramchand seems to suggest that the term *short fiction* may comprise several types of prose narrative other than the novel; and uses this term to refer to the early short fictional writings produced in the

³⁴ It is commonly agreed that the origins of the short story can be found in the fable, anecdote, exemplum, and the folk tale (Cuddon 623; Abrams 1739). On the other hand, the origin of the novella is marked by the Italian word *novella*, meaning "tale, piece of news" (Cuddon 452).

³⁵ It has been noticed that both the short story and the novella center on a very limited number of characters and on a central event or situation. The novella, however, allows the writer to expand on more details and reveal characters in greater fullness and depth (Kennedy 245).

Caribbean. Therefore, the term may well be used to name those early short writings, short stories (as these writings were later named), and other kinds of prose fiction shorter than the novel, such as the novella.

The beginnings of the tradition of short fiction in the English Caribbean are found early in the twentieth century³⁶. In a general sense, Caribbean short fiction was the result of the encounter between two narrative traditions: the primarily written European narrative tradition and the oral narrative traditions of pre-Columbian America, Africa, and Asia. Although some of these other narrative traditions, like the (Asian) Indian tradition, had already developed written forms, the literary and scribal forms of the colonizing European culture were the only ones officially accepted in the New World colonies. When studying the development of Caribbean literature, the European narrative tradition is represented in the sociohistorical accounts written by European residents, described by Ramchand as

accidental fictions and the dramatized and self-dramatizing documentary to be discovered in historical sources: early histories, missionary accounts, journals, travel books, official reports, newspapers, pamphlets, books, and magazines printed in the islands and writings associated with pro- and anti-slavery bodies (1464).

For Ramchand, however, these early writings by Europeans living in the Caribbean cannot be viewed as true representative forms of Caribbean literature since these authors, members of the dominant class, did not identify with Caribbean social reality. Consequently, their historical and fictional accounts about Caribbean life sprang out of a detached and prejudiced attitude toward black slaves' sociocultural universe and the Caribbean sociocultural reality.

On the other hand, the oral narrative tradition fueling the development of Caribbean fiction comes directly from the oral tradition and folklore of African slaves, Amerindians, and Asian indentured laborers, being the African oral tradition the major contributor to its development. African folklore included songs —necessarily related to music and dance, proverbs, riddles, dirges (funeral songs), and stories or folk tales in which animal tales were the predominant manifestation. This folk tale was plotted around the exploits and failures of a trickster figure, being the main trickster figure of

³⁶ According to Kenneth Ramchand, the first gathering of short fiction by a Caribbean writer was *Maroon Medicine* (1905), stories about rural life in Jamaica, by Jamaican writer E.A. Dodd (1994, 1465).

these tales the spider Ananse³⁷. African folk tales were part of a tradition of storytelling that had a didactic and moralistic function within African communities. Caribbean folk tales draw largely from this African tradition, which, like every other cultural manifestations relocated in the Caribbean, was transculturated attending to the particularities of the new geographical and sociocultural reality; Anancy stories (as they are known) are a clear example of this African influence.

Apart from Anancy stories, other kinds of folk tales came to enlarge the *orature*³⁸ in the English Caribbean, such as

sinister fairy stories including obeah, duppy, rolling calf, la diablesse, soucouyant, and other supernatural manifestations³⁹. . . . To this repertoire would be added latter the humorous dialect tale, stories circulating among descendants of Indians, the anecdote, ballad, and local colour story; and, of course, the calypso⁴⁰ (Ramchand 1464).

In the case of the Amerindian folk tradition, its influence in Caribbean fiction is best traced in the works of Guyanese writers like Wilson Harris, Jan Carew, Dennis

³⁷ *Anancy* or *Anansi*, the notorious spider in Caribbean folklore, derives from the Ashanti Ananse in West Africa, a trickster figure “both fooler and fool, maker and unmade . . . , the High God’s accomplice and its rival” (qtd. in Dance 1985, 11). In Caribbean folklore, Anancy retains its dual character-figure: it is wily and stupid, immoral, greed and deceitful; but it remains a popular figure nonetheless. As Daryl C. Dance notes, “Anancy is generally a figure of admiration whose cunning and scheming nature reflects the indirection and subtleties necessary for survival and occasionally victory of the Black man in a racist [and colonial] society” (1985, 12). The trickster’s deceitful behavior has been usually regarded as a strategy to subvert the colonial order within the limits imposed by a colonial and social situation of inferiority. The potential for trickery and subversion of this figure has been used by Caribbean writers to create fictional characters (e.g., Becca in Senior’s “Do Angels Wear Brassieres?” from *Summer Lightning and Other Stories*). The subversive nature of the trickster figure turns it into an image of resistance since its trickery functions in a subversive way against the totalitarian order imposed by a dominant group or culture.

³⁸ The term *orature* refers to that part in the field of oral traditions that deals with the “artistic interpretation of experience”, i.e., folk tales, songs, proverbs, etc., in contrast with *oral history*, which deals with accounts of events (Wilentz xxii). Wilentz also proposes the term *oral literature* to refer to the literature that retains elements from the oral tradition. In effect, much of the literature written by Caribbean authors show a deliberate use of the oral tradition; oraliture, then, may be a creative mode to include in the critical approaches to this still proliferating and undefined literature.

³⁹ *Obeah* is the name of an Afro-Caribbean religious practice that entails the manipulation of spirit force for good or evil; but it is generally related to negative/evil practices. *Duppie* or *jumbie* are names for ghosts. *Rolling calf* refers to the figure of a calf with fiery eyes and noisy chains that chases people. *La diablesse*, *jablesse* or devil woman is a beautiful female spirit who encounters men along lonely paths and lures them to death or misfortune —allusion to this spirit is found in Jamaica Kincaid’s “In the Night”. *Soucouyant* or *sukuya* (also *old haig* or *higue*), refers to the configuration of an old woman who sucks people’s blood at night (Benson 521-23).

⁴⁰ Calypso, formerly *cariso* or *kalinda*, was the battle song that accompanied stickfighting sessions —of African origin— in Trinidad and Tobago’s Afro-Caribbean community. By the 1950s, calypso became a form of popular song and a musical “vehicle for narratives about the everyday lives of ordinary Trinidadians” (Rohlehr 199).

Williams, Edgar Mittelholzer, among others, since the Amerindian cultural presence in the Caribbean scenario is mainly found in continental mainland like Guyana.

In addition to the presence of a rich folklore repertoire, there is an ever willingness of Caribbean people to listen to and tell stories, a social practice influenced by the oral tradition of storytelling. Olive Senior has underscored the inclination of Caribbean people to storytelling from the context of her childhood: “. . . [P]eople in recounting their day to day activities were very dramatic, you know, developed a style of telling things very dramatically, and we children followed suit. We dramatised things, made them seem far more important than they really were” (qtd. in Bringas López 229; Senior, Appendix). Here Senior asserts the influence of the legacy of oral tradition, which would be important in her development as a short fiction writer. In the Afro-Caribbean context, the oral tradition is a creolised cultural manifestation, which has borrowed elements from the other cultural traditions present in the Caribbean, but the elements from the African culture are the predominant ones.

Apart from storytelling, the agency of periodical publications has also contributed in an important manner to the development of Caribbean fiction. The periodical publications provided the scribal context in which these oral cultural traditions intermingled with the European narrative tradition. By the early twentieth century, newspapers and magazines in the Caribbean informed about local social and cultural happenings and current affairs, and gradually a new narrative was created: “In these writings the boundary lines between fact and fiction, documentary and invention, are difficult to discern, and with the passing of time some of them read like sketches or short stories” (Ramchand 1465). It was in these *news-writings* where the written European and the oral African, Amerindian, and Asian narrative forms intermingled to produce a new literary genre.

On this line, when studying the syncretic genre of Caribbean short fiction it seems that, on the one hand, the European tradition provided the linguistic medium —the colonizer’s language that was to be modified in the context of the process of creolisation —as well as literary forms and narrative techniques; and, on the other hand, the African, Amerindian, and Asian traditions provided the content: the cultural, social and religious universe of the descendants of Africans, Asians and Amerindians in the new Caribbean

social context, which came to form the mainstream of Caribbean life. This intercultural equation of form and content is the genesis of what is known as Caribbean literature.

According to Ramchand, short fiction is the foundation of Caribbean prose, and the cultivation of the short narrative form by Caribbean writers facilitated the development and success of the Caribbean novel from the 1950s onward. Nevertheless, the writers who wanted to publish their works were confronted with the problem of the lack of a publishing industry in the Caribbean which finally caused the stultification of the short fiction genre and forced many of them to go on exile to England. Once in England, Caribbean writers adopted the genre of the novel since it was the literary form preferred by British publishers. It was not until the 1970s and 1980s that the tradition of the short fiction revived with the emergence of a body of women writers who began to use the short form as an effective, creative narrative means of expression. Seemingly, this recovering of the tradition of short fiction by women writers may have induced men writers of fiction to use the short form as another form of narrative creation. The case of Lovelace offers a clear example: *A Brief Conversion and Other Stories* is his first book of short stories, and before it Lovelace had written four novels and the collection of plays *Jestina Calipso and Other Plays* (1984).

The revival of the short fiction tradition in the 1970s and 1980s entailed, in the case of women writers, a re-visiting of history and the recovering of an oral legacy embedded in the cultural memory of the community that was inherited from their mothers and grandmothers. The use of this legacy has enabled these women writers to construct a personal —*herstory*— and a collective experience —that of their community and society— from a female perspective which, in the past, had been confined to the household, the kitchen, or the yard⁴¹, and has been adumbrated by a colonial and patriarchal social situation. Senior and Pollard, for instance, have acknowledged the influence of such legacy in their creative narrative universe, (Senior and Pollard, Appendix). On the other hand, the literature written by men writers also reveals the inheritance of an oral and communal cultural patrimony that they may not directly or consciously acknowledge in their works, but that is perceived in the communal nature

⁴¹ The kitchen has been a traditional space of the house for the woman, where she develops much of her daily activities in the house. The yard, an outer extension of the house, has been equally regarded as a female space par excellence, and fundamental for the development of female socialization and subjectivity (Bringas López 72).

of their works and found in the themes and styles of their narratives. For example, the collections of short stories by Lovelace (*A Brief Conversion and other Stories*) and Jamaican writer Earl McKenzie (*A Boy Named Ossie: A Jamaican Childhood*) portray an Afro-Caribbean community viewed through the eyes of a child, which may lead the reader to see that community as the real protagonist of those stories.

As a matter of fact, the influence of an oral legacy in contemporary Caribbean short fiction hints at the writers' conscious purpose of conveying cultural and political implications in their narratives:

Many, probably most, West Indian short-story writers have been conscious of and to some extent influenced by those oral forms and the stories spun around figures like anancy . . . The device of the literary short-story pretending to be a "told tale" has real political and cultural resonance in the Caribbean context (Brown and Wickham xvii).

Certainly, Caribbean writers reveal in their stories a definite political stance against the colonial legacy within the sociopolitical and sociocultural context of their societies. It is by means of asserting an oral cultural legacy through fiction that Caribbean writers attempt to achieve the validation of the popular culture and, consequently, contribute to the assertion of cultural identity and the development of a Caribbean literary aesthetic. In a general sense, Caribbean fiction frequently reveals the position of the writer committed to his/her social reality. It is out of this revival of the short fiction genre that the stories narrated by Senior, Pollard, and Lovelace analyzed in this work emerge. The process of asserting identity in which the protagonists are engaged provides a context for the authors to question the social reality that serves as background for the development of such process. Such questioning may contribute to build a positive perspective toward the question of Caribbean sociocultural reality and identity.

After briefly analyzing the evolution of the short fiction genre in the English Caribbean, I consider important to mention some of the common characteristics of contemporary short fiction, being orality the most noticeable one. And within the Caribbean oral tradition, the elements that most have strengthened the oral quality of short fiction are storytelling, songs and proverbs.

Firstly, the main oral antecedent of short fiction is the folk tale provided, essentially, by the African tradition of storytelling. It is my assumption that the African storytelling

tradition, transculturated and re-created in the Caribbean, constitutes the principal sociocultural ground on which Caribbean short fiction has developed. I deem necessary to offer a brief description of the storytelling practice in the African tradition in order to be able to trace the relation of continuity between this practice and Caribbean short fiction. African storytelling has, as I stated before, a didactic purpose for inculcating moral and cultural values in African communities. Each community has its storyteller or griot (as they are known in storytelling performances). The griot begins with an opening formula that involves announcing the name of the tale, to which the audience responds. In these storytelling performances, the audience participates by interrupting or offering corrections, and by joining the griot in singing songs included in the stories. Some folk tales are told in cycles in which one story refers to the one before it and usually the central character is the animal trickster figure. Besides, in these cycles of storytelling two narratives rarely follow the same order, nor is a story memorized and recited word-for-word when it is retold (Leeming 43). The telling of tales becomes a verbal act that demands the creative narrative role and imagination of the storyteller. In Caribbean literature, the most recurrent element of this African storytelling tradition is perhaps the trickster figure, which has become idiosyncratic of Caribbean reality. This figure is brought forth in *Marron Medicine*, from which Ramchand cites two protagonists: Mr. Watson and Mr. Timson, as the first literary adaptations of the figure of Anancy (1994, 1465). Other literary adaptations of the trickster figure appear in stories by Naipaul (“Man-man”), Selvon (“Working the Transport”), Senior (“Ascot”), and many other writers.

Apart from the trickster figure, other elements from the African storytelling practice have been re-appropriated within short fiction, such as the opening formula, the audience participation, and the cyclic mode. The opening formula may appear represented in short fiction through the use of songs or poetry at the beginning of short stories. Velma Pollard, for example, has used songs or pieces of songs to introduce episodes in a short story—something similar appears in *Karl*—and poems to introduce the short stories of her collection *Considering Woman and Other Stories* (Bringas López 225-26). Moreover, the audience participation is referred to through the intervention of voices represented by the author’s addressing the reader directly, which usually responds to the narrator’s intention to talk to the reader/listener and to make him/her share his/her views or participate in the situation conveyed in the story.

Examples of addressing the reader as audience are found in *Karl* and “A Brief Conversion”, as will be seen later. Usually the narrator uses a familiar tone for addressing the reader, who becomes then the listener of the story being told. Finally, the cyclic mode in short fiction can be perceived in the narrative structure of short story collections, such as *A Brief Conversion and Other Stories*, by Lovelace, and *A Boy Named Ossie: A Jamaican Childhood* by McKenzie. In her analysis of short fiction by Caribbean women writers, Ana Bringas López asserts that the cyclic mode (“ciclo de contos”) is characterized by the repetition of characters, themes, places, symbols or events in the stories of a collection. Although the various stories in a collection are independent units, they are also interrelated in a way that ensures the comprehension of the work as a single thematic unit (223). Moreover, the cyclic mode can be perceived in the construction of the plot of a story as a series of episodes that may be seen as small narrative units— this is the case of *Karl*, in which the author constructs the story in episodes and each of them has a title.

Moreover, the use of narrative strategies used in oral narration reinforces the oral nature of Caribbean short fiction. For example, the narrator frequently uses connective formulas that are characteristic of oral narration to tell the sequence of events in a story. Some examples of these formulas are: “One day” (Mc Kenzie 2), “Then one afternoon” or “So he continued” (“Summer Lightning” 578, 577); or the recurrent use of the conjunction *and* to describe and enumerate and to describe a sequence of events. This is illustrated in the following example from “Summer Lightning”: “[H]is smile was crooked and at times his eyes glazed over and his mouth trembled and he mumbled to himself” (573), in which the narrator describes a character. However, the use of *and* as connective formula is more widely perceived in “A Brief Conversion”, as it will be seen later. Furthermore, another strategy taken from oral narration is the use of a hyperbolic tone that has been finely developed by Senior in “Summer Lightning”. The hyperbolic tone in an oral narration serves the purpose of keeping the audience interested in the oral performance of storytelling, and Senior has consciously used it in this story, in which she seems to take overtly the role of the storyteller.

Besides elements and strategies borrowed from storytelling, Caribbean short fiction writers also include proverbs and songs (popular songs, religious, and work songs) that reinforce its oral quality. In the case of work songs, they can be seen as sung stories,

whose origin lies on the songs of slaves working in the fields, which conveyed encoded messages in the *double entendre* of lyrics that could only be understood by other slaves. In these songs, the names of the masters and their agents were substituted by terms the overseers deemed innocuous, like bird names —the crow, for example, referred to the masters; and the parrot, a chatterbox, to the overseer (Benson 1515); these songs helped the slaves to find emotional relief from their degrading situation and frustration. A fine example of this kind of song is found in *Karl*, where the narrator also makes reference to its *double entendre*. On the other hand, this novella provides several examples of the use of proverbs, which has become a common and idiosyncratic element of Caribbean popular idiom.

Apart from different components taken from the oral tradition, the use of speech forms of Creole equally supports orality in Caribbean short fiction, since Creole has been essentially the language of oral communication and expression in the Caribbean. And the writer is free to choose among the different linguistic varieties of Creole, from basilectal forms to those closest to the Caribbean Standard English, as it has been examined previously.

Besides its oral character determined by the influence of oral tradition, other common features of Caribbean short fiction are musicality and humor. The musicality and inner rhythm of short fiction is provided, on the one hand, by the Caribbean language — Creole or Standard— in which the fictional work is written. On the other hand, its musicality is revealed in the repetition and parallelism of syntactical structures following musical patterns, found in the Caribbean musical tradition as well as the use of rhymes. For example, the repetition and parallelism of syntactical structures in “A Brief Conversion” makes us see the resemblance of Lovelace’s narrative style with the style of the calypsonian (calypso singer), who conveys his/her social reality in his/her lyrics. Besides, the use of rhymes also reinforces the musicality of Lovelace’s narrative style in this story. Apart from musicality, humor also prevails in this narrative genre, being a peculiar trait of both Caribbean short fiction and idiosyncrasy.

Another distinctive characteristic of Caribbean short fiction is the collective nature perceived through the narrator’s reliance on a received oral narration from a group of people or community; sometimes the narrator credits and relies on a received oral narration: what people say. In these cases, the writer is not the omniscient narrator;

instead, his/her fictional narrative is conditioned and aided by a *talking* public, which leads us to see this narrator as a sort of second-plane character within the story. Sometimes the presence of this *talking* public is asserted from the very beginning of the story/narration; as shown in the opening lines of “Summer Lightning”: “The man came to stay with them for a few weeks each year. For his nerves *they said*” (572. Emphasis added); or those of “Man-man”, by Naipaul: “*Everybody* in Miguel Street *said* that Man-man was mad, and so they left him alone” (483. Emphasis added). The crediting of this *talking* public stands for the narrator’s crediting of his/her reliance on an oral narration received from a group of people or community, which ratifies the collective nature of the narration.

Furthermore, this collective sense of narration is enhanced, especially, by the deliberate intervention of voices other than the author’s within the narration of the story. The intervention of voices alludes to the polyvocal narrative mode by means of which the narrator makes those that are spoken of (the characters) speak for themselves, thus, the story is narrated by both the author and the people or community depicted in the story, which reveals the collective nature of the narration/story provided by the communal quality of the Caribbean social experience —something that is ratified by the collectiveness of storytelling performance.

Moreover, in Caribbean short fiction the use of the first and third person narrations shows certain peculiarities. First, the third person narration may reveal an omniscient narrator like the case Pollard in *Karl*, whose omniscience is ratified at the beginning and the end of the story; and a limited omniscient narrator like the case of Senior, whose intention to credit what people say counteracts her omniscience in the narration⁴². Also, the first person narration is a recurrent mode in Caribbean short fiction, used especially in the autobiographical monologue. But here the narrator may seek the attention of the reader by addressing him directly through the second person singular pronoun *you*, which frequently entails the narrator’s intention to make the reader share his/her point of view regarding the situation conveyed in the story, an intention ratified by the fact that the reader is usually considered as an audience. This intention of the narrator to

⁴² In “Summer Lightning”, the narrator, seems to have participated in the situation conveyed in the story as another character that observes what happens and hears what people say, which she will use later to tell the story; it will be seen in the following chapter.

seek the reader's compliance with his/her position in the story is exemplified in the autobiographical narrations of Karl and Travey in Pollard and Lovelace's text respectively. On the other hand, the first and third person narrations may be combined within a single narration. For example, Pollard uses both modes of narration to create *Karl* because most of the narration is produced as a monologue in which Karl refers his life and social experience.

In conclusion, the short fiction genre in the English Caribbean has developed from the European narrative cultural tradition and the oral cultural traditions of Amerindians, Africans, and Asians; being the African storytelling tradition a crucial element in its development. The contemporary English Caribbean short fiction reveals a strong influence of the oral tradition; it keeps nurturing from Western literary tradition, but its content —the thematic source— is taken from the Caribbean experience and sociocultural universe. In producing the work of fiction, the writer works upon this Caribbean universe and chooses and combines narrative techniques and cultural elements, creating, thus, a personal style with which to suit his/her literary aims. Frequently these literary aims of the Caribbean writer are accompanied by a desire to address a social reality that also seeks new ways to produce positive social transformations.

Chapter Two
**The Liminal Caribbean Identity in “Summer Lightning”, by Olive Senior: A
 Reading Between the Lines.**

Now my disorder of ancestry
 proves as stable as the many rivers
 flowing around me. Undocumented
 I drown in the other’s history.
 Olive Senior.

“Summer Lightning” symbolically illustrates the developing process of defining a Caribbean identity. The story is about the experience of the boy (as he is called throughout the story) in the house and rural property of some middle class relatives (aunt and uncle) where he has been sent to by his mother as a result of an unsuccessful marriage. His experience in this house centers on a small room of the house — which is his favorite one— that he calls *the garden room* because it leads to the garden. But the story narrated here by Olive Senior centers on a short period of the boy’s life experience in this house, which is marked by the visit of an old man, a traditional visitor to the house and friend of the boy’s relatives, and one of the two main characters of the story. The old man has been visiting the house for several weeks each year, and each of his visits seems to have a definite purpose: he comes to relieve a kind of mental disorder that he suffers. However, this is the old man’s first visit to the house after the boy has gone to live there. The boy must share the garden room at times with the old man because it is the room given to the old man whenever he comes to visit this place. Due to the co-habitation of the boy with the old man in the room, the boy starts to develop a kind of silent relationship with the old man, silent in the sense that even though they are aware of their simultaneous presence in the room they never speak to each other.

On the other hand, since the boy has come to live with these middle class relatives and before the old man’s arrival, he has developed a close relationship with Bro. Justice, a worker in his relatives’ property who is also a Rastafarian⁴³, and one of the main

⁴³ Rastafarianism is a social and religious movement that developed in Jamaica during the 1930s under the influence of the doctrines of Jamaican black leader Marcus Garvey. It takes its denomination from Ras Tafari, the Emperor of Ethiopia, crowned as Haile Selassie I in 1930. He was seen, according to an Afrocentric interpretation of the Bible, as the new Messiah, the redeemer of the suffering blacks enslaved in the New World. For Rastafarians their God is Jah, and their colonial and postcolonial societies, formed on the basis of European political and cultural domination, are analogous to the biblical Babylon. The Movement’s initial members were black, urban and lower class, but in the following decades intellectuals and middle class Jamaicans, black and non-black, joined the Movement. One of their principal aims was blacks’ repatriation to Africa, which was to be fulfilled through the agency of the Ethiopian Emperor.

characters in the story. The boy used to spend long hours with Bro. Justice in the past listening to the latter's talk about his philosophical and religious ideas. However, when the old man arrives and gets to know him, the boy begins to neglect his relationship with Bro. Justice, who grows distressed at being supplanted by the old man. Bro. Justice's distress is also due to the fact that he does not like the old man, whom he considers a mischievous and untrustworthy person for reasons that will be explained later. But, the relationship between the boy and the old man becomes a passive struggle for the possession of the room, which reaches its climax with the old man's attempt to assault the boy: the old man gets up from bed and approaches the boy furtively from behind his back, the boy quickly turns when he senses the old man's closeness and gets frightened by the old man's imposing presence. At this precise moment, the boy feels an urgent need to be saved by Bro. Justice, who has tried to remain near the house and the garden room in case the boy might need his help. But, since the boy is in the room with the old man, and Bro. Justice is not there with them, the boy hopes that the message of his urgent need for Bro. Justice's help reaches the latter through the beats of his heart: "[The boy's] heart was pounding off a message so loudly that he knew . . . [Bro. Justice] was bound to receive it" (578). Whether Bro. Justice receives the message and saves the boy before the old man has reached to assault him physically, we (the readers) cannot know because the story ends precisely at that point.

"Summer Lightning" provides a symbolic sociogeographic framework to illustrate the process of articulating a Caribbean identity. Such framework is defined by the relationships of the boy with his relatives, the old man and Bro. Justice in a geographical space containing three crucial elements: a house, a small room, and a garden. The relationship between middle class relatives and the old man-the boy-Bro. Justice, and that of the house-garden room-garden and outer rural space, provides the dynamics of a process that, in my opinion, stands for the articulation of selfhood and identity of the boy. Accordingly, the boy would have to construct his identity through

Eventually, repatriation was an illusion far from becoming a reality. The sociopolitical transformations on the following decades, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, contributed to change the movement's early religious and anti-colonial orientation. Consequently, Rastafarians pursued a social and political engagement to counteract the status of inferiority of blacks in Jamaican society, as well as the social and economic handicaps of their neocolonial situation. Besides, Rastafarianism became a cultural expression of resistance through the music and lyrics of reggae star Bob Marley. This movement has been regarded as propelling the process of forming a national identity, since it pursued the positive recognition of a cultural African ancestry by the overall Jamaican society (Furé Davis 32).

the relationship, on the one hand, with his relatives and with the old man and, on the other, with Bro. Justice. The former may be identified—in the spatial context of the house, the garden room, and the garden—with the house, whereas Bro. Justice may be identified with the garden and outer space. This configuration may stand for the presence of two sociocultural milieus: a middle class and probably white/mulatto/*light*⁴⁴ milieu that favors an Euro-Creole orientation (represented by the boy's relatives and the old man), and an Afro-Creole, lower class and probably black milieu (represented by Bro. Justice). Then, the process by means of which the boy must articulate his selfhood and cultural identity should entail a negotiation of sociocultural elements from these two milieus, which is to be effectuated by the boy from within the spatial context of the garden room⁴⁵.

Furthermore, in my opinion, this story might well have been entitled “the garden room” because it pivots around the significance of this place for the boy's sense of being and identity. For the boy the room is special for several reasons. First, it functions as a protective hideout where the boy feels safe from alien, threatening forces, like thunderstorms and lightning. Second, the room is a place for recreation where the boy comes to play with several objects that his uncle keeps in a desk and that he finds interesting—such as semi-precious stones, lead weights, rusted nails, a box level (that seems to contain a winking eye), among others. But, above all, the room has spiritual value because it is in that room where the boy feels comfortable and closer to himself: “[A]s long as he was alone in this room he was happy because he knew . . . that if in the world he had nothing else, he was still rich because he had this special place which allowed him to explore secret places inside him” (573). The garden room is the place that serves the boy to distance himself from a surrounding reality with which he is dissatisfied and that is represented by the house which he finds too big and alien: “[I]n

⁴⁴ The term *light* alludes to a color of the skin that is light brown, and is used in the Caribbean to refer to the skin complexion of those mixed race people that have more white blood than black.

⁴⁵ It is my assumption that “Summer Lightning” acquires a symbolic quality through the way in which the characters' framework and their interactions may stand for the process of the boy's search of identity. Actually, Senior has asserted that she was not thinking about this process of the boy's articulating identity when she wrote the story, but I think that this idea might have been in her mind since she has dealt with it more openly in other stories from the same collection. Perhaps her characters and she herself are dealing with the issue of asserting a cultural identity unconsciously. However, she is aware of and has affirmed that her stories can certainly be read between the lines: “—that is, there is always much more going on beneath the surface of the story. But I leave it to the reader to discover what this might be” (Senior, Appendix). Moreover, the very image of the summer lightning brought forth in the title of the story has a symbolic meaning, which will be examined later.

that big house . . . he felt displaced, as if he had been plucked from one world which was small and snug and mistakenly placed into another which was like a suit many times too large and to which he could never have hopes of growing to a perfect fit” (574-5)⁴⁶. Like the house, the rural milieu of his relative’s property is alien to him as well. On the other hand, the boy’s physical escape from this surrounding reality in the small room enables him to create an alternative world lived in his imagination. The secret places of this imaginary world are inhabited by people and animals that the boy locates, dislocates and transforms at will.

Apart from the importance that the room has for the boy, it also seems to comprise therapeutic qualities since it is offered to the visitor (the old man) whenever he comes to settle his nerves. The room’s healing qualities may be explained by its modest decoration —there is only a bed, the uncle’s desk, ten jalousies, and no mirrors or glass. For a person who seeks calmness and relaxation, like the case of the old man, a quiet and simple room like this one would be more appropriate than any of the other three large bedrooms of the house. Besides, the importance of the garden room lies in the fact that it becomes a crucial space for the development of the boy’s process of articulating identity. Taking into account the function of the room as a shelter in the boy’s experience of escaping from the outer space, the room becomes a liminal space between the uncomfortable, big house and the outer rural space with which the child does not yet entirely identify. The child’s life experience narrated in this story is constructed through his relationships to both spaces/milieus, which seem to be directed from the intermediate context of the garden room.

Since I have defined the garden room as a liminal space, I would like to explain its liminal condition. The liminal space has been given several interpretations that range from the image of the liminal as a place of chaos, to its recognition as a space of cultural interaction, including diverse denominations, such as *borderland*, *contact zone*, or

⁴⁶ In this story, the boy’s experience of not fitting into the Euro-Creole middle class environment of his relatives’ world resembles those of Karl and Travey in Pollard and Lovelace’s stories respectively, in the sense that these other two characters also see themselves as not fitting into the Euro-Creole sociocultural perspective offered by their social contexts, which they interpret as wearing an uncomfortable suit or cap (in the case of Karl), and an embarrassing costume (in the case of Travey), something that will be seen later.

cultural force field, among others⁴⁷. In postcolonial theory, liminality has been brilliantly defined by Homi Bhabha in a transcultural context pertinent to most colonial and postcolonial experiences all over the world:

These in-between spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood —singular or communal— that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. It is in the emergence of the interstices . . . that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated (1-2).

Then, the liminal space may serve the individual that inhabits transculturated or creolised social contexts to negotiate the different components from the various cultural manifestations that form his/her social context. Such negotiation must be effected by the individual in order to construct his/her personhood and cultural identity. Therefore, the very postcolonial society, in its transculturalism or multiculturalism, may become a wide liminal context where social units —the individual, the group, the community, the nation— are frequently involved in an act of defining cultural identity. In “*Summer Lightning*”, the liminality of this context seems to be symbolized by the garden room space, which is the place that helps the boy to hide from an outer, menacing environment into an alternative reality —the boy’s inner self⁴⁸. And it is definitely the garden room that provides the context upon which the boy would define his identity.

On the other hand, the liminal symbolism of the garden room is ratified architecturally. As the narrator explains, it is the smallest room in the house that links the large-roomed house to the garden —a rather odd room bridging a middle class household to the poor

⁴⁷ Interpretations of the liminal space as a place of chaos spring from the destructive effects of slavery and colonialism upon the colonized individual. Thus, the colonial subject’s life-space becomes “No Man’s Land”, according to Bonnie Barthold (33-43); and a similar view is offered by Victor Turner (qtd. in Gallego 146-7). However, several scholars have addressed the function of this border or in-between place in cultural studies as favoring the formation of zones where cultural transformations occur (Benito and Manzanás 1-14).

⁴⁸ Many of the child-protagonists in Olive Senior’s stories move in a universe marked by liminality: between social classes and along racial/color lines. Usually, they place themselves in this neutral space as self-conscious, self-identifying entities. That is the case of Laura, the child protagonist in “*Bright Thursdays*”. Her situation is very similar to the boy’s (uprooted from a rural, *darker*, and lower class, milieu and placed by her mother in a mulatto/*lighter* middle class milieu): “[S]he never felt lonely, for if her mother had given her nothing else, in taking her out of one life without guaranteeing her placement in the next, she had unwittingly raised her for a life of solitude. Here in this big house she wandered from room to room and said nothing all day, for now her lips were sealed from shyness” (1986, 46-47). Frequently these child-protagonists show a subversive character that derives from his/her refusal to accept an identity defined and imposed by others. Examples of this child prototype abound in English Caribbean fiction. Senior has used this subversive child prototype to create some of her youngest characters, like the girl child in “*Confirmation Day*” (from *Summer Lightning and Other Stories*), and Sadie in “*Zig-Zag*”, (from *Discerner of Hearts and Other Stories*).

and rural space. This rural space is symbolized in the “tangled and overgrown garden” (572) and what extends beyond it, i.e., the plantation, the barracks where plantation workers live, and the countryside. Besides, the garden room has three doors: two leading to both poles of the bridge (the house and the garden); the third one leading to a side verandah that functions as the intermediate place where relations and affairs between these two poles/milieus are conducted: “[W]here the uncle sat on Sundays when the travelling barber came to cut his hair, and where visitors who were not up to the standard of the front verandah were received, standing” (572).

As I have stated previously, the liminal context of the garden room serves the boy to articulate his identity through the negotiation of elements from two sociocultural milieus. But this negotiation proves to be a conflicting process because the boy’s relationships with these two milieus are ambivalent. On the one hand, there is the sociocultural milieu represented by the figures of the boy’s aunt and uncle and the old man. In the case of the rural world of his aunt and uncle, the boy dislikes it because it is different from his original milieu⁴⁹, and because his stay with these middle class relatives does not derive from his desire but from his mother’s decision, which the boy might have interpreted as an imposition. However, the boy seems to recognize that he must accept this middle class world of his aunt and uncle because it is part of him (since his aunt and uncle are his family too); as the author asserts, it is a world that the boy “both loved and despised” (578). Besides, the boy’s ambivalent attitude toward his relatives’ world is revealed in his feelings toward his relatives; although the boy might accept them as part of his family and love them in a certain way, he does not really identify with them. This lack of identification situation of the boy with his relatives is made manifest by the boy himself in the context of the alternative world he creates. In

⁴⁹ In this story, the only reference to the boy’s original milieu is its being “small and snug” (575). Although the author does not identify the sociocultural milieu from which the boy comes, I am much inclined to identify it as one belonging to a lower class more greatly influenced by an of Afro-Creole culture when compared with the boy’s new middle class milieu. I base my assumption in the fact that this process of interaction between a rural, middle class and mulatto/light sociocultural milieu and a rural, low class and black sociocultural milieu is illustrated in most of the stories by Senior included in the collection *Summer Lightning and Other Stories* in which the main characters are children. These children generally effectuate a journey from an Afro-Creole and lower class to a Euro-Creole and middle class milieu, and their negotiation of sociocultural elements from both milieus, necessary for their articulation of identity proves to be always a conflicting process. In fact, I think that the author’s intention to produce “Summer Lightning” as a kind of tale (which will be examined later) has spared her the presentation of this theme in more explicit ways; being the abstract quality of this short story an important element for achieving her creative narrative purpose/intention.

the boy's imaginary world the figures of his aunt and uncle are excluded because he "couldn't see them stiff and proper quite fitting into and accepting the mysteries of this world" (573).

Similarly, the boy experiences an ambivalent feeling of attraction and rejection toward the old man. Firstly, the boy sees the old man as a curious and somehow nice stranger with whom he will share the room at times. Moreover, the boy begins to feel attracted by the old man's eccentric behavior based on precision, i.e., his actions performed "along lines of scientific exactitude" (574), and on concentration for the elaboration of invisible cat cradles (574). Thus, the boy grows fascinated with the old man and his ways, and learns to imitate him. This attraction to and imitation of the old man's ways makes the boy identify with the old man whose actions, as stated by the narrator, "gave the boy a strong sense of identification" (574). However, when their relationship gradually derives into an antagonistic co-existence in the room, the boy does no longer see the old man as a funny creature but as a presence that influences negatively the *magic* cosmos of the room through his ill nerves. Furthermore, the boy asserts his aversion toward the old man with his determination to maintain a physical distance from him, because the boy feels that if the old man touches him his imaginary world and even the real world would disappear (578).

On the other hand, there is a sociocultural milieu represented by Bro. Justice, and the boy seems to identify more clearly both with Bro. Justice and the milieu he represents. This identification can be probably explained in the fact that the boy associates Bro. Justice with the environment in which he himself has been living before coming to the house: "[Bro. Justice] was the only person with whom he felt comfortable" (574); and also by Bro. Justice's Rastafarianism, which helps to perceive a spiritual quality that makes Bro. Justice look self-assured and whole at the eyes of the boy. Moreover, the boy sees Bro. Justice as protective figure since he tells the boy that "he would be safe from lightning only in a place where there was no glass at all since every body knew that 'glass draw lightning', glass and 'shiny instrument'" (572). This piece of advice induces the boy to consider the garden room as the ideal place to hide from lightning during thunderstorms. Certainly, Bro. Justice feels responsible for the boy, thus, even though the boy neglects their relationship due to his incipient relationship with the old man, Bro. Justice keeps watching on the boy's and the old man's relationship and

“quietened his spirit by deciding that if ever the child should be in danger, Jehovah-Jah would give him a sign” (577).

The boy’s the identification with Bro. Justice is explained in the fact that Bro. Justice is the only “actual human being” that inhabits the imaginary world created by the boy (573) and the sole element of this world that does not and cannot be transformed. In this sense, the figure of Bro. Justice represents wisdom and a stable order, as asserted by the narrator: he, Bro. Justice, “knew everything, was right about everything, including the lightning⁵⁰” (573). Bro. Justice sees lightning as something positive, that is why he advises the boy not to be afraid of it; however, lightning is a common danger that the boy has learnt to cope with while hiding in the garden room. Therefore, the boy accepts Bro. Justice’s protection and advice but he does not identify with Bro. Justice’s Rastafarian perspective and does not consider Bro. Justice’s world as the sociocultural milieu where he will develop his life experience: “[T]he boy . . . had been able to enter [Bro. Justice’s] world, questioning only its superficial manifestations. The boy did not take anything from this world. The boy simply was” (576). Accordingly, the boy only accepts the sociocultural forms or manifestations of this world that will serve him to form his own cultural and social perspective in his life experience.

Therefore, in spite of the influence that Bro. Justice and the old man and the world of his relatives exert on him, the boy behaves as a self-conscious subject that, from his liminal position, refuses easy assimilations to one or the other milieu represented by these figures. In the context of the process of articulating cultural identity, this deliberate and self-conscious attitude of the boy’s not being determined by only one of these two milieus can be interpreted as the assertion of his right to construct a Caribbean identity that equally accepts the European and the African cultural legacies, as well as

⁵⁰ Olive Senior has referred to the symbolic role of summer lightning in this short story, as denoting both danger and illumination, (Senior, Appendix). For the boy it means danger, but for Bro. Justice it means illumination. In my opinion, the symbolism of the summer lightning should first be explained within the Caribbean geographical context, where these mid-afternoon summer thunderstorms are a quite frequent phenomenon. Its dual symbolism of danger and illumination, of good and evil, may be a representation of the disparities and controversies that have characterized the Caribbean as a socio-political and cultural region. A better explanation to this can be found in the analysis of the region made by Benitez Rojo in “The Repeating Island”, where he has theoretically approached the Caribbean through the paradigm of Chaos. In Senior’s story, the symbolism of lightning in the sense of illumination may be related to Bro. Justice’s religious beliefs, for whom “[l]ightning is Jah’s triple vision” that aims at searching him out (572). Consequently, the lightning can be interpreted as a sign of Jah, the Rastafarian God, for those who believe in Him.

other cultures present in the Caribbean social context, that is to say, a creolised identity that is not contained by only a specific position, cultural legacy or sociocultural milieu. In this sense, the boy seems to be borrowing the *Adamic* attitude that Derek Walcott confides to the New World man, who should construct his sociocultural experience and identity from the cultural legacies bequeathed on him, and on the basis of a personal reconciliation of cultural origins, to be staged away from a historical past of cultural antagonisms.⁵¹

In “Summer Lightning”, however, it is difficult for the boy to effect a personal reconciliation of the two sociocultural legacies or milieus that converge in his experience because they have been antagonistic to each other in the past; and even the one represented by his relatives and the old man has been antagonistic to the boy himself—specifically through the figure of the old man. In the case of the relationship between the boy’s relatives and Bro. Justice, the former (specifically his aunt) have been hostile to Bro. Justice because she opposes his Rastafarian ideology and social perspective, which runs counter to the *Westernized* cultural perspective of the middle class⁵². Besides, she dislikes Bro. Justice’s physical appearance, i.e., his beard and matted hair, characteristic of Rastafarians. In fact, the physical appearance of Rastafarians counters the norms imposed by a Eurocentric social and cultural discourse. It is due to the aunt’s animosity toward Bro. Justice that, as the narrator says, she rejoices vindictively when Bro. Justice is upset because the boy has preferred to stay in the company of the old man.

On the other hand, the old man’s antagonism toward Bro. Justice and the boy can be analyzed within a context of domination. Certainly, the old man, in the paradoxical context of his *rational* nervous illness, exhibits a dominating stance toward Bro. Justice and the boy⁵³. In relation to Bro. Justice, the old man exerts his power of domination

⁵¹ See Derek Walcott’s “The Muse of History”.

⁵² In his study of the middle class in postcolonial countries, Frantz Fanon criticizes its weakness or laziness to develop anti-colonial strategies to secure a true independent status for the new nation. Its laziness—Fanon states—results from its readiness to accept the Western sociocultural model, which it will try to develop afterwards (1963, 148-50).

⁵³ In this story, the narrator says that the old man was lucid at times (574) even though he was mentally ill. Senior has affirmed that the old man was really suffering from his nerves or was nervous, and that this kind of nervous illness was somehow common in the social context of her childhood: “[I]n my childhood people talked about other people ‘suffering from their nerves’ . . . meaning they were nervous, anxious or mentally ill (in a mild way)” (Senior, Appendix). Moreover, the human prototype of the lucid/mad person has become a recurrent theme in Caribbean literature. Senior seems to use it in her short story “You Think

upon him through surveillance, watching Bro. Justice insistently, which stands for a homosexual desire. This experience between the old man and Bro. Justice occurs in a time earlier to the one referred to in the narration, when the old man was young and used to walk around the property when visiting the house: “[Bro. Justice] could not escape from the gaze of this man. Even when he was fully occupied with his shores he could feel the [old] man watching him . . . He knew the [old] man was not watching the chickens or what he was doing. He was watching him. And watching him the way he should be watching a woman” (576). Thereafter, Bro. Justice tries to maintain a distance from the old man whenever the latter comes to visit as well as a defensive stance with respect to the old man’s dominating presence⁵⁴.

In relation to the boy, the old man manages to attract the boy’s attention through his eccentric behavior, which can be interpreted as an attempt to control the boy, who is occasionally occupying the space of the house that has always been his. Besides, the old man also exerts his power of domination on the boy through surveillance. He furtively surveys the boy’s presence in the room and makes him notice his awareness on that fact. The boy discovers that even in his hours of sleep, the old man spies on him: “[F]requently the man wasn’t sleeping at all but was surreptitiously watching him beneath half-closed eyes” (577). As a matter of fact, the boy is conscious of the dominating stance of the old man with respect to the room and to him, but he refuses to feel intimidated by the old man’s watching. The room becomes, then, a place of confrontation and a place to be defended. The boy perceives that the old man’s presence in the room affects the *magic*/spiritual cosmos of the room negatively: “[T]here were times when all the life with which he had once imbued the objects in the room seemed drained from them by the old man and his mysterious nerves” (577). But the boy’s response to the situation is consistent: “[H]e did not leave the room . . . something told him that if he once deserted, then even when the man left, he would never again in any

I Mad, Miss?” (1995), in which a street mad woman addresses passers-by and talks about her life experience. This prototype is also used by Velma Pollard in *Karl* in an ironic way, as we will see. By portraying this lucid/mad prototype, these authors seem to suggest that madness, when provoked by a social and cultural situation, may imply lucidity in some part of the individual’s self, and that this madness/lucidity phenomenon may be a common human state in Caribbean societies. This idea is developed further in the next chapter.

⁵⁴ Bro. Justice’s defensive attitude is symbolized in his possessing a machete, which serves him as an instrument for work, but also as an instrument of defense, that is why he cannot refuse to have it even though it is a metal instrument that may attract lightning. On the other hand, the symbolism of the machete as an instrument of defense and resistance may be explained in the fact that it was used by the maroons (fugitive slaves) to defend themselves and their gained freedom from slave owners.

shape or form be able to reclaim the room again” (577). Therefore, the boy develops personal strategies to neutralize the old man’s power: “Sometimes, sitting at the desk [the boy] would quickly turn toward the bed and feel triumphant if he caught the old man quickly closing his eyes” (578). Also, the boy decides to return the controlling gaze to the old man when he is sleeping. At these moments, the boy stands by the bed, looks at the old man’s face and tries “to summon up a feeling of power to counteract the nerves flowing through him” (578).

Then, the antagonism between the old man and the boy derives from their co-habitation in the garden room; that is to say, from the old man’s attempt to control the boy’s presence in the room, and from the boy’s attempt to save his special shelter from the negative influence of the old man’s presence. Their antagonism manifests itself directly in the last part of the story when the old man is determined to assault the boy: “[The old man’s] eyes were no longer weak and uncertain. They were firmly focused on the boy and they held a command” (578). Such command certainly meant that the boy should abandon the room. At this moment, Bro. Justice is the one to rescue the boy from domination and metaphorical death; he would be summoned to the garden room through the sign of Jah, the lightning, so that he can assist the boy (578).

This long-standing irreconciliation between the two sociocultural milieus from which the boy should negotiate his identity also reinforces the liminal position of the boy in this process of negotiation. This position of liminality asserted by the boy throughout the story responds to his need to assert a creolised identity that accepts two cultures and sociocultural milieus and becomes, actually, the central theme in Senior’s story. The author seems to ratify this self-conscious liminal position of the boy as the only valid way to effectuate a personal reconciliation of both sociocultural milieus and to assert selfhood and identity. It is the author’s intention to validate a liminal position in terms of the assertion of cultural identity that manifests itself in the narrative plane of this short story, and responds to the author’s own assertion of identity. Therefore, the creolised cultural identity of the author is being illustrated through the experience of the boy in this story⁵⁵, and is being articulated through her creative act of narrating it.

⁵⁵ The figure of the boy in the story may be a recipient of some of Senior’s attitudes during her childhood, because she seems to have borrowed from her personal experience as a child to produce this character (Senior, Appendix). Moreover, the life-experiences of the child-protagonists of her other short stories in

Senior's creolised cultural identity is, then, revealed in her appropriation of two narrative cultural discourses: a Euro-Creole and an Afro-Creole narrative discourses. In the first case, the author has used the standard English as the linguistic medium with which to produce this work of short prose fiction. It must be noted that the standard English language has been the linguistic medium of school education in the Caribbean and is related, then, to the Euro-Creole socialization of the Caribbean individual. In the second case, she has appropriated the storytelling tone of the tradition of oral narration in the Caribbean, which owes much to the African storytelling tradition.

In relation to language, most of Senior's literary work has been produced in standard English. However, the very standard English language used by Senior in "Summer Lightning" is a product of the process of creolisation. Certainly, the story has been written in Jamaican Standard English (JSE), which, as a cultural and linguistic manifestation of a creolised society, is, then, a creolised linguistic medium. This quality of JSE is ratified in the story through the presence of linguistic elements borrowed from other non-English languages spoken in the Caribbean like the word "machete" (572), and even from the English Creole, which is also a syncretic linguistic system. The presence of the Creole language in this narration is perceived, for example, in the phrase "and Bro. Justice he could never transform into anything but what he was" (573). This phrase shows a structure derived from the Creole language, which consists of the placement of the direct complement (*Bro. Justice*) before the subject and the verb of the sentence. Another example of the use of Creole language in the narration is the phrase: "[H]e felt any moment now would come Bro. Justice with his shiny machete" (578), in which the verb precedes the subject (*Bro. Justice*) and his shiny machete, and lexical/grammatical items like (he felt) *that* and *at* (any moment) are omitted. Moreover, the author introduces the Rastafarian speech to produce Bro. Justice's speech: "When Jah want to search *I* out Jah send the lightning to see right through *I*" (572. Emphasis added). As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, the Rastafarian speech is a linguistic variety of the English Creole. The example cited above illustrates one of the most peculiar features of the Rastafarian speech: the change of the objective pronoun *me* for the subjective form *I* in the first person singular. In fact, most of Senior's creative writing is pervaded by the Creole language that was probably the language

this collection that may be seen similar to the boy's, resemble the author's personal childhood experience, lived between a rural "darkskin" milieu and a middle class "lightskin" milieu (Fido 1990, 33-4).

spoken in the rural social context of her childhood and of her Afro-Creole socialization, as ratified by herself: “ I guess everything I write is infused with Creole words, syntax, rhythms, etc.” (Senior, Appendix). In spite of Senior’s influence of the storytelling and the fact that the storytelling practice in the Caribbean is usually made in Creole language, Senior’s use of the standard English in the narration of this story ratifies her conscious use of two cultural legacies, the African and the European, in her creative narrative.

In relation to the author’s appropriation of the storytelling mode, it can be stated that this oral tradition has actually influenced the creative narrative universe of Senior, which derives from the fact that storytelling has been a cultural practice commonly held in the social context where she grew up: “[S]torytelling was the big entertainment in my childhood. We had . . . anancy stories, Duppy stories (i.e. ghost stories), and of course stories from the western tradition —Bible stories and fairy tales . . . People also tended to narrate events as stories” (Senior, Appendix). Then, in this short story, the narrative tone seems to evoke the tone of an oral narration, which is produced, mainly, through the author’s intention to create a narrative atmosphere that draws from the collective atmosphere of the oral storytelling practice. For this, she introduces herself as another character of the story who observes what happens and relies on what she sees and hears in order to produce the story. Moreover, the tone of the oral narration is also manifest in the author’s use of a *hyperbolic tone*, proper of oral stories, that aims at keeping the readers/audience interested in the story being told; her intention of keeping the audience interested is reinforced by the atmosphere of mystery that she creates in the story.

Besides, the author appropriates the dramatic way of telling stories, which implies the use of syntactical structures proper of oral narration, of connecting formulas from the oral narrative mode, and at times, of an unelaborated rhetorical mode marked, mainly, by a lack of punctuation marks. Senior’s use of this unelaborated rhetorical mode and of connecting syntactical and lexical elements from oral narration aims at reproducing, in the written form, the informal speech tone of oral narration. The use of these narrative strategies has been conditioned through the author’s intention to produce a short fictional work that resembles an oral story, thus ratifying the oral quality of her story. Apart from the oral quality, “Summer Lightning” also shows musicality and humor, which may be regarded as common features of Caribbean short fiction and literature.

Regarding the narrative atmosphere of this narration, the author has intended to produce a collective atmosphere like that of storytelling practice. The narrator seems to renounce to her role as omniscient narrator—which appears mainly in third person narratives, in this story. The narrator introduces herself as another character of the story and moves in a second plane as an observer that later tells/narrates a situation that she has witnessed. It is precisely from this second plane of the observer that Senior, the narrator, asserts her reliance on a received oral narration that is found within the story. Her reliance on this received oral narration is asserted in the beginning of the story. “The man came to stay with them for a few weeks each year. For ‘his nerves’ they said” (572). This *they* refers to the boy’s aunt and uncle, to Bro. Justice, and to the people that inhabits the rural world depicted in the story; and these people may be seen as a kind of *talking* group of persons whose talk serves the narrator to construct the story she is telling and that may be also addressed to her. Consequently, the narrator both observes and listens to what this *talking* public has to say.

On the other hand, the author’s deliberate intention to credit what people say operates against her role as omniscient narrator, usually detached from the event or situation he/she is referring to in the narration, and brings her closer to the situation she is depicting in this story: “[The old man] had been coming each year for his nerves *as long as Bro. Justice could remember*. In the early days though, *nothing seemed too wrong with him*, he was then a good-looking man, *probably* the uncle’s age though now he looked twice as old” (576. Emphasis added). In this passage, the narrator brings forth the perspective of one of the characters, Bro. Justice; as if relying on what he *could remember* and not on the knowledge of the omniscient narrator about the events when shaping the story. And, after the narrator credits her reliance on the perspective of this character, she proceeds to narrate a situation between Bro. Justice and the old man when the latter was young and visited the house. Furthermore, the limited omniscience of the narrator is revealed in the phrases *nothing seemed* and *probably*. Since the author is part of the environment and the situation described in the story as an observer, her narration of facts is based on her perception of the observer/character and not on that of the observer/omniscient narrator. This perception of the observer/character is ratified at another instance: “and the box level with the green fluid in which reposed the eye, *or so it seemed*, that winked at him when he tilted” (573. Emphasis added).

It is interesting to notice that the liminal position of the author/narrator is asserted even in the narrator's intention to credit what the characters of the story say. In her description of the house, for example, the narrator does not provide a term to refer to the living room, instead she refers to this space of the house as "what the uncle called the living room and the aunt the parlour" (572). Therefore, the narrator refuses here to choose any of the two terms and seems to maintain a liminal attitude that may help her to find the appropriate term in order to name this geographical space. This intermediate position of the narrator may stand here for an intermediate position between cultural discourses: between an Anglo(Euro)-Creole cultural discourse (that of the aunt, who refers the English locution *parlour*) and a Caribbean discourse (that of the uncle and that is not Euro-Creole).

Furthermore, the influence of the oral storytelling tradition in this story is also revealed in a hyperbolic tone that pervades the whole story, which appears in oral narrations with the purpose of entertaining the audience. In her story, Senior does not only want to tell a story that appeals to the reader through its theme and content, but aim at entertaining a reading public that might be seen as an audience. At the lexical level, this hyperbolic tone is perceived in an abundant use of adverbs and adjectives that intensify the quality of the actions in the story, as in the following phrases: "[T]his advice pleased him *immensely* . . ." (573. Emphasis added); ". . . he was like a space traveler . . . flung *wondrously* upon the lonely country house" (574); ". . . he was *supremely self-conscious*" (574. Emphasis added); or ". . . he had been *extremely pleased* about the way in which the child could sit hours listening to his discourses" (576. Emphasis added).

However, the hyperbolic tone is more consciously conveyed in syntactical constructions, in which beautiful, poetic images are created through the use of similes and metaphors. This tone is perceived, for example, in the way the narrator describes the creation of the boy's imaginary world once the boy locks himself in the garden room: "It was as if when he closed the windows and doors, the doors of his mind flew open one after another, like living inside the heart of an opening flower" (573). At other instances, the hyperbolic images are reinforced by the repetition of or intensifying adverbial forms: "The child was also a novelty in Bro. Justice's life, for as he got

deeper and deeper into his religion, he found himself *more and more distanced* from the people around him, until he sometimes felt as remote as the furthest star” (576. Emphasis added). Besides, the narrator uses at times the syntactical formula *so* + adverb/adjective . . . + *that* . . . , which functions as an intensifier of the quality of the action, and which is also characteristic of oral narrations, as it can be notice in the following examples: “So fascinated was he by the old man that he no longer visited Bro. Justice” (574), and “So distressed did he [Bro. Justice] become that he took the unbelievable step of going to the aunt herself to plead with her please look after the little boy” (577). Here, the narrator places the hyperbolic formula at the beginning of the phrases and before the subject of the enunciation as a storyteller would do if he/she wanted to attract the audience’s attention⁵⁶.

Besides, the narrator develops strategies that aim at keeping the reader/audience interested in the narration/telling, like that of maintaining a kind of mystery throughout the story. This atmosphere of mystery is conveyed, mainly, around the old man’s nerves as the main reason for his visiting the house, and toward the end of the story she refers twice to the old man’s “mysterious nerves” (577, 578) but without offering some explanation about its meaning. Therefore, the narrator’s insistence on the old man’s nerves contributes to create an atmosphere of mystery that may increase and maintain the audience’s interest in the story.

Furthermore, the narrator’s appropriation of the role of storytelling mode by the narrator is ratified by the dramatic way in which she briefly tells the story of how Bro. Justice became a Rastafarian. When telling this story, the narrator uses syntactical structures characteristic of traditional storytelling and adds some dramatic mood and humor to the narration. The story begins: “*One night*, a passing Rastafarian had stopped off at the barracks where the penmen lived”, and by the middle of the story the narrator adds: “*It turned out that* this one, Bro. Naptali, had worked as a penman in the property *for three days and three nights* Bro. Naptali stayed with them, leaving at the crack of dawn as mysteriously as he had come”; concluding that “*Then suddenly one day* he [Bro. Justice] took off for no one knows where. He stayed away *forty days and forty nights*

⁵⁶ The hyperbolic tone in Senior’s narrative style can be found in other short stories, like “Lily, Lily” in *Arrival of the Snake Woman and Other Stories*, in which the omniscient narrator explicitly addresses the reader as if he/she were the audience (Bringas López, 229).

and suddenly . . . reappeared as Bro. Justice” (575. Emphasis added). The humorous tone is conveyed specially in this last part.

Moreover, the narrator uses connecting formulas related to the oral narrative mode. These formulas are used to refer to the sequence of events in oral narrations, for example: “Thus it came about that . . .” (573); “Then after a while . . .” (574); “Then one afternoon . . .” (578); “*So* he continued to watch the man . . .” (577. Emphasis added); and the adverb “now”, which appears several times and whose real intended meaning is *then* or *but* or *but then*⁵⁷. This changed meaning of *now* corresponds with an oral form of speech in which this word loses its connotation of presentness. In fact, the words *now* (in its intended meaning of *then*), *then*, *so*, and the expression *but then* are characteristic of oral narration, which has been ratified by the author who has asserted that she uses them “because they are really addressed to the listener. I guess I use them because I want to capture the informal speaking voice” (Senior, Appendix). In general, due to the strong influence of the oral narrative mode in this story, the narrator seems to be telling the story more than narrating it as a written story.

Finally, the narrator uses a rhetorical mode that in some instances lacks the specific elaborateness and style of written narratives. This unelaborated rhetorical mode can be perceived in the following passage: “The [garden] room was the smallest of the house. It had no glass, no mirrors, just a bed, the uncle’s desk, and ten green jalousies. In fact most of the house was painted green since the aunt thought it was a restful color for the eyes” (572). The simple rhetorical mode of this phrase is perceived in its directness at conveying meaning and in the omission of elements that would make the phrase look more complete and proper according to the norms of *written* narration. Accordingly, the phrase should have been written thus: “the room was the smallest of the house. It had no glass nor mirrors, (it had) just(only) a bed, the uncle’s desk, and ten green jalousies. In fact(,) most of the house was painted green since the aunt thought (that) it was a restful color for the eyes”. Besides, the rhetorical attitude of the oral narrator/teller can be noted in a non-emphatic use of punctuation marks, which stands for the freedom of oral speech that allows the speaker to make pauses when he/she deems it necessary. Thus the lack of punctuation marks can be noticed in this sentence: “At first [the boy’s] father

⁵⁷ The use of *now* meaning *then* or *but* also appears in *Karl*, p. 179, in an episode of the novella in which the narrator/protagonist seems to talk to a reading public or audience that seems to be present.

and mother sometimes appeared but his memories of them got dimmer and dimmer and finally he saw them only as through the one winking and mysterious green eye in his uncle's box level which swam up and down in a fluid" (573). In fact, long statements similar to this one appear occasionally in the narration. They appear inserted after longer passages formed by shorter syntactical units or sentences. This structure of short syntactical units grouped together and mediated by long sentences creates an inner rhythm within the narration that is better perceived if one reads the story aloud.

Therefore, "Summer Lightning" shows a musicality perceived in an internal rhythm that is brought forth by its narrative structure. The alternation of passages of short syntactical units or sentences and long sentences may be seen as providing a pattern of musical improvisation, marked by variations of rhythm (a rapid rhythm in the passages of short syntactical units and a lower rhythm in passages with long sentences)⁵⁸. Moreover, the rhythm in the level of the narration is perceived, for example, through the repetition of a lexical element as in the following passage: "Adjoining [the garden room] was the side verandah *where* the full blue-seam crocus bags of pimento were sometimes stacked, *where* the uncle sat on Sundays when the travelling barber came to cut his hair, and *where* visitors who were not up to the standard of the front verandah were received, standing" (572. Emphasis added). Here the repetition of the word *where* produces a parallelism of syntactical structures that is deemed to provide rhythm in written narrations. On the other hand, the musicality of the narration may also be provided by rhymes that occur in words within sentences, as it can be noticed in these examples: "[The boy] knew instinctively that if in the world he had nothing *else*, he was still *rich* because he had *space* which allowed him to explore secret places inside *him*" (573. Emphasis added); or "[The boy's aunt] was thus pleased in a vindictive *way* when the old man came to *stay* and, for the time being *anyway*, so attracted the child's attention that he seemed to have . . . forgotten about the Rastafarian" (575-6. Emphasis

⁵⁸ The idea of Caribbean literature as a kind of musical creative expression has been defended by E. K. Brathwaite. He has specifically interpreted some Caribbean novels and works of poetry as following the pattern of improvisation as it happens in jazz. This improvisation is manifest in the variations of tone, or rhythm, or through the repetition of a theme. Brathwaite has asserted that the musical pattern of improvisation is more certainly to be found in Caribbean literary works that grapple with folk forms and folk experience (1969, 339). Senior's short story here does not explicitly grapple with folk experience due to its symbolic quality, but the influence of the storytelling folk tradition in the creative narrative universe of Senior that is revealed in her story must have contributed to the presence of this kind of musical pattern in this narration.

added). The occurrence of these rhymes may be also influenced by the poetic inclinations of Senior who, as I claimed before, is also a poet.

Apart from the humorous tone illustrated in the part of the story in which the narrator has consciously appropriated the oral narrative intention of the storyteller to tell the brief story about Bro. Justice's becoming a Rastafarian, humor is perceived at other instances in the narration, as the following example demonstrates: "At table [the old man's] hands shook so much that the boy would watch in fascination as . . . he missed his mouth and the carrots would sail across the aunt's highly polished rosewood and mahogany floor" (574). In this fragment, not only is the situation comical, but the narrator has also managed to produce the situation comically in the level of the narration with phrases like *he missed his mouth* and *the carrots would sail* across the floor, that was, besides, *highly polished*. As a matter of fact, humor is characteristic of Senior's fictional works, being one of her most humorous works her short story "Do Angels Wear Brassieres?", also from *Summer Lightning and Other Stories*.

In sum, the combination of the oral tone and the standard English language (JSE) in the narration of "Summer Lightning" points at the author's creolised identity and liminal position between Afro-Creole and Euro-Creole sociocultural manifestations: "In my writing I am trying to fuse the oral and scribal traditions" (Senior, Appendix). From this liminal position in the assertion of cultural identity, ratified by the liminal position of the boy in this story, Senior has managed to accept the several cultural legacies present in her Caribbean social context, a process that is ratified by Stuart Hall in his second definition about identity articulation as a constant process of *becoming* in which the sociocultural manifestations of the individual's original milieu are brought to play alongside the different and new ones. Therefore, Senior's literary work has become a liminal creative space for the articulation of her creolised cultural identity: it has become a *garden room* that has allowed her to explore her human and literary sensitivity from the perspective of creolisation, and join and let run in creative and narrative ways that many cultural rivers flowing within her Caribbean identity.

Chapter Three
The Alienated Sociocultural Self: *Karl*, by Velma Pollard

mad people whisper late
 sane people's early dreams
 beware my inmost thoughts
 that wait mad mind's release.

V. Pollard

The story of Karl, narrated by Velma Pollard, illustrates an unsatisfactorily developed process of articulating cultural identity, because Karl is unable of negotiating sociocultural elements and perspectives provided by an Afro-Creole and a Euro-Creole sociocultural milieus that define his social life experience. Karl's life is split between these two sociocultural milieus. He spends his childhood in a rural, black and lower class Afro-Creole milieu; and his adult life in an urban, middle class and mixed race Euro-Creole milieu. He cannot achieve a positive convergence and complementation of these two sociocultural experiences in order to construct his identity and attain a more secure sense of selfhood because the social context in which his life experience occurs—that of Jamaica in the 1970s— does not favor the positive negotiation of these two sociocultural milieus/worlds. This social context in Karl's life experience is strongly influenced by a European/Western cultural discourse that favors a Euro-Creole cultural and social perspective which will determine his life. As a result, and contrary to the liminal experience of the boy in “Summer Lightning” that allows him to avoid being strongly influenced and assimilated by a specific sociocultural milieu, the process of articulating selfhood and identity in *Karl* is marked by a practically total insertion of the subject (Karl) into the Euro-Creole milieu urban, middle class and mulatto sociocultural milieu⁵⁹.

Karl is a black village boy who succeeds in scaling the social ladder through secondary and university education. He studies in a respectable college in Kingston as an assistant student, and later is awarded a scholarship to study in Canada. Being abroad, he

⁵⁹ In this story, Pollard refers to the mulatto middle class with the adjective *brown*; in Jamaica, the terms *brown*, *Red* or *Red-ibo* are used to refer to this mixed race middle class.

experiences for the first time the problem of class and color differences in Jamaica through his relationship with Pearl, a middle class, mulatto Jamaican girl. Later he meets Daphne, a black girl from his village, who has managed to study and train in England as a nurse and has gone to Canada to work and send money home to help her mother. Karl and Daphne marry and live in Kingston, Jamaica; but, once married, they perceive personal fulfillment in their society in different ways. While she strives to integrate within this urban, middle class, pro-Western-culture social milieu, Karl starts to detach himself from it and to confront the problem of his divided self: a public self (Karl as the accomplished bank executive) in opposition to a private self (Karl, with a class and racial/color consciousness conditioned by his lower class, black, and rural background, which holds the other Karl in contempt). The struggle between his public and private selves leads Karl to a mental breakdown that manifests itself one day when Karl grows out of a bitter rage and attacks, physically, the executive director of the bank where he works. At this moment, Karl's universe of private and public selves that has been held together until then collapses. He alienates himself from physical reality and reconsiders his life through his inner self, in his mind.

The story is conceived as a monologue in which Karl, as a *lucid* neurotic, renders a critical insight into his life. His monologue takes place while Karl is in hospital for his mental illness medical treatment until he dies. While he is in hospital, Karl develops a relationship with one of the hospital employees who always comes to serve supper and tells him about daily news; this employee represents a Rastafarian social and political perspective. The story ends with an epilogue in which the author introduces the story of Kenneth, who was born in Karl's same village (Hopeville), became a business manager, and now has decided to quit living in the urban and middle/upper class context of Kingston to start a new living in his village. Actually, the author introduces Kenneth as the successful counterpart of Karl, since Kenneth has been able to solve the dilemma posed by different sociocultural experiences in his social life.

In order to understand Karl's failure as social human being and the reasons for his unsatisfactory realization of his articulation of identity, it is necessary to examine his experience within the postcolonial sociocultural context of Jamaica, in which Karl's process of articulating selfhood and identity takes place. It is a postcolonial context that

helps Karl to ascend in the social ladder through a *Westernized* education, a process that has also entailed his living as anOther self.

Karl is a postcolonial individual whose experience has been marked by Otherness, issue already analyzed in Chapter One. His personal identity has been constructed from the Western cultural perspective. Karl's Otherness, then, is the result of a colonial cultural imposition upon his society, which has assimilated Western social and cultural standards. As the author seems to suggest, Karl's Otherness is given in his becoming a *self-made man*—which underscores a Western individualistic conception of the human being in contrast to an African and/or Afro-Caribbean conception that reinforces the collective or communal nature of the individual's social experience:

Im is a self-made man
im mek imself
das why im mek no good (*Karl* 115)⁶⁰.

These introductory lines of the story presented in the form of a chorus of people allude to Karl's personal and mental failure to construct his personal and social identity. Accordingly, Karl could not succeed as a harmonious social human entity because he made himself. A self-made man, in this Jamaican sociocultural context, is a person whose fundamental goal in life is to move higher in the social ladder and become a member of the middle or upper class. The process of his/her social mobility generally entails a) cultural estrangement (detachment from an Afro-Creole cultural cosmos strongly influenced by the African cultural legacy); b) a sociocultural separation from the Afro-Creole sociocultural milieu, which is usually black and lower class; and sometimes, c) diminished self-worth at the eyes of the Afro-Creole community⁶¹. These self-made men have usually ascended in the social ladder through education, which has allowed them to obtain better economic and social opportunities.

⁶⁰ Velma Pollard uses several varieties of Jamaican English Creole to render the story of Karl, constructed as a monologue and that it includes dialogues, proverbs, and songs, introduced in mesolectal linguistic varieties, as is the case of these lines. The use of these mesolectal linguistic varieties by Pollard in this novella will be examined later.

⁶¹ References to the self-made man in a Jamaican social context appear in Senior's short story "The Glass Bottom Boat" from *Discerner of Hearts and Other Stories*. In this story the term is used to describe the protagonist's father and the way in which he and his business partners came out of poverty to run a Company. Besides, the prototype of the self-made man can be found in the character of Beka's father in the novel *Beka Lamb*, by Belizean writer Zee Edgell.

In fact, in the colonial and postcolonial Anglophone Caribbean experience, education (following the Western cultural perspective) was the main vehicle for social mobility:

For the large and predominantly Black nation upward mobility was seen to be solely via education. To become a doctor, lawyer, teacher or professional civil servant was tangible proof that servitude and all its unpleasant memories had been left behind if not eradicated. The sooner they could put these memories behind them and become more like the upper classes the better (Philip 272).

In this quotation, Trinidadian-born Marlene N. Philip describes part of the process that favored the development of the English Caribbean middle class in the era of decolonization and independence, but the idea of the importance of education for social mobility had already been taken for granted during the colonial period, where the European colonizing cultural discourse had dictated that to become a (Western-) educated person was synonymous of civility. Consequently, the Afro-Caribbean could come out of *darkness*—an image of savagery and racial inferiority constructed by this European colonizing discourse— only if they embraced the culture of the colonizer. Colonial schools were the principal agents in this process of assimilation of European culture, and the sources of learning (books on language, literature, religion, history and geography) conveyed the culture of the colonizer and an Eurocentric cultural perspective.

In Pollard's story, Karl becomes a self-made man because he has managed through his studies to leave his poor, rural background behind and become a member of the urban Jamaican middle class. But this social improvement has been possible because his society has favoured the change that responded to the general will. As Karl asserts, his mother, his teacher and he himself had taken for granted what the European colonizing culture, metaphorically embodied in a "long-haired maiden of . . . water gullies" had dictated or sung: "Ef you cyan cook Daddy white rice/ You cyan go a Daddy yard" (124); in other words, if you cannot/do not serve Daddy you cannot enter his place/social milieu. The *double entendre* of the lyrics lies in the symbolism of Daddy as the white colonizer and in the act of cooking white rice for him as an act of submission to him. And Karl expands the meaning of the song to include and refer to the submission of slaves and descendants of slaves to the colonizer's culture: "If you can't

read Daddy you can't buy Daddy house" (125). This is how Karl addresses the correlation between education and social mobility in his social context.

As I stated before, Karl lives most of his adult life through an(other) self. In his *rational* examination of his personality, he is able to distinguish his two selves or the two men in him: "[T]he man you feel you are in truth [his private self or his Self] and the man your life has made you and everything in the circumstances around you demand that you have to be" (188). This second man or public self is his Other—how this colonial Other emerges is a question that has received critical analysis by postcolonial scholars, such as Frantz Fanon, Homi Bhabha, and Stuart Hall⁶². The process in the emergence of the Other in Karl began in his school days when he consciously accepted that studying would guarantee his social survival, as he says: "[A]fter a while you get hooked [on studying], and is not teacher Brown, or Aunti [his mother] or anybody why you press on with it; is just you..." (124). Thereafter Karl's life experience will be marked by the simultaneous presence of his Self and his Other. When he becomes aware of his double personality, he establishes a division and takes sides with his original Self, which entails a state of distancing from his urban/mulatto/middle class context. It is from his distanced, conscious Self that Karl analyzes the process of acquiring his Otherness and compares it to the action of fitting a borrowed, uncomfortable suit: "I never for once questioned the Babylon zoot zoot I was so busy fixing up: Latin, History, Religious Knowledge" (124); or a steel cap: "is a pity you don't find out is a steel cap till you spend so many years getting it" (188). Throughout his monologue Karl expresses his disagreement with and rejection of the *Othering* quality of his personal and social experience.

In fact, the controversial nature of colonial and postcolonial identities lies in the fact that Otherness becomes an inevitable and inherent condition. The dynamics of the relation between self and other in (post)colonial identities is explained by Homi Bhabha in a dual process of interaction and opposition. Self and other are not separate entities

⁶² In his psychological study of the colonized black subject, Fanon presents the dynamics of the colonial Other in the intimate interaction of black skin and white masks: the black man adopts the cultural perspective of the white colonizer and is, at the same time, "overdetermined" by a white Eurocentric cultural discourse (1986, 116). As Fanon suggests, the black subject, by imitating the white colonizer, came eventually to accept and accommodate him/herself into the stereotypes the white man created for him/her; this phenomenon of passive conformation to the colonizer's cultural norms is described by Stuart Hall as the "internalization of the self as other" (1996 "New," 445).

within the individual; although they seem to stand in opposition to one another they complement each other. This ambivalence is reinforced by a complex social context that sometimes forces the individual to construct his/her experience both participating in and alienating him/herself from this complex social reality. To Bhabha, the ambivalence of the colonial social context turns the individual into a liminal, alienated image that is neither Self nor Other, but “the otherness of the Self inscribed in the perverse palimpsest of colonial identity” (44), where Self and Other necessarily converge. Karl’s rejection of his Other, that he sees opposed to his Self, contributes to his suffering a mental breakdown. He is unable to negotiate his Self and his Other or the two sociocultural experiences his two selves represent. In order to achieve such negotiation, Karl, the liminal postcolonial subject caught between two sociocultural milieus, should assert his rural, black Afro-Creole sociocultural background and experience while accepting the positive side of his experience as Other in the Euro-Creole *Westernized* milieu. Accepting this other side is essential because it provides a European/Western cultural reference which has shaped, together with that from Africa, his Caribbean identity⁶³. However, Karl’s awareness of the problem of his divided self makes him adopt a liminal position of distancing from his social context. It will be precisely from his distancing position that Karl will attempt to reconcile his two selves and negotiate in order to construct his identity.

But in the circumstances of Karl’s life experience, such reconciliation cannot be effected because he has almost totally credited his Other through his insertion in the urban, middle class social milieu. His class and color consciousness has been awakened too late and it seems practically impossible to return to a certain intermediate point within the journey/process where he can effectuate the negotiation for asserting his identity in his own terms. On the other hand, given the pro-Western-culture nature of his society, a return to and/or positive assertion of an Afro-Creole sociocultural milieu is far from being socially acceptable. However, Karl needs to validate this Afro-Creole milieu which he feels closer to his Self. As a matter of fact, Karl feels that he can recover his Self through silence and solitude in Hopeville, his rural village. But in the

⁶³ Furthermore, the Other experience has usually furthered the context for the Caribbean subject’s necessary process of negotiation, since it is generally from the *Westernized* Euro-Creole context of the Other that the subject would try to effectuate such negotiation. It has been especially true for many writers/intellectuals whose personal and social development has been marked by a Westernized Euro-Creole education, and it is from this social context that they attempt through their work to re-validate the Afro-Creole culture and assert a cultural identity.

circumstances of Karl's life experience, this need for silence and Self-searching will be understood as insanity: "If I leave this place to go to Hopeville and sit upon a stone and look at the bushes...; or if I try to sit in the cave in all that cool stillness . . . you will her that Miss Elvy [his mother] bright son study till im tun fool" (174). Then, Karl is forced to remain in the vicious circle of the urban, middle class, and mulatto social milieu, until his ontological experience as Self and Other collapse and he alienates himself from physical reality. Karl perceives this withdrawal to the inner self as the only way to escape his unpleasant social reality.

Unfortunately, as a result of this alienation from physical reality, the alienated Self-person becomes neurotic. Neurosis is, as it is described in *The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, a relatively mild mental illness that is not caused by organic disease, and involves symptoms of stress, such as depression, anxiety and obsessive behavior, without a radical loss of touch with reality. Accordingly, a person becomes neurotic through the action and influence of external factors but maintains links with the external reality that has affected him/her emotionally. Therefore, I would say that Karl's mental state can be described as neurotic (though Karl has not lost his rationality), which is also the case of Mass Clifton and Mr. Rinyon, other two mad characters introduced in the story. However, Karl's neurotic state is controversial because we would have to question, then, whether a mad/neurotic person can elaborate a monologue in a rational way as Karl does. This is, perhaps, the greatest irony produced by Pollard's literary style⁶⁴: a mentally ill person who is able to look critically at his experience against the background of a complex and deceiving social context.

As a matter of fact, the neurotic individual is a frequent social phenomenon in Caribbean societies where he or she is usually a street character, hence his/her recurrent presence in Caribbean literature. For example, through Karl's narration we are introduced to the plight of Mass Clifton and Mr. Rinyon, two neighbors of Hopeville who, as Karl says, "ran off their minds to find their silence and blocked out everybody" (171) probably in their need of searching their true selves. Mass Clifton used to be a

⁶⁴ The use of irony combined with humor in this story has been commented upon by several critics (Mordecai and Wilson xii).

teacher and, according to people's comments, he turned mad due to too much studying or to some kind of witchcraft (*obeah*) that was worked on him. One might be tempted to think that the cause for Mass Clifton's actual situation is similar to that of Karl. On the other hand, Mr. Rinyon's madness is said to derive from a traumatic war experience (probably through his enrollment in World War II, since many Caribbean soldiers went to the war to the favor of England). Similarly, in "A Brief Conversion", Travey makes reference to several mad people that have become popular in his village. Their names tell of their dislocated sense of selfhood and identification: Priscilla, Mussolini, Science Man, Corporal, Britain, and Graham. Some of them succeeded in improving their social status and by some reason —ambition; unwillingness to accept a dishonest, urban, middle/upper class environment; fallen pride; etc.— ended in social and mental disease⁶⁵. Usually, the neurotic character is not seen as belonging to a household or family but to the community; his/her history and celebrity/notoriety becomes part of the community's history, as Travey asserts in "A Brief Conversion" when referring to these mad characters: "This was our folklore" (25).

There are, certainly, reasons for the presence of a neurotic character in Caribbean literature, and these reasons are to be found in the Caribbean writer's purpose to critically address his/her social reality through fiction. The Caribbean writer has been frequently seen as a kind of social reformer that assesses and criticizes through fiction or poetry the wrongs of his/her colonial and postcolonial society. In my opinion, these authors' representation of madness in literature is an attempt to provoke a reflection on the causes behind this madness, which are to be found in the social and cultural reality of the individual's experience, as postulated by Frantz Fanon. Fanon asserted that neurosis was produced by a cultural situation, defined by a European cultural domination in a colonial context. Thus, the colonized subject was induced to decode his immediate reality through the European cultural perspective: "[W]e can say that every neurosis, every abnormal manifestation in an Antillean [Caribbean subject] is the product of his cultural situation. In other words, there is a constellation of postulates, a series of propositions that slowly and subtlety —with the help of books, newspapers, schools and their texts, advertisements, films, radio— work their way into one's mind

⁶⁵ See "A Brief Conversion", pp. 23-5. Another neurotic prototype in the social reality and literature of the English Caribbean is the man who, pretending to be the new Messiah, looks forward to being crucified. It has been recreated by Naipaul in his short story "Man-man". It also appears in Lovelace's novel *The Dragon Can't Dance*, and Selvon's novel *The Lonely Londoners*.

and shape one's view of the world of the group to which one belongs". The colonial black subject came gradually to accept European cultural propositions, including the belief that blackness of skin stands for evil, savagery, and immorality. Then, a process of cultural self-loathing (of the African culture) took place and the black subject started to mimic the cultural forms of the colonizer. In general, the Afro-Caribbean subject was induced and taught, mainly through education, to partake of a white, Eurocentric "collective unconscious," that functioned in opposition to the positive validation of the African cultural tradition (Fanon 1986, 81-197).

In regard to literature, it has been Evelyn O'Callaghan's analysis the first serious and important attempt to analyze the mad character in Caribbean fiction⁶⁶. She proposes a view of the fictional mad prototype as an "ontologically insecure" person (92) whose experience of self is as a mind or true self divided from and in opposition to a body or false self/selves. For O'Callaghan, the image of the mad character (woman, in this case) in Caribbean fiction stands a metaphor of a Caribbean society that lacks self-assurance and autonomous (cultural) self-worth (103). Her conclusions are deserving:

The interior schisms dramatized in fiction may be interpreted as the symptoms of the dangerous lack of ontological security still prevalent in our region — manifested in continuing *outward directedness*: continuing regard for foreign culture, denigration of local traditions, the need to seek an elusive *reality* in the metropolis, or to play out roles adopted from imported models/ideals— all revealing a lack of secure pride in our society and its image (104).

The neurotic state of the Caribbean individual is then a consequence of the continuing unstable nature of Caribbean societies, and of their lack of a positive social and cultural integration. Since culture constitutes the foundation of any society, asserting cultural autonomy can be considered as the first step for social development and for raising pride in one's society, which, as O'Callaghan asserts, is fundamental for the sociocultural well-being of the individual, the community and the society at large. The Afro-Caribbean writer, then, by attempting to validate an Afro-Caribbean sociocultural space through fiction, contributes to assert a cultural identity that sustains the social and cultural development of his /her society.

⁶⁶ See O'Callaghan's "Interior Schisms Dramatised: The Treatment of the *Mad* Woman in the Work of Some Female Caribbean Novelists".

It is my assumption that madness is the central thematic source of *Karl*, and that it has been used by Pollard as an ironic vehicle to criticize a social situation in Jamaica in the 1970s⁶⁷. Madness, as a theme, has enabled the author to trigger social critique through the portrayal of Karl's social failure, which is a consequence of his society's inability to support the individual in his/her personal and social growth. Moreover, Karl's state of alienation conditioned by his madness enables the narrator to take a detached position as well, from which she will look critically and ironically at the character's experience and social situation that she will convey in the story. As a matter of fact, Karl's madness becomes the thematic ground upon which Pollard constructs this fictional space that also serves her to assert a cultural identity. Pollard's creative style in this novella is perceived in her use of irony in both thematic and narrative levels; in the episodic structure of the story which reveals Pollard's appropriation of the storytelling oral tradition; in her use of diverse narrative strategies like the inclusion of songs that, together with an abundant use of popular sayings, also reinforce the oral quality of this narration; the use of polyvocal narration; and, finally, in her use of different varieties of Creole.

Pollard's use of irony in this narrative work is shown at two levels. The first one is that of the theme of the story, since Pollard has ironically chosen Karl's state of madness to convey her critical perspective toward the social and cultural reality in question. And it is through Karl's monologue —constructed through the first person narration— that the reader perceives the author's voice. In the following passage, for example, Karl ironically refers to the hardship his education entailed for his mother:

Cocoa to reap, canes to cut, vegetable garden to weed ... poor Aunti! And later . . . Aunti nodding seriously . . . when she tried to keep me company so her bright boy so could do well in his education and have a future. What a future! God bless Aunti in all her loving ignorance! (121).

In the narrative level, Pollard's use of irony with respect to the social and cultural situation she is conveying in the story is revealed in her use of several Creole varieties to produce Karl's speech. Here the irony lies in the fact that even though Karl has been educated in the standard English language, his monologue is produced mostly in a

⁶⁷ Pollard has declared having written the story in 1974 and that Karl's social and personal failure and death suited her purpose to make a social statement. (Pollard, Appendix).

variety of Creole closer to Jamaican Standard English (JSE), which means that his true language is Creole. The same happens in the Epilogue with Kenneth who, in spite of being educated in the standard English he speaks a variety of Creole closer to JSE, which helps Pollard to validate Jamaican (Caribbean) cultural identity, as it will be seen later.

Furthermore, Pollard has appropriated the storytelling mode of the Afro-Creole oral tradition to create this narration. Structurally, the novella is constructed in episodes, and may also be perceived as a kind of theater representation, in which each episode stands for a different scene. Each episode has a title or introductory statement. Thus, in the first episode or scene “Enter Karl...” introduces Karl, the protagonist of the story and first character to appear *on stage*. The following episodes introduce other characters relevant to Karl’s story, such as his mother (Aunti), his grandfather (Gramps), and his wife (Miss Daphne), as well as events or facets in Karl’s life.

The construction of this work as a set of episodes suggests the appropriation of the cyclic mode of storytelling practice/performance. As it has been referred to in Chapter One, the storyteller frequently creates a cycle of tales related or through the presence of a central character in them. The episodes in this novella may be seen as tales or stories with which the author constructs a single long story, and Karl’s life experience becomes the linking point of all the episodes. In addition, Karl is given the role of storyteller to tell his story in episodes or small stories, each of them dealing with characters and events that converge and shape that story. He also tells the stories of other characters marginal to his personal story, such as Mass Clifton, Mr. Rinyon, and Coaly (the Hindu coal vendor). In these brief narrations, Karl abandons the first person narration and uses the traditional third person narration of storytelling, which reappears in the Epilogue, the final episode of the story narrated by Pollard. Here she presents the story of Kenneth who, like Karl, grew up in Hopeville, went to college abroad, and is a Jamaican professional; but he has found a way to succeed personally and socially living in his rural, Afro-Caribbean community. Then, the epilogue, as the concluding section of a storytelling session, provides a teaching: the validation of an Afro-Creole sociocultural universe as an alternative to Karl’s failure in the process of searching and asserting his identity.

Apart from the cyclic mode expressed in the form of the narration as a set of episodes and the teaching offered in the Epilogue, the appropriation of the storytelling tradition by Pollard in this narration is revealed in the fact that she ratifies the presence of an audience to which the story of Karl is told. This audience, as observed earlier, is identified from the beginning by the chorus of people that opens the narration and addresses an audience: “Masters, who will define what good is?” (115). With this question, it seems that this imaginary audience is being invited to participate in the creation of the story. As a matter of fact, Karl, the narrator, addresses this audience at several instances; he does it specially by appealing to the perspective of the reader through the second person singular pronoun *you*. The episode “Interlude”, for example, is narrated taking into account the presence of the reader/audience, and the narrator addresses them using a friendly, familiar tone: “You see when you have a job that pays you enough to live on you don’t even have to exercise you[r] mind on the business of what to do to find a little *roast*” (179). Here Karl speaks actually of himself and invites the reader/audience to share his own perspective, to understand his situation. Later he addresses them more directly with questions: “[W]ho you accustomed to see at Constant Spring Golf Club playing? Anybody like you?” (179). As it shows, the narrator identifies with the audience, which he sees belonging to his same social class, and at the same time, he aims at making the audience identify with him. Like the cyclic mode, the presence of this audience equally denotes an influence from the oral tradition of storytelling and strengthens the oral quality of this narration.

Moreover, Pollard reinforces *Karl’s* oral quality through her use of songs. She introduces lyrics of popular songs and a work song⁶⁸. The episode “Karl...stranger” opens with a popular song whose content evokes, metaphorically, the process by means of which Karl becomes aware of class and color differences in his Jamaican society, which is illustrated in the episode that refers to his relationship with Pearl:

Show me the way to go home

⁶⁸ The use of songs to introduce a narration is characteristic of Pollard’s creative style. For example, in the short story “Gran” in her collection of short stories *Considering Woman* (1989), a popular child song conveys the thematic line of the story, and each episode of this short story is introduced by a fragment of this song (Bringas López 226).

I am tired I want to go to bed
 I took a cup o' Coca Cola
 And it fly right in my head ... (141).

In this episode, Karl's excitement about his relationship with Pearl while studying together in Canada vanishes when he learns that Pearl would not want them to be engaged, because her mother would not accept Karl's lower class background. Moreover, in the episode about his grandfather, a work song is introduced through the voice of Gramps (portrayed as a humorous and tireless storyteller and as a great singer):

Blackbird go eat Busha corn
 Blackbird go eat Busha corn
 When Busha come I will tell him
 Seh Blackbird go eat busha corn ... (131).

Like the work songs of Caribbean folklore, Gramp's work song shows a *double entendre* in the figures of the Blackbird (the black field slave) and Busha (the master), and refers to the tense relationships between the black field slave and the black house servant who betrays his race or group and takes side with the master. This work song as well as the figure of Gramps are used by Pollard to evoke a collective memory that ensured the transmission of oral history and folklore from elder to young generations, and that has been fundamental in the process of social development of children in the Afro-Caribbean community.

Furthermore, Karl's narration abounds on popular sayings in a popular idiom, which once more underscores the orality of Pollard's story. These sayings or proverbs convey a didactic purpose or, like a chorus, comment on Karl's specific dilemma or a social situation. Some examples of proverbs are: "Country people say the pen is lighter than the cutlass" (123), which means that education can spare you the physical exercise of farm work; or "Who the cap fit, wear it; who the cap don't fit had bloody well better wear it too"(188), which refers to Karl's social dilemma, suggesting that he should adjust himself to the Euro-Creole urban, middle class social milieu because it was the kind of social experience that his society accepted and supported. Also, the proverb "Every day [the] bucket go[es] a [to the] well, one day the bottom will leave there"

(183) uttered by the hospital employee who identifies with Rastafarian perspective alludes to the social tension between the ruling class and the police and the socially depressed class, of which Rastafarians were part. The use of this same proverb by reggae singer Bob Marley in his song “I Shot the Sheriff” (1973) may have inspired the author to use it as a distinctive cultural connotation within the Jamaican sociocultural context. In fact, the Creole language in which the story of Karl is referred is pervaded by this popular idiom of which proverbs are an inherent part. The frequent use of proverbs in people’s speech reveals that they are an extended practice of popular wisdom which is ratified by Pollard: “Our land is full of roadside philosophers” (161).

The polyvocal narrative mode is perceived in Karl through the presence of different voices identified in songs (chorus) and, specifically, storytellers. One voice is that of the author, that appears at the beginning to introduce Karl’s monologue and reappears in the Epilogue to conclude the story that she is telling. The author’s voice is expressed in JSE and uses the third person narration which identifies her as the omniscient narrator. But the author abandons her narrating role and allows Karl —through a first person monologue— to tell his story from his own perspective. Moreover, Karl’s story is completed through other narrative voice: that of Daphne (Karl’s wife), who is the narrator in the episode “Daph’s side” to refer her views on Karl’s traumatic experience and her role into it, ratifying their disagreement on sociocultural perspectives. Daphne’s speech also occurs as a monologue. Pollard’s narrative, then, clearly shows a performance quality in how various characters (narrators and/or storytellers), chorus and audience converge to tell/perform Karl’s story; all of which ratifies the collective nature of the polyvocal mode and of English Caribbean fiction.

Furthermore, the creolised identity of the author is revealed in her use of language. Pollard uses the JSE to introduce Karl’s monologue and to conclude —in the Epilogue— the story she is narrating, which reinforces her role as the author of a fictional story that is narrated by different characters. Then, these fictional Jamaican characters who speak Creole are representatives of an Afro-Creole community specially grounded on orality. As it has been examined in Chapter One, the Caribbean English Creole is a syncretic linguistic system, illustrated in this narration in the lexical level through the presence of words that derive from other languages like *pantaloons* and

fete, and in a wide use of reduplications: “bake-bake”(121), “fast-fast (124)”, “zoot zoot (124)”, “happy happy (153)”, and “dan-dan (190)”, among others; which is a pattern derived from African languages, as it has been observed. On the other hand, the accentuated musical quality of Creole is shown in this narration by the rhythm expressed through the repetition of lexical and syntactical forms, as in Karl’s phrase: “[S]eeing my *hurt* and *hurting* to think *how much she* suffered and *how much she* tried, to get me that *hurt*” (115-16. Emphasis added).

As a matter of fact, several varieties of Creole are used in the narration with the primary purpose of conveying a social characterization of the characters. Within those varieties are those of Karl and Kenneth, whose Creole speech closer to JSE has been influenced by their college education produced in standard English and has made them members of a Jamaican (upper) middle class. Karl’s Creole speech is revealed from the beginning in phrases like: “[It is] funny how they shake my hands [and] squeeze them as I look in their eyes . . .”; or “And now [there is] this nail hole clear and pure. [I] Bet I can sleep tonight without trouble and without the needles again” (115). The Creole variety spoken by Karl is mainly characterized by omissions of subject pronouns; inflexional suffixes, e.g., “What happen[ed] today?” (116); and auxiliary verbs, e.g., “But how [are] things going your side this week?” (183).

On the other hand, the voices of the other characters are expressed in different mesolectal varieties of Creole. The speech of Daphne, for instance, is produced in a mesolectal Creole variety closer to JSE when compared with that of the hospital employee or that of Karl’s mother; which might be due to the fact that she has also received education in Jamaica and abroad but not up to college degree. Her Creole speech is mainly characterized by omissions of auxiliary verbs and prepositional elements: “Karl [is] staring into space and I know [that] him [he is] not coming back. Nobody [is] telling me anything. But I know” (195). On the contrary, the Creole speech of Karl’s mother and the hospital employee —both from the lower class— shows changes of phonological patterns, like the change of *th* for *d/dd* or *t/tt* and the full vowel quality in unstressed syllables, among others. Notice, for example, the speech of Karl’s mother: “Mek dih bwoy take dih entrance, Teecha” [“Make the boy take the entrance, Teacher”] (121); and the speech of the hospital employee: “No seh dem fine Ganja in a

dih middle a Bredda Ken little garden, and dem was bunnin dih weed [Now they say they found Ganja (Marihuana) in the middle of Brother Ken's little garden and they were burning the weed]" (183).

Apart from Pollard's purpose of describing the characters socially through language, the use of Creole in this narration also illustrates a process of code-switching. It is revealed in Karl's speech and stands for a change of social roles perceived when he switches from a Creole variety closer to JSE to a mesolectal variety in speaking to his mother, and, essentially, for a change in Karl's social attitude and in the social quality of his identity. In the first case, Karl's mesolectal Creole speech when speaking to his mother corresponds with his role as his mother's son, being she a member of the lower class and speaker of a mesolectal variety of Creole: "Aunti, a [I am] taking a walk [a]roun[d] [the] church" (170); while Karl's Creole variety closer to JSE corresponds with his middle class social experience in the urban context of Kingston. In the second case, Karl's switching of linguistic codes runs parallel to a change of social attitude and identification —throughout his stay in the hospital, Karl moves away from his middle class condition and starts to re-define his identity by crediting his lower class background. This process of re-defining his identity occurs gradually and can be perceived through his relationship with the hospital employee and specially through a change in his use of language. From Karl's first encounter with the employee in the first episode his sense of identity is altered, since the man recognizes him as belonging to the lower class; Karl remarks: "This fellow is sure I must be grounds. One look at me: short, black and newly scrubbed . . . and he offers me my identification . . . pricelessly, in spite of this room and the cost he must recognize"(116). In the linguistic level this offering of identification occurs when the man addresses Karl as Rastafarians address their fellow beings: "Bredda Man!" (115). Karl accepts this low class identification internally, but it will affect his social attitude as his linguistic behavior will demonstrate later on.

For example, in the episodes "Interlude" and "Peace" Karl narrates in a mesolectal Creole variety, characterized by occasional omissions of the third person singular inflexional suffix (-s) in verbs, and final consonant clusters, among others, that do not appear in his previous speech. Notice these examples: "Now if you are a cricket man, all

Saturday afternoon and whole day Sunday you tell you wife you gone and that is cricket pitch and drinks and old-talk with the boys” [“Then, if you are a cricket man, you tell your wife that all Saturday afternoon and the whole day on Sunday you are going to play cricket, and you spend that time playing cricket, drinking, and doing old-talk with the boys”] (179); and “You[r] cap [is felt] tight at work; you[r] zoot zoot don’t [doesn’t] really fit no matter how much time you spend fixing it up . . . Nobody ask[s] how you like it” (190). Therefore, these examples show that Karl seems to accept the identification offered by the employee externally. When he addresses back the employee in one of the final episodes, his Creole language resembles that spoken by the employee, revealing, thus, a change of social attitude and identification. Besides, the humorous tone of his addressing the man contrasts sharply with the reticent greeting “Hi!” (116) and “What happen today?” (116) in the first episode:

-Wait, you no hear bout it? [the man asks Karl]

-Hear *bout* what, *Bredda Man*? It look like you getting mad. How must I hear *bout* anything if you don’t tell me?” (183. Emphasis added).

This act of code-switching in Karl’s speech is not produced out of a deliberate impulse to meet the linguistic requirements of a situation in which the linguistic code of the other speaker is different to one’s own, as it usually happens. Contrarily, Karl’s switching of Creole varieties comes out of a conscious intention to accept a lower class social perspective and identification that was already part of him for it had grounded his identity: “I take it gratefully, with both hands, only because I had taken it myself, unoffered, long before” (116). Here he refers to his Afro-Creole lower class, rural background, which he thinks that he needs to recover and validate in order to assert a stronger sense of selfhood.

As a matter of fact, in my opinion, one of the main points of this story narrated by Pollard is Karl’s attempt to re-define his identity and counteract his social and personal failure, an attempt that is frustrated precisely due to the author’s purpose of making a social statement through the story (and sociocultural experience) of Karl, and that she deemed as the primary thematic purpose of *Karl*. Certainly, Karl’s process of re-defining his identity through his assertion of his Afro-Creole background is also manifest in his form of narration. Karl tries to reaffirm his Afro-Creole lower class,

rural identification through the way in which he presents each episode. For example, the episodes that refer to the beginnings of his life, “Son of Aunti...” and “Grandson of Gramps” identify him as the son of his mother and the grandson of his grandfather: as a member of a lower class, rural, and black family. Besides, he tries to validate his background through the repetition of this *identifying formula* in the narration, which reappears at the end of his monologue, when he is convinced that he wants to return to his village, but he does not know still how to accommodate this side of his identity to his present sociocultural reality: “Karl, son of Aunti ... the late; and Boy-Boy??? Grandson of Gramps ... also the late. Lord, what is the sense of it all?” (191).

This process of re-defining identity developed by Karl and revealed in his linguistic attitude and form of narration takes place in the thematic context of madness. It is, as I suggested before, a kind of lucid madness that enables Karl to detach himself from his social reality and to reflect critically on his experience and society. Therefore, his madness implies rationality, consciousness, and wisdom. Karl fails socially but his madness cannot be interpreted as failure. Rather, it becomes a kind of liberating experience that serves him to free himself of harmful, false social attitudes and validate his Self⁶⁹. It is in this sense of Karl’s madness as a liberating experience that his madness supports his attempt to re-define his identity in order to recover an assured sense of selfhood.

However, the validation of an Afro-Creole sociocultural milieu attempted by Karl in his re-definition of identity is presented as an alternative for social and personal accomplishment that is fulfilled by Kenneth ten years later⁷⁰. Kenneth has managed to find a way to negotiate his Afro-Creole and Euro-Creole sociocultural experiences in his

⁶⁹ The idea of madness as a liberating experience has been developed by Pollard in the short story “Miss Chandra” from *Karl and Other Stories*. In this story the protagonist, Miss Chandra, becomes mentally ill and much later she appears rational, calm, and self-assured, and the author/narrator says: “it was clear that she had found her Jerusalem this side of the great divide” (106). *This side* represents, here, the context of introspection provided by madness. The idea of madness as a liberating experience has been ratified by Pollard, who has also declared not being conscious of this other positive connotation of madness in her works. (Pollard, Appendix).

⁷⁰ Pollard has declared having finished Karl in 1974 and that she added the epilogue the next year, which makes me think that her primary purpose of making a social statement/criticize a sociocultural situation was later fulfilled by her offering a solution/alternative to the individual’s problem of asserting selfhood in this sociocultural reality that she depicts in the story. (See Appendix, Velma Pollard).

assertion of selfhood. He is a Rastafarian, and although his negotiation favors mostly his Afro-Creole background, it can be seen as a valid alternative that aims at counteracting a cultural discourse strongly influenced by Western culture: “You have to find out what you want and take it . . . and Babylon can only hold you as strong as you allow it . . .” (202). This statement becomes the epitome of the social message that the author/storyteller wants to convey when narrating this story. Kenneth’s validation of the Afro-Creole sociocultural milieu ratifies that the individualistic self-made man is an imperfect/insecure social and human artifact/entity because a person does not *construct* him/herself but is *constructed* by and from a collective social and cultural unit: a family or community. This collective unit or community stands—in this story—for the Afro-Creole sociocultural milieu that strengthens the Afro-Caribbean individual’s sense of selfhood as in the case of Kenneth’s articulation of identity. Therefore, this Afro-Creole sociocultural milieu becomes, as Hall asserts in his first definition of identity articulation, the collective *one true self* and the essence of Caribbeanness (111) of Kenneth’s Afro-Caribbean sociocultural experience.

To end, Pollard’s *Karl* may respond to a literary act of cultural reaffirmation. Through her use of different varieties of the Creole language and the oral tradition in the thematic and narrative presentation of this novella, she re-validates an Afro-Creole sociocultural universe that has been long stigmatized by a dominant Western cultural discourse. Then, *Karl* as well as other fictional work created by Pollard becomes a literary medium for the inscription of cultural identity—that of Pollard herself—and for the assertion of an Afro-Caribbean cultural identity.

Chapter Four

Self-pride and the Expression of an Afro-Caribbean Identity in “A Brief Conversion”, by Earl Lovelace

We have to get rid of these postures[of victor or victim], comforting as they may seem, for whether it is as supervisor of civilization or as a victim of oppression, both prevent us from the far more exciting and essential task of building . . . a new human society. We can only do this from where we are . . . Everyone of us is born into a place in the world, in a culture, and it is from the standpoint of that culture that we contribute to the world.

E. Lovelace.

Contrary to the process of articulating identity illustrated in *Karl* —within both an Afro-Creole and a Euro-Creole sociocultural milieus, the process of articulating identity proposed by Lovelace in “A Brief Conversion” occurs exclusively within the sociocultural context of the Afro-Creole milieu. This milieu constitutes the foundation of Travey’s identity and the cornerstone of his process of articulating selfhood and identity, and is identified in this story by the presence of an Afro-Caribbean community strongly culturally identified around Afro-Creole forms, as will be seen later. As Lovelace ratifies in the quotation above, it is from the standpoint of the Afro-Creole sociocultural milieu that Travey will have to negotiate the sociocultural forms of his Afro-Creole rural milieu and those provided by an Euro-Creole social context and by the wide creolised context of Trinidad and Tobago’s society.

Travey is the Afro-Caribbean child whose upbringing/socialization has been essentially Afro-Creole within the rural Trinidadian village of Curinapo. However, in order to complete his social development he must grapple with a social reality characterized by the strong influence of Western culture, which reveals the contradictions that the Caribbean individual must face in his/her sociocultural experience. As a matter of fact, this social reality is not brought forth directly in this story because the experience of Travey narrated here is that of a time period of his childhood in an Afro-Creole community, but is represented through the Euro-Creole/Western manners required by his mother and the school education, and through the presence of relatives (his aunt and his cousin) from Port of Spain (the capital of Trinidad and Tobago).

The figures of his mother (Pearl) and his father (Bertie) are central to Travey's family and social world. Bertie is a woodcutter, who plans to progress with the opening of a shop for repairing radios, an idea that waits indefinitely for his finishing a Radio Repairs Course. He is a popular village fellow, committed to his community—he is helpful to other neighbors, in Carnival he joins stickfighters in their public performances, and in Christmas he goes around the village with his *cuatro* (a stringed musical instrument similar to the guitar) and other musicians bringing merriment to people in their homes. He represents, in essence, the collective spirit of the community, and Travey admires him for that. On the other hand, Pearl, his mother, encourages Travey to progress socially by trying to raise in him a positive and decent attitude toward his education in school, which may lead him to college and gaining a higher social status. Here Pearl is “The Mother”, as Lovelace calls her (17), a common figure in the context of Caribbean families who supervises and frequently handles the upbringing of her children without help from the father or other male figures. Lovelace describes Pearl in this story as “the great pillar and presence anchored in enduring” (17). Although Travey's mother is attached to her Afro-Creole world, she is aware of the need to grapple with the social milieu beyond that world for achieving social progress, i.e., to negotiate between these two sociocultural experiences. This can be a painful process —as it is for Travey, strongly attached to his Afro-Creole milieu, but it is, nonetheless, necessary and, eventually, unavoidable. Travey grows conscious of this need to accept the Euro-Creole sociocultural norms and perspective, and ultimately thanks his mother with boundless affection for encouraging him in pursuing social progress. In this sense, the figure of the mother becomes the main role figure in his upbringing.

The first steps in Travey's acceptance of the Euro-Creole sociocultural perspective are symbolized in the acts of cutting his hair and buttoning up his shirt, which stand for having a *socially acceptable* appearance⁷¹. At first, Travey does not agree with these hair cutting and shirt buttoning rituals, but eventually he comes to accept them as the right, socially acceptable thing to do. Having to go to school with his hair cut short and his shirt buttoned up causes Travey to be abused by several schoolmates, who do not regard him as part of the group. These schoolmates form a gang of ill-behaved students

⁷¹ Here *socially* refers to the wide Caribbean social context, where Western cultural and moral values have been emphasized.

and Travey's brother (Michael) is part of it. Michael's friends begin to clout Travey on his head when he goes to school with his hair cut really short or greased down, and with his shirt buttoned up. As a result of being abused by these boys, Travey begins to experience a loss of pride, but soon he will make an attempt to recover his pride and lets these boys know that he does not want to be clouted on the head, although they refuse to stop doing this. This situation reaches its climax when a physical confrontation between Travey and the most bellicose boy of the gang (Police) takes place and a fight is arranged to settle the conflict provoked by this confrontation. In order to avoid the fight, Michael advises Travey to make peace by offering a present to Police; but making such offering would diminish Travey's self-esteem and would mean that he accepts being treated as an outsider, and being excluded from the group—and, in a wider sense, from his Afro-Creole community.

Finally, Travey decides to fight due to a recovered sense of self-esteem and identification with his uncle (Bango), his father and his Afro-Creole world. He needs to fight in order to recover his integrity and to prove that he belongs to a community that offers him rootage in his process of becoming. The fight takes place on a Friday afternoon after the school is closed and although Travey has no idea of fighting tactics (28), he is decided to fight. Travey wins the fight because he manages to strangle Police, whereas the latter bites Travey on his arm—something that goes against the rules of fighting. The story ends when Travey reaches his home and his mother, who has heard of the fight through Michael, is expecting him. Instead of a severe punishment, she only commands him to wash the dirty school shirt and, being aware that it was the Travey's hair cut that caused the fight, she tells Travey that he will no longer need to cut his hair so short.

Travey's process of articulating identity is shown by the author through different phases. First of all, Travey must accept an Euro-Creole sociocultural perspective existing in his Afro-Creole rural context which entails for him a change of personality and a damage to his self-esteem. But, when he realizes that this change affects his sense of personhood negatively, he attempts to regain his self-pride through a reassertion of his identification with his Afro-Creole milieu, which hints at negotiating the Afro-Creole and the Euro-Creole sociocultural forms in a way that does not counteract his assertion of integrity and self-pride. Certainly, Travey's process of asserting selfhood

and identity is seen by Lovelace also as an assertion of his integrity as a male individual. It must be underscored that the process of articulating identity proposed by Lovelace in this story is not as traumatic or complex as the one presented in *Karl*. The reasons lie, on the one hand, in the fact that Travey's life experience narrated in this story is that of a specific time period in his childhood developed in his rural, original social milieu and without moving and/or visiting an urban/middle or upper class/mulatto or white milieu⁷². On the other hand, Travey retains almost throughout the whole story a strong sense of identity favored by the presence of a community identified around Afro-Creole sociocultural forms, which helps to *solidify* the individual's sense of selfhood. The vital function of this Afro-Creole sociocultural world in supporting the Afro-Caribbean individual's social and cultural growth has been ratified by Lovelace: "You should feel solidified by the culture that you have among you, by the people that you live among, by the kind of relationships . . . there's a kind of solidity . . . which you should not give up because it makes you solid, it makes you rooted" (1994, 136). Then, an Afro-Caribbean community with a strong sense of cultural identity will strengthen the Afro-Caribbean individual's personhood and his/her cultural identity. And the Afro-Creole sociocultural milieu depicted by Lovelace in this story is certainly strengthening Travey's cultural identity.

Travey's sense of Afro-Creole identity is strengthened by the presence of an Afro-Caribbean rural community strongly identified around Afro-Creole sociocultural elements —such as the stickfighting tradition, the Shouters' religion⁷³, the *parang* or musical band, and the communal labor or system of exchange labor. The stickfighting tradition derives from African martial arts; that is why stickfighters are seen as warriors even though stickfighting in the Caribbean is a kind of recreational practice. In this story, Travey's father and uncle join other stickfighters at the junction near to Loy shop to hold stickfighting competitions as part of carnival celebrations. Another Afro-Creole

⁷² In fact, the categories of race and color seem no relevant to Lovelace or to the people of this community. Not even once the word *black* —describing race or skin complexion— appears. The reader should learn that the community portrayed here is Afro-Creole or Afro-Caribbean from the social and cultural elements that characterize it, or should be guided by a knowledge, before hand, about the author and the social and cultural thematic field of his work.

⁷³ The Shouters' religious group in Trinidad and Tobago is essentially a religion of the rural, black communities and is similar to the Baptist Church depicted by Lovelace in *The Wine of Astonishment*. Besides, Lovelace has declared that he based his description of this Baptist Church on the Shouters' religion, and that in his childhood he was moved by the merry way in which they held their religious service. However, he and his family were not Baptists but attended a Pentecostal church (1994, 134).

cultural element is the author's reference to the Shouters' religious group at the beginning of the story through the protagonist's remembrance of their religious songs, which his mother sings while the barber is cutting his hair. Although Travey and his family attend another church (not named in the story), his remembrance of this Afro-Creole church through its songs indicates its relevance as an identifying element within this Afro-Caribbean community. A third element is the *parang*, a kind of musical band in which Travey's father and other musicians play serenades (8) for neighbors in their village and other villages during Christmas. The *parang* derives from a Spanish musical tradition that was acculturated by black slaves during the colonial ruling of Spain in Trinidad and Tobago⁷⁴.

A fourth element is the system of exchange labor illustrated in this story as part of the activities that take place in Travey's home previous to the celebration of his parent's wedding: "My father had brought a few of his friends from the village to help him build a tent in the yard" (11). The ritual of preparing the wedding reveals the presence of a strong Afro-Creole cultural tradition implied in this communal labor of friends and relatives, and in the fact that elder women from Travey's family come to initiate the would-be wife into the rites connected with marriage; as Travey notes: "It was the women who came, the big majestic women of our family, with their colourful headties and their scents and incense, with the mysterious air of priestesses . . . to initiate my mother into new rites connected with marriage" (11). Apparently, these women had *descended* to blessed the wedding as if representing a strong female *spiritual force*, coming from the African cultural legacy.

On the other hand, the purpose of the religious wedding of Travey's parents responds to their desire to progress socially, which favors a Euro-Creole perspective. For Pearl, an official marriage through the church means respectability for her and her family at the eyes of society; and Bertie thinks that it would bring him luck in his desire to improve their social status. Then, religious wedding may be regarded as a vehicle by means of which Travey's parents attempt to be part of a Euro-Creole sociocultural perspective offered by their Trinidadian social context and stands for social progress.

⁷⁴ Trinidad and Tobago was conquered by Spain in the sixteenth century and remained under Spanish rule until 1797, when these two islands were captured by England. The influence of Spanish culture is evident, for example, in the presence of many Spanish or Spanish-like words in the lexicon of the region, as is evident in this short story (Lovelace, Appendix).

Due to the predominant presence of this Afro-Creole sociocultural milieu that solidifies Travey's sense of selfhood, the encounter with Euro-Creole forms by Travey occurs in a context of resistance to accepting these forms. This resistance is primarily conditioned by Travey's rebellious spirit. That is why his mother believes she must restrain her son's rebellious spirit —“to tame the warrior” in him (6), which is pursued through the simple acts of having his hair cut short and buttoning up his shirt. The whole haircutting ritual, which opens the narration of the story, is perceived by Travey as depriving him of his pride. On the other hand, Pearl's demanding Travey to button up his shirt essentially when he goes to school is more relevant in the process of accepting the Euro-Creole cultural perspective because this ritual must be performed every day. The command “Button up your shirt!” (6) becomes a constant statement from Travey's mother and eventually his father. Thus, Travey is constantly being induced to recognize that he must accept the social norms of a Euro-Creole social context. The ritual of buttoning up the shirt is, then, important within Travey's process of negotiation, but is also more conflicting for the child ⁷⁵, because it realizes for him the in-between position for the negotiation of cultural identity, pertinent to most postcolonial experiences:

There were times I stood between my parents, my fingers trembling on the topmost button of my shirt, knowing that, with my three-quarter length pants, my cleaned head, and my socks collapsed around my ankles, to button it up would be to complete my costume of clown (7).

For Travey, this costume of clown is the one that his mother, the school and the Euro-Creole oriented social context want to impose on him, in contrast with the costume of warrior that he was accustomed to wearing in his Afro-Creole milieu and the one that his father would like to recognize⁷⁶. That is why Travey is able to understand his mother's attitude with respect to his upbringing, as well as her commitment to the community: “Maybe my mother's rage and pain derived from having to tame in us what she would have loved to see us exalt, at having to send forth camouflaged as clowns the

⁷⁵ Actually, the statement *Button up your shirt!*, more than a mere command, becomes the recipient of a social attitude consonant with the social norms produced by the euro-Creole social context. This social attitude of Travey's parents is revealed through the English language of the command *Button up your shirt!* or “button it up” (16); it is the standard English identified with education, with higher social status, and with the Euro-Creole social context. Besides, the standard English of this command uttered by Travey's parents contrasts with the Creole language of the other command: “Hold yer head!” (2), uttered by Travey's mother presiding the haircutting ritual. Apparently, the standard English of the first command responds to the parent's purpose of being more emphatic in making the child behave in a socially acceptable way through the daily act of buttoning up his shirt.

⁷⁶ This costume of clown that is imposed on Travey can be held metonymic of the *Babylon suit* or the *steel cap* that Karl, in Velma Pollard's novella, identifies with accepting and appropriating the Euro-Creole sociocultural perspective (124, 188).

warriors she had birthed” (6). In spite of her pain, Pearl is aware of the fact that the *taming* is necessary in her sons’ social growth.

As a matter of fact, Travey himself grows aware of the need to renounce certain things or *de-emphasize* things like his rebelliousness⁷⁷. He learns this, first, through palying games with his cousin Ronnie from Port of Spain, in which he always has to assume being the loser only because Ronnie has the toys to play with and refuses to play if he does not win: “Ronnie is not very athletic. In the races we run, I beat him every time; yet ... in all our games Ronnie is the star boy and I am the crook” (3).

This children game symbolically displays the dynamics of the process of social mobility for the Afro-Caribbean subject. The individual’s desire to improve his/her social status (Travey’s desire to play) has been marked, forcefully, by the assimilation of the social and cultural norms dictated by Western culture (the rules of the game imposed by Ronnie, who embodies the Westernized social lifestyle of Port of Spain). If Travey wants to play he has to put his athletic superiority and braveness (rebelliousness) aside: “I learn to stumble” (4). He has to submit to that power external to their rural world, “a power greater than all our efforts” (8), that certainly determines their social development.

Moreover, Travey is finally induced to accept the Euro-Creole sociocultural perspective through his father’s acknowledgement of the need to accept this other sociocultural perspective for achieving social improvement. Although Bertie has opposed Pearl’s attitude in relation to their sons’ upbringing in a kind of silent manner (when Pearl commands them to button up their shirts), he will eventually advise Travey to button up his shirt, as if this were the better and wisest thing to do. It is from this moment on that Travey decides, deliberately, to credit the Euro-Creole manners imposed by his mother and the school as “the armour” needed to succeed in that wider social context beyond — but also inherent in— his community (16).

⁷⁷ Talking about the way the individual asserts his/her personhood in society, Lovelace refers to the need to “de-emphasise” certain things that the individual had emphasized before (like a Eurocentric or Afrocentric position), and to add other “dimensions” to his/her personality and identity. These other dimensions are provided by the diversity of the cultural elements forming Caribbean societies (Dance 1984, 149-51).

Consequently, Travey renounces his rebelliousness and is *converted* by his own will to discipline and *sainthood* since he became “a scholar and a saint” (16). However, it is Travey’s conversion to a Euro-Creole discipline that causes him to be abused by his schoolmates, which affects his sense of personhood negatively: “I felt something surrendering in myself, a pride, a spirit, a self. I began to feel myself getting away from me ” (20-21). Therefore, Travey’s conversion means renouncing that side of his identity and selfhood grounded in the Afro-Creole sociocultural milieu.

Certainly, in “A Brief Conversion” —as in most of Lovelace’s fictional works— the process of asserting cultural identity is closely linked to the individual’s assertion of self-pride and integrity. Therefore, Travey’s need to confront the boys abusing him can be regarded as his need to regain his self-esteem and integrity, i.e., the reassertion of his Afro-Creole sociocultural experience and identity. Travey’s decision to fight the boy shows his realization “that [he] had to pay attention to the presentness of [his] world or forever surrender” (21).

Travey knows that he will have to effectuate his sociocultural growth and construct his identity in the postcolonial context of his Caribbean society, but he needs to move on with his integrity and selfhood for only in those terms will he be able to succeed in his personal and sociocultural development. Since Travey’s identity and selfhood are grounded on his Afro-Creole sociocultural milieu, his conversion to the Euro-Creole manners occurs *briefly*, because this Euro-Creole perspective is just one more dimension that Travey will have to add to his sociocultural development. In general, the process of articulating selfhood and cultural identity as depicted by Lovelace in this story validates an Afro-Creole culture and sociocultural milieu inserted and participating within a creolised Caribbean society. Such process contrasts with the process illustrated by Pollard in *Karl*, in which the Afro-Caribbean individual credits an Afro-Creole milieu on the margins of a creolised social context dominated by a *Westernised* Euro-Creole sociocultural perspective.

On the other hand, Travey’s assertion of a cultural identity grounded on his Afro-Creole milieu (which entails the acceptance of other cultural perspectives provided by the Caribbean social context) reveals the author’s position in relation to the issue of identity in the Caribbean, which may equally stand for the author’s own way of asserting

cultural identity⁷⁸. Lovelace's position in relation to the articulation of an Afro-Caribbean identity —supported by his own assertion of cultural identity— is manifest on the creation of this fictional narrative. First, the fact that this short story is created through the autobiographical first person narration hints more readily at an identification of the protagonist/narrator with the author of the story⁷⁹. From the context of this identification between author and protagonist, the way in which the author's cultural identity is revealed in this fictional work can be more easily traced. Moreover, the author's cultural identity —creolised but strongly grounded upon an Afro-Creole cultural perspective— is especially revealed in the language usage, the appropriation of elements of the storytelling oral tradition, the musicality and humor (which are elements also very much related to the oral tradition in the Caribbean).

In regard to Lovelace's use of language, an interesting phenomenon occurs here in the way Lovelace expresses Travey's voice both as the narrator of this autobiographical story and as the protagonist (character) of that story. In both cases a linguistic situation of code-switching is perceived. In the first case, Travey's voice as the narrator of this autobiographical story is expressed in Trinidad and Tobago Standard English (TSE). However, he switches to Creole in his indirect narrative style when introducing Pearl's voice, (his mother). The fact that her voice is expressed in indirect speech does not make it her own, but the narrator's voice reproducing her Creole speech through his own knowledge of the Creole language. Here the use of the indirect style serves not only to reproduce Pearl's speech but also to introduce the story of Priscilla —a neurotic woman from Travey's village— probably told by Pearl and Aunt Irene, and retold by Travey into his autobiographical narration: "When Priscilla was young, *my mother says*, it didn't have [there was not] anybody in Curinapo who could dress like her, and nobody so good looking ... in those days, Priscilla was a star"⁸⁰ (23-24. Emphasis

⁷⁸ Lovelace has been one of the few Caribbean writers who has decided to live and work in the Caribbean. He now lives in Port of Spain but he has also lived in rural areas of Trinidad and Tobago, such as Toco (where he was born) and Matura. (Lovelace, Appendix). His belongingness to a rural, Afro-Creole community has been asserted in most of his works, as well as the significance of this milieu to the Afro-Caribbean individual's social and cultural growth and to the assertion of an Afro-Caribbean cultural identity.

⁷⁹ Although the story narrated in this fictional work is not autobiographical, Lovelace has affirmed having drawn upon his childhood experience to create it. (Lovelace, Appendix).

⁸⁰ Priscilla is a neurotic woman who, as the narrator says, used to be famous as a star in Port of Spain and abroad. She had a good job in the civil service but lost it because she opposed her boss's dishonest conduct and gave evidence against him in an enquiry. Unfortunately, she was eventually rejected by this urban social context, her friends and her family until she became a drunkard and turned neurotic.

added). This short narration in indirect speech denotes a conscious use of the Creole language by the narrator, and his switching of linguistic codes from TSE to Creole and vice versa reveals the creolised nature of the narrator's linguistic and cultural identity — ratified in his creation of this story by using the TSE in the narration and Creole in the dialogues.

In the second case, Travey's voice as the protagonist (character) when addressing other characters from his Creole-speaking social milieu is expressed in Creole. Travey's use of Creole can be noticed in the following examples: "Mr Fitzie, [is] it good now? I [will] finish [to] trim [it] now! [There is] Enough hair gone now!" (2); or "[It] is not the same, Michael, you is [are] their friend" (21). But even in his Creole speech, the variability in language usage —characteristic of linguistic communities where several linguistic codes are spoken— is perceived in his mingling of speech codes, as it happens in this example: "Just tell them I don't want any one of them touching my head. Rule or not rule. I am not playing. I don't clout nobody [anybody] and I don't want nobody [anybody] to clout me" (21). Here the code-switching situation is noted in the speaker's use of the correct negative construction *don't* + *any-* (according to the standard English or TSE) in the first line, and the incorrect form *don't* + *no-* in the subsequent lines.

The creolised nature of Travey's identity parallels the also creolised nature of the language of Trinidad and Tobago⁸¹. One of the most relevant elements that evinces this creolised nature of the language in this story is the presence of words derived from Spanish. Some of these words are *serenades* (8), *serenading* (14), *gyrating* (25), *sombrero* (27), and *galavanting* (10) appearing in the narration produced in TSE. Besides, we can note linguistic elements derived from African languages, like reduplications: *good good* (24), *pretty pretty* (24), and *poorly poorly* (18); and the repetition of syntactical structures: "She [Priscilla] *used to give away* dresses to her relatives. *Good good dresses, she used to give away; pretty pretty dresses*" (24. Emphasis added). These repetitions at the lexical and syntactical levels, and the placement of the direct complement before the subject and the verb in the last sentence

⁸¹ The language used in Trinidad and Tobago evinces the convergence of people from various cultural origins: Amerindian, Spanish, French, English, Indian, Chinese, and North American —since North American soldiers lived in a USA military base established in Trinidad during WWII and developed social interactions with part of the island's population.

of this final example, are peculiar features of the Caribbean English Creole, as already examined in Chapter One.

Furthermore, the influence of the storytelling tradition in this short story reveals that this Afro-Creole oral practice has been relevant in the formation of Lovelace's cultural identity. The influence of this oral tradition is demonstrated in this narration through the narrator's telling of Priscilla's story (in which he uses the third person narration characteristic of oral narrations); his crediting of a received oral narration; his use of narrative strategies proper of oral narrations like the profuse use of the conjunction *and*; his crediting of the presence of an audience to which he seems to address the story that he tells; his appropriation of the entertaining mood of the raconteur; and finally, through the fact that the narrator ratifies his role as the teller of the story conveyed in this narration. All these elements ratifying the influence of the storytelling oral tradition in this narration reaffirm its oral quality.

First, the influence of the storytelling oral tradition is ratified in Travey's re-appropriation of his mother storytelling attitude and playing the role of the storyteller to tell Priscilla's story. He then tells the story of this woman, once a beautiful girl from the village who became a star in the capital and abroad, and who is now a drunkard and a neurotic woman. In this story, which resembles a tragic fairy tale, the narrator abandons the first person narration of his autobiographical story and uses the third person narration characteristic of the storytelling practice. Moreover, the narrator acknowledges the oral tradition passed to him by his mother, his father and the community. All of them become a kind of *talking* public that passes on the stories they tell about real people. The presence of this *talking* public is acknowledged at various times in phrases like: "my mother says" (24), "my father says" (25), or "The story, which circulated through the village afterwards, and which came to us at school, was that . . ." (27); a story that refers to Travey's uncle and how he countered an unrespectful adversary. Also Michael, Travey's brother, is part of this storytelling community: "Michael, had reached home ahead of me and has . . . *given her* [Pearl] *the story*" of Travey's fight (29. Emphasis added). In the same line, the story of Travey's uncle is also told by Travey and his family: "We talked about him at home. He worked irregularly. My mother says he has three women minding him. Pa knows him as a wood worker. He could dance bongo, fight stick and he sculptured heads from dried coconuts"

(27). Therefore, the narrator's role as storyteller has been conditioned by a collective practice of oral narration.

But it is in the level of the narration of the autobiographical story where we can best perceive the influence of the storytelling tradition in the narrative style of the narrator. It is revealed in the fact that the narrator seems to be telling rather than writing the story, which is underscored by the use of narrative strategies proper of oral narration, such as the recurrent use of the conjunction *and* in enumerations and descriptions, and the description of a sequence of events. The following example illustrates the use of this conjunction in an enumeration: “[W]ith everything already on the table, the rum *and* the wine *and* the ham *and* the sweet-bread *and* the ginger beer *and* the sorrel *and* the cake” (8. Emphasis added). Besides, the narrator uses *and* in his description of Aunt Irene's physical appearance and personality:

Aunt Irene has this hoarse seductive voice filled with sighs *and* secrets breaths *and* dark smoke, *and* she has a space between her teeth *and* she stretches *and* yawns *and* she puts her feet up on the bannister or the verandah *and* talks of men *and* she laughs that terrible laughter that makes dogs bark and the hens scatter *and* my mother's eyes widen in alarm (4. Emphasis added).

At other instances, *and* is the preferred connective formula for presenting the sequence of events in this oral-like narration. It is clearly exemplified in the narrator's report of Bertie's activities on the day of Christmas Eve:

On the day of Christmas Eve my father usually went *and* helped Mr Sylvester to butcher a pig, *and* in the evening he would come with a few drinks of rum in his head *and* in his hand a choice piece of pork *and* a coiled length of black pudding, *and* after he put down the meat *and* had a bath *and* something to eat, he would take up his *cuatro* *and* his two *shac shacs* *and* go into the kitchen . . . (8. Emphasis added).

The notable use of the connective *and* in this text hints presumably at a desire to build up a copious narrative that would add up to the enticement to which the raconteur drives his audience. It imparts this text an oral quality and takes it closer to the oral story or folk tale.

Another element that has been borrowed from the storytelling here is the presence of an audience. In this regard, the narrator uses a friendly, familiar tone in the narration of the story suggesting his probable recognition of the readers as listeners, i.e., this familiar tone crops up, for instance, in the following phrases: “Of course, none of us don't know

who this Alan Fortune is” (5) and “Let me not make a martyr of myself” (16). In the former example, the protagonist makes reference to a song his aunt Irene is singing, and the phrase *Of course* implies a familiarity in the narrator’s addressing his audience. In the second example, the expression *Let me* suggests a direct address to a personalized audience (like that of storytelling). In this verbal construction, the narrator is apparently asking his audience for permission to do something. But, out of its strict semantic connotation, this phrase becomes idiomatic from the oral speech in the Caribbean.

As a matter of fact, the narrator seems to tell this oral story to an audience whose presence he credits and which is personalized within the discourse: “*You dream of a place to go and Ronnie has been there. You doubt him* and he turns to his mother ‘Mummie, didn’t you take me to the De Luxe cinema to see that Tarzan picture?’” (3. Emphasis added). In this passage, the narrator addresses his audience directly and invites them to participate in the story being told. He invites them, apparently, to address his cousin, to dream of a place where he/she would like to go and probably ask his cousin whether he has been there, and even to doubt Ronnie’s answers. Besides, implicit in this appeal to the audience, there is an invitation to share the narrator’s view and to identify with his position in his life experience being narrated here. In another instance, the narrator’s addressing the audience takes the form of advice: “Do not learn the vanity of a muff. Do not learn the vanity of a covering of hair” (1), which might suggest a link between the narrator’s intention of advising the reader and the teaching or moral message of the storytelling tradition.

On the other hand, the narrator, aware of the presence of this audience, follows the entertaining vein of the raconteur, whose art aims at arising interest in the audience and amusing the audience with the telling of tales. Travey, the narrator uses the raconteur’s hyperbolic narrative tone, characteristic of popular narrations, in the descriptions of characters, specifically, those of his mother and his father. The hyperbolic tone of these descriptions reveals the beauty and creativity of the verbal act performed by the raconteur, as shown in the images conveyed in Travey’s reference to his father:

And he limped away with his wound and his strength, with his *cuatro* like a toy in his fist, to bleed slowly from the wounds of his loyalties and his guilt, to grow quiet with the routine of his woodcutting and the slow magical fiddling with the derelict radios which people had abandoned and brought for him to resurrect, until Carnival came and, as my mother would say, “the

blood fly up in his head”, and leave again, leave radio and axe and forest and take up his stick and go down to the junction to the stickfights . . . (9).

The hyperbolic tone in this fragment aids the rendering of the image created around the emotional state of the father after being reprimanded by his wife. This image is shaped by the protagonist’s appraising view of his father —conveyed in the metaphorical hyperbole contained in the expression to *bleed slowly*— and by his enchanted view describing an idyllic scene, ratified in the also metaphorical phrases *magical fiddling* and *derelict radios . . . brought . . . to resurrect*. In addition, it is interesting to notice the rhythm and musicality that accompany the hyperbolic tone of the storyteller’s narration in the above passage, which points at the simultaneous realization of the rhyming, musical narration of both the calypsonian and the storyteller. The calypsonian’s narrative comes forth here in the internal rhythm provided by the repetition and parallelism of syntactical structures in these phrases: *with his wound and his strength/with his cuatro like a toy in his fist*, and *to bleed slowly from the wounds of his loyalties/to grow quiet with the routine of his woodcutting*. The rhythmic quality of this narration, as if produced by a type of oral entertainer and singer (the calypsonian), is enhanced by rhymes, like the one occurring in the words *came, say, head, and again* at the end of phrases. They may stand as the couplets of a calypso song’s text.

Furthermore, the effect of the hyperbolic tone and musicality can be also perceived in a reference to Travey’s mother: “With her voice ranging over the sounds wave make at every tide, their roarings and their sighs, she had her boychildren shorn, zugged and greased down; and she never allowed us to leave the house without the parting command; Button up your shirt! Button up your shirt!” (6). Here the musicality is manifest mainly in the rhymes *tide/sigh* and *sounds/down*, and in the repetition of the imperative phrase at the end. The rhythm created in these descriptive passages through repetition and rhyme makes them appear like pieces or stanzas of songs, resembling the narrative style of the texts of calypso songs⁸².

Apart from the hyperbolic tone of the storytelling tradition, humor becomes another peculiar element of this short story that adds up to the perception of this narrator as oral

⁸² According to Gordon Rohlehr, calypso developed from a battle song (kalinda) to a kind of “gossip” song, in which the singer referred the incidents of everyday life: “Calypsonians were . . . confronted with the challenge to create fiction from observed domestic situations, current events read in the newspapers, and rumors” (“Images” 199). Then, calypso, as a popular song, has developed as a kind of narrative story about people and their doings.

entertainer. In the passage previously quoted that makes reference to Travey's father, the narrator shifts the calm tone of his hyperbolic report about Bertie to a direct and more rapid tone. This shift corresponds also with a change in Bertie's mood being described here from emotionally hurt to festive and careless. The narrator's verbose and eloquent style at the beginning contrasts with his straightforward way of reporting—in Creole— Bertie's reckless and festive mood when carnival comes, which Pearl describes with the idiomatic expression *the blood fly up in his head*, meaning that Bertie gets excited when carnival celebrations come and forgets about his responsibilities. The way in which the narrator changes tone and refers to Bertie's careless behavior is quite humorous. The same humorous quality can be perceived when he refers to Aunt Irene's flirtatious nature: “[A]nd she extends her coquettish charms to anything male, so that even our dog, Hitler, she treats with a warmth she doesn't extend to Flossie” (4), (Flossie is a female dog that belongs of Travey's family).

Finally, the perception of the narrator as storyteller—supported by the incorporation of techniques proper of oral narration into the narrative body of this text—is ratified by the narrator's acknowledgement of his role as storyteller: as the creator of this narration and the teller of his personal story, in which he makes a hero of himself. Travey's role as storyteller is asserted when he tries to find a way to produce the most rightful description of his uncle Bango, whom he sees as a kind of hero. In his description, he places himself out of the narration and reflects on how to make the figure of his uncle fit into the story: “I would like to embellish Uncle Bango with power and purpose and a war, give him two pistols and a riffle and a double bandolier . . . I would like to tell of his being pursued by the cavalry, riding through a hail of bullets to meet the woman that is waiting for him” (26-27). However, he recognizes that his idealization of his uncle Bango as a cowboy hero of an American Western movie would bring forth an unreal and deceiving story: “that would obscure the truth of this story” (27). Then, his recreation of the story about Bango would be a forgery. He thinks that he should describe Bango as a Trinidadian rural and popular hero, and proceeds to tell his uncle's story following this line returning to the narration of his own life story.

Certainly, the narrator/protagonist makes himself the hero of this story, which makes him produce a counter hero, brought forth in the figure of his brother. Michael is the rebellious child that refuses to accept the Euro-Creole manners that his social context

(the school and his mother) want to impose on him, he refuses to accept, in an agreeable way, the Euro-Creole sociocultural perspective that his creolised postcolonial society offers the individual for his/her social and cultural growth. His negotiation of these Euro-Creole manners occurs in a kind of *trickstering* way because through his apparent and deliberate acceptance of these norms, he is actually mocking the way in which these norms are imposed on him, something that is shown through his attitude toward his personal appearance when going to school:

Michael is unworried. He protests nothing. He sits down in perfect peace while Mr. Fitzie trims him, the cleaner the trim, the more Michael is delighted . . . Nobody needs to tell Michael to button up his shirt. Michael buttons every button right up to his neck . . . he doesn't have in his possession a school shirt which is not stained with cashew juice or mango sap, nor a complete set of buttons. Michael buttons up his shirt with pins. With his impassive face and occasional wry grin, he goes to school with the solemn air of a triumphant clown, in a parody of the neatness which my mother and the school seek to impose upon him (20).

Apparently, Michael accepts the Euro-Creole norms, but the way he observes these Euro-Creole norms and values reaches the absurd, which implies a subversion of the Westernized Euro-Creole values reinforced by his society. His tricky acceptance reveals, actually, a definite rebellious stance⁸³. Michael mocks at what his society wants to make of him stoically, and does not attempt to grapple with the accommodation of the Euro-Creole forms existing within his social context. As Lovelace furthers in this story, Michael's rebellious stance may derive into a kind of antisocial behavior.

In contrast to Michael, Travey is convinced that his negotiation of Afro-Creole and Euro-Creole elements should be effected through education and that, as he comes to realize later, that is the real fight to win. Therefore, he should attempt to achieve social improvement while asserting, at the same time, his rural, Afro-Creole sociocultural milieu, which also means asserting selfhood and identity. In fact, he has already begun to win this fight: "In a way, I was a hero to him [his uncle Bango], to his whole generation. For them, heroism had never meant the surrender of the self" (27). Bango offers Travey an identification as his father's son (the son of a strong woodcutter and stickfighter), which also stands for an identification with his Afro-Creole milieu and

⁸³ Lovelace has referred to the way in which Michael mocks at the requirements of his mother and his social context as his way to rebel against having these requirements imposed on him and which Lovelace calls *demands for conformity* (Lovelace, Appendix). This notion of conformity, interpreted in the sense of agreement with the Euro-Creole sociocultural perspective, has constituted for long the only valid way for the "half acquiescent, half oppositional, always untrustworthy" colonized and postcolonial subject to achieve sociocultural development (Bhabha 33).

with the world of his rural community. This identification with his family's Afro-Creole world makes the child recover a sense of selfhood and pride that was failing in him. This moral support provided by his family and milieu encourages him to face the boys abusing him at school, fight and become a hero⁸⁴.

In this sense, Travey becomes the true hero of this story. He defines his conversion to sainthood as his enduring a redemptive suffering: "I begin to button up my shirt ... I feel myself the bearer of a redemptive penance that shall lead me to glory, that shall remove the strange burden from my father and make my mother proud of me. I am our hope. I shall become a scholar, a saint" (16). And later this hero finds his way to real redemption through his recognition that only with a self-assured personhood, secured by his Afro-Creole sociocultural milieu he can negotiate, safely, his social and cultural experience in the creolised context of Trinidad and Tobago's society.

Lovelace's story, then, is underscoring that the Afro-Caribbean individual should try to assert his self, his identity, and should feel proud of himself and his culture, which will assure his personal and sociocultural development in his/her Caribbean social context. This is, certainly, the message that Lovelace wants to convey to his society and that has been a fundamental theme in his work, and his assertion of an Afro-Caribbean cultural milieu through literature has helped to credit a way of perceiving Caribbean identity that escapes the lens of a postcolonial cultural discourse influenced by Western culture. Then, an Afro-Caribbean individual like Travey can assert a cultural identity *positioned*—as Hall proposes (1997, 115)—in the Afro-Creole sociocultural context, and reaffirm a positive sense of an Afro-Caribbean identity within the wider creolised Caribbean social context.

⁸⁴ In Travey's experience narrated through this story, his identification with his uncle and his Afro-Creole sociocultural milieu is certainly what Travey needs to assert a strong sense of selfhood. In this sense, Travey's position in this story with regard to his articulation of selfhood and identity contrasts with that of the boy in Senior's "Summer Lightning", a character that accepts the sociocultural elements or manifestations of Bro. Justice's Afro-Creole milieu as well as his support to confront the old man, but does not identify with Bro. Justice's world, because here the boy would assert his selfhood from an in-between sociocultural position.

Conclusion

The assertion of cultural identity in the English Caribbean is grounded on a process of creolisation defined as a mutual intercultural action, because Caribbean cultures and societies have been formed by the interaction of several cultural presences such as the European, the African, the Asian and the Amerindian in the sociogeographical context of the region. But creolisation has been a heterogeneous process because the degree and quality of the cultural interaction among these several cultures has been variable, being one fundamental factor for this variability the resistance of the subordinated cultures of Africa and Asia to assimilation by the European dominant cultures. However, it was precisely the resistance of the subordinates cultures in the Caribbean that helped the development of a heterogeneous process of creolisation, since it favored transformations in which the input of the several cultures —those of the colonizer and those of the colonized— were equally positive. And this heterogeneous process of creolisation or cultural intermingling has essentially determined the protean nature of Caribbeanness, of Caribbean identity, which is revealed in every act of articulating cultural identity, as the literary texts I study demonstrate.

The short stories “Summer Lightning” and “A Brief Conversion”, and the novella *Karl* are fictional works in which the authors have tackled the process of articulating Caribbean identity through the experiences of their Afro-Caribbean protagonists (the boy, Travey, and Karl respectively). In addition, the authors’ personal standpoints in relation to the assertion of personhood and identity in the Caribbean are revealed in their narratives, which also become a personal literary space for these authors’ assertion of cultural identity.

Consequent with the fact that Caribbean identities are complex and multifaceted, these three works illustrate different ways in which the process of asserting identity within the Afro-Caribbean context is developed, echoing the creolised and multifaceted Afro-Caribbean identities of their authors. In the case of “Summer Lightning”, for instance, the boy asserts a liminal position which may allow him to negotiate the Afro-Creole and

Euro-Creole sociocultural orientation in his life experience in equal terms. This liminal position of the boy in this short story reveals Senior's liminal position in the assertion of her Afro-Caribbean identity, which credits both the European and the African cultural legacies in the formation of her personhood and identity. Actually, the fact that Senior lives out of the Caribbean (in Toronto, Canada) might have contributed to her crediting of this liminal position in terms of articulating identity, since the experience of expatriation and detachment from her country may help to construct a more objective and, probably, more critical reflection on the Caribbean reality and experience.

On the other hand, the process of asserting identity illustrated by Pollard in *Karl* entails the assertion of an Afro-Creole sociocultural milieu on the margins of a wider Caribbean creolised context. The lack of assertion of an Afro-Creole sociocultural milieu in this novella has been conditioned by Karl's complex sociocultural experience throughout his life, in which the Euro-Creole sociocultural perspective has been credited as the only valid way to achieve sociocultural development. Pollard, however, has definitely aimed at making a social and cultural statement about the necessity to credit the Afro-Creole cultural perspective in order to build a positive sense of identity for the Afro-Caribbean individual. Thus, in her text, the fact that Karl dies at the end ratifies the author's purpose of criticizing the pro-Western-cultural sociocultural situation of the Jamaican social context in the 1970s, (when her novella was written); however, the story narrated here by Pollard may transcend the context of a specific time period because contemporary Caribbean societies still manifest the symptoms of *outward directedness* and ontological cultural insecurity that derives from the legacy of colonial experience in the Caribbean (O'Callaghan 102). The assertion of the Afro-Creole sociocultural milieu revealed in *Karl* through the experience of Kenneth, disfavors the Euro-Creole sociocultural perspective that also forms its Caribbean (Jamaican) sociocultural context, which becomes the social and cultural background of any process of assertion identity in the Caribbean. Pollard, however, illustrates the creolised nature of her Afro-Caribbean cultural identity that allows a negotiation of cultural forms for the Afro-Creole and Euro-Creole contexts within her own narrative, but it reasserts the Afro-Creole sociocultural perspective forming her cultural identity.

In the case of “A Brief Conversion”, the position of Lovelace in regard to the process of asserting an Afro-Caribbean identity is echoed through the experience of Travey, who should effectuate his articulation of selfhood and identity from his Afro-Creole sociocultural milieu and accept the Euro-Creole sociocultural perspective within his creolised social and cultural context of Trinidad and Tobago. Therefore, the process of identity articulation proposed by Lovelace in “A Brief Conversion” may be seen as revealing an intermediate position/standpoint with regard to the process of asserting identity in Senior and Pollard’s texts, because Lovelace favors the Euro-Creole perspective but credits the Afro-Creole milieu as the ground on which to enact the process of negotiation of the European and the African sociocultural legacies in his social reality.

Therefore, these three authors develop different ways of asserting their creolised Caribbean identities, which demonstrates the variable or unstable quality of the process of asserting identity which, as Stuart Hall has affirmed, is a heterogeneous and on-going process of transformation and becoming (1997, 112). The variability of these authors’ process of asserting cultural identity is revealed, for example, in their use of the Creole language in the creation of their texts. In the case of Senior’s text, she has used the Jamaican Standard English (JSE) and occasionally fuses Creole into it, which shows the author’s conscious purpose of defending the Euro-Creole and Afro-Creole sociocultural perspectives. Pollard, on the contrary has used the Creole language —signifier of an Afro-Creole sociocultural perspective— as the main linguistic medium for producing her text, including the use of several linguistic varieties of Creole. Finally, Lovelace has used the Trinidad and Tobago Standard English in his narrative but has also incorporated the Creole language to convey the linguistic interactions of the characters, which reveals his conscious and positive use of two linguistic mediums that stand for the Euro-Creole and the Afro-Creole cultural perspectives in Caribbean reality.

Moreover, in the narrative context of these three works, there is a clear influence of the oral tradition, which ratifies the importance of the Caribbean oral culture in these writers’ process of asserting their Afro-Caribbean cultural identities. Such influence of the oral tradition in these writers’ narrative universe is revealed in their appropriation of the storytelling mode when narrating these stories and the inclusion (in the case of

Pollard and Lovelace) of songs and proverbs within the narration. Furthermore, these three writers seem to acknowledge an oral tradition or narration passed on by people who may stand for the Afro-Caribbean communities where these writers come from. Essentially, the re-appropriation of the storytelling mode is what marks the influence of the oral tradition, which is perceived in the fact that the narrators of these stories seem to ratify their role as storytellers by telling other small stories within the narration, being this storyteller role also explicitly acknowledged by the narrator in “A Brief Conversion”; besides, by addressing an audience that is invited to share the narrator and/or storyteller’s point of view regarding the situation conveyed in the story, and by using narrative strategies that allude to the mode of oral narrations such as the episodic structure of *Karl* resembling the cyclic mode of storytelling, the hyperbolic tone of oral narration in Senior and Lovelace’s texts, and the use of connective formulas usually used in oral narration to enumerate, describe, and refer the story’s sequence of events.

The influence of the oral tradition in the narrative universe of these authors ratifies, on the one hand, the creolised nature of their cultural identities since the Caribbean oral tradition is a syncretic cultural practice, and, on the other hand, the relevance of the Afro-Creole sociocultural perspective in these authors’ sociocultural experiences since this oral tradition has essentially been a manifestation of the Afro-Creole milieu in the Caribbean. However, the Euro-Creole sociocultural perspective also grounding these author’s cultural identities is mainly manifest in the use of the standard English (Jamaican Standard English and Trinidad and Tobago Standard English) to ratify their role as authors of these fictional works. In the case of Senior and Lovelace’s texts, the JSE and TSE become the main linguistic means in which these narrations are produced, respectively. On the contrary, in Pollard’s text, which has been produced mainly in Creole, the JSE only appears at the beginning and the end of the narration where her role as the author of the novella is asserted.

Furthermore, these works demonstrate their authors’ concern with their Caribbean sociocultural reality revealed in their portrayal of the protagonists’ sociocultural experiences and the vicissitudes they have to face in their process of asserting selfhood and identity, and also in their portrayal of madness as a common social phenomenon in Caribbean societies. The fact that this madness or neurosis is provoked by a social and

cultural situation hints at these writers' purpose of criticizing the ways of a sociocultural context—that of Caribbean societies—which has always favored the Western cultural perspective.

To sum up, even though these authors have approached the question of asserting identity differently, we can note that the process of creolisation that produced Caribbean societies and that grounds Caribbean identity is manifest in the way they have created these narrative works, because they have appropriated syncretic cultural and linguistic manifestations to portray an equally syncretic sociocultural context, asserting, thus, a Caribbean identity through their narratives. Moreover, the strong influence of the oral tradition in these narratives contributes to these authors' assertion of their Afro-Caribbean cultural identities produced within a postcolonial cultural discourse strongly influenced by Western culture, and to validate, through fiction, a positive sense of Afro-Caribbean identity.

Appendix

A Brief Exchange of Ideas With the Authors

The following exchange of ideas was conducted with the authors via e-mail on May, 2003.

OLIVE SENIOR ON “SUMMER LIGHTNING”.

First I explained to Olive Senior that I had interpreted her story from the standpoint of the assertion of identity, to which she answered that she had not thought about it when writing the story.

Question: Do you think that the assertion of identity might have been in your mind? When reading your story one gets a feeling that the story may stand for something else.

Answer: I think that all my stories can be “read between the lines”, that is, there is always much more going on beneath the surface of the story. But I leave it to the reader to discover what this might be.

Q: Why the title of “Summer Lightning”?

A: I just think that “summer lightning” plays a major role in the story, operating at both an actual and symbolic level. At the symbolic level, it is hinting at both danger and illumination, for instance. As a child living in the country I could not help but be aware of lightning. To use it as a way of pulling some of the story elements together was quite unconscious on my part.

Q: How did you imagine the old man? Is he really mad? In the story you keep insisting on the mystery of his nerves. Did you imagine that there might be something behind his nervous illness?

A: I am not sure myself about the old man. I imagined him the way I represented him in the story, i.e. as being uncertain of what his real situation is (as one can be uncertain about people in real life). He does have a nervous illness; in my childhood people talked about other people “suffering from their nerves”, etc., meaning they were nervous, anxious or mentally ill (in a mild way). So I just automatically made the child in the story wonder about what “nerves” were as I myself probably did as a child.

Q: In the narration, you use phrases like: ". . . and Bro. Justice he could never transform into anything . . .", and "the man did nothing else as he continued past but turn his head sideways and smile at him...". Are these phrases Jamaican Standard English or there is some Creole in them?

A: Yes, I guess everything I write is infused with Creole words, syntax, rhythms, etc.

Q: In this story, I see you as a kind of storyteller. The story seems to be more like an oral narration than a written one, regardless of the standard English in which it seems to be narrated. When you were writing it, did you imagine that the reader might be an audience to which you were telling the story?

A: Yes, I do consider myself as a kind of storyteller. I am writing for both the eye and the ear, so I always imagine a listener. In my writing I am trying to fuse the oral and scribal traditions.

Q: What kind of stories were you accustomed to hear in your childhood: anancy stories, like fairy tales ones, or stories people invented?

A: Yes, storytelling was the big entertainment in my childhood. We had all the stories you named —Anancy stories, Duppy stories (i.e. ghost stories), and of course stories from the western tradition —Bible stories and fairy tales, etc. We also had lots of other entertainment from the oral tradition such as Riddles, Rhymes, games and of course music and songs. People also tended to narrate events as stories. There was always a dramatic quality to narratives of whatever was happening in the village or the world around us.

Q: In these phrases: "Now, he reasoned deeply with himself . . ." and "Now, just as the aunt thought . . .", (the word *Now* here really means *then*) Is this use of *now* as *then* characteristic of oral storytelling? Is it the same with this other structure: "*So* he continued to . . ." or "*So* Bro. Justice ended up doing . . ." ?

A: Yes, the words *now*, *then*, and *so* are characteristic of oral storytelling, because they are really addressed to the listener. I guess I use them because I want to capture the informal speaking voice.

VELMA POLLARD ON *KARL*

Pollard is one of those authors who feel uncomfortable discussing their own works, as she has affirmed. As a teacher of literature and critic, she discusses other writer's works and prefers that the critic reaches her/his own conclusions when discussing her works.

Q: The story of Karl is the story of a person that failed in his personal and social experience. In your opinion, what are the reasons for his failure?

A: I think the society has failed him in a way and that it could fail people with his history at that time. Another writer writing another story about the same time might create a character who was able to be successful in spite of the odds.

Q: Why does Karl die?

A: When I was writing the story that is how I imagined it and I hope I was making a strong social statement by having him die.

Q: When did you actually write *Karl*?

A: I finished Karl in 1974 except for the Epilogue which I wrote in 1975. I did nothing about it till I sent it to Casa de las Américas in Nov., 1991.

Q: Although you say that Karl's death suited your purpose to criticize a social situation, I do not feel incline to see his death as a tragedy because in a sense his madness implies rationality, consciousness, wisdom, and even through his madness he manages to recover a sense of selfhood. Similarly, in your short story "Miss Chandra", she becomes mentally ill and much later, when she is older, she appears rational and whole (ontologically secure). Then madness may be and may not be a failure.

A: *I did not* see it before. I really mean it that I do not analyze my own work, I simply write. When I analyze I do it of other people's (see for example an article in *Motherlands* (ed. Sushuela Nasta, Women's Press Ltd. 1991).

Q: How has been your relation to storytelling?

A: I have read a lot to my grandchildren as I did to my children and as my parents did to us. You will be surprised at how much you remember from the stories your abuelita told

you. They will crop up in your mind when you least expect. My children remember stories I have forgotten I told them and the same thing happened to my parents.

EARL LOVELACE ON “A BRIEF CONVERSION”

Q: In which period of Trinidad and Tobago’s history can be put this story of Travey, the 1950s or the 1960s?

A: The 60s.

Q: About the Shouters, is it an Afro-Caribbean religious cult, like the Spiritual Baptist Church that you present in *The Wine of Astonishment*?

A: Actually, it is the same as Spiritual Baptist. Shouters is another name for the same group.

Q: I figure out that the *parang*, the kind of musical band, derives from a Spanish musical tradition. Is it so? What kind of music is that played by the band of musicians and Travey’s father in the story?

A: Yes, it derives from a Spanish musical tradition. It is closely connected to the Catholic celebration of Christmas. This music seems also to be played in Venezuela. Trinidad was a Spanish colony up to 1797. In the first years of British conquest, Trinidad was a British colony run by French (from Martinique, Grenada, St Lucia) operating under Spanish law.

Q: You use some words that sound Spanish like *serenading*, *gyrating*, *galavanting*. Do they derive from Spanish?

A: As I said Spanish is part of Trinidad’s heritage, so I am sure that many of our words are of Spanish derivation.

Q: I know that you have lived in Matura, has it being for most of your live? Is it a rural space of Trinidad?

A: Yes, Matura is a rural space. In the North East of the island, about 40 miles from Port of Spain. I lived in Matura for about 9 years continuously, from 1974 and still retain close contact with the village.

Q: I see that this story may resemble your own childhood, for example, Travey's mother may resemble yours in her role with respect to your upbringing. (You said something about your mother in a speech for CARIFESTA V, edited by Pearl Eintou Springer). May this story be a kind of autobiographical narration about some part of your childhood?

A: I certainly draw upon my own childhood, but it is not really autobiographical, and here I am looking at the different roles played by Mother and Father.

Q: I think that Travey's brother is an interesting character in the story, he is a trickster figure in a sense. Travey has find a way to progress and retain his integrity —what I call to negotiate his cultural and social identity. But how is it for people like Michael?

A: I see Michael as someone who navigates his world by appearing to agree to the demands for conformity it makes on him, He does it to such a degree that he takes his conformity to the level of the absurd. In truth this is his way of rebelling.

Q: In this story you credit at several instances what people say, the stories that people tell about them and others, for example, Travey (you) echoes the voice of the mother in the story about Priscilla. Here, as I see it, you're crediting a received oral tradition, and I think that your narrative style reveals an influence from the oral tradition (from storytelling and song/music). How did you experience this oral tradition in your life? did people use to tell stories where you grew up?

A: As a child I was told Anancy stories. But stories are all around us. This has been a very oral culture.

Works Cited

Primary sources

- Edgell, Zee. *Beka Lamb*. London: Heinemann, 1982.
- Kincaid, Jamaica. "In the Night". *The Arnold Anthology of Post-colonial Literatures in English*. Ed. John Thieme. London: Arnold, 1996. 569-72.
- Lovelace, Earl. *The Wine of Astonishment*. Oxford: Heinemann, 1982.
- . "A Brief Conversion". *A Brief Conversion and Other Stories*. Earl Lovelace. Oxford: Heinemann, 1988. 1-31.
- . *A Brief Conversion and Other Stories*. Oxford: Heinemann, 1988.
- McKenzie, Earl. *A Boy named Ossie: A Jamaican Childhood*. Oxford: Heinemann, 1991.
- Naipaul, V. S. "Man-man". *The Arnold Anthology of Post-colonial Literatures in English*. Ed. John Thieme. London: Arnold, 1996. 483-87.
- Philip, Marlene N. *Harriet's Daughter*. Oxford: Heinemann, 1988.
- Pollard, Velma. *Crown Point and Other Poems*. Sussex: Peepal Tree Press, 1988.
- . *Karl*. La Habana (Cuba): Casa de las Américas, 1993.
- . *Karl and Other Stories*. England: Longman, 1994.
- Selvon, Samuel. "Working the Transport". *The Arnold Anthology of Post-colonial Literatures in English*. Ed. John Thieme. London: Arnold, 1996. 845-49.
- Senior, Olive. "Summer Lightning". *The Arnold Anthology of Post-colonial Literatures in English*. Ed. John Thieme. London: Arnold, 1996. 572-8.
- . *Summer Lightning And Other Stories*. England: Longman, 1986.
- . *Discerner of Hearts And Other Stories*. Toronto: Mc Clelland and Stewart, 1995.

Secondary sources

- Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 5th ed. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1988.
- Ashcroft, Bill et al. *Post-colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Benítez-Rojo, Antonio. "The Repeating Island". *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Massachusetts, USA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998. 978-95.

- Benson, Eugene, and L.W. Conolly. *Encyclopaedia of Post-colonial Literatures in English*. 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Benito, Jesús, and Ana María Manzanás. "Border(lands) and Border Writing: Introductory Essay". *Literature and Ethnicity in the Cultural Borderlands*. Eds. Jesús Benito and Ana María Manzanás. Amsterdam-New York: Rodopi, 2002. 1-21.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Boehmer, Elleke. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Bonnie, Barthold. *Black Time: Fiction of Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981.
- Brathwaite, Edward Kamau. "Jazz and the West Indian Novel I, II and III". *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature*. Eds. Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson Welsh. London: Routledge, 1996 [1969]. 336-43.
- . "Timehri". *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature*. Eds. Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson Welsh. London: Routledge, 1996 [1970]. 344-50.
- . "Creolization in Jamaica". *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. Eds. Bill Ashcroft et al. London: Routledge, 1995 [1971]. 202-5.
- . "Nation Language". *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. Eds. Bill Ashcroft et al. London: Routledge, 1995 [1984]. 309-13.
- . "The New Aesthetic and the Meaning of Culture in the Caribbean: the Dream Coming in With the Rain". *Carifesta V*. Ed. Pearl Eintou Springer. Trinidad: National Carnival Commission, 1995. 144-54.
- Bringas López, Ana. *Muller e Literatura na sociedade caribeña anglófona*. Vigo, España: Ediciones Univesidad de Vigo, 2000.
- Brown, Stewart, and John Wickham. Introduction. *The Oxford Book of Caribbean Short Stories*. Eds. Stewart Brown and John Wickham. Oxford: University Press, 1999. i-xxi.
- Casimir, Jean. *La invención del Caribe*. Puerto Rico: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1997.
- Craig, Dennis. "Social Class and the Use of Language: A Case Study of Jamaican Children". *Focus on the Caribbean*. Eds. Manfred Gorklach and John Holm. Ser. Varieties of English Around the World G8. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 1986. 71-116.

- Cuddon, J. A. *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Rev. ed. London: Andre Deutsch, 1979.
- Dance, Daryl Cumber. *Folklore From Contemporary Jamaicans*. Tennessee, USA: University of Tennessee Press, 1985.
- . *New World Adams: Conversations with Contemporary West Indian Writers*. Yorkshire (England): Peepal Tree P, 1992.
- Dash, J. Michael. "Psychology, Creolization, and Hybridization". *New National and Post-colonial Literatures: An Introduction*. Ed. Bruce King. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996. 45-58.
- Davies, Carole Boyce, and Elaine Savory Fido. "Introduction: Women and Literature in the Caribbean: An Overview". *Out of the Kumbla: Caribbean Women and Literature*. Eds. Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1990. 1-22.
- Donnell, Alison, and Sarah Lawson Welsh. "General Introduction". *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature*. Eds. Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson Welsh. London: Routledge, 1996. 1-21.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Trans. Charles Lam Markmann. London: Pluto Press, 1986. [1952].
- . *The Wretched of the Earth*. Trans. Constance Farrington. New York: Grove Press, 1963.
- Fido, Elaine Savory. "Textures of Third World Reality in the Poetry of Four African-Caribbean Women". *Out of the Kumbla: Caribbean Women and Literature*. Eds. Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1990. 29-44.
- . "Ramabai Espinet Talks to Elaine Savory —A Sense of Constant Dialogue: Writing, Woman and Indo-Caribbean Culture". *The Other Woman: Women of Colour in Contemporary Canadian Literature*. Ed. Makeda Silvera. Toronto: Sister Vision Press, 1995. 94-115.
- Furé Davis, Samuel. *Cantos de resistencia*. La Habana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 2000.
- Gallego, María del Mar. "The Borders of the Self: Identity and Community in Louise Eldridge's *Love Medicine* and Paule Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow*". *Literature and Ethnicity in the Cultural Borderlands*. Eds. Jesús Benito and Ana María Manzanás. Amsterdam-New York: Rodopi, 2002. 145-58.
- Gilroy, Paul. "The Black Atlantic". *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers. 1998. 970-77.

- Hall, Stuart. "New Ethnicities". 1988. *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. Eds. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen. London: Routledge, 1996. 441-50.
- , "Cultural Identity and Diaspora". *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. Ed. Mongia Padmini. London: Arnold, 1997. 110-21.
- Hellinger, Marlis. "On Writing English-related Creoles in the Caribbean". *Focus on the Caribbean*. Eds. Manfred Gorch and John Holm. Ser. Varieties of English Around the World G8. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 1986. 52-70.
- Hodge, Merle. "Challenges of the Struggle for Sovereignty: Changing the World versus Writing Stories". *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature*. Eds. Donnell and Welsh. London: Routledge, 1996. 494-47.
- Holt, Thomas C. *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938*. Maryland, USA: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.
- Katrak, Ketu H. "Decolonizing Culture: Toward a Theory of Post-colonial Women Texts". *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. Ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith and Helen Tiffin. London and New York: Routledge, 1999. 225-58.
- Kennedy, X.J. *An Introduction to Fiction*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1976.
- Leeming, David Adams. *Storytelling Encyclopaedia: Historical, Cultural, and Multiethnic Approaches to Oral Traditions Around the World*. Arizona, USA: Oryx Press, 1997.
- Le Page, R. B. "Dialect in West Indian Literature". *Critics on Caribbean Literature*. Ed. Edward Baugh. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1978. 123-29.
- Le Page, R. B., and Andrée Tabouret-Keller. *Acts of Identity: Creole-based Approaches to Language and Ethnicity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism and Postcolonialism*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Lovelace, Earl. "Culture and the Environment". *Carifesta V*. Ed. Pearl E. Springer. Trinidad: National Carnival Commission, 1994. 132-36.
- Mordecai, Pamela, and Betty Wilson, eds. *Her True-True Name: An Anthology of Women's Writing From the Caribbean*. Oxford: Heinemann, 1989.
- The New Oxford Dictionary of English*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

- O'Callaghan, Evelyn. "Interior Schisms Dramatised: The Treatment of the *Mad Woman* in the Work of Some Female Caribbean Novelists". *Out of the Kumbula*. Eds. Davies and Fido. Trenton: Africa World Press, 1990. 89-108.
- Philip, M. N. "The Absence of Writing or How I Almost Became a Spy". *Out of the Kumbula*. Eds. Davies and Fido. Trenton: Africa World Press, 1990. 271-78.
- Pollard, Velma. "Innovation in Jamaican Creole: the Speech of Rastafari". *Focus on the Caribbean*. Eds. Manfred Gorchach and John Holm. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 1986. 157-66.
- , "Blurring Cultural Boundaries: The Balm Yard in Olive Senior's 'Discerner of Hearts' and Erna Brodber's *Myal*". *Contemporary Literature in the African Diaspora*. Eds. Olga Barrios and Bernard Bell. Universidad de Salamanca. León: Celarayn, 1997. 93-99.
- Ramchand, Kenneth. *The West Indian Novel and its Background*. London: Heinemann, 1983.
- , "Short Story (The Caribbean)". *Encyclopaedia of Post-colonial Literatures in English*. 2 vols. Eds. Benson and Conolly. London: Routledge, 1994. 1463-68.
- Ramraj, Victor. "Diasporas and Multiculturalism". *New national and Postcolonial Literatures: An Introduction*. Ed. Bruce King. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996. 214-29.
- Rohlehr, Gordon. "Images of Men and Women in the 1930's Calypsoes". *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature*. Eds. Donnell and Welsh. London: Routledge, 1996. 198-205.
- Said, Edward. "Orientalism". *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers. 1998. 873-86.
- Serra, Edelweis. *Tipología del cuento literario: textos hispanoamericanos*. Madrid: Cupsa Editorial, 1978.
- Springer, Pearl Eintou. "Carnival: Identity, Ethnicity, and Spirituality". *Ah Come Back Home: Perspectives on the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival*. Eds. Ian Isidore and Kimani Nehusi. Washington D.C. and Port of Spain: Original Press, 2000. 17-27.
- Walcott, Derek. "The Muse of History". *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature*. Eds. Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson Welsh. London: Routledge, 1996. 354-58.

Wilentz, Gay. *Binding Cultures: Black Women Writers in Africa and The Diaspora*.

Indiana, USA: Indiana University Press, 1992.

Winer, Lise. *Trinidad and Tobago*. Ser. Varieties of English Around the World T6.

Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 1993.