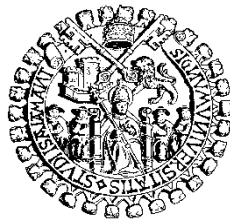


UNIVERSIDAD DE SALAMANCA  
FACULTAD DE FILOLOGÍA

Departamento de Filología Inglesa

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**EXPRESSING *THEM SELVES*: ORALITY IN  
CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH CARIBBEAN SHORT FICTION  
AS A KEY SIGNIFIER IN THE ASSERTION OF CULTURAL  
IDENTITY**

Zenaida Seguin Pedraill

2006

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Salamanca, noviembre 2006

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation could not have seen the light without having received the emotional and moral support from my mother, family and friends during these years of study so far from home. I also truly appreciate the assistance and contribution to the development of this work of the staff of the Department of English of the Faculty of Philology of the University of Salamanca, with special thank you to librarians Andrés and Manoli. I would like to express my boundless gratitude to the authors who contributed, personally and academically, to the realization of this work, to Olive and Velma for their encouragement and their kind and sincere collaboration. My most special thank you is due to my tutor Dra. Olga Barrios Herrero for her guide, her generous assistance and encouragement, her open, patient and understanding character, and her personal, emotional, and scholarly support. Thank you all.

## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	7
 CHAPTER ONE. THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO CARIBBEANNESS AND LITERATURE	 21
I. CREOLISATION AND CULTURAL IDENTITY	24
Creolisation	24
Cultural Identity	33
 II. THE CARIBBEAN ENGLISH CREOLE	 41
An Approach to the Creole Language and its Uses in Short Fiction	41
A Brief Analysis of the Most Noticeable Features of Creole	54
 III. ENGLISH CARIBBEAN SHORT FICTION	 58
An Approach to the History of Short Fiction in the English Caribbean	58
Some Considerations on English Caribbean Short Fiction and its Most Distinctive Features	67
 CHAPTER TWO. THE ORALITY OF ENGLISH CARIBBEAN FICTION	 84
I. THE USE OF THE CREOLE LANGUAGE AS A NECESSARY NARRATIVE STRATEGY FOR THE ARTICULATION AND ASSERTION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY	92
 II. THE TRADITION OF STORYTELLING: ITS FORMS AND MOTIFS BEQUEATHED TO ANGLO-CARIBBEAN NARRATIVE	 101
 III. THE PRESENCE OF PROVERBS AS A LINGUISTIC AND SOCIOCULTURAL SIGNIFIER OF ORALITY	 118
 IV. THE RHYTHMIC AND FORMAL FEATURES OF THE POPULAR SONG DETERMINING THE ANGLO-CARIBBEAN MUSICAL NARRATIVE MODE	 122

V. THE ORAL MESSAGE OF SOCIAL PROTEST OF DUB POETRY CONDITIONING FICTIONAL NARRATIVE IN FORM AND CONTENT	141
CHAPTER THREE. STORYTELLING AS A THEMATIC AND NARRATIVE VEHICLE FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE COMMUNITY'S HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL LEGACY AND THE ASSERTION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY	155
I. STORYTELLING AS A CULTURAL FORM OF SOCIAL HISTORIOGRAPHY IN VELMA POLLARD'S "A NIGHT'S TALE"	155
II. THE STORYTELLER: A POLITICAL AGITATOR FOR THE PRESERVATION OF TRADITIONAL CULTURE IN ISMITH KHAN'S "SHADOWS MOVE IN THE BRITANNIA BAR"	172
III. A BIG BOY/ANANCY TALE: THE TRICKSTER MOTIF PROPELLING A NARRATIVE OF RESISTANCE IN OLIVE SENIOR'S "ASCOT"	195
CHAPTER FOUR. SONG, ORAL POETRY AND CREOLISATION AS STYLISTIC SIGNIFIERS OF CULTURAL IDENTITY IN THE EXPRESSION OF AN IDIOSYNCRATIC LITERARY AESTHETIC	223
I. WRITING A CALYPSO: THE CELEBRATION OF GRASS-ROOT CULTURE IN MICHAEL ANTHONY'S "THEY BETTER DON'T STOP THE CARNIVAL"	223
II. THE LYRICAL POLITICISING OF NARRATIVE: DUB POETRY AND SOCIAL PROTEST IN MAKEDA SILVERA'S "CARIBBEAN CHAMELEON"	250
III. CREOLE CULTURAL RESISTANCE IN EARL LOVELACE'S "A BRIEF CONVERSION": ASSERTING PERSONHOOD AND CULTURAL IDENTITY THROUGH CREOLISATION	281
CONCLUSION	323
APPENDIX I. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON THE AUTHORS	330
APPENDIX II. A BRIEF EXCHANGE OF IDEAS WITH SOME OF THE AUTHORS	333
WORKS CITED	340

## INTRODUCTION

Identity has become a major issue of debate in contemporary literary theory and cultural studies within postcolonialism<sup>1</sup>. 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*<sup>2</sup> of cultures, a process that has been taking place after the major events that have marked the history of humanity —from the *rediscovery*<sup>3</sup> of the New World, the colonial experience, through 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. These processes have provided the ground for the development of complex and continual processes of formation and articulation of identity in

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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 hybridised 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. This issues will be examined in Chapter One.

<sup>3</sup> 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 had come to the region centuries before from the Asian continent, and thus became the real *conquistadores* of the land.

contemporary societies. The complexity of these processes of identity formation and articulation is explained by the nature of the sociogeographical and sociocultural context in which they are developed. In postcolonial societies, for example, the articulation of identity frequently becomes a troublesome process because of a historical, antagonistic relation of domination and subordination that ruled the interaction of the diverse cultural groups within the colonial experience, and because 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 strengthened by the maintenance of sociopolitical and cultural malformations 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 culture. 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 colonizing culture by colonized subjects has usually entailed some kind of subversion against the social and cultural order imposed by the colonizer<sup>4</sup>. Consequently, despite the dominating stance of the European/Western culture, the colonized

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<sup>4</sup> 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).

subject has tried to oppose the impulse of assimilating into the dominating culture by maintaining his/her own cultural heritage. This cultural resistance has actually been the ground of a rebellious, militant position for the legitimisation and reassertion of a cultural legacy marginalized and denigrated by a dominating European/Western discourse, which has been fundamental in the colonized individual's assertion of cultural identity.

The complex processes of articulation of identity, as well as those of reaffirmation of cultural identity have been largely echoed by the literature produced in these societies. Many writers have enacted in their works personal dilemmas concerning the expression of identity, which can be seen as metaphors of a situation relevant to his/her society as a whole. On the other hand, and more consonant with contemporary experience, the reaffirmation of a cultural identity taking place in postcolonial literatures aims at rescuing the traditional culture and validating the local sociocultural universe against Western cultural imperialism. It is precisely the validation of the local sociocultural universe against Western cultural penetration what lies at the core of contemporary Anglo-Caribbean literature<sup>5</sup>. Whereas from the thirties until the fifties and sixties —the decades that marked the boom of Anglo-Caribbean literature— this literature's development was propelled around a social need to oppose and contend the colonial system and its harmful influences in the sociocultural growth of colonized subjects, the literature produced in the region in subsequent years has strategically shifted its emphasis on overt opposition and resistance to oppression, inscribing resistance from a perspective

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<sup>5</sup> 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, San Vincent and the Grenadines, Granada, and Trinidad and Tobago). In my analysis, I will use the terms Anglo-Caribbean, Caribbean, and English Caribbean interchangeably so as to avoid redundancy when referring to the social and cultural universe of these Anglophone Caribbean territories.



consonant with their present postcolonial life and in other, sometimes more passive or subtle ways, “[m]oving beyond the reactive role, Caribbean writers are now writing for and to each other, outside the context of ‘white man’s meaning’” (Donnell and Welsh 452). This literature, therefore, does no longer speak resentfully from a past experience of colonization rooted in oppression and loss, in a revisionist practice of history; it rather pays attention to present-day Caribbean experience and its predicaments, like that of enduring a more subtle way of domination: cultural neocolonialism. That is why, the defence of cultural autonomy through the assertion of a truly Caribbean cultural identity has become a primordial task for many Caribbean writers and intellectuals.

In the context of fictional writing, the potential of fiction for politically affecting the way in which the formerly colonized people see and express themselves has been recognized by many Caribbean intellectuals, who have witnessed and experienced the harmful influence of the European cultural discourse —imposed on the colonized subject through the school texts of colonial education and the imported fiction from the metropolis— for the ontological security and self-assurance of the (post)colonial individual (as it will be commented on in Chapter One). In this regard, many Caribbean writers might consider the writing of fiction as a valid vehicle for producing revolutionary changes in the perception of Caribbean people toward themselves and their reality, ultimately contributing to a healthier and more solid sociocultural development for their societies. In agreement with this view, Merle Hodge, Trinidadian writer and scholar, claims that the “[f]iction which affirms and validates our world is therefore an important weapon of resistance”, with which to eradicate the negative images of their world enthroned by the colonizing European cultural discourse, and against the cultural domination or “occupation” by foreign fiction (from the United States, Canada, England, and even Australia); for Hodge, the writing of fiction becomes then a “guerrilla activity” in the struggle for cultural

sovereignty and that might contribute to the development of “a modern tradition of popular literature” (206-7).

As a matter of fact, the development of a literature about and addressed to Caribbean people remains the concern of many Caribbean intellectuals. It is out of this concern, but coming from the educational sphere, that some Anglo-Caribbean scholars have worked in favour of the necessary incorporation into the school curriculum on literature of Caribbean texts. Jamaican writer Vic Reid, for instance, wrote several books of fiction to be used in schools in an attempt to fight against what he saw as a disgraceful and shameful situation in post-independence Jamaica: “[I]t’s is a scandal that so many English books and even American books are in our primary school system” (215). But his fight also entailed the necessary teaching of their history (the colonized people’s version of history) to children, which would help them to grow up as self-assured individuals, socioculturally speaking: “[I]t is the children to whom we ought to go with our Jamaican history. We old ones are on our way out, but the kids growing up ought to know something about themselves and ought to develop a pride in themselves” (209). Like Reid, Velma Pollard has noted this alarming educational situation with regards to the foreign literature alien to the Caribbean reality been taught in Caribbean schools: “[I]f you are reared on literature, the literature that we have is a literature that does not include us” (“Interview” 178). Echoing Reid’s concerns on the education of Caribbean children, several writers (like Pollard) have devoted part of their fictional work to children; as an example, *Over Our Way: A Collection of Caribbean Short Stories for Young Readers*, edited by Velma Pollard and Jean D’Costa from Jamaica, anthologises short stories written by authors from across the English Caribbean that can be worked upon in the classroom through a guide of questions included in this work. The validation of the Caribbean sociocultural reality which certainly occurs in this

fiction about the Caribbean and its people serves the purpose of asserting a cultural identity with which to counteract Western cultural penetration.

The reaffirmation of cultural identity taking place in Anglo-Caribbean fictional writing is produced from different levels and out of different subjective positions. When it is deployed in the thematic level of the fictional text, the reader can more readily identify an authorial interest concerned with the question of identity articulation or assertion (personal or communal) in his/her society. Out of the many personal dilemmas in the sociocultural self-articulation of the Caribbean subject conveyed in this literature, the writer's grappling with the question of identity articulation or assertion usually entails the validation of Caribbean sociocultural reality and an overt affirmation of the individual's right to express his/her culturally identified Self, freed from imposed cultural conceptions. Accordingly, the validation of the Afro-Creole sociocultural universe, for instance, remains vital for Travey (in Earl Lovelace's "A Brief Conversion"), and Kenneth (in Velma Pollard's novella *Karl*) in their growth as ontologically secured and self-assured social beings. Also, the portrayal of resistant subjects asserting their right to sociocultural self-determination can be found in several texts like Olive Senior's "Zig-Zag" and "The Two Grandmothers", and Lionel Seepaul's "Pan for Pockot", to name just a few. The processes of identity articulation and/or assertion tackled in these texts frequently reveal the troubling implications such processes involve, like the ambivalent positions of in-betweenness experienced by these individuals and exemplified in stories such as Senior's "Summer Lightning" and Clyde Hosein's "Morris Bhaiya".

Furthermore, even when the question of identity expression is not central to the theme, a seemingly ingenious reaffirmation of cultural identity can be perceived in the author's portrayal of Caribbean reality; as if with their description of their native reality they were revealing a

country, a culture, and a way of life proper of that culture, asserting at the same time their belongingness to that world also as sociocultural subjects. However, these authorial acts of assertion of cultural identity perceived in fiction may be produced unconsciously, since the writers are not always conscious of the personal situations or dilemmas concerning this question being carried onto the fictional text in its process of creation. This unconscious assertion of identity is demonstrated in Senior's "Summer Lightning", in which the story of a boy living occasionally with some rural relatives reveals from a sociogeographic context the liminality (or in-betweenness) of the child's experience. This is the Caribbean child who would try to construct his experience of selfhood, from a resistant and self-conscious in-between position, negotiating among the different sociocultural contexts or milieus necessarily converging in his sociocultural growth.

Contrarily, on the formal level, one can perceive a more objective position of the writers concerning the expression of identity through fiction, because very often the form of the fictional text suggests a conscious attitude of the writers to work upon elements and narrative resources found in the oral tradition in order to craft their creative works. Although they may be unaware of the political implications of their crafting, they are certainly expressing and reaffirming a cultural identity through the validation of local cultural forms in their fiction. It is precisely out of the writers' attempts at representing and validating the cultural forms of the oral culture in the English Caribbean (composed of oral cultures overwhelmingly) that orality emerges as a distinctive feature of Anglo-Caribbean literature, on which my analysis will focus.

The oral quality of Anglo-Caribbean fiction is perceived from its beginnings, but it is seen to be more openly acknowledged and celebrated in general terms in the literature from the 1970s onward serving creative, stylistic purposes, as well as the idea of expressing cultural identity.

My specific interest in identifying the oral quality of this literature —as my analysis of several texts developed in this dissertation will demonstrate— focuses on the relevance of orality as a signifier of cultural identity in Anglo-Caribbean literature, functioning as a vehicle for the validation and preservation of traditional folk culture in the articulation of cultural identity, as well as for the development of an idiosyncratic and syncretic literary aesthetic sometimes defined as *oral literature*. For such endeavour, I have restricted my interest to the genre of short fiction<sup>6</sup> because, as a form of literary expression, it is a genre more consonant with the Caribbean sociocultural reality when compared with other genres (that is why, perhaps, it has always been very popular), and it is, seemingly, the one with a longer history. Its origins are traced back to the tradition of oral narration more largely developed by the descendants of the African, Amerindian, and Asian populations in the region; and its development has showed stronger links to that oral tradition than to the European narrative tradition. In this line, Caribbean critic Kenneth Ramchand has asserted the Caribbeanness of short fiction on account of its relation to traditional modes of oral narration when noting the proficiency of Caribbean writers in the short form, also perceived when they change to the novel, a European narrative form: “[A] closer look at Caribbean novels shows that most of them are written by authors with a bent towards the short story” (“Short Story” 1466). In my opinion, the attachment of Caribbean writers to the short narrative form makes short fiction a rightly suitable genre in the

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<sup>6</sup> Here I propose to use the term *short fiction*, within the context of Anglo-Caribbean literature, to refer to the prose fiction that does not reach the extension of the novel. Within short fiction we could speak then 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 can be placed under a single denomination firstly because both genres share a common origin —both derive from the folk tale; and their historic-literary precedents are the stories of *Decameron* (1353), by Italian writer Boccaccio (Cuddon 452, 624). Moreover, both genres may be comprised into the category of short fiction because, on the one hand, it does not seem yet 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 in the Caribbean present great similarities probably because they also developed from the same source. Furthermore, in his analysis of the Caribbean short story, Kenneth Ramchand seems to suggest that the term *short fiction* may comprise several types of prose narrative other than the novel; within this categorization may be included then the early short fictional writings produced in the Caribbean, short stories, and novellas.

purpose of authenticating the traditional culture, providing a fertile ground for any (narrative) act of cultural identification, and for that other purpose of continuing to develop a Caribbean literary aesthetic in which the short form already occupies a prominent place.

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 Anglo-Caribbean literature. Moreover, the reason for choosing male and female writers is that of comparing and contrasting male and female positions in relation to the issue of asserting a cultural identity through their appropriation and use of elements from the oral culture. Thus, regarding the use of the Creole language, for instance, female writers tend to credit it more as narrative linguistic medium when compared with male authors, which corresponds with a truly militant attitude of women writers to raise the status of Creole in a Creole-speaking but still Creole-disfavouring society through fiction. The uses of Creole in the texts analysed in this paper testify to this divergence toward language use in male and female creative writing, as it will be seen. This example corroborates the fact that the positions of Caribbean writers, male and female, concerning the validation of oral tradition and culture as a sociopolitical strategy for the reaffirmation of a cultural identity are varied. However, in 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.

There have been specific reasons for choosing the authors under study. In the cases of Velma Pollard, Earl Lovelace, and Michael Anthony, they are based in the Caribbean, which means that they have been and presently are participants in the social and cultural transformations that have been taking place in their societies. Olive Senior, Makeda Silvera, and Ismith Khan, on

the other hand, have resided abroad —Senior and Silvera in Canada and Khan in the United States; however, their fiction addresses the Caribbean sociopolitical and sociocultural universe. In the case of Senior, her literary and critical works are grounded on the Caribbean, portraying and analysing her native Caribbean (Jamaican) reality from a critical perspective; her characters are usually Caribbean-based subjects. Also, the Caribbean reality and that of Caribbean or Caribbean-born subjects frequently occupy the thematic field explored in the fiction of Silvera and Khan. For this reason mainly, choosing these expatriate writers is not controversial at all, because even though many of the works written by expatriate postcolonial writers tend to move toward a multicultural context (afforded by the metropolitan centres where they live), a considerable number of them still maintain thematic links with their native backgrounds<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, the expatriate Caribbean writer can be seen as the “generic” postcolonial writer in exile described by Elleke Boehmer: “[E]x colonial by birth”, “*Third World* in cultural interest”, who “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).

Velma Pollard, Olive Senior and Makeda Silvera are from Jamaica, while Ismith Khan, Earl Lovelace and Michael Anthony are from Trinidad and Tobago. The majority of the writers chosen are Afro-Caribbean or partake of the African legacy in the Caribbean since it informs, culturally, their creolised identities. The Trinidadian-born Ismith Khan has Indian ancestry tracing back to the historical experience of indentured labour of immigrants from India in

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<sup>7</sup> Caribbean expatriate writers such as the Trinidad-born V. S. Naipaul and the Guyana-born Jan Carew follow a cosmopolitan approach in their works. But others, like the St. Lucia-born, Nobel Prize winner 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. 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 novella: “I had to leave my land, Masters, to see my land” (*Karl* 138), —the vision of a Caribbean-based writer crediting a positive side of the migrant experience.

Trinidad and Tobago. My choosing him as one of the authors to study in this work is supported, primarily, by the syncretic character of the Caribbean experience, of *Caribbeanness* and its quality of openness to embrace different cultural groups and manifestations in one space and context. And this creolised Caribbean sociocultural experience is what all these writers are describing and crediting in their fiction. (Khan's fiction is not at all restricted to the Indo-Caribbean experience, however; it addresses Trinidadian society as a complex intercultural social space, which is corroborated in his short story analysed here). Moreover, my choice here justifying the notion of creolisation in the Caribbean agrees also with my intention of avoiding the "generalizing and homogenizing tendencies" within *Postcolonial Studies* that may cause that certain specificities or unique features of Caribbean cultures and literatures be erased in this overarching conceptual framework. Because, as Alison Donnell and Sarah L. Welsh have noted, the "critical policing of the post-colonial perimeter fence" for writers and texts "which stray from assigned identities" makes that certain writers and their texts be excluded, as well as reduces the "constructions" of Caribbean writers and texts (438-40). The creolised Caribbean experience has been addressed by these Caribbean writers from within its syncretic context, whether they are Afro-Caribbean or Indo-Caribbean. And Ismith Khan, just like Michael Anthony, is one of the Trinidadian writers who, even without having received much literary recognition, has greatly contributed to the validation of the Trinidadian creolised sociocultural experience in literature.

Perhaps most importantly, the short fictional texts chosen show different narrative styles defined by varied authorial attitudes toward the appropriation of elements from the oral culture, the presentation of the characters as discursive agents in the narration, and the choice of narrative perspective and linguistic registers. The difference in their narrative styles is revealed, for example, in the way in which the characters' voices/discourse are given expression within



the narration, and in the use of language as a narrative strategy. This diversity in styles points at different positions in the writers' approach to and validation of the oral culture and their representation of their sociocultural reality in fiction. These works are Velma Pollard's "A Night's Tale", Olive Senior's "Ascot", Makeda Silvera's "Caribbean Chameleon", Ismith Khan's "Shadows Move in the Britannia Bar", Michael Anthony's "They Better Don't Stop the Carnival", and Earl Lovelace's "A Brief Conversion".

My study is divided into a theoretical section and the individual analysis of the texts. Chapters One and Two offer a theoretical basis for the analysis of the texts. In Chapter One, I propose a personal approach to *Caribbeanness*, creolisation, and the expression of cultural identity in contemporary Anglo-Caribbean literature, which will support my analysis of orality as a signifier of cultural identity in this literature. Within this theoretical basis, an approach to the Creole language and the short fiction in the region is deemed necessary; that is why they are treated here in independent sections. Chapter Two is devoted to the analysis of orality through the study of several elements from the oral tradition and culture that most largely and effectively condition the oral quality of literary texts, such as the Creole language, folktales, proverbs, songs and oral poetry. It serves, then, to distinguish the cultural precedents informing the occurrence of this oral quality in this fiction, and to raise a tentative commentary on the emergence of new narrative modes based on orality as a defining stylistic element. Orality is, in my view, the most noticeable feature of this fiction: the one that has more largely sustained its creation and development, and contributed to the construction of a genuinely Anglo-Caribbean literary aesthetic.

Chapters Three and Four are dedicated to the analysis of the texts. In Chapter Three, the analysis of three of the texts chosen focuses on storytelling as an important element from the

oral tradition and culture that needs to be preserved; this celebration of storytelling in fiction can be perceived as a significant act of cultural reaffirmation within the process of assertion of identity. The other three texts examined in Chapter Four offer also original ways in which other elements from the oral culture are appropriated and recreated in fiction, contributing thus to the creation and development of a Caribbean *oraliterary* aesthetic that confirms the expression of cultural identity from the context of narrative. Specifically, I analyse here the way in which oral artistic forms like calypso and dub poetry have been adapted to fiction conditioning, also, its distinctive oral quality.

In addition to the chapters dedicated to the analysis of the texts, I have included at the end an appendix that offers some bibliographical notes on the writers, and a second appendix that shows an exchange of ideas conducted via email with some of the writers about their works analysed here, that has served to support and re-consider some of my early views in relation to their fiction.

When analysing the process of creolisation pertinent to the formation of Caribbean societies, I have particularly relied on Barbadian writer and scholar Edward K. Brathwaite's theoretical postulates, whereas the issue of the articulation of cultural identity is addressed allowing for the theoretical works on the subject of several scholars such as Homi Bhabha, the Jamaican-born Stuart Hall, and Trinidadian Merle Hodge. 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 Velma Pollard's study on the speech of Rastafarians. In relation to short fiction, I have grounded my approach to it on Caribbean critic Kenneth Ramchand's examination on this genre, and on that of Spanish scholar Ana Bringas López on contemporary fiction by Caribbean women writers. Finally, I address the orality of

this genre taking into account the critical postulates of several scholars such as Walter Ong, Carolyn Cooper, Gayl Jones, and Henry Louis Gates Jr. It is important to underscore here that in a general view the short fiction genre has received sparse literary analysis as an independent field of study in Anglo-Caribbean literature. 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. In a similar way, the critical work on Anglo-Caribbean literature has generally centred on the content more than on the form; the signified has gained more attention than the signifier, which is nevertheless of notable import to the writers in the process of writing creatively. All this ratifies the need to expand the critical studies on Anglo-Caribbean fiction, and specifically the short form as literary genre.

By using the Caribbean short fiction as a narrative model for studying the assertion of cultural identity through its form, I hope to contribute to a further understanding of this sociocultural region and its contemporary writing, especially short fiction, as well as make a payment 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 geographical<sup>8</sup>, sociohistorical and sociocultural signifiers. The diversity found in the sociocultural panorama of the region is due to the continuous cross interaction of cultures from pre-Columbian times to the present age: the Amerindian, European, African, and Asian cultures that, as they participate in the processes of transculturation that took place, cannot be conceived as monolithic and homogeneous cultural entities.

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 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 communities<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> 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 Río de Janeiro (in Brazil) are also included within the Caribbean.

<sup>9</sup> 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 early 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

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*<sup>10</sup>. 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 or Indian or Chinese diaspora in European and New World societies, the time has reached for us to accept and celebrate as well the idea of a Caribbean diaspora, with all the troubling implications this diasporic condition entails<sup>11</sup>. Then, I propose to hold an ample conception of all that the term *Caribbean* may imply 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 analysing the processes of assertion of cultural

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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.

<sup>10</sup> In his dissertation on Caribbean cultural identity, Pablo A. Mariñez refers to "la caribeñidad" as a product of a cultural blending, and as a "fenómeno de identidad cultural de carácter regional, que logra superar la diferencia de sus componentes" (2).

<sup>11</sup> 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).

identity enacted 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 analyse 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 or culture-related analysis in the Caribbean. As a matter of fact, this creolised nature of the Caribbean lies at the core of every cultural manifestation, including literature, as the literary works analysed demonstrate. Moreover, I will provide a brief theoretical insight into the issue of the assertion of cultural identity, highlighting the causes for its recurrence in literature. This approach to the question of identity assertion in Caribbean literature will serve to ground our views toward the several positions from which Caribbean writers enact those processes of expression and/or assertion of cultural identity in fiction.

Furthermore, I will offer an insight into the linguistic manifestations in the Anglo-phone Caribbean through the English Creole. The use of Creole by the Caribbean writer reveals the importance of Creole not only as the language spoken by the majority of the population in the Anglo-phone Caribbean, but also as the linguistic medium that enables the writer to express their cultural identity and contribute to the formation of a Caribbean literary aesthetic. Finally, my approach to the short fiction genre will assist the analysis of these six texts in how they reveal and assert a Caribbean aesthetic; 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.

## I. CREOLISATION AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

### **Creolisation**

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 conceptualisation of these terms by ethnologists and cultural studies scholars is not utterly fixed, Aschroft and his colleagues agree on *creolization* as the term that specifically characterizes the cultural blending in the Anglo-phone 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 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 (“Timehri” 344).

Brathwaite has also noted the main differences between these two kinds of creolisation. In the *mestizo-creolization* 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-creolization* developed in the Caribbean the two main cultural elements in the process of interculturalisation —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 (“Timehri” 344). Brathwaite describes the *mulatto-creolization* 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-creolization* should probably 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 (“Creolization” 203).

Accordingly, African slaves were apparently deculturated by what Brathwaite names processes of “seasoning” (initiation into the Plantation world mainly through slave labour) and “socialisation” (interaction within the social world of the Plantation). He describes the process of creolisation for the black slave 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 (“Creolization” 203).

Being an Afro-Caribbean scholar, Brathwaite regrets that the black slave’s creolisation caused 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 favoured the white master’s process of creolisation: this intimate contact between African slaves and Europeans forced the latter to partake of the social and cultural 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 noted 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)<sup>12</sup>. The resistance of these subordinated cultures —though passively performed mainly— 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 cultures in the Caribbean played an important role in the dynamics of creolisation:

[T]he 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 (46-7).

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

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<sup>12</sup> The resistance maintained by the subordinated cultures or sociocultural/ethnic groups in the Caribbean is explained in the opposition to European colonial cultural domination and cultural supremacy, to postcolonial sociocultural malformations derived from colonialism, and to the hegemony of European/Western cultural discourse.

positive input 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, which are perhaps the most clear example because the African religious cults and deities have retained their African essence and suffered little transculturation—it was mainly determined by the newness and difference of the Caribbean sociogeographic 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 festivals<sup>13</sup>. 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 labour, and the marital union without benefit of the church (Ramchand, *West Indian* 118-21)<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> 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".

<sup>14</sup> For example, in the Afro-Caribbean community depicted by Lovelace in *A Brief Conversion and Other Stories* this kind of marital union—described by Olive Senior in *Working Miracles* as common-law 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 a very strong sense of Afro-Creole identification.

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 European cultural forms, which 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. Then, 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 Afro-Caribbean context may be also explained in a context of social relations through what Velma Pollard has called “Afro-creole” and “Anglo-creole socialisations” (“Blurring” 93). Pollard uses these terms to describe the kind of 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. Certainly, the construction of identity for 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 milieus<sup>15</sup>. This process of construction of identity is frequently re-enacted by Caribbean writers

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<sup>15</sup> The construction of a creolised identity through the negotiation of elements from the Afro-Creole and Euro-Creole sociocultural milieus is thematized in fictional works such as “Summer Lightning” (by Senior), *Karl* (by Pollard), and “A Brief Conversion”. In these works, the protagonists’ identities are formed, initially, in an Afro-Creole sociocultural context, and subsequently and forcefully re-defined through their social interactions in an Euro-Creole sociocultural context. (For a more detailed analysis of this question see Seguin, “Creolization and Caribbeanness: The Assertion of Identity in Contemporary English Caribbean Short Fiction”).

in their fiction both, as a way to come to terms with the cultural diversity and the irreconciliations between cultural groups or sociocultural experiences in different milieus, and as a way to assert a creolised cultural identity in their own personal and most positive way.

The process of creolisation pertinent also to the immigrant Asian communities in the Caribbean developed in different terms (when compared with the Afro-Caribbean context) and certainly out of the domination/subordination scheme of social relations between the European colonizer and the colonized black subject during slavery. These immigrant cultural groups found creolised societies where the African cultural input was great but the dominant, official codes were European. However, because they came as labourers and not as slaves, they were accepted as people with a culture and not like the Africans that, even though they were also people with a culture of their own, were seen as *savages* that had to be educated in the colonizer's culture and, thus, deprived of developing their culture in the New World. Commenting on the conditions of the sociocultural input of the Indian immigrants who came to supplant the labour force of the then liberated slaves that refused to work in the plantations of Trinidad, Earl Lovelace claims that "the Indians were accepted on a different kind of base in Trinidad ... His religion was accepted and so on" (152). However, their acceptance as a new and different cultural group of relatively autonomous subjects did not hinder their process of acculturation to this creolised society and their creolisation, because they soon realized that for being accepted into this new society they had to move out of the encapsulating scenario of their native cultural traditions and accept and mix with the other cultural groups in the society. The already creolised European and African social context of Trinidad and Tobago determined the acculturation of the Indian: "[T]he Indian has not been easily accepted in the Creole society unless he gave up something of his culture" (Lovelace 153).

Like Lovelace, Ismith Khan acknowledged the necessary move of the Indian out of his Indianness in the development of the Indo-Caribbean community in Trinidad and Tobago, something that he thematizes in his first novel *The Jumbie Bird*. He explains the process of transculturation of the Indians in terms of the forced disappearance (somehow) or rather adaptation of the very fixed Indian traditions and customs within the Indo-Caribbean community:

Now you bring a very tightly knit system like that [of an Indian family kept unified around strong customs and traditions brought with them] to such a vastly different part of the world, it's going to have to give. And it is in that sense that one laments the passing of some of these traditions because they had to be... Actually they didn't die, but they had to be modified if these people were going to be able to survive and exist in these new circumstances (124).

Then, the Indian traditions were transculturated and this process facilitated the inclusion of the Indian as a sociocultural subject in the configuration of these creolised Caribbean societies. This creolised, intercultural context largely defined by the Afro- and Indo-Trinidadian communities has been portrayed by Afro-Trinidadian and Indo-Trinidadian authors alike, which is corroborated in the fiction by Earl Lovelace, Ismith Khan, Clyde Hosein, and Samuel Selvon —the last three Indo-Trinidadian. Selvon, especially, was a supporter of *Caribbeanness*, of the idea of a unified and creolised Caribbean. He envisaged the formation of the Indo-Trinidadian subject as the formation of the Caribbean man (on whom the Indian, European and African legacies converge). And he explains this as he refers to his own sociocultural growth as a Trinidadian subject:

As I say, growing up in that sort of [creolised] atmosphere I identified as much with Blacks as with Indians; in fact, strictly speaking, if you talk about the creolising process, you're not Indian, you're not Black, you're not even white; you assimilate all these cultures and you turn out to be a different man who is the Caribbean man (234).

This Caribbean man is apparently the one portrayed by Khan in his short story “Shadows Move . . .”, who is Indian by name, declares himself a believer and practitioner of African religious manifestations (like *obeah*), and criticizes the pro-Western-culture attitudes of the Trinidadian youth and the society in general as they turn their backs to their Caribbean traditions.

Allowing for the different situations and elements converging in the formation of these societies, the construction of a Caribbean identity must necessarily attend to the peculiarities of the process of creolisation that gave birth to Caribbean creolised societies. That is why any analysis on the expression of cultural 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. Ratifying this, Caribbean scholar Elaine S. Fido has remarked that Caribbean writers tend to convey the complexity of this question in their works because they themselves have to live a multifaceted experience nurtured by more than pure cultural elements: “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” (100).

## Cultural Identity

My people have been separated from themselves White Hen,  
 by several means, one of them being the printed word  
 and the ideas it carries. Now we have people who are about  
 to see through that. . . . People who are familiar with the print  
 and the language of the print. . . . We have people who can  
 and are willing to correct images from the inside,  
 destroy what should be destroyed, replace it with what  
 it should be replaced and put us back together,  
 give us back ourselves with which to chart our course  
 to go where we want to go.  
 (Erna Brodber, *Myal*)

The expression and assertion of cultural identity has become one of the major themes of contemporary Anglo-Caribbean literature. It has largely defined the thematic line of many individual texts or a collection of texts (like a short story collection). But it is in the form (through the use of resources found in traditional culture and the development of narrative strategies based on native cultural forms) where the writers more consciously tackle this issue.

There are certainly several reasons behind this inclination of Caribbean writers toward the expression/assertion of cultural identity in fiction. One reason is directly linked to the historical experience of colonialism endured by these societies, and determined by the imposition of an alien imperial culture to colonized subjects, to the detriment and denigration of these subjects' mother cultures. As noted previously, the African slaves were to be deculturated and forcibly introduced to the sociocultural world of the European colonizer in an enduring and problematic



process of cultural *otherization*<sup>16</sup>. The emergence of the controversial (post)colonial *Other*<sup>17</sup> points then at one of the traumatic aspects of the colonial experience, but also at a crucial stage of the process of formation or *becoming*<sup>18</sup> of Caribbean identities. As Jamaican-born critic Stuart Hall states, the colonized was forced to see and experience him/herself as Other, so that his/her culturally marginalized self was gradually depersonalised. He/she became his/her Other, colonized, by what Hall calls “an inner compulsion and subjective conformation to the [European cultural] norm” (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. It is due to the dynamics of the colonial domination/subordination relation in the Caribbean favouring creolisation that we presently have creolised societies and not ethnically plural societies<sup>19</sup>.

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:

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<sup>16</sup> I have borrowed this term from Julie Brown’s introduction to *Ethnicity and the American Short Story*.

<sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> The notion of cultural identity in the Caribbean as “a matter of *becoming*” has been furthered by Caribbean scholar Stuart Hall, as he recognizes the inevitable input of several cultures, providing *points of difference*, in the sociocultural panorama of the region: “as well as the many points of similarities [with one’s original culture], 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* (112).

<sup>19</sup> Michael Dash has argued that the plural society model is pessimistic because it focuses on racial difference and social confrontation rather than on contact and interdependence (47).

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 (51-2).

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.

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, many Afro-Caribbean intellectuals tend to give equal relevance to the African and the European while accepting the several cultural traditions grounding their identities, and frequently their works reveal the liminality of their position as social beings and writers<sup>20</sup>. 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<sup>21</sup>.

However, for the Afro-Caribbean individual, the assertion of cultural identity has always entailed the confrontation with a wider creolised sociocultural context highly determined by the European cultural tradition. This situation, assisted by that of historical, officially-sanctioned disagreement between the European and the African cultures, has made the articulation of

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<sup>20</sup> The idea of liminality implies an in-between position (in terms of cultural traditions or sociocultural milieus/experiences) in the process of assertion of cultural identity.

<sup>21</sup> See Walcott, "The Muse of History".

identity for the Afro-Caribbean subject a troublesome process. It poses the 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?” (118). As a matter of fact, this is a dialogue taking place in much of the works by Afro-Caribbean writers, which they have frequently undertaken from a position of rebellion and resistance to the accepted imposition of European cultural values in their societies, as illustrated in Senior’s poem “Colonial Girls’ School”:

Borrowed images  
 willed our skins pale  
 muffled our laughter  
 lowered our voices  
 let out our hems  
 dekinked our hair  
 denied our sex in gym tunics and bloomers  
 harnessed our voices to madrigals  
 and genteel airs  
 yoked our minds to declensions of Latin  
 and the language of Shakespeare

Told us nothing about ourselves  
 There was nothing about us at all.  
 (*Talking of Trees* 26)

The rebellion of Caribbean intellectuals to the process of cultural *otherization* developed since the colonial era has certainly entailed the validation of the long-marginalized cultural traditions of the colonized groups in the Caribbean. This is how they have aimed at rescuing themselves—rescuing those other cultural signifiers (African, Amerindian, Asian) informing their creolised identities— from the oblivion/repression sanctioned by the school book, and the colonial institutions. That is why, the validation of those other cultural legacies has become a central motive and a deserving *raison d’être* of much of the region’s literature; in the words of

Trinidadian scholar and writer Merle Hodge: “The genesis of modern Caribbean writing lies . . . in such a reaction, conscious or unconscious, against the enterprise of negating our world and offering us somebody else’s world as salvation” (202). The several acts of validating the local cultural world performed by these writers in their works accounts, according to Hodge, for a political action for the sake of cultural sovereignty. Although there is a vibrant popular culture in the Caribbean resulting from the continual resistance of the subordinated groups to cultural domination, the culture of the region has not yet achieved a positive recognition at the eyes of the people:

[T]he culture produced here on Caribbean soil by the ordinary working people of the region, has never gained full recognition in our society. It has never gained official recognition, and has never been fully recognized and valued by the very people who created and continue to create it every day of their lives (203).

This underestimation of the culture produced by Anglo-Caribbean people, together with the penetration of foreign (Western) cultural values, has produced a kind of “mental desertion” of many Caribbean subjects from their own environment, and that—in Hodge’s views— “is not matched . . . by any other people on earth” (206). To this regard, as Hodge suggests, fiction becomes a potential agent in the attempt to counteract such phenomenon of mental desertion when it aims at representing and/or validating the Caribbean sociocultural universe, because “*fiction gives substance to reality*.. . . [it] casts a redeeming and enhancing light back upon the reality from which it springs, endowing it with meaning, credibility, and authority. It allows a people not only to know its own world but to take it seriously” (206). In this revolutionary enterprise for the sake of cultural sovereignty, the Caribbean writer plays an important role since s/he is deconstructing through fiction the borrowed images enthroned by the colonialist texts of school education. By validating his/her culture, the Caribbean writer is giving his/her

people back their Selves identified with their country's culture<sup>22</sup>. In the process, s/he is also asserting an identity socioculturally grounded on the native culture; their representation of the oral tradition in fiction functions thus as more than a mere stylistic strategy in the creation of a culturally-situated writing, but responds to an ontological need: for them, “to seize the [literary] territory’ with oral tradition . . . is a way of knowing themselves” (Jones 12). The expression and assertion of cultural identity in this literature is deployed then in multiple levels.

Furthermore, the validation of the local traditional culture constitutes a strategy in the writer's desire to affirm a cultural identity also against the threat of modern, neo-colonial forms of cultural domination. It is clear that more subtle ways of cultural domination are being exercised in the Caribbean, conditioned by economic imperatives and the now global culture of fast food and satellite television. As Merle Hodge asserts, it was through television that American cultural imperialism initiated its penetration in the post-independence Caribbean:

Television, which is basically American television, came to Trinidad and Tobago in 1962, the year the British flag was pulled down. The same pattern can be seen all over the Caribbean —withdrawing the most obvious trappings of colonial domination and installing a Trojan horse instead (205).

This cultural penetration operated through satellite television opened, then, a neo-colonial era for the cultural panorama of the region, hindering the achievement and development of cultural sovereignty for Anglo-Caribbean societies.

Tourism, the economic activity on which the majority of the region's economy is based, contributes also to foreign cultural penetration, since it facilitates the importation of material, social, and cultural values from Western societal models. In reverse direction, tourism

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<sup>22</sup> These writers are those which Erna Brodber makes reference to in her novel *Myal* in the words of Mr. Dan, who is redeemed from the false fictions of eurocentric school texts for Caribbean children; cited as the epigraph of this section on cultural identity.

“perpetuates the manufacture of cultural identities for the Western eye”, promoting “the commodification of cultural identity and of cultural products for outside consumption” (Donnell and Welsh 450). Consequently, tourism does not only facilitate the Western world’s serious influence in Caribbean sociocultural reality, but also denies Caribbean subjects the right to express their cultural identity by themselves. In this sense, like television also, tourism “militates against cultural self-definition” in the Caribbean (Donnell and Welsh 450).

Obviously, these neocolonial forms of cultural domination have been operating against the positive recognition of local cultural traditions, which need to be validated so as to guarantee cultural autonomy for these societies that still lack sociocultural self-assurance. As Davies and Fido corroborate,

The greatest threat to Caribbean life at this time comes from a denial of the spiritual/intuitive/emotional strengths which have developed to sustain the culture in the past. This denial takes the form of adherence to materialism, of attraction to the world of fast foods, video recorders, cars, multi-channelled television stations, and attendant attitudes of more concern for the superficial and literal than the deeper meaning of social tradition (16).

The validation of Caribbean cultural traditions becomes, therefore, a necessary weapon with which to counteract the entrenchment of imported social and cultural models and values in the Caribbean, as well as the mental desertion or *outward directedness*<sup>23</sup> of Caribbean subjects. Such validation would surely contribute to the assertion of cultural autonomy, which can be considered the first step for raising pride in one’s society, fundamental as it is, in O’Callaghan’s views, for the sociocultural well-being of the individual, the community and the society at large. The Caribbean writer, then, by validating his/her native sociocultural reality

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<sup>23</sup> In her article “Interior Schisms Dramatised: The Treatment of the *Mad* Woman in the Work of Some Female Caribbean Novelists”, Evelyn O’Callaghan refers to the continuing *outward directness* of Caribbean subjects — manifested in the “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” (104)— as a phenomenon derived from the lack of self-assurance and autonomous (cultural) self-worth of Caribbean societies.

through fiction, contributes to assert a cultural identity that sustains the social and cultural development of his /her society.

Being an essential component of this sociocultural universe, Caribbean languages, and specially Creole, are of paramount importance whenever the issue of asserting cultural identity in the Caribbean is broached, which is manifest in Anglo-Caribbean fiction, as the texts analysed in this work demonstrate. That is why an approach to this linguistic manifestation is due, but also because the Creole language in its several varieties has been perhaps the most notable sociocultural factor fuelling the oral quality perceived in this literature.

## II. THE CARIBBEAN ENGLISH CREOLE

You taught me language, and my profit on't is,  
I know how to curse.  
(Caliban's words to Prospero in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*)

I must be given words to refashion futures  
like a healer's hand.  
(E. K. Brathwaite).

### **An Approach to the Creole Language and its Use in Short Fiction**

*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 islands; 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 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 observed 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 (*West Indian* 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 —corroborated by the Creole *unmarked verb*<sup>24</sup>. Moreover, in this *minimal*, practical English the West African syntax was retained. It might constitute then the primary source of the syntactical structures of Creole, in which the word order does not necessarily follow the grammatical norms of standard English.

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<sup>24</sup> Here I am thankful to Velma Pollard for calling my attention to this peculiar feature of the Creole verb in her manual *From Jamaican Creole to Standard English: A Handbook for Teachers*, in which she notes that the Creole verb, also known as *unmarked verb*, “changes neither in the present nor the past nor does it change for continuous activity”; i.e., it is formed by the *base form* of the English verb, “except in a very small number of cases where the English past tense form is used (e.g. los’, brok’)” (22).

In the second stage —approximately at the turn of the eighteenth century, the linguistic base of Creole was already English and the number 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; which is also described by Brathwaite from the context of creolisation as follows:

It was moving from a purely African form to a form which was African but which was adapted to the new environment and . . . the cultural imperative [of imposed superiority] of the European languages. And it was influencing the way in which the English . . . spoke their own language (“Nation” 310).

Consequently, the third stage in the development of Creole 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). 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” (Ramchand, *West Indian* 82-87). But, in spite of its increasing closeness to standard English throughout its development, the Creole developed a

peculiar syntax based on that of West African languages that came to characterize the contemporary Creole language.

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 population 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, *West Indian* 90; Craig 71; Bringas López, *Muller* 194). 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 favour 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, *West Indian* 90). Consequently, Creole was stigmatised as flawed or *bad English* in spite of being the language spoken by the majority of the Anglophone Caribbean population.

As noted 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 (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, the language of the master/colonizer, could have never served such a purpose. But, as she affirms, the black slave's attitude toward English was subversive; he/she appropriated and transformed the colonizer's language permeating it with elements from the African languages that were devalued and sometimes forbidden to use, thus enacting their linguistic liberation and rebirth in the New World. In his critical oeuvre *La voz del crepúsculo (What the Twilight Says)*, Derek Walcott suggests that Creole originated in the pain and rage of the colonized man for having to express himself, forcefully, in the language of the colonizer; this paradoxical situation is described by Walcott as "the language of the torturer mastered by the victim" (56). The colonized (trickstering) man wittily settled his rage using the disguise of subversion—the only available strategy for the indocil slave in forced bondage—to redeem himself from linguistic servitude. The victory of the New World (Adamic) man lies, then, in the development and celebration of a new language of his own, which would surely help him to ease his rage: to redeem the enraged speech of Caliban. The new language thus became a redeeming weapon for

the New World slave<sup>25</sup>. (Probably, a modern variant of this subversive praxis carried out on language and set in an Afro-Creole context of cultural resistance is the language of Rastafarians—the linguistic variety of Jamaican Creole created out of individual, politically-based acts of transformation of the English language in the grammatical, phonological, and lexical levels). Creole was also the linguistic medium that enabled the slave to redeem the African oral cultural legacy from suppression and stigmatisation 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.

The black slave, then, 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 and grammar, while African languages provided other lexical and syntactical 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.

Despite the stigmatisation 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

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<sup>25</sup> “Lo que lo liberaría de su servidumbre era la forja de un lenguaje que superase la mímica, un dialecto que tuviera la fuerza de la revelación a medida que inventaba los nombres de las cosas, que resolviese definitivamente su propia inflexión y empezase a crear una cultura oral de refranes, chistes, canciones y fábulas populares; esto, y no sólo la deuda de la historia, era la verdadera reivindicación del negro ante el Nuevo Mundo” (Walcott, *La voz del crepúsculo* 28).

alludes to various forms of language usage—in this case of Creole—that overlap in the subject’s or speaking community’s speech behaviour. 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 to 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 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 Creole<sup>26</sup>. In literature, the CSE has been the linguistic code preferred by Caribbean writers as means of narration, while varieties of Creole have been normally used to introduce the speech of the characters in dialogues. And it has been precisely in dialogues where the use of these

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<sup>26</sup> 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” (*West Indian* 93); but being probably an intermediate variety between such patterns. Cassidy’s characterization of Caribbean English languages as an accidental way of speech in terms of intonation patterns (as derived from the Creole) 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).

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 story, freely switches from a linguistic form closer to Caribbean (Belizean) Standard English to Creole, then to Spanish, and then to Creole again. Her use of a linguistic variety closer to the Belizean Standard English in the first part of her report is due to the fact that it is addressed to non-Caribbean educated speakers of English; then she switches to a Creole variety which she feels more comfortable with. Besides, 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 shift of social roles since the Caribbean individual switches linguistic varieties depending on the social context. For example, in Pollard's novella already mentioned, Karl narrates his monologue in a variety of Creole much closer to standard English (Jamaican SE) conditioned by his Westernised 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 around 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, illustrated in Lovelace's "A Brief Conversion". Her reiterated command "Button up your shirt!" (6) —pronounced in a standard English that contrasts with the Creole, her true language— becomes the recipient of a social attitude consonant with the Euro-Creole cultural orientation and the social norms produced by a social context highly influenced by Western culture. Thirdly, the shift of linguistic codes perceived in the linguistic behaviour of a character may indicate a process of identity articulation through language. This phenomenon is illustrated, for example, in Karl's linguistic behaviour throughout his monologue, which reveals a shift from a mulatto, middle class to a black, lower class social perspective suggesting a re-definition of his identity toward the validation of his Afro-Creole sociocultural experience<sup>27</sup>. Finally, code-switching is manifest in the writers' use of Creole varieties to produce the characters' discourse within a narration. 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 may stand for different social/literary attitudes or sociocultural perspectives.

Certainly, the most significant linguistic analyses on Caribbean English Creole languages have been based on the essential statement that language is a social act and an aspect of the human behaviour, something that has been ratified by the theories of the Creole continuum and code-switching. By adapting his/her linguistic behaviour to the needs of a given situation, the Caribbean subject is using the language as a vehicle for identification. Therefore, the linguistic behaviour 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). The close relationship between the use of language as a vehicle for the expression of identity and social attitudes has led Le Page to perceive language as a means of

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<sup>27</sup> For further information on this question in Pollard's *Karl* see Seguin 81-85.



expression more than a means of communication (124). Accordingly, since the Creole as a syncretic linguistic system reveals the convergence of the several sociocultural and sociohistorical factors in the formation of Caribbean cultural identity, 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.

Furthermore, 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 analysed as a sociolinguistic act of cultural resistance and sociopolitical identification. The Rastafarian language —labelled, variously, Rasta Talk, Dread Talk, I-tally, I-ance, and I-yaric— “evolved in response to a specific group’s need to articulate in its everyday language the religious, social, cultural and philosophical positions it wished to reflect” (Pollard, “Innovation” 157). As Pollard explains, the Rastafarians re-organized and adjusted the lexicon of the English-related languages available to them (Jamaican Creole and Jamaican Standard English) to force the word to reflect the Rastafarian philosophy and standpoint, which identifies with the socially depressed black folk. Their creative and transforming attitude toward language in their search for the adequate linguistic medium with which to describe and address their experience of social and cultural marginalization responds, therefore, to a desire to reject the values associated with Western (white) cultural supremacy<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> In her analysis of Rastafarian speech, Velma Pollard refers to the transformations/innovations in the grammatical and lexical levels that occur in the Rastafarian code. In the pronominal system, the first person pronoun *I* acquires great relevance due to its indication of the name of the Emperor of Ethiopia Haile Selassie I (a prophet for Rastafarians). The significance of *I* is defined by its denotation of *ego* and *eye* (through this word’s sound), which points at the subject as seer (a redeemed interpreter) of his reality; this consistency between *word-sound* and *word-meaning* is of paramount importance within I-tally or I-ance or Rasta Talk (Pollard, “Sound” 62). Here, *I* 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, in this sociopolitically-biased code words are transformed and given new meanings, like oppression becoming *downpression*, politics becoming *politrics*,

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 reaffirm a Caribbean cultural identity. Louise Bennett's intellectual activity, for instance, centred 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 has been, 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 re-dress it with a powerful sociocultural semantic quality, as *patwah*, which the Jamaican theatre group Sistren Collective validates as a signifier of Jamaican 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 artists and scholars, the use of Creole entails a political stance toward the validation and defence of an authentic cultural identity. Such stance is also assumed by Carolyn Cooper with her critical work in Creole on Sistren's *Lionheart Gal*. 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 (275-77). And it has been specially through literature and the use of Creole in it that the Caribbean writer has aimed at making the people accept and enjoy their Caribbean experience. As a result, a stronger sense of cultural identity is attained and a

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understand becoming *overstand* or *higherstand*, and deadline becoming *lifeline*. For further information see Velma Pollard's scholarly works on the Rastafarian speech cited in the bibliography.

collective consciousness —cultural, social, and political— is developed, contributing, in this way, to the development of Caribbean societies.

Certainly, many Caribbean writers have been using Creole as a major effective linguistic vehicle with which to portray Caribbean reality. In short fiction, for example, the use of Creole has not been restricted to dialogues, but Creole has become the language of narration itself, from Vic Reid's *New Day* (1949) and Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) —stories about black Caribbean immigrants in London, whose narrations in Creole, like those of “Working the Transport” and “Calypsonian,” show a notable presence of the *unmarked verb* and *West Indianisms*, to a considerable number of short stories mainly by women authors, like Senior, Pollard, Lorna Goodison, Hazel Campbell, Jean Binta Breeze, Makeda Silvera, among others. In the case of Selvon's stories, his use of Creole reveals a narrative intention resembling that of the oral narrator, 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.

At other instances, Creole is incorporated in the narration in standard English when the discourse of the Creole-speaking characters shapes the narrative body of the text, which is a recurrent narrative strategy in this literature. An interesting narrative phenomenon occurs when the Creole idiom and structures influence the Caribbean Standard English of the narration, which may occur unconsciously since Caribbean writers usually move, as speakers and writers, within the linguistic continuum comprising both Creole and CSE; the narrative of Olive Senior and Earl Lovelace, as example, frequently illustrates this.

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 instance, validates an oral tradition in Creole received from their grandmothers and elder figures in the community, which is ratified by their use of Creole. Their use of different varieties of Creole has helped to create new modes of narration grounded on narrative and linguistic variation, such as the polyvocal narrative mode (explained in the next section), in which the characters' voices are given expression and shape in a plural narrative discourse. Usually, these voices express different varieties of Creole speech according to the sociolinguistic development and social status of the characters behind these voices.

On the other hand, men writers also credit 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 autodiegetic narrator expresses the narrating Creole voice of his mother through indirect discourse; whereas in *Karl* and "A Night's Tale" Pollard deliberately grants the narrative word to the characters so that they speak/narrate for themselves, constructing, thus, the fictional text. In my view, the reasons for the difference in narrative mode in terms of Creole usage of female and male writers lie in the primary 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 in the 50s and 60s, produced mainly by male writers. It is not until the 1970s and 1980s that Caribbean literature begins to show a growing presence of women authors thanks, in Brown's view, to a wider access to formal and college education for girls from the 1950s onward, (college education for girls was possible with the development of the regional University of the West Indies in that decade) (xxvii). That, together with the other fact that women in the Caribbean are said to be more attached to the oral tradition than men, justifies, perhaps, their more practiced and free use of Creole in narrative; but whatever the peculiarities of their use of

Creole, these Caribbean authors, women and men, are surely asserting in personal ways a creolised cultural identity through fiction.

### **A Brief Analysis of the Most Noticeable Features of Creole**

In order to be able to trace the way in which the use of Creole enhances orality and favours the assertion of a Caribbean identity in the works studied here, I deem necessary to offer some of the basic characteristics of the Caribbean English Creole. Firstly, most of its lexicon derives from the English language, and comprises words derived from other European languages: Portuguese, such as *pickney* meaning child; Spanish — *pantaloons* (*Karl* 130), *serenading* (“Brief Conversion” 14), *machete* (“Summer Lightning” 2); French — *fete* (*Karl* 153; “Brief Conversion” 13); and words derived from African languages, Hindi, Chinese, and Amerindian languages<sup>29</sup>.

At the grammatical level, omissions are the most frequent feature when compared to standard English. 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 eliminated. Examples of these omissions are: “you will hear that Miss Elvy(’s) son study(-ied) till (h)im tu(r)n fool” (*Karl* 174), and “Somebody have(has) to keep up these things” (“Brief Conversion” 9). The two latter cases refer to the Creole *unmarked verb* that, as it was previously noted, is formed by the base form of the standard English verb. At the phonological level, the several Creole languages spoken in the Caribbean share similar patterns such as the change of the English phoneme *th* for *d* or *t* (e.g., *them/three* for *dem/tree*), or for *dd* and *tt* in intervocalic

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<sup>29</sup> For examples of words derived from languages other than English see Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 20-21.

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)<sup>30</sup>.

The syntactic patterns of Creole show varied word orders. In a syntactical structure, for instance, the complement may precede the subject and the verb of the phrase —seemingly, when the complement is the most important element within the oral utterance, it comes first in the phrase. This pattern, derived from West African syntax, might be explained, within the psychodynamics of orality, by the fact that “[o]ral structures often look to pragmatics” and not to the syntactic organization of discourse usually accorded to chirographic cultures (Ong 37-38). Examples of this syntactical structure of Creole are “*Good good dresses*, she used to give away” (24), from Lovelace’s “A Brief Conversion”; “[*S*]ame ting dem did tell im madda [the same thing they told his mother]” (174), from Pollard’s *Karl*; “and is *six months now* he ain’t working” (106), from Samuel Selvon’s “Calypsonian”; and “and *Bro. Justice* he [the boy] could never transform into anything but what he was” (2), from Senior’s “Summer Lightning” (emphasis added).

Perhaps the most remarkable traits of Creole are its musical and oral qualities. Creole has 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 of paramount importance, which has been ratified by Brathwaite when he claims that Creole or Nation Language “is based as much on sound as it is on song” (“Nation” 311). It is obviously the oral sound of the spoken word what provides Creole its substance: “[T]he noise that it makes is part

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<sup>30</sup> For further information on these phonological aspects of Creole see Hellinger 58-64.

of the meaning . . . . When it is written, you lose the sound or the noise, and therefore you lose part of the meaning” (“Nation” 311-12). And this oral sound coming from African languages was preserved and passed onto the Creole through the songs of African slaves in the colonial Caribbean, which (as it will be explained in the next chapter) functioned as an unrestricted and indirect context for the communication of messages, desires or intentions, critique, gossips, and events or situations among slaves. In my opinion, in these sung messages or stories one can trace the extent to which songs, as a vehicle of indirect communication for black slaves, came to influence the nature of the Creole language contributing to its musical quality.

The musicality of Creole is perceived in the written context mainly through the repetition of lexical and syntactical constructions, and through a rhyming pattern that may be given at phonological and lexical levels. An example of repetition are reduplications: lexical constructions formed by the repetition of the same lexical item and derive from African linguistic features (Ramchand, *West Indian* 85). Some instances of reduplications are found in *Karl* —*bake-bake* (121) and *happy happy* (153), and in Senior’s “Ascot” —*smiley-smiley* (29) and *chatting and chatting* (32); to name a few. Besides, the following example from “A Brief Conversion” illustrates the occurrence of reduplications and the repetition of syntactical forms through the words of a Creole-speaking character: “She [Priscilla] *used to give away* dresses to her relatives. *Good good dresses, she used to give away; pretty pretty dresses*” (24. Emphasis added).

Seemingly, the influence of song in Creole has also determined its intonation and stress pattern. According to Brathwaite, the stress pattern of Creole is dactylic (like that of calypso songs) and not iambic (like that of the English verse) (“Nation” 312)<sup>31</sup>. This dactylic stress pattern of

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<sup>31</sup> 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.

Creole is better perceived in poetry and song. On the other hand, the intonation of Creole, as Brathwaite suggests, is marked by variation: “The voice dips and deepens to describe an intervallic pattern” (“Nation” 312); this variation of Creole’s intonation patterns has been also noted by other Anglo-Caribbean scholars<sup>32</sup>.

Certainly, the rhythm and musicality of Creole have their origin also in the people’s love for language and its oral sounds. The development of Creole through the spoken word by the Anglo-Caribbean population has made orality its basic and most distinctive feature. The oral quality of Creole is given by the fact that until recent times, this language remained, essentially, a language of oral discourse, produced and developed by a still potentially oral culture. 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” (“Nation” 312). Brathwaite’s thesis is supported by the fact that the spoken word creates links (or makes possible the group’s union through oral, personal communication), in contrast to the solipsistic practices of reading and writing:

Because in its physical constitution as sound, the spoken word proceeds from the human interior and manifests human beings to one another as conscious interiors, as persons, the spoken word forms human beings into close-knit groups (Ong 73).

The collective nature of the Anglo-Caribbean sociocultural experience sustained by the spoken word in the Creole language is revealed, for instance, through the interactions that occur, at social and linguistic levels, in the practice of storytelling within the group or community. The oral and musical quality of Creole and the oral tradition re-created and developed in this

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<sup>32</sup> See footnote 26.



language have proved to be major contributors to the development of Anglo-Caribbean short fiction.

### III. ENGLISH CARIBBEAN SHORT FICTION

#### **An Approach to the History of Short Fiction in the English Caribbean**

The beginnings of the tradition of short fiction in the English Caribbean are found early in the twentieth century<sup>33</sup>. 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 tradition informed by the cultures of pre-Columbian America, Africa, and Asia. Although some of these other (cultural) narrative traditions had already developed written forms —like the (Asian) Indian tradition, 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 Anglo-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 (“Short Story” 1464).

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<sup>33</sup> 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 (“Short Story” 1465).

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, really, with Caribbean social reality. Consequently, their historical and fictional accounts about Caribbean life sprang out of a detached and prejudiced attitude toward the black slaves' sociocultural universe and the overall Caribbean sociocultural reality.

On the other hand, the oral narrative tradition fuelling the development of Caribbean fiction comes directly from the oral tradition and folklore of African slaves, Amerindians, and Asian indentured labourers, 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 folktales in which animal tales were the predominant manifestation. This folktale was plotted around the exploits and failures of a trickster figure, being the main trickster figure of these tales the spider Ananse from West African folklore. Caribbean folktales draw largely from this African tradition, which, like every other cultural manifestation relocated in the Caribbean, was transculturated attending to the particularities of the new geographical and sociocultural reality, the Anancy stories are a clear example of this African influence.

Apart from Anancy stories, other kinds of folktales came to enlarge the *orature*<sup>34</sup> in the English Caribbean, such as

sinister fairy stories including obeah, duppy, rolling calf, la diablesse, soucouyant, and other supernatural manifestations<sup>35</sup>. There was a tradition of lying, as in the

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<sup>34</sup> The term *orature* refers to that part in the field of oral traditions that deals with the “artistic interpretation of experience”, i.e., folktales, songs, proverbs, etc., in contrast with *oral history*, which deals with accounts of events (Wilentz xxii).

boasting and grandiloquence of the tall tale. . . .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 calypso<sup>36</sup> (Ramchand, “Short Story” 1464).

All this repertoire constituted a large body of oral narrative forms that have consequently and considerably influenced the development of short fiction in the region, as they proposed—in Ramchand’s words— “methods of narration and performance, as well as models of audience participation that inform the literary short story of today” (“Short Story” 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 Williams, Edgar Mittelholzer, Pauline Melville, among others, since the Amerindian cultural presence in the Caribbean scenario is mainly found in continental mainland like Guyana. The oral tradition in the Caribbean is a creolised cultural manifestation that retains elements from the other cultural traditions present in the region. Although these elements have been recreated through generations to suit the new sociopolitical, cultural, and geographical specificities of the milieu or the community’s situation, some aspects—like certain themes and characters or type-characters<sup>37</sup>— have remained vital in this oral heritage.

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<sup>35</sup> *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 *ghost*. *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 sheds her skin, transforms into a fireball, and sucks people’s blood at night (Benson 521-23).

<sup>36</sup> 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, “Images” 199).

<sup>37</sup> The “type ‘heavy’ (or ‘flat’) character derives originally from primary oral narrative . . . the type character serves both to organize the story line itself and to manage the non-narrative elements that occur in narrative”. The lore concerning cleverness, for example, can be made use of around type characters like Odysseus, Brer Rabbit or the spider Anansi. This kind of character “never surprises the reader but, rather, delights by fulfilling expectations copiously” (Ong 148).

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 seem far more important than they really were” (qtd. in Bringas López, *Muller* 229). Senior asserts here the influence of storytelling and the legacy of oral tradition, which would be important in her development as a short fiction writer.

Apart from storytelling, the agency of periodical publications 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, “Short Story” 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.

When studying the origin of 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 cultures provided the content: the cultural, social and religious universe —including cultural forms of

expression— 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 Anglo-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 due to several factors. One was a notably reduced interest of foreign publishers in the Anglo-Caribbean novel that, as Jamaican sociologist and writer Orlando Patterson has noted, determined, partly, the move away from novels. On the other hand, local publishers, counting then on more writers writing locally and a large readership, were more inclined to publish shorter works like poems, plays, and stories, because novels were most expensive to publish (Patterson 202-203). Besides, the revival of the short fiction genre was possible due to the emergence of a body of women writers who began to use the short form as a suitable narrative means of creative expression. And Olive Senior's collection *Summer Lightning and Other Stories*, inaugural winner of the Commonwealth Writers Prize in 1987, certainly helped to drive attention to the then overshadowed English Caribbean short story. Seemingly, this recovering of the tradition of short fiction by women writers has induced men writers to re-assess the short form as an also valid form of narrative creation. The case of Lovelace provides 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).

This recovery or re-assistance of the short form by Caribbean writers can be interpreted, within the context of the process of assertion of cultural identity through fiction explored in this dissertation, as a way for the writer to come to closer identifying terms with his/her cultural (narrative) roots. Having as primary narrative antecedent the folktales or stories coming from a powerful oral cultural legacy, the Caribbean short story shows an obvious link with the oral tradition and popular culture<sup>38</sup>. It is presumably on account of this closeness of the short story to oral tradition and popular culture that Ramchand considers it as being more Caribbean a genre when compared with the Caribbean novel. In this sense, the return of the Caribbean writer to the short form becomes an act of cultural identification occurring within the context of narrative creation; an act which, as Ramchand suggests, calls most readily upon the proficiency of the writer in his/her creative act: “Caribbean writers are more comfortable and cavalier with the short story, having modified it more confidently and radically because they can bring to it a whole range of stories and modes of storytelling that are indigenous” (“Short Story” 466). And these oral narrative modes have been influencing the contemporary Caribbean short story, something that will be broached in Chapter Three.

Furthermore, on the thematic level of this short narrative, there is an exploration of the realities of Caribbean life and identity that, while it had previously occurred in a national context and pioneered by the *nationalist* generation, is then given at the level of the personal. Writers have been exploring, therefore, the realities of personhood and the articulation of identity within the

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<sup>38</sup> It is commonly agreed that the origins of the short story can be found in the fable, anecdote, exemplum, and the folktale (Cuddon 623; Abrams 1739; May 81). Folktales were an essential component of the sociocultural world of Caribbean communities and, as oral narrations, they provided the primary narrative sources from which short fiction (the written story) emerged.

community. This expression of a personal and cultural identity has resulted from the writer's look inward the local reality —the whole Caribbean social and cultural reality and experience— and themselves. It is through this renewed look toward the native reality and themselves that these writers are reconnecting or coming to closer identifying terms, as subjects and writers, with the native Caribbean experience and toward a definition of themselves as a culture and a people. Then, this look inward for the sociocultural self-definition and articulation of Caribbean peoples entailed a rectification of the imitative or outward look (of the mimic-man) to the European metropolis and its cultural codes largely sustained from the colonial times. This rectification would turn out to be necessary, in Earl Lovelace's view, for the sociocultural development of Caribbean societies: "I think that we have been largely imitative, because everything was external . . . we never looked inside; we were always looking outside, and I think increasingly we are coming to a consciousness of being a people . . . as a people with a culture and possibilities of our own" ("Interview" 154). The presentation and validation of the oral tradition occurring in Anglo-Caribbean narrative owes much, certainly, to this self-exploring look inward of the writer in relation to his/her native reality. Lovelace's narrative itself has been propelled by the author's validating look to the native sociocultural Caribbean experience; while it accepts (in its formal context) the influence of the literary standards of the Western tradition, it is definitely based on the Caribbean folk culture. His short story here analysed illustrates this through a syncretic or hybrid text resulting from the validation of the oral narrative forms and voices of Trinidadian folk culture in literature; and its theme, likewise, pivots around the protagonist's articulation of personhood and identity through a reinforced identification with a rooting sociocultural milieu: his Afro-Creole community.

Corroborating this validating stance toward the native Caribbean sociocultural reality, 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 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 yard<sup>39</sup>, and has been adumbrated by a colonial and patriarchal sociopolitical situation. Senior and Pollard, for instance, have acknowledged the influence of such legacy (and specially storytelling) in their creative narrative universe (Appendix II). On the other hand, the literature written by men writers also reveals the inheritance of an oral and communal cultural patrimony perceived through 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 a rural Afro-Caribbean community viewed through the eyes of a child, which may lead the reader to see that community as the real protagonist of these stories. Besides, in these short stories several forms and practices from the oral culture such as storytelling, stickfighting, calypso singing, carnival's speech-making (see Lovelace's), and riddles, proverbs, songs, and cultural beliefs (see McKenzie's) are validated.

As a matter of fact, more often than not contemporary Anglo-Caribbean short fiction shows a deliberate appropriation of elements from the oral tradition, like songs and narrative modes and type characters proper of oral narrations. As a result, the equation of form and content —form after the Western tradition and content after the local sociocultural universe highly informed by the African, Amerindian, and Asian traditions— describing the genesis of Anglo-Caribbean literature is being left unbalanced. The form is seen taking after the several manifestations and

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<sup>39</sup> 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, *Muller* 72).



elements found in the local and predominantly oral sociocultural universe to a remarkable extent in what seems to be a subversive attempt to mitigate, in fiction, the cultural domination from the Western world. Moreover, such appropriation of elements from the oral tradition usually results from the writer's desire to validate the long-denigrated and illegitimated oral tradition and culture as the mainstay of Anglo-Caribbean culture within his/her fiction. And this legitimisation of the oral culture through fiction translates into an act of asserting a native cultural identity to be upheld against foreign cultural models usually imported from the developed Western world. In this way, as some critics corroborate, the celebration of oral tradition in contemporary Caribbean short fiction hints at the political implications of fictional writing for the writer:

Many, probably most, West Indian short-story writers have been consciously 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 xvii).

Certainly, Caribbean fiction frequently reveals the position of the writer committed to his/her social reality, explained by a definite political stance against the colonial legacy in these societies. This political commitment is perceived in the short stories analysed in this work. Even the apparently unaffected and humorous *told tale* about the trickster character proposed by Senior, for example, is grounded on a deep and sensitive regard toward Jamaican life, culture, and art forms, to such an extent that the text becomes a fine literary instance of *Jamaicanness*. In effect, by means of asserting an oral cultural legacy through fiction Caribbean writers attempt to achieve the validation of popular culture and, consequently, sustain an assertion of cultural identity as well as the development of an indigenous literary aesthetic.

To sum up, the contemporary English Caribbean short fiction reveals a strong influence of the oral tradition though it keeps nurturing from Western literary tradition. In producing the fictional work, the writer works upon his/her Caribbean universe and chooses and combines narrative techniques and cultural elements, creating, thus, a syncretic, personal style with which to suit his/her literary aims. Usually the literary aims of the Caribbean writer are accompanied by a desire to address social and cultural issues relevant to the positive development of these societies, as well as a social reality that also seeks new ways to produce positive transformations.

### **Some Considerations on English Caribbean Short Fiction and its Most Distinctive Features**

After briefly analysing the evolution of the short fiction genre in the English Caribbean, I will attempt to trace some of the most common characteristics of contemporary short fiction. Above all, a critical description of Caribbean fiction should certainly address the syncretic or hybrid nature of Caribbean culture as an idiosyncratic principle observed in literature when it comes to style and narrative modes and strategies, for this literature clearly exhibits the intermingling of elements proper of the culture from which it springs:

Just as there is a lack of strict separation between ‘the arts’ in many West Indian territories —so that dance/drama/music/poetry may blend into the other— similarly literature crosses oral/scrabal, sacred/secular boundaries and allows some degree of inter-genre cross fertilization . . . (O’Callaghan, “Outsider’s” 274-75).

This inter-genre cross fertilization is perceived, for example, in the novels of Jamaican writer Erna Brodber, in which, as O'Callaghan has noted, "[r]eaders are treated to anecdotes, songs and spells, statistics, dreams and lyrical fantasies, cosy practical wisdom, schoolbook stories and parables" (qtd. in Narain 107). Brodber's experiments in narrative techniques have placed her fiction among the most innovative and complex to read in contemporary Anglo-Caribbean literature. Also in drama the hybridistic impulse governing artistic expression is manifest, being a fine example the play "A Black Woman's Tale", by Jean Small. This play, originally entitled "Collage", presents a woman's performance that includes monologue, song, storytelling, jokes telling, and poetry; and even two Creole linguistic traditions —French and English— are brought together in the telling of a tale. This intermingling of genres, languages, and art forms in Anglo-Caribbean literature is the result of a creative process through which these writers try to find their literary voice, "preserving survivals, adapting from other sources and creating out of these processes something new" (O'Callaghan, "Outsider's" 275).

This cross-fertilization of elements is found in short fiction, also sustaining the diversity of styles. But, in spite of the multiplicity of styles in this short fictional writing, the hybrid nature of this literature (marked by a combination of narrative traditions, languages and linguistic registers, literary genres, and art forms) functions as a unifying element within the already acknowledged diversity. It becomes a defining feature of this literature, in the same way that creolisation, as an identifying sociocultural term for the region, unifies the diverse cultural presences in the Caribbean. Therefore, it can be said that hybridity constitutes the fundamental feature of this literature. It can function as a powerful trope in the processes of identity redefinition and assertion at the level of the individual or the communal that take place in much of this literature, as well as in other postcolonial or ethnic literatures. In her analysis of

hybridity in relation to the articulation of identity in ethnic literary texts, Rocío Davis asserts that it should be considered

a strength rather than a weakness. It does not imply a denial of the traditions from which it springs but rather focuses on a continual and mutual development. In this manner, the text itself becomes the embodiment of the histories, the mechanisms for modifying and recreating personal and collective identity (7).

In this line, we could say that Anglo-Caribbean literary texts, in their hybrid nature, become the embodiment of the histories of several narrative and linguistic traditions in the Caribbean, as they have been brought together in the creation of idiosyncratic modes of literary expression.

The hybrid character of Anglo-Caribbean short fiction can be traced, for example, in the mix of narrative techniques from the Western literary tradition and the oral tradition. The scribal conventions of the novel and Western fiction are combined with the narrative strategies of oral storytelling, and the reader is frequently introduced to some kind of *talking* text: a written text showing a narrative intention invested with the rhetoric of the spoken word. This kind of text has been identified by Henry Louis Gates as the trope of the Talking Book in his critical study of African American Literary Tradition<sup>40</sup> to describe those texts showing a double-voiced discourse informed by the literate (white) narrative voice and the oral voice of the black vernacular. As Gates explains, the desire of the African American writer to inscribe a formal “black difference” —to *signify*— based on the black vernacular tradition in literature responds to a personal need to articulate cultural identity or to solve, quoting Ralph Ellison’s words, “the Negro writer’s complicated assertions and denials of identity” (117). The story of the validation, in form and content, of the vernacular oral tradition in African American literature

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<sup>40</sup> Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Criticism*.

reached its climax, according to Gates, with the fiction of Zora Neale Hurston, in which the Talking Book became the *speakerly* text:

[A] text whose rhetorical strategy is designed to represent an oral literary tradition, designed “to emulate the phonetic, grammatical, and lexical patterns of actual speech and produce the ‘illusion of oral narration’”<sup>41</sup>. The speakerly text is that text in which all other structural elements seem to be devalued, as important as they remain to the telling of the tale, because the narrative strategy signals attention to its own importance, an importance which would seem to be the privileging of oral speech and its inherent features (181).

The privileging of oral speech and modes of storytelling can be equally found in several Caribbean novels and short fictional texts, so that they might fit into the categorization of speakerly text from the African American literary tradition. The fiction of Olive Senior, for example, can be considered for its most part a speakerly fiction, mostly because of the representation of an ever-talking community that occurs in much of her texts. Here we can also include Samuel Selvon’s short stories in Creole resembling oral stories; the autobiographical first person narrations in Creole of many texts, usually by women (Pollard, Jean Binta Breeze, Campbell, etc.); and even those texts that, though in the standard variety of English, are aimed at representing and/or validating forms of oral narration (eg., A. M. Clarke’s “Tales My Grandmother Told Me” from *The Black Madonna*, Lawrence Scott’s “Ballad for the New World”, among others). The *speakerliness* of these texts is generally explained by the narrative intention of *telling* a story, that materializes in the written page when it is made to apply to the conventions of writing, and depending on how and to what extent the writer uses oral elements when creating his/her text.

Apart from the amalgamation of the oral and scribal modes in narrative techniques, Anglo-Caribbean short fiction reveals its syncretic quality in the mix of literary genres and art forms.

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<sup>41</sup> Gates cites here the definition of *skaz*, from Russian Formalism, due to its similarity with his concept of the speakerly text.

Seemingly, the syncretism inherent to Caribbean sociocultural life manifests in literature through the writer's impulse to produce hybrid literary and artistic forms, hence the convergence of poetry, drama, letters, and song in short fiction. In the case of poetry, the incorporation of poems to introduce or conclude a short story collection is exemplified in Pollard's *Considering Woman* and Silvera's *Remembering G*, respectively. But, more than the direct incorporation of poems, the influence of poetry in short fiction is perceived in the poetic prose of several writers like Senior, Lorna Goodison, and Opal Palmer Adisa, who are also poets. On the other hand, the epistolary genre is generally brought to short fiction as a narrative technique through which the voice/discourse of an absent character—due to his/her being dead or in a distant place—is produced. It is the case, for example, of Senior's "Lily, Lily" and Pollard's "Georgia and Them There United States". But it can also be the narrative technique chosen to produce a short story: "A Letter to the Prime Minister", by Guyanese writer Harry Narain, refers the plea of a rice farmer about the difficulties of rice cultivation addressed to his Comrade Prime Minister.

Song and drama are, in my view, more largely present in short fiction. Excerpts of popular songs, children songs, work songs, and calypso are incorporated in several texts. However, the use of song as an aesthetic model in devising narrative strategies constitute one of the most innovative aspects of this fiction, generally explained by the appropriation of the formal properties of songs to construct a narration. The experimentation with the structural pattern of songs in fiction has resulted in the creation of new, *musical* narrative forms<sup>42</sup>. In this sense, the text appears, structurally, as a composition of passages that alternate with a repeated statement or theme functioning as the chorus or refrain of a song. It is perceived, for example, in the framed story of Khan's "Shadows Move . . .", in Senior's "Ballad", and Scott's "Ballad for the

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<sup>42</sup> That is how Bringas López describes what women writers create when applying the structural conventions of musical forms to the context of written narration (*Muller* 226).

New World” —the titles of the latter two texts signal the musical form which has influenced them. Other titles also refer the musical form around which the text has been constructed, as is the case of “Supermarket Blues” and “I-Calypso” by Hazel D. Campbell.

Finally, the influence of drama in this short fiction is aided, seemingly, by the dramatic component of storytelling performance, (the influence of storytelling in short fiction will be discussed later); that is why very often those texts resembling a play, structurally, also reveal an influence from storytelling. This is the case, for example, of Pollard’s novella *Karl*, constructed in episodes (as if emulating the cyclic mode of oral narrations) that may also stand as the scenes of a play. In these scenes several characters relevant to the story being narrated are apparently brought to the stage so as to render (and narrate) their part/role in that story. Much closer to drama in structure are the short stories “Hazrool Deen Goes to Town” from *Grass-root People* by Harry Narain, and “In These Our Sunshine Years” by Jamaican writer Trevor Fearon. As in a play, Narain’s text begins with an introductory note establishing the scene, time, and characters of the story/play that will follow, and the narration is devised as a dialogue following the play’s format between the main character and other characters. On the other hand, Fearon’s text is constructed in passages and each of them has a title (e.g., Edgar Reflecting, Introducing Angie, He Thinks of Angie, They Meet). These titles appear to introduce the theme or to thematically set the scene proposed in a given passage, whether it is a dialogue, a description, or a simple utterance. The structure of these short stories reveals, then, the appropriation of modes of plot development inherent to drama.

In addition to the mix of narrative techniques, literary genres, and art forms, the hybridity of this fiction is ratified by the mix of languages (standard English and Creole) and linguistic registers. The history of Anglo-Caribbean short fiction shows that the CSE in its several

varieties has been the linguistic medium of narration par excellence, and Creole usually appeared in dialogues, describing the characters' linguistic behaviour. However, Creole has been gradually occupying the narrative space, since several writers (women mainly) have been trying to validate in their writing the use of Creole as the true language of Caribbean peoples, which responds to an attempt of asserting a native linguistic identity. Consequently, some short stories are narrated in both languages (e.g., "Shadows Move . . ."); others are produced in Creole alone (e.g. Senior's "Real Old Time T'ing" and "Do Angels Wear Brassieres?" from *Summer Lightning*, Breeze's "Sunday Cricket", Norma Hamilton's "Birthday Drive", Robert Antoni's "A World of Canes"); and some others, ratifying the syncretic impulse governing Caribbean life, combine both languages in sometimes not-easily-recognizable ways (e.g., Senior's "Summer Lightning" and much of the fiction by authors like Lovelace and Anthony). Besides, the use of Creole in short fiction is diversified by the different Creole varieties and registers used to describe the characters' linguistic attitudes. Several varieties of Creole, for example, shape the narration of *Karl*, representing the varied speech of the characters, as some of them also become narrators.

As it has been furthered previously, the syncretic or hybrid character of Anglo-Caribbean fiction perceived in a continual mix of elements (narrative techniques, genres, artistic forms, and linguistic forms) is a product of the syncretism that characterizes the Caribbean experience. Therefore, the hybridity of this fiction constitutes a literary, formal signifier of the region's culture. Following this cause-effect line, since the region's culture has been overwhelmingly marked by a collective sense of communal life, collectiveness comes to be also a signifier for the region's literature and culture. It furthers then another relevant feature of this short fiction: a collective character ratified, formally, in modes of narration that can be labelled *collective*, and



that usually foregrounds the importance of the voice/spoken discourse in a culture that remains essentially oral.

As it has been noted in my approach to Creole, the orality of Caribbean cultural and linguistic experience through Creole fostered the maintenance of communal bonds for the sake of survival, thus strengthening the communal *modus vivendi* in the Caribbean reminiscent of African, Asian and pre-Columbian societies. This communal nature of Caribbean experience comes then to define also a Caribbean aesthetic in every cultural manifestation, which is corroborated by Brathwaite in his pioneering analysis of Caribbean cultural aesthetic:

. . . [W]e have to be communal because the nature of our culture is essentially communal. We come from a very strong folk tradition, it comes from powerful African and Indian groups and the Amerindians also, and all of these elements are very strongly based to be communal ("New Aesthetic" 144).

It is important to notice that Brathwaite perceives here the collective character of Caribbean cultural manifestations as deriving directly from the folk tradition. Certainly, it is the translation of this folk tradition to the narrative context of creative fiction that makes possible the manifestation of these *collective* modes of narration.

Several narrative strategies in Anglo-Caribbean fiction ratify this collective character, such as the polyphonic text, the polyvocal narrative mode, and the short story cycle. The polyphonic or multiple-voiced text implies a plurality of voices or perspectives within the narration. The perspectives of the characters are credited or relied on shaping, together with the narrator's, the story. A complex way in which that perspective of those *spoken of* can be credited in a text is through free indirect discourse, becoming part of the narrative body of the text. This free indirect narrative discourse is exemplified in the following excerpt from Silvera's "Caribbean

Chameleon”, offering the last good-bye feelings toward Jamaica of several travellers flying to Canada:

Approaching the North Star. Atlantic Ocean, flying high over sea. Goodbye  
 May Pen Cemetery, goodbye gunman, murderers step aside, goodbye dead dogs in  
 gully, rapist, womanbeater, police, soldier, cowboy, Northcoast hustler, goodbye.  
 Fly higher, iron bird. Away. Goodbye.  
 Goodbye sunshine, warm salty sea, music with di heavy drum and bass.  
 Goodbye mama, baby, little bwoy, goodbye, no tears, a jus’ so. Wah fi do? (400).

Here, the dramatically different viewpoints of some of Silvera’s characters in this short story are summoned: that of a woman angry at certain socially negative Jamaican male prototypes, then that of the tourist, and that of another woman, probably the one in red frock who, according to the narrator, has been consoling her crying child before leaving him at the airport and taking the plane.

At other instances, the characters’ perspectives are very subtly credited, as these lines from Senior’s “Summer Lightning” demonstrate: “He 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” (7). Here the narrator brings forth the perspective of Bro. Justice, seemingly relying on what he *could remember* of those past events. Curiously enough, a very similar passage to this one is quoted from Tony Morrison’s *Song of Solomon* by Gayl Jones, as she analyses the influence of oral tradition in this work: “They each knew Mr. Smith . . . He never beat anybody up and he wasn’t seen after dark, so they thought he was probably a nice man”. In this passage, the phrases *They each knew* or *so they thought* signal a collective discourse produced by the community of characters in the story, who also participate in the narrative act through this “spoken recollection of the past” (171). In this sense, the community’s discourse, whether it is

identified as outer (through the spoken word) or inner (through the mental processes of thought), is relevant to the narration of the story, thus asserting the important role of the community in these societies. In the narrative context, this communal *they* represents then a kind of talking community whose talk and oral stories are voiced by the narrator for constructing the written story, as it is demonstrated in many Anglo-Caribbean texts. 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*” (1. 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).

Certainly, the narrator’s deliberate intention to voice and credit the characters’ views in third person narrations diminishes his/her omniscience, which suggests that the authoritarian, individualistic perspective of the narrator-persona is avoided in favour of a pluralistic perspective offered by several characters or the community depicted in the story. Serving this purpose, a narrative technique frequently used by certain writers is presenting a third person narrator that is perceived to play the role of a marginal character who observes what happens and relies on what s/he *sees* and *hears* in order to produce the story s/he narrates; (in other words, the narrator becomes part of the community observed and depicted in the story). Since the narrator becomes part of the situation conveyed in the story as an observer, his/her narration of facts is based on the perception of the observer/character and not on that of the observer/omniscient narrator.

This technique is finely developed in Senior’s fiction, which seems to strive out the author’s conscious desire to portray a storytelling, gossiping community, resembling that of her

childhood. Sometimes, the third person limited-omniscient narrator of short stories like “Summer Lightning” becomes a character proper who echoes the diverse discourses of the main and other characters in the story, functioning then as a narrative vehicle and as a sort of intermediary agent between the storytelling community and the reader/listener (audience). In Senior’s “Ascot” and “Real Old Time T’ing”, for example, the first person narrator-character is identified as such in only very few instances, and her individual narration, marked by the personal pronoun *I*, changes into a plural one, as the narrative agent is presented as *we*. Therefore, the reader is left with a sense of being overhearing a story told by the community depicted in the text, and the narrative act is produced as if performed collectively. Certainly, Senior’s voicing of this *talking community* in fiction suggests a representation and re-enacting in fiction of the context and process through which she came in touch and learnt about the oral tradition of her native folks.

Another way in which a text becomes a collective narration is when the characters’ voices construct the narration and the characters become, then, narrating agents. It may occur through dialogues, when the characters’ speech is what prevails, and the text is mostly constructed in paragraphs enclosed by speech marks. But it also occurs when the characters assume the narrative role at certain instances within a narration. This narrative phenomenon is defined by Bringas López as “alternancia da focalización en varios personaxes”, whose narrative voices create a “polifonía textual” (Muller 214). Therefore, the author grants the characters the word so that they be the protagonist in the telling of their stories or in the rendering of their perspectives. In the first case stand, as example, the short stories by Pollard and Khan analysed in Chapter Three. Fitting into both cases, Senior’s short story “Lily, Lily” proposes five different narrative voices, and each is expressed through different narrative techniques:

dialogue, monologue, letters, and third person narration<sup>43</sup>. The presence of different narrative techniques corresponding to different narrative voices or discourses in fiction defines what is known as the polyvocal mode.

The polyvocal or poly-discursive narrative mode, also called “quilted” or “fragmented”, was primarily developed by women writers in their need to find creative modes of expression with which to come out the “voicelessness” imposed by a (neo)colonial and male-dominated discourse. It consists of “the expropriation of a number of forms within one communication. Prose, poetry, letters, female history, all become part of this narrative voice” (Davies and Fido 4-5). To this could be added journalistic commentary, storytelling, and other discursive modes of communication. As Davies and Fido also note, this eclectic and fragmented mode appears in the fiction of writers like Michelle Cliff and Jamaica Kincaid, and it is also perceived in the novellas *Karl* (by Pollard) and *The Longest Memory*, by Fred D’Aguiar. Usually the development of this narrative mode in short fiction requires space; that is why it is more generally found in lengthy texts, like novellas or short story cycles<sup>44</sup>.

It has been noted that the fragmentation suggested by the individual short stories comprising a cycle may ultimately serve an idea of collectiveness, as it is perceived in many minority and third world literatures. Usually, the fragmentation-in-unity provided by the cycle serve the purpose of enacting in fiction processes articulation of personal and communal identities: “[T]he presentation of identity and community, as separate entities, and the notion of an

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<sup>43</sup> For further information on this narrative strategy in this text see Bringas López, *Muller e Literatura na sociedade caribeña anglófona*, p. 214.

<sup>44</sup> The short story cycle is defined as “a set of stories linked to each other in such a way as to maintain a balance between the individuality of each of the stories and the necessities of the larger unit (qtd. in Davis 4). The relation between the stories is given by the repetition of characters, themes, paces, symbols or events. Each story is read as an independent unit, and at the same time is interdependent of the rest, since the information provided in one story aids the interpretation of other stories and of the collection as a whole.

identity within a community” (Davis 8). As Davis explains concerning the fiction coming from ethnic communities,

On different levels, ethnic short story cycles may project a desire to come to terms with a past that is both personal and collective: this type of fiction explores the ethnic character and history of a community as a reflection of a personal odyssey of displacement and as a search for self and community (7).

The exploration of the community as the necessary backcloth for the protagonist’s search for self and articulation of identity is frequently found in Anglo-Caribbean short story cycles, such as Lovelace’s and McKenzie’s cited previously, Silvera’s *Remembering G*, and Dianne Maguire’s *Dry Land Tourist*. The representation of community occurring in these collections becomes their leading narrative motive, which hints at an idea of collectiveness being evoked, ratifying also the collective character of this fiction.

Another distinctive feature of Anglo-Caribbean fiction is a musical quality perceived in several texts, which results from the recreation of rhythmic and musical patterns through language, and narrative motives, idiom, and structure in a text. This musical quality is mostly determined by the influence of song in the thematic, idiomatic, and structural levels of several texts, which will be examined in the next chapter.

To conclude this tentative approach to the main characteristics of Anglo-Caribbean fiction, I will briefly address the narrative perspectives found in it. The first person narration, for example, is certainly a recurrent mode showing certain peculiarities, especially in the autobiographical monologue, in which the autodiegetic narrator is the main character of the story being narrated; i.e., the narrator-protagonist narrates his/her own story. This kind of

narrator can be found in “A Night’s Tale”, *Karl*, and “A Brief Conversion”, to name a few examples.

Sometimes, in these autobiographical monologues the narrator is seen addressing the reader as audience. In addressing his/her audience, the narrator calls for the reader/audience’s perspective through the second person pronoun *you*, with the intention of making them share his/her point of view regarding the situation conveyed in the story. This intention of the narrator to 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 texts respectively. The presence of the second person perspective accounts for the oral quality of the narrative act being developed in two ways: a) since it represents and personalizes the reader/listener, the communication thus established between the narrator and his/her audience more clearly conditions the narrative act to the favour of the spoken discourse; and b) this narrative intention favouring oral discourse and self-consciously identifying a listener usually has a didactic purpose (Serra 36), at which point the narration realigns itself with the traditional folktale.

On the other hand, the first person narration that centres on characters other than the narrator has also become a recurrent mode. The narrator really acts as a secondary character that simultaneously becomes audience, witness, and then teller of the lives/experiences of these characters, (i.e., this homodiegetic narrator fills the dual role of narrating agent and focaliser<sup>45</sup>). Therefore, the narrator’s first person perspective functions merely as a narrative vehicle through which the reader knows about the main characters. This narrator is usually seen as a kind of storyteller. Besides, since the narrator does not narrate about him/herself but about third

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<sup>45</sup> According to Cohan and Shires, *Focalisation* consists of a triadic relation formed by the *narrating agent* (who narrates), the *focaliser* (who sees), and the *focalised* (what is being seen and, thus, narrated) (95). The heterodiegetic narrator is an extradiegetic narrating agent (third person narrator), whereas the autodiegetic narrator and the homodiegetic narrator are intradiegetic ones: the former is identified with autobiographical narrations and the latter with the *focaliser* (but not the *focalised*) of first person narrations.

persons, the narrative perspective appears to shift from first to third person and vice-verse within a single narration. This narrative strategy is deployed in McKenzie's *A Boy Named Ossie* and is central to Senior's fiction, which more often than not shows resemblance with forms of oral narration.

In the case of the third person narrative perspective, it may correspond with an omniscient narrator or a limited-omniscient narrator like that of "Summer Lightning," as it was previously noted. However, it is relevant to notice that the third person narration in Anglo-Caribbean short fiction usually shows an influence from the traditional narrative mode found in oral narrations, which is also produced in the third person perspective. As a matter of fact, the debt of contemporary Anglo-Caribbean fiction to the oral tradition on this account is such, that some critics testify to the emergence of new modes of narration based on storytelling: "[T]he sustained, continuing narrative of the storyteller becomes a[n] . . . alternative, although perhaps more traditional creative mode . . . whose formal specifics in Caribbean . . . literature are yet to be clarified" (Davies and Fido 6). This *storytelling narrative mode* results from the writer's experimentation with oral narrative forms, as Davies and Fido suggest in their analysis of Caribbean women's fiction. Certainly, the appropriation of elements from the oral tradition like the storyteller's narrative form has rendered an oral quality to this fiction, that surely becomes its most distinctive feature, and that is approached in the next chapter.

As this first chapter illustrates, the diversity suggested in *Caribbeanness* applies to every cultural manifestation in the region, like literature. Anglo-Caribbean literature, then, is the product of a unified diversity made possible, primarily, through the process of creolisation or



hybridism. The process of creolisation, that facilitated the mix of races, cultures, and traditions in the Caribbean, offered a foundational principle (of blending, syncretism, or hybridity) for the development of these Anglo-Caribbean societies and cultures. Creolisation, therefore, lies at the core of Caribbean life, art forms, languages, and writing, justifying the presence and manifestation of a creolised sociocultural reality, a creolised linguistic experience, and a creolised fictional narrative through which contemporary Anglo-Caribbean writers are expressing and asserting a creolised cultural identity. This assertion of cultural identity is equally supported by creolisation in the necessary legitimisation and celebration of the suppressed cultural traditions that participated in the configuration of these societies and cultures through mutual interaction, and that have been historically denigrated by the colonialist European cultural discourse. Then, the expression of cultural identity in this narrative is defined around the celebration of the oral traditional and the sociocultural universe of the dominated cultural groups in these societies, and the reaffirmation of cultural identity against foreign cultural domination. Defending an autonomous (creolised) cultural identity vis-à-vis a new colonialist phenomenon of cultural imperialism in the region has become a deserving *raison d'être* for this short fictional narrative.

In the formal context of this narrative, this assertion and defence of a creolised cultural identity translates itself into the validating representation of the oral tradition and culture in the conventional scribal context of narrative bequeathed by the European literary tradition. Consequently, the Creole language comes to support the hybridity of this genre as a linguistic manifestation from the Anglo-Caribbean oral culture legitimated in the literary context of this short narrative, while its use promotes an expression of cultural identity in the development of a culturally situated and identified fictional narrative. Ratifying the syncretic and predominantly oral nature of the overall Anglo-Caribbean experience, the Creole language reveals itself as a

hybrid linguistic manifestation with a distinctive oral and musical quality. On its part, this short fictional narrative, formed through the convergence of the European, African, Amerindian and Asian narrative traditions, and revealing a multiplicity of styles, corroborates the diversity and creolised nature of the reality and experience from which it emerges and which it addresses. It owes to this reality and experience, then, its hybrid and sometimes collective and musical quality. Likewise, this narrative contributes to the purpose of asserting cultural identity through the celebration of the oral tradition in its already hybrid (oral/scribal) formal context. Such celebration takes place in its formal context through the adaptation of oral art forms and narrative strategies into the literary, scribal narrative context, thus ratifying its oral quality as its most distinctive feature.

## CHAPTER TWO. THE ORALITY OF ENGLISH CARIBBEAN FICTION

Oracy is not merely the absence of literacy;  
it is a way of seeing, a knowledge system.  
(Carolyn Cooper, *Noises in the Blood*)

. . . in all the wonderful worlds that writing opens,  
the spoken word still resides and lives.  
(Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy*)

The oral quality of Anglo-Caribbean short fiction emerges as an unequivocal signifying element sanctioned by a culture that has always been overwhelmingly oral. Despite Caribbean colonial subjects were to be educated in the language and literature of the English scribal tradition in colonial schools, the oral traditions coming from the African, Amerindian, and Asian ancestors were preserved and re-created by their descendants through the agency of the Creole languages. The maintenance of this oral legacy has more evidently taken place within the Afro-Caribbean community because of the large input of African slaves in the configuration of Caribbean societies —certainly larger when compared to that of the other cultural groups informing also the sociocultural panorama of the region, and due to the several strategies of cultural resistance developed by black slaves and their descendants. Precisely, this Afro-Creole cultural resistance against colonial cultural domination for the preservation of the African legacy favoured the process of creolisation for the formation of these creolised societies that later received new immigrants from Asia. Asian immigrant labourers, on the contrary, had no need to defend their culture against a colonial, cultural imposition, but had irremediably to renounce to part of their traditions and customs or adapt them to the new circumstances — through cultural blending or creolisation— in their process of accommodation into these new creolised societies and cultures.

In the Afro-Caribbean community, the maintenance of the oral tradition has occurred mainly in the context of children's up-bringing. The Afro-Creole socialization of children, developed out of the school context, has implied their acquaintance with a great deal of oral lore: tales, songs, riddles, rhymes, proverbs, etc., passed on to them by elder people. Corroborating this, many Caribbean writers (Olive Senior, Velma Pollard, Afua Cooper, and Paule Marshall) have asserted their indebtedness to those elder figures, mainly grandparents, for much of the oral material from their culture that they learnt during their childhood. In fact, the Anglo-Caribbean sociocultural experience is so much grounded on the oral tradition that it becomes a necessary axis for every cultural manifestation, including literature. The debt of the region's literature to that large and older body of folk knowledge known as oral tradition, from which it keeps nurturing, is such that the Barbadian scholar and writer E. K. Brathwaite has deemed necessary a re-evaluation of the term *literature* pointing at a more all-(oral)encompassing definition:

[W]e have to redefine the term "literature" to include non-scribal material of the folk/oral tradition, which, on examination, turn out to have a much longer history than our scribal tradition, to have been more relevant to the majority of our people, and to have had unquestionably wider provenance. In other words, while a significant corpus of "prose" and "poetry" has been created —and read— by a few persons in the major Antilles; folk song, folk tale, proverb, and chant are found *everywhere* without fear of favor and are enjoyed by all (qtd. in Martin 3).

This folk oral material is being taken to fiction in an attempt, partly, to rescue the collective cultural memory from a past prone to fall into oblivion. In effect, the evocation of a past full of deep sociocultural resonance relevant to the narrator-persona is manifest in texts like Lovelace's "Those Heavy Cakes", Khan's "A Day in the Country", or Pollard's *Karl*.

On the other hand, the presence of the *orature* of Caribbean culture in this fiction responds to the writers' desire to *voice* and credit a cultural heritage that has been long stigmatised and undervalued due to the entronement of the European cultural discourse. The rescuing and

voicing of this cultural heritage hints at a process of “generational and cultural continuity” with that cultural past inherited from one’s ancestors being enacted by these writers in their fiction, which has been identified by Gay Wilentz in her study of some African and African American women writers’ fiction (xiv). In the Anglo-Caribbean context, the cultural continuity with regards to the oral legacy in the Caribbean is what many writers have been ratifying with texts whose thematic and formal levels are amply informed by the oral culture.

The validation of the oral voice of these cultures in fiction responds also to a more important aim: that of asserting identity (aesthetic, social, moral, cultural, personal). As African American writer and scholar Gayl Jones puts it: “Oral tradition offers continuity of voice as well as its liberation” (179). These writers can only free their voices by turning to the forms of the native culture and counteracting the enthronement of Western cultural standards. And this *freeing of voice*—which is how Jones describes the movement of artistic liberation in African American literature that was possible through the writers’ validation of the oral tradition in their works—translates into a process of self-liberation and self-authentication undertaken by Anglo-Caribbean writers in their works, usually with sociocultural, political, and ideological resonances. As Edward K. Brathwaite has suggested in relation to the development of an indigenous literary (poetic) aesthetic, the oral culture of the folk functions as a means whereby the writers can move beyond the anxiety of influence caused by the dominating literary imagination of their European “poetic precursors” and toward cultural and literary liberation (Simpson 830). The liberated voice (personal, narrative, linguistic, cultural) of the Anglo-Caribbean writer necessarily echoes the oral tradition and culture largely sustaining his/her creolised identity.

Certainly, the representation of the oral culture in fictional writing has given birth to new — also hybrid— modes of narration. On this account, Wilentz proposes the term *oraliterature* to define those narrative texts of the literature of Africa and the diaspora informed by both the oral and scribal traditions: “*Oraliterature* refers to written creative works which retain elements of the *orature* that informed them”. In these works the authors attempt “to encapsulate the orality of the spoken word and the active presentation of the oral tradition within the confines of fiction” (xvii). In Wilentz’s critical study, *oraliterature* is signalled as a creative mode in African and African American literatures. Due to the continuities between African and African American and Caribbean cultures and modes of literary production<sup>46</sup>, and to the fact that much of the literature by Anglo-Caribbean authors reveal a notable presence of the oral tradition, *oraliterature* may be then a creative mode to include in the critical approaches to this still proliferating and undefined literature. The term can be used to describe, for instance, the fiction of Erna Brodber, Olive Senior, Velma Pollard, Earl Lovelace, Samuel Selvon, and that of many other Anglo-Caribbean writers, greatly grounded on the oral tradition. In the same line, the *speakerly text* from the Afro-American literary tradition, based on the representation of forms of oral speech and the imitation of oral forms of narration in fictional writing, can suggest a type of narrative mode within the Anglo-Caribbean *oraliterature*.

The interpenetration of oral and scribal literary forms in Anglo-Caribbean literature has seemingly a long history, but the history of the theoretical approaches to this literature does not show us that an extensive conceptualisation around modes of narration in this highly creative

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<sup>46</sup> The connection between African, African American, and Anglo-Caribbean literatures —mostly given by the sharing of sociocultural and sociohistorical signifiers among these societies— has been corroborated by several scholars such as Henry Louis Gates (79), Carolyn Cooper (7), Selwyn Cudjoe (45), and Gay Wilentz. In the case of African American and Anglo-Caribbean literatures, their connection has been nurtured through personal, political and literary endeavours of expatriate Caribbean scholars and writers living in the United States, from Claude McKay and Marcus Garvey to Jan Carew, Ismith Khan, Derek Walcott, Jamaica Kincaid, and Michelle Cliff, among others; and of African American writers with (Afro)Caribbean ancestry like Paule Marshall. Noting this connection is pertinent to my dissertation to use theoretical notions held in relation to African and African American literatures and cultures, in order to assist my theoretical approach to orality and Anglo-Caribbean (short fictional) narrative.

fiction is attained. However, and perhaps conditioned by the clear validation of the oral tradition occurring in the creative fiction by women authors, several scholars have directed their critical attention to this issue as they approach it in their theoretical works. Of significant interest concerning this topic stands the critical work of Carolyn Cooper focused on Jamaican culture *Noises in the Blood: Orality, Gender and the 'Vulgar' Body of Jamaican Popular Culture*, originally subtitled “The Writer and the Oral Tradition in Jamaica”.

Cooper’s analysis of the dialogical relation —more rightly defined, in her view, around an ideological opposition— between the oral and the scribal forms in Jamaican culture signals the presence of an oral/scribal continuum that encompasses several degrees and ways in which the interpenetration of the oral and the scribal has taken place and takes place in Jamaican literary and musical texts. This oral/scribal literary continuum appears to be as complex as the linguistic continuum of Creole, with texts or cultural manifestations ranging from a “largely scribal end of the continuum (‘literature’)” to “the primarily oral [end] (‘popular culture’)” (6). In the literary continuum in which Cooper sets the Jamaican texts analysed in her work, for instance, the primarily oral end is more closely reached by cultural forms like proverbs, popular songs and reggae songs; dub or performance poetry —written poetic texts fully accomplished when delivered orally— would occupy a next stage toward the scribal end, followed by the texts of Sistren Theatre Collective, which Cooper sees as “scribalised oral forms/[testimonies]” (4). A further stage toward the scribal end is represented by those written texts (novels, poetry, short fiction) that incorporate elements from the oral culture. Apparently, in Anglo-Caribbean literature the farther scribal end of the continuum is never reached, given the continual interaction occurring between the oral and the scribal forms in this literature since its beginnings. As a matter of fact, despite the very close relation to the English literary tradition of many fictional texts evinced in their formal level through the imitation of narrative moulds

from that tradition, the representation of the primarily oral Caribbean cultural reality occurring, mainly, in these texts' thematic level confirms their relation also to the oral side of the continuum.

Defining the literary mode in which the texts she analyses converge, Cooper has also neologized the term *oral literature* to refer to the oral/scribal literary continuum in Jamaica (20). The term can be used when reference is made to the literature of the Anglophone Caribbean as a whole. In Cooper's view, the *oral literature* of the region has been the result of certain acts of "transgressive innocence" performed by authors such as the Jamaicans Claude McKay, Herbert DeLisser, Vic Reid, and Erna Brodber, in an "attempt to 'colonise' a Western literary form (the novel) adapting the conventions of the genre to accommodate orality" (9). With their transgressive acts these writers were legitimising the *orature* of their culture. And "if the oral . . . does achieve 'status' once it appears in written form [—Cooper adds—], it nevertheless contaminates the written as subversive praxis" (3). Therefore, the validation of the oral culture in the written form through these subversive literary acts has been a primordial and latent objective in Anglo-Caribbean literature, leading to the emergence of *oral literature*.

Perhaps the most transgressive form within Anglo-Caribbean *oral literature* is dub poetry, delivered orally through performance to the accompaniment of musical rhythms. The final form of presentation of this new poetry is not the written one (through the printed word) but the oral one (through performance and sometimes recorded by means of audio/audio-visual technology). This kind of oral poetry can be defined as the result of a social and artistic movement seeking to denounce a general situation of social and racial marginalization in the Jamaica of the 1970s. The oral dub poets were seizing the poetic territory of Western literature with the music and the Creole language of their fellow folks. It is precisely through dub poetry



and their critical approach to it that other (non-Caribbean) scholars have identified the presence of the oral/scrival continuum in Anglo-Caribbean literature: “[T]he oraliterary” in this literature is exemplified in dub poetry —according to Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson Welsh— because its authors work “within an ‘oraliterary’ framework rather than exclusively oral or scrival” (367).

While the contemporary Anglo-Caribbean *oraliterature* is heir to those early transgressive literary acts for the legitimisation of the oral in the scrival context of literature, and although this kind of literary subversive praxis may still function as a valid weapon for guaranteeing cultural and literary autonomy, this contemporary *oraliterary* narrative can be defined, in general terms, by a clear celebration (not direct inscription) of the oral culture being enacted from within the (ideological) context of cultural self-articulation for these societies. And the creolised nature of these cultures favours here the realization of this oral/scrival aesthetic through the acknowledgement of the several cultural and narrative traditions in the Caribbean. It is, perhaps, in this sense of literary syncretism that the development of the Anglo-Caribbean *oraliterature* contributes the most to the expression of cultural identity in this literature. As Jamaican critic Hyacinth Simpson furthers in her analysis of an oral poetics or aesthetic of orality in Olive Senior’s narrative,

literary orality realizes its highest potential when in theory and practice it is not oriented toward writing back to the West. By transcending oppositional thinking and refusing to define the self by negative reference to another, West Indians can fully utilize the richness of the local oral context as a voice and vehicle for self-expression. Asserting the presence and power of the oral culture of the folk does not mean a rejection of literary forms and (some) practices inherited from the European scrival tradition. Rather, the affirmation of the oral signals a valid practice of literary *creolization* (830).

Then, the celebration of the oral culture that reinforces this *oraliterary* aesthetic in Anglo-Caribbean literature functions in the articulation of cultural identity, while it affirms the local creolised sociocultural context; it is demonstrated in much of the Anglo-Caribbean fictional narrative.

The originality of *oraliterature* as a creative mode within this literature is certainly afforded by the oral culture and its representation in the conventional scribal context of the European literary tradition. In this sense, and in order to understand the dynamics of the *oraliterary* aesthetic in short fiction, I propose below an analytical approach to specific elements of Anglo-Caribbean oral culture (such as the Creole language, the tradition of storytelling, proverbs, songs —especially calypso, and dub poetry) and the way in which they have been used by the writers, thus sustaining and expanding the oral/scribal continuum in this literature.

## **The Use of the Creole Language as a Necessary Narrative Strategy for the Articulation and Assertion of Cultural Identity**

Being essentially the language of oral communication and expression in the Anglo-phone Caribbean, the use of Creole in its different varieties supports orality in short fiction. Its use in the rendering of the characters' speech through dialogues in the works of some of the region's pioneering writers stands as one of the earliest evidences of a relationship between the oral tradition and the literary tradition in the region's literature. This relationship on account of Creole's usage was reinforced in subsequent years as the narrative possibilities of Creole were expanded and ratified: "[P]erhaps the more significant impact of the oral tradition on the West Indian short story has been in the movement towards the language of speech becoming the language of narration and action" (Brown xvii). These extended narrative possibilities of Creole in the fictional text resulted, in Brown's views, from the writer's desire to recognize and incorporate the *alternative* (oral) *word-culture* of the Caribbean into their texts, a desire conditioned by a political position favouring cultural nationalism (Brown xxiii). When the Creole language of that alternative word-culture becomes the linguistic vehicle of narration, it is clear that its oral quality is translated to the written text in what might be called an innocent act of subversion: undermining the conventional literariness of the written text.

Analysed within the context of cultural nationalism, the more extended use of Creole in fiction results from a conscious attitude of writers to subvert the conventional linguistic policy operating in Anglo-Caribbean narrative, in which English has been the preferred and acceptable form and Creole its low class, *broken* or bastard relative. Therefore, raising its political status as the true language of Anglo-phone Caribbean peoples becomes a serious purpose behind its narrative use in literature. The potential of fictional narrative for being used as a vehicle to

carry out a political campaign such as this one on language have been affirmed by Merle Hodge in “Challenges of the Struggle for Sovereignty: Changing the World versus Writing Stories”. Then, a literature written in Creole would contribute to affect, positively, the perception of Creole for those very people who created it and use it for everyday communication.

The subversive character of Creole’s usage in this literature is manifest not only in the incorporation of Creole as the text’s main linguistic medium, but also in the apparently unconscious way —on the writer’s part— in which Creole affects the standard narrative idiom in English of some texts. As Jamaican scholar Jean D’Costa explains referring to Jamaican fictional texts that show this linguistic cross-fertilization: “SJE [Standard Jamaican English] is often a subtle mask for JC [Jamaican Creole], even while parading as an innocent and respectable variety of SE [Standard English]” (qtd. in Bringas López, *Muller* 200). This situation derives from the writer’s need to offer a credible representation of a Caribbean context that is overwhelmingly Creole-speaking in the common language accepted and known by the large reading audience (the Standard English). This slightly Creole-influenced standard variety is, according to linguistic Le Page, one of the options open to the Anglo-Caribbean writer in deciding which language to use in his/her writing —an easy one in his view: “[H]e can simply make use of words and idioms with a distinctive West Indian meaning and flavour in what is otherwise more or less standard English” (128). It becomes then a standard English with Caribbean linguistic cadences partly informed by the Creole. In this way, the Caribbean Standard English varieties, in this other stage of syncretism, become a liminal linguistic context where the oral, Creole subversion of the authority of the literary canon in standard English takes place.

As suggested above, this subversive praxis taking place in the linguistic terrain of texts in the standard variety of English might escape the writer, for his/her incorporation of Creole structures and lexicon in the *standard* narration might occur unconsciously. It happens because these authors tend to move freely, as polyglossic individuals, within the linguistic continuum operating in these societies, and because of the clear truth that Creole is the linguistic medium associated with inner reflection and conceptualisation for Anglo-Caribbean individuals<sup>47</sup>. Thus, this amalgamation of linguistic forms in narration might appear as a quite natural phenomenon for Caribbean writers, aware or not, as they might be, of the subversive potential of Creole's usage in such cases<sup>48</sup>.

Certainly, this subversive aspect of Creole's use in literature is reminiscent of the subversive praxis of black slaves toward the language of the colonizer that gave birth to Creole. But, whereas the subversive linguistic acts of slaves contributed to the creation of a new language, those performed by Caribbean writers in their works have contributed to the positive recognition, at home and abroad, of this new language, and to the development of a genuinely Caribbean narrative aesthetic grounded on the region's folk culture. Interrelated to the purpose of raising Creole's political status, the representation of a linguistic culture in fiction stands as a primary purpose behind the writer's use of Creole. An accurate portrayal of Caribbean linguistic communities in fiction should necessarily be rendered using the language spoken by these communities. Besides, the adequacy of the use of Creole languages to describe and narrate the Anglo-Caribbean experience is explained by the fact that, as Hodge ratifies, these

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<sup>47</sup> Writers like Jamaica-born dub poet Ahdri Zhina Mandiela have alluded to the role of Creole as the primary linguistic ground out of which her poetic universe is conceived, since her mental processes of reflection and imaginative creation are bound to her Jamaican Creole: "Mother tongue, being Jamaican, gives me a definite perspective on language, both written and oral use. Even when I write in English, I think I conceptualize in Jamaican. It seems to yield more precise symbols, hence crisper, more descriptive images. It's like thinking, transforming pictures into words —Jamaican in my mind, English or Jamaican on paper" (82).

<sup>48</sup> Senior's fiction provides a clear example of this seemingly unconscious subversive praxis in narration. Short stories like "Summer Lightning" and "The Boy Who Loved Ice Cream" are narrated in a Jamaican Standard English subtly influenced by Creole. It has been corroborated by the author: "I guess everything I write is infused with Creole words, syntax, rhythms, etc." (Appendix II).

languages “express *our* personality, our reality, our worldview in a way no other language can” (204).

Both aims (political and socio-linguistic) concerning Creole’s usage are clearly corroborated in Louise Bennett’s work. Her representation and validation of Jamaican Creole culture entailed a definite commitment toward the language of her fellow folks: “Bennett used the power of Jamaican speech to explore the complexity of Jamaican experience and, in so doing, forced the members of the upper and middle classes to face their own linguistic and class biases” (Cudjoe 26). Bennett’s legitimising of the *bastard* tongue Creole also implied the writing down of the language, making it accommodate itself to express, now in the scribal mode, the sentiments of the people, thus challenging the literary conventions of the English poetic tradition. As Carolyn Cooper notes in relation to her poem “Jamaica Philosophy”, “[h]er creation of oral *personae* such as Aunt Roachy is not simply a matter of spontaneous ejaculation; it is the product of a complex process of socio-linguistic accommodation” (40). Consequently, her work stands as one of the earliest significant examples of the intermingling of the oral and scribal modes in Anglo-Caribbean literature. Her affirmation of the *naygacentric/nativist* aesthetic values afforded by the oral tradition led her to discover “an alter/native, dualistic oral/scribal aesthetic, grounded in both Jamaican popular culture and her formal (English) training in theatre” (C. Cooper 41). And the syncretism of her work was conditioned, as Cooper suggests, by a political decision on a linguistic and cultural situation.

A portrayal of the Caribbean Creole-speaking society with clear political and sociocultural implications in terms of language use is also fostered by one of Bennett’s contemporaries, the also Jamaican writer Vic Reid. His much celebrated landmark novel *New Day* (1949) is the first Anglo-Caribbean novel written in dialect or Creole. With this work, Reid aimed at rescuing the

other/alternative version of Jamaican history (the colonized subject's version) —from the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865 to the granting of a new constitution to Jamaica in 1944, in an attempt to counteract the *severance* of or *amputations* made to Jamaican history by colonial governments and institutions. And he set out to recover and deliver to his audience this part of the distorted Jamaican historical heritage using the language of the alternative word-culture (Creole) and the collective knowledge passed on through the oral tradition. By validating through fiction Jamaican historical and cultural heritage, Reid wanted to make the people know and accept in positive terms their Afro-Creole heritage; his very words testify to that as he explains what motivated him to write *New Day*: “Above all, ‘twas the need... in my mind to tell Jamaicans who they are, to remind the Jamaicans who they are, where they came from” (207).

Reid's validation of Jamaican Creole linguistic heritage in this text entailed, however, a process of *normalisation*<sup>49</sup> or standardisation of Creole for the sake of reaching a larger audience. Aware of the limitations that a long fictional work as a novel written in pure dialect would raise for the audience's reception, Reid invented a *stylised* reproduction of the Creole as it might had been spoken by the old man who refers, through an autodiegetic narration, the oral historical account offered in the novel. In the written page it looks much like English (the spelling), but retains the rhythm and flavour of the Creole speaking voice: “I very consciously determined to place it in a text which would make it available to all peoples, but at the same time keep the atmosphere and the rhythm and the similes and so forth together” (206). Reid's experiment of finding a more *acceptable* form of Creole for fulfilling a narrative function in his text resulted from a difficult decision in the linguistic context:

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<sup>49</sup> It is explained by le Page as the process “of finding the ingredients which are common to two or more parochial dialects of West Indian English” that the writer must undertake when deciding what language to use in his/her writing if s/he wants to aim at an audience larger than a parochial one (126-7). Probably many of these common ingredients among Creole varieties in the Anglophone Caribbean can be found in the common ground of the English language which they all have derived from.

[O]ne has to compromise between an accurate representation of one particular dialect and a widely recognizable representation of something general in the West Indies, in a spelling system which does not signal “comic” but does not on the other hand smack so much of linguistics as to be off-putting to non-linguists (Le Page 128).

The complex task of making Creole accessible to more than a Jamaican reading audience while at the same time keeping a serious, respectful stance toward the language entailed, in this case, the approximation of Creole to the standard form. Therefore, Reid’s succeeded here in bridging the gap between the language of narration (English) and the language of the characters (Creole) in Anglo-Caribbean novelistic tradition. This novel proposes one of the earliest examples in the continuum of dialogic encounters between the Creole/English and oral/scribal within Anglo-Caribbean literary discourse.

Contemporary Caribbean writers have continued to develop the syncretic literary and linguistic aesthetic formulated by Bennett and Reid, many of them favouring Creole as perhaps the most suitable linguistic medium to approach, describe, and transmit the true nature of Caribbean sociocultural world. In Samuel Selvon’s narrative, for instance, so brilliantly does the author represent the peasant and urban Trinidadian society of the forties and fifties through language that Creole becomes, at least in his fiction, the most effective narrative resource to describe the Trinidadian life of the time, so much permeated by oral cultural forms like calypso and storytelling. The influence of those cultural forms in Selvon’s fiction noticed in its thematic and mostly its narrative levels, has certainly added to his use of Creole for narration. His third person narrative perspective in Creole constitutes the earliest most innovative example within Creole’s journey from being the language of speech and towards its becoming the narrative language: “It is in Samuel Selvon’s works that the language of the implied author boldly



declares itself as dialect differing little from the language of the characters” (Ramchand, *West Indian* 102).

In Selvon’s stories in Creole beginning with *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), the use of the Creole language was determined by the author’s conscious intention of conveying that (immigrant) Caribbean experience looking inward the native reality as a Caribbean man: “[A]s I saw it through the eyes of a man from the Caribbean. And I couldn’t write it unless I used the Caribbean idiom” (236). Since, as Selvon realized, the stories could not come along in standard English and Creole was not understandable to the predominantly white reading public at the time, he had to modify Creole slightly. What resulted was a grammatical transcription of Creole just as it was spoken in Trinidad, using the straight Creole word and avoiding the phonetic spelling that he had previously used in dialogues. Using this *scribally* invented Creole proved to be a key strategy in his development as writer of fiction, which enabled him to keep on addressing his Caribbean reality from a more comfortable perspective, the perspective *from within* of the (Creole) Caribbean man —not Indian, not European, and certainly not African—that he felt himself to be. As Selvon once noted referring to his writing of a novel after *The Lonely Londoners*, the use of Creole definitely helped to advance his narrative career:

[Creole] fitted so naturally that the novel just sailed along, no difficulty at all. It seemed as if what I was trying to write about, the Blacks in Britain, and using that language form just melded into one another and just pushed the whole thing straight along, and I don’t think it would have worked at all if I had tried to do it in standard English (236).

Creole, then, was manifesting itself as the most suitable language to communicate and describe the Anglo-Caribbean experience. Also, for Jamaica-born, Canada-based dub poet Afua Cooper Creole is the language that enables her to speak out the collective Caribbean experience, because through its use in her poetry she is able to connect to her familiar voices coming from

her history and mother culture that speak through her work. Through Creole she does not only manage to make the collective memory of her cultural and historical heritage speak to present generations, but she also succeeds in “being true to [her own] voice”, informed by these many cultural and historical voices (“If you’re true” 297).

In fiction, when Creole is the linguistic medium of narration, a narrative attitude felt close to the situation or the context described is frequently perceived, as if affirming the narrator’s involvement or relation to such context. Resembling the oral narrator or storyteller, this self-conscious narrator appears to speak from within the context depicted offering a warm rendering of firsthand knowledge and information about what is narrated. At other instances, the choice of Creole for narration is not determined by the narrative strategy in relation to perspective — whether it is third or first person narration— but by the story itself the author wants to create; i.e., some stories are just meant to be rendered in Creole. That was true for Makeda Silvera when she wanted to write “Caribbean Chameleon”. After several frustrated attempts at conceiving the story in Standard English, she discovered that she needed Creole to make it up, otherwise “the characters would not have it” (415). Creole was the right language to produce the characters’ discourse but, above all, to express the woman protagonist’s rage and the author’s discomfort toward the racial and social discrimination of the black immigrant woman in Canada. The author’s angry *declar/mation* could only be communicated in her mother tongue, for using the language of the dominant, racist culture in this case would have been politically controversial.

As mentioned previously also, Creole becomes for the Caribbean individual the language to speak *out* your (inner) Self. Since the conceptualising and reflective processes of thought for the Caribbean individual occurs in Creole, and reflection, as it is known, is part of the process

of gaining control over one's own life, the use of Creole (in oral and written expression) confirms the individual's ontological need to express him/herself in that language, his/her mother tongue, for the sake of ontological wholeness. For Vic Reid, for instance, writing in Creole or a *stylised* Creole is the first step for "talking to ourselves" (207) —pursuing a connection with one's inner self in writing is only possible through one's mother tongue. For the Caribbean subject, Creole is associated to yard/home, childhood experience, the oral tradition and cultural roots. That is why its use by Caribbean writers has frequently entailed the validation of their cultural heritage as a necessary sociocultural ground that nurtures their identities. For Guyana-born Grace Nichols reclaiming and exploring her Creole linguistic heritage in her poetry becomes an "act of spiritual survival" (284); to preserve it amounts to keeping the spirit of her cultural foremothers and fathers alive. Consequently, the writer's use of Creole also responds to the purpose of asserting a Creole-based (linguistic) cultural identity, as addressed in the previous chapter.

Whatever the reasons (political, sociocultural, or spiritual) leading to the use of Creole in literature, and whether the presence of Creole in it occurs consciously or unconsciously on the writer's part, the oral essence of the language is transfused to the text, subversively *signifying* upon the literary (narrative) conventions of the English tradition, but certainly distinguishing it as an idiosyncratic literary product of these residually oral cultures. In this sense, the text itself speaks, without mediation of authorial intentions, of a Creole cultural identity.

## **The Tradition of Storytelling: Its Form and Motifs Bequeathed to Anglo-Caribbean Narrative**

As noted in the previous chapter, the main oral, narrative antecedent of this short fiction is the folktale 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 Anglo-Caribbean short fiction has developed. As a matter of fact, several African parallels can be traced in the storytelling tradition in the English Caribbean, in relation to themes, the dynamics of the storytelling practice, certain principles of oral narration, and characters. The theme of the girl marrying an animal (usually a snake) in disguise, for example, appears in the folklore from across the Caribbean and West Africa<sup>50</sup>.

Concerning the dynamics of storytelling, the African storytelling session begins with an opening formula through which the storyteller announces the name of the tale, to which the audience responds. Audience participation is here an essential component that helps to complete the meaning of the story told. The audience participates by interrupting or offering corrections, joining the storyteller in singing songs included in the tales, and presenting themselves as actors/actresses<sup>51</sup>. The storyteller is usually skilled in mime, mimicry, and singing. Very often 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 performative role, as well as the imaginative and mnemonic powers of the

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<sup>50</sup> Caribbean folktales on this theme are collected by Daryl C. Dance in her *Folklore From Contemporary Jamaicans*, pp. 103-105. Besides, according to Wilentz, tales embodying this theme are very familiar to the young girls in villages across West Africa.

<sup>51</sup> These actors/actresses are members of the audience who would give impersonations of various characters in the story, between the various tales and often in the middle of the story. Their presence reinforces the dual character of the African folk tale explained by both drama and narrative (*Jamaican Anansi Stories* 3-4).

storyteller. The storytelling practice has had a didactic purpose for inculcating social, moral and cultural values in African communities. Many of the components of the African storytelling tradition have been preserved in the Caribbean, like the opening formula, audience participation, the inclusion of songs, and the cyclic mode with the prevailing trickster figure.

Moreover, some of the principles or *laws* which determine the style and content of folk literature are shared by Caribbean and African oral narrations, such as the *Law of Repetition* (in order to build tension and fill out the body of the narrative), the *Law of Three* (indicating three specific elements like characters, time periods, or actions), the *Single-stranded character of narrative* (or linear; not using flashbacks in order to fill in missing details), and the *Concentration on a leading character*<sup>52</sup>. The Law of Repetition in oral narration is stylistically explained, also, by the redundancy proper of oral discourse and especially before a large audience. As Ong notes: “Redundancy, repetition of the just-said, keeps both speaker and hearer surely on the track” (40). Repetition is thus a necessary element in the raconteur’s craft.

The *Law of Three* in oral narration corresponds with a mnemonic devise proper of the poetic economy in oral cultures for the organization of thought and experience: in order to organize experience (narrative) in a permanently memorable form some mnemonic formulas are implemented for easy recall in oral narration, like the “formulary number groupings” —as examples of these formulas Ong cites “the Seven Against Thebes, the Three Graces, the Three Fates” (69). The number Three has special import in oral narration regarding the organization of the story’s content (characters, time periods, frequency of actions), but also the organization of the story proper or narrative. According to Derek Walcott, the symmetry of the folktale structure is conditioned by the *Law of Three*: “The true folk tale concealed a structure as

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<sup>52</sup> For further information on this issue see *Jamaican Anansi Stories* 6-10.

universal as the skeleton, the one armature from Br'er Anancy to King Lear. It kept the same digital rhythm of three movements, three acts, three moral revelations" (qtd. in C. Cooper 89). The three-act symmetry of the folk tale is illustrated, for instance, in one of the stories told by Sokoo, the storyteller of Ismith Khan's "Shadow Move . . .", because the story is composed of three violent acts: the three instances of a fight between the old coal man Rajan and his ungrateful son. On the other hand, the formulaic number grouping of oral narration is appropriated in Senior's "Summer Lightning" when the narrator refers the story of how Bro. Justice, one of the main characters, became a Rastafarian:

One night a passing Rastafarian had stopped off at the barracks where the penmen lived . . . It turned out that this one, Bro. Naptali, had worked as a penman in the property at one time . . . For *three days and three nights* Bro. Naptali stayed with them, leaving at the crack of dawn as mysteriously as he had come . . . After Bro. Naptali left, Bro. Justice pondered on his words long and deeply. Then suddenly one day he took off for no one knows where. He stayed away *forty days and forty nights* and suddenly, dramatically, reappeared as Bro. Justice (4. Emphasis added).

The formulaic style that characterizes the organization of experience in oral cultures is reinforced in these number-grouping formulas by their composition as parallel clauses following the aggregative and repetitive nature of oral expression (Ong 38). Not only are the number-grouping formulas borrowed here from oral narration, but also narrative formulas used to aid the progression of the story being told, and some of the dramatic mood and humour characteristic of storytelling.

Concerning the sequential ordering in oral narrations in general, it must be said that linearity of plot has conventionally characterized the narrative structure. But this linearity conforms to the short tale generally constructed around fixed narrative clauses that "will appear in a particular

presentational sequence within the same story”<sup>53</sup> (Skinner 131-32). In the general context of oral narrations —that of longer oral narrative, however, the narrative structure is marked by non-linearity, i.e., by digression, distraction, flash-backs. It is basically explained by the fact that memory, which is what guides the oral narrator, does not function to produce a linear plotting of events in chronological sequence (Ong 143). The performed narration depends on the narrator’s memory (*what* and *how* s/he will report) and his/her audience (*what* they want to hear): “Narrators narrate what audiences call for or will tolerate” (Ong 66). The oral context of storytelling defined by oral expression and audience’s response determines this non-linear aspect of narration.

The non-linearity of oral narration explained by digression is corroborated in the narrative level of Lawrence Scott’s short story “Ballad for the New World” through the seemingly oral relate of the narrator and his desire to immortalize his family’s past in a ballad. While narrating his ballad he digresses several times as several stories or mini-stories seem to come at once in his nostalgic remembrance of the past, which are sometimes put aside with a phrase like “but that’s another tale” (328) before getting back on the track or returning to primary story time. He confesses to his audience his inability to follow a linear narration of his story/ballad due to his immense desire to remember things from the past: “You see, you start telling the story about a guy and then you get to telling the story of a time, a place, a people, and a world. Then I start getting into the story. Well I made that choice early” (328). A similar digressing narrative behaviour acknowledged by a self-conscious intradiegetic narrator can be noticed in Pollard’s and Lovelace’s texts here analysed.

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<sup>53</sup> Such narrative clauses are given, according to the six-part structure of the oral narrative proposed by Labov, by abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, result or resolution, and coda (Skinner 132).

Although non-linearity is characteristic of the storyteller's narrative performance in general, the basic short tale is linear in structure, and this aspect has greatly influenced the written narrative tradition in the Caribbean, especially the short form. The conventional, naturalistic and *direct* mode that has mostly characterized Anglo-Caribbean narrative is reminiscent of the African oral narrative forms. But, as Walcott notes, it is not the result of an imitation of these *ancient* (narrative) *moulds*, but of continuing collective acts of remembrance of those forms through the oral tradition (*La voz del crepúsculo* 35).

These collective acts of remembrance among the black slaves' descendants in the Caribbean permitted, besides, the plotting of tales around the adventures of an animal trickster figure as leading character, which has been a dominant feature of African and Caribbean folktales. The trickster-hero par excellence in Anglo-Caribbean folklore is the spider Anansi, the Caribbean counterpart of the West African spider Ananse<sup>54</sup>: "Transported and indigenised according to the contingencies of a Caribbean culture historically rooted in slavery, such stories tended to de-emphasise moral lessons and to ploy up the inherent subversiveness of Ananse as trickster" (Gilbert and Tompkins 133). It was this emphasis on the subversive nature of Anansi in Caribbean folklore what determined its popularity. The celebration of the trickster's deceitful behaviour among black slaves is given by the fact that it emblematises real-life subversive attitudes of the slaves toward the colonial order, expressed within the limits imposed by a colonial and social situation of inferiority. In this line, the potential for subversion of the trickster figure is acknowledged by David A. Leeming when he notes that the

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<sup>54</sup> *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 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" (12).



trickster's function is to keep order from taking itself too seriously . . . The tales were not psychological compensation for the obvious lack of power in the slaves' lives. Rather, they represented an extraordinary effort to balance the totalitarian order of the slave system with archetypal disorder (20).

The trickstery, subversive attitude of slaves aimed at destabilizing the colonial order is evoked by Earl Lovelace in his prize-winning novel *Salt* through the storytelling of Bango, a descendant of black slaves:

And then it dawn on [the slave owners] that you can't defeat [black] people. Then they find out that people too stupid to be defeated. They too harden. They don't learn what you try to teach them. They don't hear you. They forget. You tell a man to do something and he tell you he forget. . . . You tell him to get up at five, and nine o'clock he now yawning and stretching: he didn't hear you; or, he hear something different to what you tell him. You is the expert, but he believe that he know better than you what it is you want him to do, and he do it and he mess it up (7).

As this case shows, cheating the slave owner on their competence to carry out certain tasks exemplifies a tricksterly act of resistance developed by the black slave. By passing himself for a fool he was actually fooling the overseer or master. The trickster's cunning scheme became here an indirect weapon to oppose and resist domination. The subversive nature of the trickster figure turns it, then, into an image of resistance since its trickery functions in a subversive way against the totalitarian order imposed by the dominant group or culture.

The trickster has become an idiosyncratic figure of Caribbean sociocultural reality, also frequently represented in literature. This figure is brought forth in *Marron Medicine* (1905), in which Ramchand recognizes two characters: Mr. Watson and Mr. Timson, as the first literary adaptations of the figure of Anancy ("Short Story" 1465). Other literary adaptations of the trickster figure appear in stories by V. S. Naipaul ("Man-man"), Samuel Selvon ("Working the Transport" and "The Cricket Match"), Olive Senior ("Ascot" and "Do Angels Wear

Brassieres?”), and many other writers. Also, Anancy has been re-interpreted according to modern times by Andrew Salkey in his collection of stories *Anancy's Score* (1973), in which he is moved to the city and becomes some kind of city slickster.

The potential for trickery and subversion of this figure has been used by Caribbean writers to create fictional characters, whose misleading, laugh-provoking behaviour accounts for serious strategies of resistance. Then, the representation of the trickster figure in fiction may provide a thematic line for “the writing in of resistance subjects”, corroborated in Olive Senior’s fiction (Donnell 124). The story of Ascot analysed in the next chapter, for instance, demonstrates that, as well as that of the witty and irreverent girl child Becca in “Do Angels Wear Brassieres?”, one of Senior’s best known stories. This child, empowered by the very rituals designed to make her submissive (the reading and study of the Bible), addresses her irreverent questions —as if imitating a riddle— to the visiting archdeacon. It becomes a way for her to communicate “her resistance to the order and values of the dominant culture”; and the presumably riddle-form of Becca’s biblical banter with the archdeacon responds to the fact that, as Donnell comments, the characters’ “self-empowerment in Senior’s stories often involves an acknowledgement of those cultural resources and alternative ways of knowing, which were marginalized or undervalued within a conventional ‘colonial’ education” (124). This trickery attitude of fictional characters may parallel the writer’s attitude toward the representation of their reality in fiction: *what* they present and specially *how* they present it, because, as it is noted previously in this work, the telling-of-a-tale devise in Anglo-Caribbean short fiction may reveal sociopolitical and cultural implications.

Apart from the trickster figure, other elements from the storytelling practice have been re-appropriated within short fiction, such as the opening formula, audience participation, and the

cyclic mode. The opening formula may appear represented in short fiction by sayings, proverbs, or cliché expressions around which many short stories have been conceived. It links the short story to its oral narrative antecedents like the exemplum, the fable, and the joke with its punch line (May 103). The use of proverbs or sayings to introduce a story is illustrated in Clark's "Tales My Grandmother Told Me" from *The Black Madonna*. The storytelling session presented in this text is introduced by a remark through which homage is paid to the proverb-speaking Caribbean rural community and specially the elders, who have most significantly contributed to the preservation of the oral tradition: "Only the young and upright can observe wrong-doing at a glance where immorality and crime have flourished un-recognised for a long time; yet the old West Indian peasant had a store of home-spun wisdom that we don't seem able to match to-day" (82). Besides, one of the tales told by this grandmother is introduced by a saying and a brief discussion on its meaning and the possible situations referred to by it. The opening formula is also represented through the use of songs or poetry at the beginning of short stories. Velma Pollard, for example, uses pieces of a children song to introduce the episodes of her short story "Gran". Something similar appears in *Karl*, in which a chorus of people seems to open the narration with the Creole lines:

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

alluding, sententiously, to Karl's social and mental failure. Also, the chorus of a popular song:

Show me the way to go home  
 I am tired I want to go to bed  
 I took a cup o' Coca Cola

And it fly right in my head ... (141)

introduces the episode “Karl...stranger” metaphorically evoking the process by means of which Karl becomes aware of the problem of class and colour differences in his Jamaican society while being abroad. Seemingly following the same pattern, Pollard uses poems to introduce the short stories of her collection *Considering Woman and Other Stories*.

Furthermore, audience participation is represented in fictional narrative through the narrator’s addressing the reader directly, which usually responds to his/her intention to talk to the reader as listener and to make him/her share his/her views or identify with the experience conveyed in the story. Olive Senior, for example, needs to imagine a participant listener as in the manner of storytelling, since she writes “in the belief that there is always someone else out there who has to help to bring the story to fulfilment” (qtd. in Simpson 835). The presence of an audience acknowledged by the narrator is what most certainly ratifies his/her role as storyteller, since it points at the performative nature of the narrative act or *telling* being developed, consonant with the storytelling tradition whose “codes and conventions as a mode of communication are already highly theatrical” (Gilbert and Tompkins 126). As Gilbert and Tompkins note,

the story-teller gauges his/her performance by the reactions of the audience and elaborates and/or improvises accordingly. This licence to alter the story necessarily challenges the assumption that history is closed or immutable, suggesting instead that the “truth”, if any, is in the telling (128).

The storyteller’s improvisation according to his audience’s reaction can be identified, for instance, in Khan’s text analysed here. In the storytelling session proposed in this text, Sookoo becomes an accomplished storyteller thanks to his ability to raise and maintain his audience’s interest in his telling throughout their interaction; and for attaining such purpose he is willing to sacrifice the truth about his own personal history that he fictionalises in the rendering. The performative action of Sookoo’s storytelling is suggested in this text by the interaction with his

audience through questions, and by *gestures* apparently implied through extratextual clues for emphasis like the underlining of words. The following excerpt illustrates both aspects of Sookoo's narrative strategy indicating such interaction: "So I wait till she come right close to my shoulder and I *pull up* my sleeves, and I show she *this!* 'You see it ... you watching it good? . . .'" (114). Here Sookoo is relating and representing to his audience how he could escape from the evil spirit of La Diabliesse, aiming through his demonstration to convince his audience about the veracity of his report.

But the most common indicator of the presence of a listening audience in this fiction is the narrator's addressing it through questions or directing his/her narrative commentary occasionally to a *you*-persona (singular or plural). Examples of this addressing the reader as a listening audience are found in Selvon's "Working the Transport": "You know where Barbados is? You don't? Well that is your hard luck" (845), and "because you know how they themselves cargoo, they don't know how to shake a leg or how to get hep" (847). In Pollard's *Karl*, the chorus of people that opens the narration might be seen to function as a kind of *onstage* audience to Karl's monologue, and it addresses also an audience (the imaginary *paying viewers*<sup>55</sup>): "Masters, who will define what good is?" (115), seemingly inviting this imaginary audience to pay attention to Karl's story and participate in its rendering. This audience is addressed by Karl as well in his monologue, especially in the episode "Interlude", 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). Speaking actually of himself here, Karl invites his audience to share his own perspective,

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<sup>55</sup> The close relationship between storytelling and drama noted in postcolonial literatures —corroborated in *Karl's* narration— is also certified in drama on account of the importance of storytelling as a narrative art in these societies and its already performative aspect: "Usually a metatheatrical devise which draws attention to the relationships between the narrative and its performative enunciation, story-telling creates two levels of audience: the onstage audience's responses invariably affect those of the paying viewers, whose communal reaction reinforces any socio-political response" (Gilbert and Tompkins 129). The presumably presence of these two levels of audience in *Karl* more readily suggests, however, the adaptation of the performative principles of drama than those of storytelling to fictional writing.

seeking its compliance with his situation in his story. This example confirms the *empathetic and participatory* nature of orally based expression (in this case oral narration), since oral performers aim at seeking an “empathetic, communal identification with the known” or thing narrated (Ong 45). Other examples of the narrator’s addressing a presumably listening audience appear in Khan’s “Shadows Move ...”, Lovelace’s “A Brief Conversion”, and Pollard’s “A Night’s Tale”, as it will be seen later.

The cyclic mode of oral narration can be perceived in short fiction in the narrative structure of lengthy short fictional texts or short story collections. In the first case, the text is generally composed of several sections standing for episodes on various stages of the life-story of the protagonist or leading character being narrated. The cyclic mode is clearly illustrated in Pollard’s *Karl*, for the episodes in which this novella is constructed can 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 the case of short story collections, the various short stories in a collection are related in theme in as much as they refer, as a whole, the life of a community at a given period of the protagonist’s life. Such is the case of Makeda Silvera’s *Remembering G*, Earl Lovelace’s *A Brief Conversion and Other Stories*, and Earl McKenzie’s *A Boy Named Ossie: A Jamaican Childhood*. Of these collections, perhaps the latter resembles the most the cyclic mode of storytelling, because of the presence of a same central character in these short stories, the child named Ossie. And it is through the narration of different events or experiences of his life in his Jamaican rural community that the reader/listener is introduced to other characters (members of that community) and their doings and stories.

Although more rarely found in short stories because of their shortness, the cyclic mode of oral narration can be reproduced in a short story in different ways, as illustrated in A. M. Clarke’s

“Tales My Grandmother Told Me” and V. S. Naipaul’s “Man-man”. In the former, a storytelling session conducted by the narrator’s grandmother is apparently transcribed to the written paper. It includes four tales or self-contained stories and the narrator’s commentary introducing the telling of each tale. Naipaul’s text, on the other hand, presents an abbreviated version of a cycle of stories about a trickster figure: the seemingly mad or neurotic man of the street called Man-man. It comprises several mini stories about Man-man’s curious habits and behaviour narrated by a child. The presence of these elements from the oral tradition of storytelling being adapted to fiction suggests an authorial intention of applying the conventions of oral narration to fictional writing, all of which inevitably positions the narrator in the role of storyteller.

The perception of the narrator as storyteller in this fiction is supported by the presence of a narrative idiom that frequently parallels that of oral narration. This narrative idiom is characterized by the presence of connective formulas, and the dramatic, hyperbolic tone proper of oral narration. Generally, the connective formulas are used to indicate the sequence of events in a story, and many of those indicating temporality reveal the vague or unreliable character of the report produced by the imagination of the storyteller. Some examples of these formulas are: “One day”, “One evening at dusk”, “Then one night”, “A week or so later” (McKenzie’s *A Boy Named Ossie: A Jamaican Childhood*); “One time”, “Well in the end”, “So Change get up” (Samuel Selvon’s “Working the Transport”); “Well, anyway, one time”, “So Ascot stay round”, “Well sah” (Senior’s “Ascot”); “Then one afternoon”, “So he continued”, “Thus it came about that”, “Now, just as the aunt thought” (Senior’s “Summer Lightning”); “So now with trouble looming (Michael Anthony’s “Drunkard of the River”). It is relevant to notice here that the real intended meaning of the adverb *now* in these formulas is *then*, *but*, or *but then*. This changed meaning of *now* corresponds to an expression of oral 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. It has been ratified by Senior, who asserts 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” (Appendix II). Moreover, minding the performative context in which the oral rendering of stories takes place in storytelling, the use of *now* might suggest the presentness of the event being narrated as it is evoked by the storyteller; that is, the storyteller brings the story s/he narrates (although one of past events) to a present reality while performing it, making the past perceptible for his/her audience.

The narrative idiom of oral narration being borrowed in fiction is also perceived in the recurrent use of the conjunction *and* to describe and enumerate, and to present a sequence of events. This is illustrated, for instance, in the description of a character in Olive Senior’s “Summer Lightning”: “[H]is smile was crooked and at times his eyes glazed over and his mouth trembled and he mumbled to himself” (3). The use of *and* as connective formula is more widely developed in Lovelace’s “A Brief Conversion”, serving several purposes (it will be seen in Chapter Four). As a matter of fact, primary to the fact of being one of the connective formulas associated to oral narration, the recurrent presence of *and* in narrative is explained, basically, by the oral nature of Caribbean culture, due to the additive style that, according to Walter Ong, characterizes the thought processes in orally based or residually oral cultures (37-38)<sup>56</sup>.

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<sup>56</sup> The seemingly simple forms of thought organization inherent to oral cultures —illustrated, for instance, in this additive style— do not make them inferior when compared to those of literate cultures. The difference, Ong claims, is given by the context in which the process occurs, one is the out-of-the-text reality and the other the scribal context: “Written discourse develops more elaborate and fixed grammar than oral discourse does because to provide meaning it is more dependent simply upon linguistic structure, since it lacks the normal full existential contexts which surround oral discourse and help determine meaning in oral discourse somewhat independently of grammar” (38). Obviously, the full existential contexts of oral discourse support the performative trait of oral enunciation.



In addition to connective formulas, the dramatic tone of oral narration is achieved in short fiction mainly through hyperbole. The hyperbolic tone in oral narration serves the purpose of raising and keeping the audience's interest in the story being told. Probably with such aim and addressing an imaginary listening audience, several writers have constructed some of their texts. The hyperbolic tone perceived in "Summer Lightning" corroborates this. At its lexical level, this narrative mood is revealed in an abundant use of adverbs and adjectives that intensify the quality of the actions in the story, as in the following phrases: "This advice pleased him *immensely* . . ." (3), ". . . he was like a space traveller . . . flung *wondrously* upon the lonely country house" (4), ". . . he was *supremely self-conscious*" (4), and ". . . he had been *extremely pleased* about the way in which the child could sit hours listening to his discourses" (6) (emphasis added). Besides, it is more finely conveyed in syntactical constructions, in which beautiful poetic images are created through the use of similes and metaphors. It can be appraised in the narrator's description of the creation of the boy's imaginary world once he locks himself in the 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" (2).

At other instances in "Summer Lightning", the hyperbolic images are reinforced by the repetition of 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" (6. Emphasis added). Moreover, the syntactical formula *so* + adverb/adjective . . . + *that* . . . present in this narration functions as an intensifier of the quality of the action, and is characteristic of oral narrations. Notice the following examples: "So fascinated was he by the old man that he no longer visited Bro. Justice" (4), 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"

(8). Apparently, in this short story Senior does not only want to offer a story that might appeal to the reader through its theme and content, but aims at entertaining a reading audience imagined as that of a storytelling session.

The narrator-storyteller of many short fictional texts is sometimes distinguished within the text through self-acknowledgement: the narrator recognizes him/herself as story-teller. It happens in Lovelace's "A Brief Conversion", Pollard's "A Night's Tale", Lawrence Scott's "Ballad for the New World", and Selvon's "Working the Transport". In the latter, the statement made by the end of the short story: "Well, it ain't have a lot more episode to tell you about Change, except how he lose the work at last" (848) suggests that the narrator has been delivering a cycle of stories on the adventures of his trickery protagonist while working in public transportation in London.

Sometimes the narrator's bend toward storytelling is not explicitly acknowledged in the narration; however, a narrative mood emulating that of the storyteller is perceived in many short stories, and not necessarily through the appropriation of elements from oral narration. It might be noticed through a shift in narrative attitude (from being the conventionally literate narrator to be the folk narrator speaker of Creole) taking place at a certain stage within the narration, usually at the beginning. In some texts produced in standard English and Creole, this shift of narrative attitude might occur parallel to that of linguistic medium: usually the storytelling mood comes alive when the Creole language is used (it happens in Velma Pollard's *Karl* and Ismith Khan's "Shadows Move ...").

In texts produced in the standard variety of English, the narrator's mood favouring storytelling is given by a narrative attitude perceived closer to the *focalised* (the story's characters and the

world depicted in it), as if confirming the narrator's involvement (as an observer) in the fictional world depicted and in the telling. This kind of narrator may be exemplified by the limited-omniscient narrator or the audience-witness narrator examined before in relation to Senior's fiction. A singular example can be found in Anthony's "Drunkard of the River": after an introductory part in which the protagonist is referred to as *the boy*, the extradiegetic narrator suddenly starts to call him by his name, and the narration is partly assisted by the inner voice of the characters' thoughts brought forth by the narrator —the narrator's speaking from the characters' consciousness might suggest that s/he is assuming the character's position in the story while narrating it. In general, the narrator's role as storyteller illustrated in many Anglo-Caribbean short fictional texts becomes a narrative strategy through which the author revivifies the oral tradition of storytelling, while certifying in fiction the oral quality of Caribbean sociocultural reality.

In sum, short fiction reveals the appropriation of elements and narrative techniques from the oral tradition of storytelling, among which are the cyclic mode, episodic pattern, stories within stories or tale-within-the-tale device, interaction with an audience, and repetition. Due to the appropriation of these techniques, the narrative structure of short stories usually validates some oral narrative form. But the oral character of this short fiction is also given, in the narrative context, by the special import of language in these highly residually oral cultures. That is why the narrative discourse here is more oriented to *telling* than to *showing* (more to diegesis than to mimesis) and language becomes the central component of narrative. Analysed within the context of modern narrative poetics, this kind of narrative is *socially situated* and culturally

conditioned<sup>57</sup>, and points at the clear relationship between socio-linguistics and narratology in these cultures.

The emphasis on language as the determining factor of narrative, supported by narratology critics like Lokke and Rimmon-Kenan, has served also to direct attention to the performative aspect of narration, since language is not only medium but *act* as well, a verbal act that is thoroughly fulfilled when performed orally. This performative quality of narration on account of language as its central component links fictional narrative to oral narration, where *telling* becomes performed narrative. The connection of short fiction to oral narration through language is ratified by Horacio Quiroga, a prominent Latin American short story writer: “[A]s long as the human language is our preferred vehicle of expression, man will always make [short] stories, because the short story is the one natural, normal, and irreplaceable form of storytelling” (qtd. in Walker 14). Besides, given the basic orality of Anglo-Caribbean languages, the oral quality of this narrative with regards to language’s use as narrative strategy is then doubly asserted. The storytelling mode has therefore influenced short fiction, conditioning many of its formal features and its oral quality.

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<sup>57</sup> The definition of narrative proposed by Vigil Lokke supports such characterization: “[T]he ways in which we string together our sentences, our utterances, according to the privileging strategies of the language and conventions of our own communities” (qtd. in Skinner 13).

### **The Presence of Proverbs as a Linguistic and Sociocultural Signifier of Orality**

Proverbs and aphorisms are important elements of Caribbean orature. Their belongingness to the linguistic realm of Creole confirms their univocal oral essence. Their provenance is mostly justified in the African cultural legacy. In the primarily oral African cultures, proverbs have always been integral part of communal life, from everyday speech to the storytelling practice with educational purposes: “[T]he passing down of tradition is made through a speech sprinkled with proverbs and aphorisms. They back up any moral judgement and are part of the spoken language” (Wilentz 7). In oral cultures, proverbs are mnemonic resources through which *memorable thoughts* are stored; as Ong explains,

to solve effectively the problem of retaining and retrieving carefully articulated thought, you have to do your thinking in mnemonic patterns, shaped for ready oral recurrence. Your thought must come into being in heavily rhythmic, balanced patterns, in repetitions or antitheses, in alliterations and assonances, in epithetic and other formulary expressions, in standard thematic settings . . . , in proverbs which are constantly heard by everyone so that they come to mind readily and which themselves are patterned for retention and ready recall (34).

These several mnemonic patterns defined by rhythm, rhyme, repetition, alliteration, antithesis, etc., are observed in proverbs and sayings pointing at a great ability in oral cultures to manipulate language, as the various oral art forms (songs, riddles, rhymes, proverbs) illustrate.

Like in African cultures, in the Anglo-Caribbean highly residually oral cultures proverbs are common part of the everyday oral speech of either the storyteller or the ordinary folk. The use of proverbs in oral discourse reveals their efficacy in providing a conclusive view/judgement about a particular incident or situation, probably widening its significance. The proverb or saying usually carries the weight of thought in ordinary oral discourse<sup>58</sup>. Their recurrent use in

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<sup>58</sup> See Velma Pollard’s discussion of proverb use in Jamaican everyday speech, quoted by Carolyn Cooper, pp. 38-39.

oral speech shows this function of proverbs and sayings, which is legitimised in fiction whenever they are part of the narrative idiom.

In *Karl*, for example, several proverbs embody some statements of Jamaican popular philosophy held pertinent to certain situations within Karl's life experience narrated in this text. The proverb contained in the phrase "Country people say the pen is lighter than the cutlass" (123) alludes, metaphorically, to the fact that education can spare you the physical exercise of farm work and provide you with a *lighter* or more comfortable life. The saying "Who the cap fit, wear it; who the cap don't fit had bloody well better wear it too" (188), epitomizing Karl's social dilemma, refers to his forced adjustment to the Euro-Creole urban, middle class social milieu because it is the kind of social experience that his society accepted and supported. And the proverb "Every day [the] bucket go[es] a [to the] well, one day the bottom will leave there" (183) uttered by a character who identifies with the 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 fact that this text has been devised as a monologue produced by a Creole-speaking black character with rural origins (Karl) explains the recurrent use of proverbs. The recurrent presence of proverbs in people's speech signals at an extended practice of popular wisdom, which is ratified by Pollard in the words of Karl: "Our land is full of roadside philosophers" (161). Besides, Karl's relate is conditioned by his newly acquired wisdom resulting from his awoken class and racial consciousness consonant with his black, low class and rural origins. It is, then, the wisdom nurtured by the proverb-speaking rural Jamaican community that reveals itself through Karl's monologue fulfilled with proverbs.

The representation of the proverb-speaking Caribbean folk in literature ratifies the basic oral nature of these linguistic cultures, as well as celebrates the oral tradition preserved and

developed in these cultures through the Creole language. There are many instances in this fictional writing illustrating the proverb-speaking rural and urban Caribbean speech. In A. M. Clarke's "Tales My Grandmother Told Me" from *The Black Madonna*, the saying "Whatever you do, do with all your might . . . things done by halves are never done right" (86) is used to further a discussion on its meaning, serving as the introduction or didactic commentary previous to the telling of a tale. Thus, the saying appears as an opening formula reviewing what the tale is intended to teach.

Proverbs and sayings inform the narrative idiom of short stories like in the following examples: "[W]here there is smoke there is fire", "Fear the living . . . , not the dead", and "No horse should be ashamed to carry his own grass", from Earl McKenzie's *A Boy Named Ossie: A Jamaican Childhood* (8, 50, 65). These proverbs uttered by Ossie's mother reflect a distilled knowledge afforded by a communal experience used by the mother to instruct and guide her son in his personal development. The third one, contrived metaphorically around the animal imagery to describe the human world, serves the mother to teach Ossie the moral lesson of the proud of honest work: Ossie should not feel ashamed of selling bananas like the market women (higglers) do if it is a means of providing for himself and his family.

Olive Senior's *speakerly* fictional texts usually committed to the celebration of her Creole-speaking rural Jamaican folks also show an extended use of proverbs and sayings. In her short story "Real Old Time T'ing" from *Summer Lightning*, the metaphorical proverb "every dog have him bone" (57) is a similar version of the proverb "Every puppy got him flea" cited by Carolyn Cooper from Louise Bennett's *Jamaica Labrish* (200). As Cooper notes, the "use of animal imagery in the proverbs to describe human characteristics suggests the ontological continuum of the human and animal worlds —a distinctive feature of the metaphysics of

primary oral cultures” (43). These proverbs allude to the conclusive truth that none human being is perfect for we all have our flaws. Moreover, the Jamaican rural *talking* community depicted by Senior in “Ascot” also shows an extended practice of popular wisdom deeply grounded on the oral cultural tradition. Instances of this communal, popular wisdom are afforded in the sayings “the cat who is the incarnation of the devil have nine life” (30), and “No matter how hard yu wuk an how much money yu make yu will nevva find shoes for dem doan mek dem fe yu size” (29). Both are brought forth by Papa (the child narrator’s father) in relation to Ascot and referring to his innate deceitful, devil-like behaviour.

Also, the narrators of Velma Pollard’s “A Night’s Tale” seem to speak from the wisdom of the old storyteller in relating the Jamaican rural experience here presented. This is indeed a highly proverb-speaking community depicted through their profuse use of proverbs and sayings like the following examples show: “[H]ow to make this end meet that” (75), “to eat grapefruit to cut your courage” (76), “What good fi sleep good fi married” (78), “Can’t forget to count your blessings or else God might take them away” (79), “her head started turn water” (80), and “when you doing well is best to keep to yourself” (81). Reference to these expressions and their meanings are given in the analysis of this short story in Chapter Three. On the other hand, the also storytelling, Creole-speaking community depicted by Earl Lovelace in “A Brief Conversion” is also identified as a proverb-speaking community. It is illustrated with the sayings “when the living good without wedding, the ring does spoil the thing” —signalling the uncertain feelings of Travey’s mother about her official marriage in the church (10), and “to soak your tail” —brought forth by Travey’s brother hinting at the punishment that Travey is most certain to receive from their mother for dirtying his clothes (29).



The presence of these condensed expressions of popular wisdom in fiction is determined, above all, by the representation of the oral discourse of the Caribbean fellow folk in these texts. Consequently, their narrative idiom frequently shows a high influence of verbal art forms from the oral Caribbean Creole culture like proverbs and aphorisms. This representation of the oral lore through proverbs in fiction confirms the oral essence of Anglo-Caribbean cultures sustained through the oral tradition. It entails a validation of the oral tradition and its Creole language, and a way of educating the reading audience on their oral heritage while passing down to them societal values and a long-time-grown popular wisdom. This validation of the oral tradition through the presence of proverbs in fiction responds to the writers' desire to assert the alter/native oral Caribbean culture in their articulation of cultural identity through literature.

### **The Rhythmic and Formal Features of the Popular Song Defining the Anglo-Caribbean Musical Narrative Mode**

Like folktales, oral stories and proverbs, songs have been an essential component of the oral lore in Caribbean cultures. They have always been closely related to storytelling, either by being incorporated into oral stories, or serving as artistic vehicle for the rendering of stories. Illustrating the latter case, the work songs of black slaves provided a primary, though indirect, context of communication for slaves, and offer an early instance of the influence of song as musically rendered text in Anglo-Caribbean literary tradition.

Singing became an entertaining practice for slaves that helped them to ease the burden of forced labour in the fields, but through it the slaves also managed to find emotional relief from their daily degrading situation. Probably, from their lamenting or rejoicing chant emerged an

early form of verbal and artistic expression in the Caribbean, as critic Gordon Rohlehr puts it: “Songs were the Caribbean’s first poems” (qtd. in Benson 1514). But singing became also a subversive practice through which slaves managed to free their voices and thoughts from the silence imposed by the white master and overseers<sup>59</sup>. However, this freeing of voice and thought was produced on a submerged semantic level of the Creole language in which the songs’ lyrics were rendered —what is known as *double entendre*. Songs were used by slaves to communicate secretly among themselves through encoded messages so that the real meaning of the lyrics was understood only by them. The *double entendre* of the black slaves’ work songs has been analysed by Henry L. Gates in African American literary tradition as one of the earliest examples of *signifying*<sup>60</sup> in that tradition. In it the wit, humour, and love for language and its noises of the black slave were all brought together and conditioned by a subversive *signifying* attitude toward a deceiving reality of colonial exploitation and cultural domination.

The inventive, subversive attitude of black slaves reflected on the songs they were creating in the New World pivoted around the manipulation of words and of sound, as it is corroborated by Frederick Douglass, a North American black slave, in his autobiographical narrative:

[The slaves] would compose and sing as they went along, consulting neither time nor tune. The thought that came up, came out —if not in the *word*, in the *sound*; — and as frequently in the one as in the other . . . they would sing, as a chorus, to words which to many seem *unmeaning jargon*, but which, nevertheless, were *full of meaning* to themselves (qtd. in Gates 67).

In the work songs of Afro-Caribbean oral culture, the *double entendre* of the lyrics resides, mainly, in the use of words/terms which the overseers deemed innocuous to substitute the name

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<sup>59</sup> It is known that black slaves were forbidden to talk while working in the fields, something their masters thought would hampered slaves’ plans for rebellion or escape (Benson 1514).

<sup>60</sup> Gates describes *signifying* as a rhetorical strategy mostly based on indirection, in which meanings are displaced or deferred: “[A]n indirect form of communication” (68) standing as a trope of black rhetoric in African American literature. As Gates explains, given “the play of doubles at work in the black appropriation of the English-language term that denotes relations of meaning . . . Signification [stands as] the obscuring of apparent meaning” (53).

of the white masters and their agents. Bird names, for example, replaced the names of those being criticized: the crow (a scavenging bird) referred to the masters, and the parrot (a chatterbox) to the overseer (Benson 1515). As illustrated in Pollard's novella already cited, the work song sung by Karl's grandfather introduces the figures of the Blackbird (symbolizing the black field slave) and Busha (the master):

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

It also 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.

Because in these songs also, the slaves would *sing as they went along* —in Frederick Douglass' words— unrestricted to time or tune, they can be seen as sung messages or stories composed, precisely, around a person or persons, an intention or desire, or an event or situation. These work songs were then granting a musical flavour to the oral narrative forms of the Afro-Creole culture. That is why Walcott's interpretation of folktales as *sung symmetric narrative forms*<sup>61</sup> should not surprise us; for the better part, it favours the possible acceptance of these sung stories as one of the earliest narrative experiences in the Caribbean.

The musical flavour of work songs rendered to oral narrations was given, primarily, by a high rhythmic quality born out of the manipulation of the sound of words. The slaves' enjoyment of the sound of words in creating and voicing their sung messages —or *unmeaning jargon*— determined the high rhythmic quality of Caribbean folk songs. Rhythm is certainly their

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<sup>61</sup> Derek Walcott, *La voz del crepúsculo*, p. 35.

dominant feature (Benson 1415). The rhythmically-contrived discourse of black slaves rendered through their work songs came to shape also the storyteller's narrative discourse. This musical aesthetic of work songs influencing the oral narrations in the Caribbean can be traced not only in the tonal quality of the storyteller's discourse, but also in the form in which a storytelling session is conducted, that may recreate the antiphonal call-and-response pattern of work songs: "[T]he listeners may interject their commentary [within the storyteller's account] in a modified call-and-response pattern derived from African musical tradition" (Jones 197)<sup>62</sup>. In this sense, the discursive interaction that occurs between storyteller and audience in storytelling performances is reminiscent of this call-and-response musical pattern.

Likewise, the influence of a musical aesthetic inherited from Africa in Caribbean narrative has been ratified by writers like Jamaica-born Afua Cooper, who certifies the unconscious way in which song and poetry come together interrelated in her poetry, resulting from "the fact that we as Africans in the New World never lost the essence of our cultural heritage, which I believe is coded in our genes, because in African villages poetry was sung, recited, and chanted ("Finding" 303). The aesthetic features of slave songs —its rhythmic and structural patterns— conditioning the discursive and narrative style of oral narration were to influence, later on, the Caribbean *literate* narrative forms. Therefore, the influence of song in Anglo-Caribbean short fiction is traced through the (sung) narrative forms of the oral tradition: through the folksongs and the folktales.

Such influence is more directly perceived in short fiction when, in the manner of the storytelling tradition, songs or excerpts of songs (ballad, blues, calypso, children songs, folksongs or popular songs) are incorporated into the text. It happens in Olive Senior's "See the

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<sup>62</sup> An example of the call-and-response pattern in Caribbean work songs can be found in "Oman Is a People", registered by Daryl C. Dance in *Folklore From Contemporary Jamaicans*. Here the leader of the song makes up his verses as he goes along; they alternate with the repeated refrain of his audience's response (175).

Tiki Tiki Scatter” (from *Arrival of the Snake Woman*), Hazel D. Campbell’s “Singerman”, Loorna Goodison’s “I Come Through”, and Velma Pollard’s *Karl*. This musical influence is also suggested when the song-motif defines the thematic level of a text. For example, song or the composition of a song becomes the narrative motif of short stories like Hazel D. Campbell’s “Supermarket Blues” and “I-Calypso”, Olive Senior’s “Ballad”, Lawrence Scott’s “Ballad for the New World”, and Michael Anthony’s “They Better Don’t Stop the Carnival”. The composition of a song in Campbell’s calypso, and Senior’s and Scott’s texts defines the stylistic framework for the storytelling act developed by the I-narrator. In these texts the ballad’s theme, that always revolves around a third person experience, favours the storytelling attitude of the homodiegetic narrator; (the calypso understood here as ballad as well). The narrator’s dual role as singer and storyteller is explicitly recognized in Scott’s short story: “You try to put it all down before it passes away. Sing the ballad for the heroes of the new world” (330). The narrator’s clear intention to inscribe into history these heroes’ exploits signals the oral/scribal continuum in which his celebratory narrative act is set: to write down his oral chant honouring these New World heroes.

On the other hand, the song’s influence in fiction is not so readily recognized when it is the formal rhythmical elements of song (i.e., variation, repetition, and rhyme) that, being adapted to fictional prose, determine the song-like quality of certain texts. According to Cuddon, rhythm, “in verse or prose, [is] the movement or sense of movement communicated by the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables and by the duration of the syllables” (573). The rhythm provoked by the arrangement of the syllables in syntactical units is illustrated in Senior’s text “Summer Lightning”, which shows a structural pattern characterized by the occurrence of long sentences inserted after longer passages formed by shorter syntactical units or sentences. It creates an inner rhythm within the narration that is better perceived if one reads

the short story aloud. Such structure illustrates a musical pattern of improvisation. In Edward K. Brathwaite's interpretation of some Anglo-Caribbean literary texts as a kind of creative musical expression, this jazz-like improvisation is manifest in the variations of tone, or rhythm, or through the repetition of a theme inducing a parallel with the stanza-chorus format of songs ("Jazz" 339). In "Summer Lightning" this musical improvisation is marked by variations of rhythm: a rapid rhythm in those passages formed by short syntactical units, and a slower rhythm in those long-sentence passages. Sometimes these long-sentence passages appear to show a concluding view or reflection on some question or situation brought forth in the story, thus they may be seen functioning as some kind of chorus: a sort of narrative counterpart to the chorus or theme of popular songs that alternate with the several passages (stanzas) forming the song's lyrics. This sense of movement found in the syllabic composition of an utterance or sentences is aided, in the literature being examined here, by the rhythm of the Creole language—which also shows, as Brathwaite has noted, a musical quality<sup>63</sup>, and by the influence of music and song coming from the folk tradition.

Furthermore, the narrative idiom of some texts emulates that of popular songs, abundant on repetitions and rhymes. The repetition of a theme or chorus in a song takes its narrative shape in a text usually by the repetition of a statement that can be slightly modified throughout the text. This incremental repetition, when translated to a text, may serve several purposes: emphasis, character or story progression, and intensified moments; besides, "[r]epetitions reveal situations and advance story interest . . . The last line of the story does not . . . merely repeat the words of the beginning, but strengthens and reinforces sense of character, context, and meaning" (Jones 78)<sup>64</sup>. In "Ascot", for example, the opening statement is also the final one,

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<sup>63</sup> See my approach to the characteristics of Creole offered in Chapter One.

<sup>64</sup> This analysis of incremental repetition is furthered by Gayl Jones in her study of the appropriation of the incremental repetition of the blues and ballad traditions by African American writers in their fiction but, more

though it is modified and pronounced by different characters. This repetition reinforces the meanings around the cunning character of the protagonist's personality and, at the same time, offers the narration a sense of coherence. Moreover, the incremental repetitions found in the short stories by Ismith Khan and Michael Anthony analysed in subsequent chapters serve to emphasize some fact or reinforce the meanings around a situation, and aid the progression of the storytelling session that is being conducted; (in the case of Khan's text, the repetition helps the storyteller to enhance the interest of his audience in the stories that he tells). In the structural level of these texts, the chorus-like repeated statement mediates between the several narrative passages or stories, closing up the previous narrative stanza and opening the next one. In Lawrence Scott's short story the repeated line evoking Lord Invader's calypso "Rum and Coca Cola" (1946) — "[R]um and Coca-Cola ... working for the Yankee dollar" (326)— reinforces the musical quality of the text, that might stand as a literary counterpart of a narrative/ballad calypso.

On the other hand, there is repetition of lexical elements in syntactical constructions that, together with the presence of rhymes, enhance the musicality of the narrative idiom in some texts. The repetition of lexical elements usually produces a parallelism of syntactical structures that is deemed to provoke rhythm (apparently a kind of *synthetic rhythm*<sup>65</sup>); notice the following example:

Adjoining it 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 ("Summer Lightning" 1. Emphasis added).

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exactly, in her critical interpretation of Jean Toomer's "Karintha" as a ballad. Certainly, this pattern of repetition is "a rhetorical devise of the ballad" (Cuddon 327), and becomes a recurrent structural pattern in Caribbean songs.

<sup>65</sup> It occurs, according to Cuddon, when part of a verse is repeated so as to complete other verse(s) (678). This pattern of repetition is characteristic of Caribbean traditional and popular songs.

The repeated element propels here the completion of each of the verbal constructions or *verses* describing that external part of the house. Also, the repetition and parallelism of syntactical structures perceived in “A Brief Conversion” makes us see the resemblance of Lovelace’s narrative style with the style of the calypsonian, who narrates about his social reality in his lyrics.

In relation to rhymes, their presence in Caribbean texts can be explained as a result of the influence of both the (syllabic) rhyming pattern found in songs and rhymes<sup>66</sup>. Senior’s “Summer Lightning” provides also very fine examples of such influence. Its musical quality, which has been referred to previously, is enhanced by rhymes that occur in words within sentences, as these examples show: “[H]e knew instinctively that if in the world he had nothing *else*, he was still *rich* because he had this *space* which allowed him to explore secret places inside *him*” (3. Emphasis added), or “She 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 completely forgotten about the Rastafarian” (6. Emphasis added). These rhymes tell, without doubt, of the author’s special love for her Jamaican language, something she brilliantly conveys in her poetry and fiction. On the other hand, the rhyming style of calypso seems to crop up in the narrative of Trinidadian writers, as illustrated in Earl Lovelace’s and Samuel Selvon’s. In Selvon’s “Calypsonian”, the calypso singer’s composing muse seems to aid the narrator as well given the rhyming bend in the narrator’s Trinidadian urban Creole speech: “The calypso would *say* about how he see some real hard *days*; he start to think up words right *away* as he walking in the *rain*” (111. Emphasis added).

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<sup>66</sup> Rhymes are an important element of Caribbean oral traditions. They usually accompany children’s games, and are produced out of language plays; as Dance has noted in her recollection of Jamaican folklore, they are created out of the people’s “special love of language —its rhythms, melodies, rhymes, and poetry (156).



These rhythmical elements of song, when adapted to prose, help to fix the structure of the text, which obviously resembles the song's format: the repeated statement functioning as chorus and mediating between the several narrative passages in which the text is constructed. Also, the occurrence of this statement reiterated and modified throughout the narration suggests an accommodation, in the narrative context, of the pattern of repetition and variation found in the ballad tradition. Perhaps two of the texts that most clearly exhibit this song-like structural pattern are Senior's "Ballad" (from *Summer Lightning*) and Scott's "Ballad for the New World", probably because they were conceived as songs/ballads made to fit into the requirements of written narration. Especially in "Ballad", the repeated and modified statement mediates between the stanzas in which the girl-child narrator reveals several episodes of the life of her deceased woman friend Miss Rilla to whom she dedicates her posthumous lamenting chant. The refrain thus expresses the narrator's grief for her friend's death: "O Lord. No more laughing. No more big gold earring. No more Miss Rilla gizada to cool down me temper when MeMa beat me. All the sweetness done" (104). This ballad/narrative exercise has resulted from the girl narrator's attempt at paying homage to her late friend in the old-time traditional way for honouring important figures through a ballad but, since she cannot sing or play the guitar, she has decided on narrating the story of Miss Rilla, which would serve her intention better, in her view. The final outcome is this musical or song-like narrative text.

The writers' experimentation with musical forms of expression in fiction gives birth to *musical* narrative modes, and points at a conscious, serious engagement of the writers with the cultural forms from the oral tradition and culture in the process of writing. In the cultural context of Trinidad and Tobago, the writers' engagement and celebration of the musical forms of the oral culture, specifically calypso, has given birth to a calypsonian narrative mode. It entails a synergistic perspective of these writers as literate and oral narrators and singers. They should

be viewed as creative inheritors of the black slaves' work songs that provided a vehicle for the development and preservation of the Afro-Creole cultural heritage (linguistic, narrative, lyric, etc.), and functioned as artistic agents in the process of resistance undertaken by the Afro-Caribbean community. They have also inherited some of the style and rhetoric of the storyteller and the calypsonian (calypso singer). This syncretic calypsonian narrative style is deployed in the narrations of the Trinidadian-born Ismith Khan, Michael Anthony, and Earl Lovelace analysed in this paper. It is defined here by the influence of calypso as a musical narrative form in the narrative style of these writers.

The Trinidadian calypso probably best exemplifies the correlation between song and narrative in Anglo-Caribbean arts. A modern descent of the work songs that favoured the rendering of messages and stories through singing and a contemporary artistic manifestation of the Afro-Creole cultural resistance, calypso has transformed or *reinvented* itself—to use Gordon Rohlehr's term in his description of the evolution of calypso—all throughout the twentieth century, accommodating different, usually foreign formal and musical tendencies and influences. The more direct antecedents of calypso are found in the nineteenth century's kalinda, cariso, and belair songs. Kalinda/calinda songs were the battle songs of stickfighting (a Trinidadian cultural practice derived from a mock-combat dance of African origin). They endowed calypso with a litanic call-and-response structure, rhythm, melodies, and a combative, satirical manner. Carisoes were the female banter songs sung in the intervals between stickfights by jamettes (women who followed stickfighting) in nineteenth century Trinidad. The “‘obscene’ dancing and ‘profane’ singing” of these women were the focal point of a constant moralising attack by the “‘respectable’ public opinion”, which partly caused the withdrawal of women, as stickfighters and singers, from the stickfighting arena and carnival. Here is a clear reason of why the world of calypso has been predominantly male. However, as Rohlehr

suggests, “the feminine cariso mode of banter, gossip and abuse” offered an alternative to chantwels (calinda lead singers and the early versions of calypsonians) when stickfightings were prohibited in 1884 (“Images” 198).

On the other hand, *belair* was a topical satirical or eulogistic song and drum dance in the nineteenth century Caribbean (Martin 284). It provided the calypso with an stanzaic structure that contributed, certainly, to the expansion of the early *single-tone* four-line calypsos in French Creole and to the ushering in of the verse and oratorical forms of the English tradition. As a consequence, the 1900’s and 1910’s calypsos came out as *double-tone* eight-line stanzas followed by a litanic refrain, all in a highly rhetorical English: “Thus, calinda litanies coexisted beside rhymed couplets, quatrains, and octaves; in time, combinations of these would constitute the fundamental forms of most ‘ballad’ or narrative calypsos from the 1930s to the 1950s” (Rohlehr, “Calypso” 214). Therefore, the narrative/ballad calypso nurtured from the narrative stanzaic structure enlightened by the English verse and oratory, and from the aggressive verbal attitude inherited from calinda and cariso.

On the other hand, the narrativisation/fictionalisation of calypso was possible thanks to a shift in the perception of the calypsonian from a *man-of-words* or fanciful verbal hero to the domestic hero (the barrack-yard neighbour or ordinary folk with a growing concern for social and political issues). The contextual background of calypso had also changed:

[T]he perceived arena of encounter within the fictional world of the calypso, which had once been the stickfighter’s *gayelle* or the road, and had between 1900 and 1920 been the bamboo and cocoyea tent, now also became the barrack-room, and would later with a few singers also become the bedroom (Rohlehr, “Images” 199).

The calypsonian became, then, a lyrical gossip of barrack-yard life, or a reporter of incidents or narratives about the everyday lives of Trinidadians. According to Rohlehr, these storyteller-calypsonians were fictionalising domestic situations of their social reality as observers and participants, just as many of the writers did in the emerging novels and short stories of the period. Rohlehr points at the parallelism between the writer and the calypsonian as creators of fiction on account of narrative strategies, driving attention to the fact that, as in fictional prose, the calypsonian develops several techniques, from the third person or extradiegetic narration to the intradiegetic ones. In the latter cases, given the fictional quality of the narration, the correspondence between the calypsonian —as the observing and participating narrating agent— with the I-narrator should never be simply assumed.

The calypsonian-storyteller was then more than a mere entertainer. Apart from the narrative and poetic craft that his creations required, his humorous account of social situations usually masked a serious tackling of sociopolitical and cultural issues through censure, complaint, ridicule, or satire. Humorous ridicule, for instance, of the different lifestyles and the ethnic conservatism in the Indo-Trinidadian community is found in Fighter's "Indian Wedding" (1957) and the Mighty Dictator's "Moonia" (early 1950s). Both calypsos relate the tense Afro-Indian social relations, usually reaching its gravest tone in the context of interracial relationships between men and women from both cultural communities. Censure and cynicism come together in several calypsos alluding to the raise of prostitution in many towns during and after the US soldiers' occupation of Trinidad in World War II. The cynicism resulting from the revengeful feelings of the jealous native macho-man whose male pride has been wounded is illustrated in one of Killer's calypsos in the forties that is apparently recreated by the Mighty Sparrow in his 1956's "Jean and Dinah" (now a classic that granted Sparrow the Calypso King

and the Road March tittles in that year's carnival). And it is conveyed as well in Lord Invader's "Rum and Coca Cola".

Sometimes fiction, humour, and satire were necessary disguising agents in the calypsonian's critical addressing of social reality, legitimising through an artistic manifestation the calypsonian's role of social commentator or the "people's newspaper" (Warner 140). As the well-known Trinidadian calypso singer Slinger Francisco (The Mighty Sparrow) once claimed, "the calypsonian, more than anybody else in the society, has to keep his finger on the pulse of the country" (qtd. in Warner xi). It is this role of the calypsonian as social commentator from and for his folks what Samuel Selvon and Michael Anthony seem to highlight with the protagonists of their short stories "The Calypsonian" and "They Better . . .", respectively. In both stories, the calypsonian's commentary on a problematic social situation (that of unemployment and hunger in the one and the banning of carnival in the other) provides the sociopolitical backcloth of the story he wants to tell (his story) in the calypso that he is composing. In Selvon's text, Razor Blade's desperate situation of unemployment and hunger triggers the creation of his calypso that becomes a lyrical type of social protest:

And he don't know why, but same time he get a sharp idea for a calypso. About how a man does catch his royal when he can't get a work noway. The calypso would say about how he see some real hard days; he start to think up words right away as he walking in the rain:

*It had a time in this colony  
When everybody have money excepting me  
I can't get a work no matter how I try  
It look as if good times pass me by (111).*

Consistent with the period's trend, this fictional narrative/ballad calypso shows the rhymed-couplet format in the standard English language. The storytelling vein of the calypsonian is

asserted from the folktale-like opening line of his sung story. And his dual role of social commentator and storyteller is thus ratified.

As a matter of fact, the calypso song realigns itself with the folktale or oral narration in relation to several stylistic and thematic features. Structurally, the calypso (and more precisely the narrative/ballad and the *message* calypsos) is composed of narrative sections/stanzas that alternate with the litanic refrain/chorus. The basic calypso structure has been the eight- to sixteen-line stanza and the eight-line chorus; but at several stages of its development it was expanded as required by musical or narrative innovations. In the 1980s, for instance, Kitchener introduced new types of calypso like the *pan calypso* (composed for the steelband) and the *message calypso*. The former, needing twenty-four or thirty-two bars/lines in both stanza and chorus, would highlight the percussive strength of pans (steel drums); while the latter, being a “slow didactic ballad . . . needed an expanded structure of thirty-two bars in both stanza and chorus” that would give “the singer ‘time to relate what you want to relate’” (Rohlehr, “Calypso” 218).

The *relating* or narrative imperative of the calypso’s function was certainly established from the 1920’s onward with the ballad calypso. Its narrative component has been maintained or reasserted throughout its several transformations/*reinventions*. A noticeable example is offered by Rohlehr as he analyses the (oral) idiomatic similarities between Selvon’s fictional prose and the calypsonian’s narrative comparing Selvon’s *A Brighter Sun* (1952) with Panther’s calypso “Taxi Drivers” from the forties. In this calypso, some extra narrative sections in prose are incorporated into its stanzas-and-chorus structure. They serve the calypsonian in offering the taxi driver’s discourse in his desperate search for clients and, in the mode of an oral account, “are spoken rapidly in the tones of the hustler above the rhythm of the calypso” (“Samuel”

159). This calypsonian fulfilled then the dual role of entertainer and social commentator so commonly found in the narrative/ballad calypso.

Furthermore, the trickster, the idiosyncratic figure of Caribbean orature, enters the world of calypso on different levels. It offers a thematic vehicle for the calypsonian's humorous though critical approach to the issue of Afro-Indian relations in Fighter's calypso "Indian Wedding". The protagonist of Fighter's story rendered in this calypso is a glutton Afro-Creole who attends Indian receptions disguised as a Hindu with the only interest of satiating his ever-hungriness. When this skilful Hindu singer and disguiser is discovered to be black he cannot escape and is severely beaten. Like his folktale counterpart, this protagonist embodies the Anancy archetype of "gate-crasher, disguiser, and trickster" who can be outsmarted through either wit or violence by a presumably outwitted rival: the fooler made fool. As Rohlehr suggests when comparing this calypso with Lord Executor's "My Indian Girl Love" (1939) in relation to interracial relations, the trickster's myth functions here as a masking strategy with which the calypsonian-storyteller "engages more deeply and less indirectly with the awkwardness and pain of Afro-Indian social relations ("Images" 203). The indirection inherent to the trickster conditions, then, the quality of the narration of this story.

The analogy between calypso and the trickster as manifestations of indirection implied in the previous case-example can be explained from within the sociohistorical context of cultural resistance in the Caribbean. Disguising or indirection has been a necessary stylistic tendency in Afro-Caribbean art forms from the slave work songs to contemporary art forms like calypso, which permitted the preservation and affirmation of the stigmatised African cultural legacy. Through necessary disguise, calypso transcended the kalinda arena and was reinvented defying numerous attempts at controlling, censoring, and prohibition:

From the Music Ordinance of 1883 in Trinidad, to the Theatre and Dance Halls Ordinance of 1934 on to the more recent “Clause Seven” of the Equality of Opportunities Act of the late 1990s . . . , grassroots Afro-Creole music in Trinidad has had to circumvent legislation designed to control or even abolish social commentary critical of elites in positions of power. Mask, disguise, verbal coding, and shape-shifting were strategies of both self-defence and attack (Rohlehr, “Calypso” 216).

Into Rohlehr’s continuum of laws for the control or banning of Afro-Creole music in Trinidad it could be incorporated the 1884 Peace Preservation Ordinance banning stickfighting and thus the context where kalinda song were born, and the banning of carnival from 1942 to 1946 during World War II. It is against this latter prohibition that the calypsonian’s protest gives birth to his calypso in Michael Anthony’s short story “They Better Don’t Stop the Carnival”. But calypso continued wearing the emblem of Anancy (trickster, shape-shifter, and survivor) in offering social commentary whenever necessary, stubbornly surviving censure and control.

On the other hand, the indirection of the idiom of calypso’s social or political commentary has probably contributed to the development of a metaphoric rhetorical style that adds to the artistic value of calypso as a lyrical and narrative form. In the narrative context, certain disguising or metaphoric strategies working at the semantic level of the text may give the calypso the quality of parable. In such cases the relation of calypso with the folktale and the folksong is ratified<sup>67</sup>.

Finally, the worlds of calypso and oral narration relate to each other through performance, because the delivery of both calypso songs and stories is necessarily performed in front of an audience which the calypsonian, like the storyteller, seeks to entertain. His success depends

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<sup>67</sup> Whereas the parable belongs to the realm of folk literature, it is also present in Anglo-Caribbean folk songs confirming once more the already noted convergence of different art forms, like song and tale in the region’s folklore and cultural manifestations in general. The Jamaican folk song “Hold ‘Em Joe” recorded by Daryl C. Dance exemplifies how a song becomes a parable through the singer’s rendering, with double meanings, of a story about a girl that has gone to visit not the doctor but her boyfriend (172).



equally on what he has to relate and how to relate and perform it. As Rohlehr notes referring to the calypsonians from the forties: “These artists had a special language which involved heightening of the mundane and humdrum into melodrama . . . . Gesture and mime reinforced speech (“Samuel” 158). Also in this line, Keith Warner proposes a view of calypso as oral (narrative) material performed through rhythmic music, its “purpose being the immediate entertainment or moral upliftment of the listener, or more correctly listeners, since enjoyment of calypso is, by large, a communal activity in which both the performer and the audience play well-define roles” (4). Here not only the performative but also the communal quality inherent to storytelling is apparently called upon to define calypso, a definition which certainly places calypso within Trinidad and Tobago’s oral literature. In this way, calypso is incorporated into the oraliterary continuum in the Caribbean at a similar level to that of dub poetry, both being described as forms of oral literature rendered and performed through music. The many points of convergence between calypso singing and storytelling noted in several contexts —narration (the text), enunciation (performance), and theme— support, therefore, a perception of calypso as the urban musical cousin of the folktale and, in a wider sense, an urban-Creole hybrid art form combining song, gossip, and tale. For this reason, any approach to the orality of Trinidad and Tobago’s fictional prose should necessarily address calypso, since it has influenced it as both song and oral literature.

Being one of the most important components of Trinidad and Tobago’s oral tradition and culture, calypso has frequently found its way into the country’s literature whenever the writers have turned to this tradition for sociocultural, political, or stylistic reasons. Samuel Selvon’s fiction, committed to the representation of his urban and peasant folks, offers an early example. His skilful transcription of the language of his fellow folks on the written fictional page,

including the calypsonian's, relates him, in Rohlehr's views, to an oral tradition of the streets (the urban lime, or calypso):

Selvon, in his stories about Port-of-Spain urban/Creole life, is relating to the same tradition of style and rhetoric which produced calypsonians like the legendary Spoiler, Wonder, Panther, Melody, Lion, Tiger, Invader, Atilla, Kitchener, Beginner and Dictator, all figures of the forties ("Samuel" 157).

Selvon appropriates the style and rhetoric of the calypsonian in his rendering of the story of Razor Blade in the short story "Calypsonian". The opening lines of this story are very similar to those of the calypso that Razor Blade is composing, cited previously: "It had a time when things was really brown in Trinidad, and Razor Blade couldn't make a note nohow, no matter what he do, everywhere he turn, people telling him they ain't have work" (106). Like the protagonist calypsonian, the narrator sets himself to comment here the hardships endured in the Trinidadian social context serving as backdrop of the story of Razor Blade. His commentary on the difficult economic situation is extended to broach certain social, cultural, and personal issues, like when referring the case-story of a calypso song that was made very popular in the United States sung by the Andrews Sisters while "the poor calypsonian who really write the song catching hell in Trinidad; it was only when some smart lawyer friend tell him about copyright and that sort of business that he wake up" (109). This narrator is certainly offering a commentary on a case from the cultural and social history of Trinidad, because it is the Andrews Sisters' successful version of Lord Invader's calypso song "Rum and Coca Cola" that he is referring to. Also, his narration/commentary turns rhymed at some few instances, as if imitating the rhyming style of the calypsonian's speech.

Given the influence of calypso in Selvon's fiction, greatly perceived in the language of his prose, he might be seen as a kind of literary calypsonian. Selvon's legitimising of the vernacular Trinidadian experience through his representation of the oral language of the calypsonian and his urban fellow folks in his fiction marked an early stage in the development of a new musical narrative style in the country's literature. And the transcription of the oral Creole language in the written context of this fictional narrative became a central stylistic strategy for the realization of the musical speech of the calypsonian. Indeed, Selvon's attitude toward the native Creole language in his literary works has inspired several Trinbagonian writers coming out in the subsequent decades. Earl Lovelace, for example, has attested to the supporting influence of Selvon's work on the Creole in his self-development as a writer: "Selvon . . . who deals with the vernacular of the native speech and a lot of the underlying pathos, and writes in Caribbean English . . . is one person who I feel I have looked at with great interest" ("Interview" 147). Then, Selvon's literary endeavours related to the Creole language constituted a stylistic *solidifying* or grounding source in Lovelace's literary career. The new musical narrative forms emerging from these early attempts at legitimising through literature the oral native speech of the calypsonian were certainly given a mature shape and developed by the subsequent generation of Trinidadian authors publishing from the sixties on of which Lovelace, Khan, Anthony, and Scott are part.

The influence of calypso (as a hybrid narrative-song form) in fiction has therefore contributed to the creation of a new *musical* narrative mode in Caribbean literature: the calypsonian narrative mode. It has furthered the perception of the Trinidadian writer working with a calypso-influenced narrative form as a kind of literary calypsonian or calypsonian-storyteller. Besides, such influence corroborates, from a truly synergistic context proper of Caribbean cultures, the presence of the folktale and song, essential elements of Caribbean oral traditions,

in this literature. It implies then a double assertion of the oral in the literary within this narrative tradition, and a reaffirmation of the *oraliterary* as its most significant aesthetic quality.

### **The Oral Message of Social Protest of Dub Poetry Conditioning Fictional Narrative in Form and Content**

Like calypso, dub poetry is a hybrid art form from the Anglo-Caribbean oral literature. The cursory though serious exploration of dub poetry as another art form in the oral/scrubal literary continuum in the English Caribbean offered here seeks to support its gradually achieved relevance amounting to its recognition in academic circles —being a conclusively oral, black, and low class cultural manifestation coming from Jamaican pop culture— and its cultivation by a growing number of poets in the Caribbean, England, Canada, and the United States. But, more precisely, this approach to dub poetry is aimed to provide a thematic and stylistic basis for my analysis of Makeda Silvera’s text “Caribbean Chameleon”, since this short story shows, in my view, a clear influence from this literary/oral form. The militant, poetic rhetoric of the dub poet has certainly assisted the writer in the creation of this fictional text that becomes, besides, a political statement of social denounce and an oral poetic declamation in prose.

Having originated in the Jamaican social context of the seventies under the auspices of reggae music’s tremendous popularity and the rise of the Rastafarian movement, dub poetry came out as a kind of oral musical poetry informed by the grass-root culture, also a political art through which the aspirations, frustrations, and spirit of resistance of the ordinary Jamaican people were echoed. The importance of reggae music and the disc jockeys’ oral improvisation over the instrumental versions of reggae and popular songs in the creation of dub poetry is asserted by Jamaican-born poet Lillian Allen as she describes its beginnings:

In the early '70s, in the dance halls of Jamaica, competing sound systems with highly skilled Djs and refrigerator-size speakers vied for the biggest crowds. This was the indigenous pop culture of the people, and this music did not find acceptance on the island's radio stations until much later on. Star Djs —The Mighty U-Roy, Big Youth and I Roy— chanted messages over the instrumental versions on the flip sides of popular songs. . . . These Djs talked about anything and everything, from the private and personal to social and political taboos (256).

These instrumental versions recorded in the flip side of a record (single) intended to provide for the singer's improvisation, and re-mixed by the mixers of the music or studio engineers —as Allen explains— provided a new and provocative musical context for several young poets to chant out their verse, to act out their militant voice:

The mixers' techniques of echoing, repeats, fades, the dropping in and out of instruments to create internal rhythms, ignited the imagination of a generation of young poets: Oku Onuora, Mutabaruka, Jean Binta Breeze, Mikey Smith, Nabby Natural, Malachi Smith, Poets in Unity, among others. These groups of word practitioners, all born in the early '50s, echoed the rhythms, the excitement and the concerns of the period (256-57).

Then Allen introduces here a crucial element that gives dub poetry its literary dimension: the oral/written *word* usually delivered through the Creole voice of the grass-root Anglo-Caribbean experience. It is certainly the arrangement of words in verse and fitting into a particular rhythmic and musical pattern that characterizes the first stage of dub poetry creation. The literary value of dub poetry afforded by the word/text was vindicated years later by several scholars and poets like Jean Binta Breeze, who lamented the deceptive art of certain practitioners who emphasize a sometimes clichéd performance around traditional themes and moods/tones with verses void of genuine poetic value. As Carolyn Cooper describes this situation: “The song-and-dance of ‘performance’ struggles to animate nonsense [or *tedious jabber* in Gordon Rohlehr's words] that cannot stand alone on the page or on the stage” (70).

The dub poetry of Breeze, and that of Mikey Smith are singled out as offering perhaps the most accomplished interrelation of word (poetry) and act (performance) in this art form.

Performance (the oral, performative act of delivering the poetry) is an essential second stage in dub poetry creation. It makes possible “the fulfilment of the promise of the words on the page” (C. Cooper 73) through the necessary agency of the oral voice, for it is really the oral voicing of the text what stands at the centre of performance in dub poetry. The centrality of the voice in performance is sanctioned here by the orality of Jamaican (and Caribbean) popular culture, which this art form comes from<sup>68</sup>. Moreover, the relevance of the voice in *dub* is justified by the poet’s desire of declaiming his/her lyric message of protest, rebellion, and resistance echoing the voice of a generation and a people. It positions the dub poet in the role of cultural political representative of the people or community —a seemingly oraliterary counterpart of reggae singer Bob Marley in the Jamaican context of the seventies<sup>69</sup>. This perception of the dub poet as a lyrical spokesman of the people was certified by the naming father of dub poetry, Oku Onuora, in his lines:

I am just a voice  
I echo the peoples  
thought  
laughter  
cry  
sigh  
I am no poet  
no poet  
I am just a voice (Allen 257).

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<sup>68</sup> As Carolyn Cooper explains: “In traditional oracy, performance is, quite literally, the making of the text, which has no ‘existence’ or authority independent of its voicing” (84).

<sup>69</sup> In his critical essay *Cantos de resistencia*, Cuban scholar Samuel Furé Davis addresses dub poetry, together with reggae, as artistic forms from the culture of resistance in Jamaica.

And the militant and lyrical potential of this oral voice organized on paper materializes through performance. Therefore, dub or performance poetry is something more than words, music and performance. It is the unfixed combination of these and other elements for, as Jamaican critic and poet Mervyn Morris claims, its meanings are dependent “on the variable interaction between text, performer, audience and occasion” (qtd. in C. Cooper 70). The variability in the interaction of these components has partly determined some changes in themes, tones, musical accompaniment, and styles in the development of dub poetry. These changes brought about a re-evaluation of this art form in academic circles, as whether it should be called *dub* or *performance* poetry.

The denomination *dub* has specific socio-historical and political resonances referring to a kind of musical manifestation of social protest in favour of the racial, cultural, and political recognition of the black, low class Jamaican people in the seventies. It inevitably signals at the reggae culture of urban revolt from that period. The term’s militant connotation is corroborated in Oku Onuora’s definition of dub poetry, explained in terms of cultural (and linguistic) resistance, in a reaffirmed Creole language:

Dub poetry simply mean to take out and to put in . . . It’s dubbing out the little [English] penta-metre and the little highfalutin business and dubbing in the rootsical, yard, basic rhythm that I-an-I know. Using the language, using the body. It also mean to dub out the isms and schisms and to dub in consciousness into the people-dem head. That’s dub poetry (qtd. in Furé Davis 98).

Then, in the oraliterary context of expression of dub poetry, this artistic form emerged as a creative practice of these artists to subvert the Anglocentricity in Caribbean art forms of written and oral expression, defined by the pre/dominance of the English rhetorical and stylistic patterns. This allusive militant and transgressive character of the term *dub* in the conception of dub poetry is what might be lost if *dub* poetry becomes, exclusively, *performance* poetry. The

latter would surely allow a more ample register of declaiming styles, themes, and rhythmic or musical backgrounds to be included within this art form. This more inclusive aspect of *performance poetry* is pointed out by Mervyn Morris in his preference for the term when referring to this art form, because it makes possible to acknowledge within such categorization the works of several poets that do not perform to the accompaniment of reggae rhythms or in the Creole language only, or that do not write dub poetry but whose work has an exceptional quality for being rendered orally through performance (as is the case of Jamaican poet Lorna Goodison). Therefore, the all-inclusive term *performance poetry* has the further advantage of “confirming the breadth and complexity of the performance/print, oral/scribal literary continuum along which both ‘performance’ and ‘non-performance’ poets operate” (C. Cooper 81). Nevertheless, Carolyn Cooper herself, in an attempt to retain the *dub* substance of the genre’s name, with its *onomatopoeic drum resonances* and its sociopolitical connotation, offers the term *meta-dub* in her critical work to “suggests the transformation of the somewhat more limiting term ‘dub’ into ‘performance’ poetry” (85). It will allow then the indiscriminating accommodation of a variety of poetic styles within this genre.

Such variety can be perceived if we pay attention to the characteristics of this poetry. In relation to themes, they focus on the criticism of social, political, cultural and historical questions and situations leading to the condition of social and economic depression, marginalization, and political unempowerment of low class people and those excluded from the dominant culture. The manifestation of protest, rebellion and non-conformism has generally been at the centre of such criticism. The non-conformist, denouncing stance of the dub poet vis-à-vis the racial marginalization of black people mostly determines the thematic quality of social denounce in Makeda Silvera’s short story “Caribbean Chameleon”. The dub poet/writer’s protest declaimed in this story is raised against the continuing marginalization of the immigrant



black woman in Canada, and the neocolonial exploitation of Caribbean postcolonial societies like Jamaica.

In dub poetry, several aspects of everyday life are tackled within the poet's censure, like religion. Rastafarianism and its themes of repatriation to Africa and the struggle against Western cultural domination are present, for instance, in Benjamin Zephaniah's "Dread John Council" and "So Fari", and Mutabaruka's "Look Again" and "Weh Mi Belang?" (Where do I Belong?). Implicit in the celebratory evocation of Africa as the original cultural and historical source for the New World black man, there is frequently the individual's search of his/her cultural identity, which is corroborated in poems like "Weh Mi Belang?" and Mikey Smith's "Roots". Other social aspects occupy the thematic field of some poems: the difficulties of child-bearing for the poor (Jean Binta Breeze's "Riddym Ravings"), women sexual abuse by men (Mikey Smith's "Mi Cyaan Believe it"), the endurance of the hard-working (peasant) woman (Breeze's "Simple Tings"), man and woman relationships (Breeze's "Holly" and "Lovin Wasn Easy"), among others. Also, the meta-dub poem reverberates, thematically, around itself, with verses that speak about it: its content, performers, and performance —like Mutabaruka's "revolutionary poet" and "Dis Poem".

Besides the Rastafarian opposition to racial and cultural domination defining these texts thematically, cultural resistance is furthered in dub poetry through the critique of certain pro-Western-culture social attitudes and the celebration of the *alter/native* oral tradition. In Jean Binta Breeze's "I Sight Up Tacky", the rebellious figure of the maroon hero Tacky is rescued from Jamaican oral lore and propped up as paradigm for the Jamaican youth willing to give away their pride and dignity to follow the *American dream*. The poet, in the manner of Bob Marley's chant of rebellion "Get up Stand up", advises them to "[s]tan up like Tacky!" to assert

their dignity (qtd. in C. Cooper 79); and directs her message to Johnny (Johnny Drughead), an immigrant Jamaican boy in America seemingly drugged by the *American dream*. This figure is a more civil and socially uncommitted version of the delinquent young man turned *bad* by the depressive economic and social environment identified by Bob Marley in his song “Johnny Too Bad”. Like Tacky, the name Johnny belongs to Jamaican oral tradition and is generally used to refer to the bad boy (Bad John) made *maudite* by the oppressive establishment (Furé Davis 114).

Also Mikey Smith seeks to celebrate the oral traditional lore while denouncing the continual state of dispossession and oppression among the Jamaican low class in his well-known poem “Mi Cyaan Believe it” (I Can’t Believe it). It includes proverbs, rhymes from a children’s ring game, nursery rhymes, and aphorisms of Jamaican oral culture. Other of his poems, “I and I Alone”, denounces the violence bound to a severely economically impoverished social milieu through the ordinary scenario of the market place. The verbal battles between the sellers and buyers are justified here in the proverb “every mickle meck a muckle”, hinting at the fact that hustling becomes a necessary way of life for those who must struggle to guarantee their survival, including the Rastafarian (C. Cooper 79). The rhetoric of social protest in defence of the suffering Jamaican people imbued with the Rastafarian perspective displayed in these poems by Jean Binta Breeze and Mikey Smith can be also found in Makeda Silvera’s short story “Caribbean Chameleon”. It conditions the narrator’s idiom that at times appears produced from the sociopolitical standpoint of the Rastafarian. On the other hand, the expression of cultural resistance formulated in Silvera’s text is centred on the assertion of a non-Western (Caribbean) cultural and literary identity as a sociocultural and literary strategy of self-articulation. It is explained here by the author’s crediting of her native Jamaican Creole language and dub poetry through their use in the creation of this short story, which becomes an

oraliterary, poetic-narrative instance of *uprising* textuality of self-articulation in a Caribbean diaspora.

In the Western metropolitan sociocultural context, the *migrant* meta-dub poetry found other thematic concerns provided by the experience of black communities in Western societies. They pivoted around the situation of racial, political and cultural discrimination, labour exploitation and social marginalization of black and non-Western minorities. As the Jamaican-born, Canada-based poet Lillian Allen comments with regards to the Canadian immigrant experience:

The first generation of dub poets wrote of police brutality, of immigrants' dashed dreams, of hard work and little pay, of the oppression of Black women at the hands of Black men, of the need to nurture and to fight back. We made art part and parcel of political work (261).

The political conditioning of dub poetry in the Afro-Canadian context was overdetermined by a discriminatory situation in terms of place of birth, race, gender, skin colour, and sexuality supported by the establishment. The militant voice of the woman dub poet raised against these discriminatory practices is echoed in "Caribbean Chameleon". It serves Makeda Silvera to denounce racist Canadian Immigration procedures, the labour exploitation of black immigrant women, and male abuse of women through the story of a black Jamaican immigrant woman. At the centre of the poet/writer's denounce in this story, there is a call for unity among black people in the fight for equality and respect, and for the self-affirmation of non-Western subjects (identified, in this case, as black, Caribbean, female and male).

Concerning the tone of meta-dub poetry, the original protest, anger, and fire referred in an inflammatory and sometimes apocalyptic idiom may be soothed, as poets/performers reveal a less aggressive mood in their critique. There is also, then, irony, melancholy, humour, etc. The

calm, ironic mood of the narrator's declamation in Silvera's story already cited is disrupted as the angry, violent voice of the black female subject producing this quasi-autobiographical report seeks to speak out her protest. Other formal features of this poetry are its direct exteriorisation of consciousness in the address/appeal at matter/subject, conciseness marked by short lines, word association dependent on rhyme, and rhythm afforded by the language and the performance's musical background.

Rhythm, in dub poetry, is clearly relevant from the primary stage of writing the script. It is the rhythm of the language what facilitates the poem's creation and invests it with a musical quality before going on for performance. It is true for Jean Binta Breeze, as she notes in her poem "Dubbed Out":

i  
 search for words  
  
 moving  
 in their music (qtd. in C. Copper 68).

It is the rhythm of the Creole language and the overall oral discursive experience in the Caribbean which the poet appeals at, firstly, in creating dub poetry. Or sometimes it is a particular rhythm what ignites the poet's artistic vein provoking the composition of the meta-dub poem —something ratified by Mikey Smith, who sees himself in such case as a musician (C. Cooper 81). This rhythm materializes itself in the written discourse of dub poetry through rhymes, repetition, and variation of tempo given by the length of the lines. These rhythmic manifestations of dub poetry adapted to fictional narrative are perceived in "Caribbean Chameleon", as it will be seen.

Reaching its final stage —performance and audience reception, meta-dub poetry reveals itself as a hybrid art form in which the poet juxtaposes several artistic idioms and recurs to different resources so as to create a dynamic poetry: “[A] poetic form that would incorporate many aspects of performance, drama, fiction, theatre, music, opera, scat, a cappella, comedy, video, storytelling and even electronics” (Allen 258). *Poetic ammunition* or *artistic call to arms* is how Lillian Allen describes this cross-fertilization of art forms taking place in meta-dub poetry, metaphorically echoing its ever political resonances in its possibilities for arising political conscience among the people and its role in social and political movements. In her own words: “[I]t asserts revolutionary possibilities, most importantly for those who must struggle for freedom and transformation” (261). And the dub poet, as cultural and community worker, aids to make the people reach and live these revolutionary possibilities proclaimed in his/her performed poetry.

Seemingly, this hybrid character of dub poetry and its militancy have been fuelling the creative vein of Caribbean authors of conventional written poetry and fiction, adding to the peculiar bend in Caribbean art forms to syncretism and hybridity. A product of this poetic ammunition displayed in the context of fictional writing, the short story “Caribbean Chameleon” analysed in this paper can be described as a combination of poetry, fiction, storytelling, song, performance or declamation, and political statement of social denounce. All these varied idioms appear to converge in the writer/poet’s expression of a plural and communal discourse of self-articulation and assertion against the hegemonic and discriminating cultural discourse of the Western centre that is endlessly silencing or/and locating (on the margin) the presence of the Other.

The Anglo-Caribbean oral literature has resulted from the continual encounters and amalgamation of narrative and artistic forms from the Euro-Creole literary tradition and the oral tradition and culture. The oral tradition has constituted an important sociocultural source maintained due to the several acts of cultural resistance undertaken by the dominated cultural groups in these societies, especially in the Afro-Caribbean community, as well as a primary cultural entity in the development of Caribbean people as sociocultural subjects. That is why these are still potentially oral cultures. On this account, the region's literature has a distinctive oral quality that is reinforced in the last decades as Anglo-Caribbean writers have cast a *validating* (and politically-biased) look at the oral tradition through their works in an attempt to assert an autonomous cultural identity through literature. Consequently, *oral literature* or the oral literary mode has been highlighted in recent times defining an indigenous literary aesthetic born out of these conscious and sometimes subversive acts of legitimising the denigrated oral traditions and crediting the overwhelmingly oral Anglo-Caribbean sociocultural experience in the conventionally scribal context of literature. Therefore, this oral literary aesthetic is explained, formally, by the incorporation of elements from the oral tradition, and the appropriation and adaptation of oral narrative and art forms within the scribal literary context.

As this chapter illustrates, this oral literature has been supported by several manifestations from the oral tradition and culture that, being incorporated and/or recreated in the literary context, have strengthened the oral quality of Anglo-Caribbean short fiction. Primarily, the use of the oral Creole language marks an early stage in the interpenetration of the oral and the scribal due to the representation of the Creole-speaking Anglo-Caribbean community in this fictional narrative. The shift in the use of Creole from describing the speech behaviour of the characters in dialogs to becoming the language of narration in many of the region's fictional narrative (specially, by women authors) has been conditioned by a political stance of the writers toward

Creole for raising its status as the true language of these peoples. Besides, for many writers, Creole becomes a most suitable linguistic medium with which to address, represent and validate this sociocultural experience in literature. This use of Creole, also with clear sociopolitical implications, assists the need of the Anglo-Caribbean writer to articulate and assert a cultural identity through language.

The appropriation of several other manifestations from the oral culture in this short fiction assisting the development of the Anglo-Caribbean oral literature contributes, also, to the expression of cultural identity from within its formal context. In this line, the tradition of storytelling that afforded this literature primary narrative antecedents has continued nurturing its oral quality through the adaptation of its themes, narrative forms, and structural principles into the literary narrative context. Largely influenced by the African cultural legacy, the storytelling tradition retains several elements of African storytelling—which was creolised according to the new Caribbean reality—that are observed in this short narrative, like audience participation, the inclusion of songs, the formulaic rhetoric and dramatic tone of the storyteller's narrative, and the cyclic mode of narration with a prevailing leading trickster figure or type-character. Mainly, the single-stranded or linear character of African oral stories constitutes a structural principle that applies to short fiction determining the conventional and naturalistic mode that has mostly characterized this narrative; and the spider Anancy (the popular trickster figure of Anglo-Caribbean folklore) with its inherent subversive nature, has frequently functioned as a thematic and narrative vehicle for the exploration and criticism of this sociocultural reality in the manner of the folktale: entertaining and teaching moral and social lessons at the same time, and for the articulation of resistance to dominant social and cultural orders. The stylistic and thematic influence of oral narrative in this short fiction

supports a perception of the writer as *in-writing* storyteller, and of the text as a scribal form of oral literature.

Furthermore, proverbs are another essential element of the oral tradition in the Creole language, that frequently partake of the narrative discourse in Anglo-Caribbean short fiction. Their presence in this narrative is due to the representation of the local idiosyncratic forms of speech and the proverb-speaking fellow folk. This representation accounts for a way of preserving and passing down, through literature, an oral legacy of popular wisdom developed in the Creole language, as well as educating the readers/listeners on social and cultural values. The writer's validation of the oral tradition through this representation of these cultures' popular wisdom in the discursive context of fiction helps to create a culturally-conditioned narrative that supports the articulation of cultural identity in this literature.

Also, the songs of the Anglo-Caribbean oral culture (folksongs, popular songs, children songs, ballad, calypso) have influenced short fiction, thus enhancing its oral quality and determining a musical quality in many texts. This influence of songs can be traced on two levels: more directly, songs have influenced fictional narrative as an oral musical form, and, primarily, songs have provided early narrative forms in Anglo-Caribbean narrative tradition through the work songs of black slaves in the Caribbean. Born in the context of slavery, work songs usually became a vehicle of indirect communication among slaves for the transmission of sung messages and stories. Therefore, they were granting a musical flavour to Anglo-Caribbean narrative perceived in the discourse of the oral narrator and his storytelling practice that reproduced the call-and-response pattern of work songs. More than in the incorporation of songs into the text, the influence of songs reinforces the orality of this fiction through the adaptation of their structural and rhythmic patterns in the narrative context. The recreation of



the song's rhythmical clues (rhyme, repetition, and variation) and stanza-chorus format in the narrative text has determined the emergence of new musical narrative modes that celebrate musical forms from the oral culture like the ballad and the calypso. In the context of Trinidad and Tobago, the calypso, an oral musical/narrative artistic form held representative of a popular culture of resistance, has influenced Trinidadian narrative as musical form and oral literature, bringing about the development of a *calypsonian* narrative mode that implies a synergistic perception of the Trinidadian writer as literary and oral narrator and singer. These Anglo-Caribbean musical narrative modes, like the *calypsonian*, are enriching the region's oral literature from a musical perspective, and are aiding to an expression of cultural identity in this short fiction.

Finally, dub poetry comes to influence this short fiction as an oral, poetic, and militant art form from the Jamaican pop culture of social revolt and resistance, pointing at an interesting way in which the intermingling of the oral and the scribal supports the development of an oraliterary aesthetic in Anglo-Caribbean narrative. Dub poetry's content of social protest and its stylistic features assist the writer of fiction in her declamation of a political statement against racism and neocolonialism in Makeda Silvera's text "Caribbean Chameleon", which becomes a hybrid oraliterary and resistant text of social and cultural self-articulation. The resistant and subversive narrative discourses of Anglo-Caribbean short fiction that seek to validate the oral within the literary are certainly consolidating an oraliterary aesthetic in the purpose of asserting cultural identity.

CHAPTER THREE. STORYTELLING AS A THEMATIC AND NARRATIVE  
VEHICLE FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE COMMUNITY'S  
HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL LEGACY AND THE ASSERTION OF  
CULTURAL IDENTITY

The three Anglo-Caribbean short stories analysed in this chapter are defined as oraliterary texts due, mainly, to the appropriation of the storytelling narrative mode from the oral tradition. The narrative of the storyteller fulfils several functions in the thematic context of these texts, specifically through the educational dimension of storytelling as a communal sociocultural practice, and turns into a stylistic strategy, in general, with clear cultural and political connotations in this short fictional narrative.

**Storytelling as a Cultural Form of Social Historiography in Velma Pollard's "A Night's Tale".**

As if testifying to the Caribbean writer's tendency toward the cultivation of several literary genres and the mingling of genres and artistic forms in her/his creative writing, the short story "A Night's Tale" was born out of the author's urge to expand into prose the rather concise poetic treatment given to the female protagonist's story in her poem "the best philosophers I know can't read or write"<sup>70</sup>. Here Pollard brings to light and fiction once again one of her most recurrent fictive characters —"the hard working Jamaican woman" ("Most Important" 20), (or

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<sup>70</sup> It appears in her collection of poems *The Best Philosophers I Know Can't Read or Write*. In a critic panel held within the celebration of the 8<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Short Story in English, in October, 2004, in Madrid, Pollard commented on her re-creation in prose (a short story) of a theme she had previously treated in a poem. Certainly, it is the story of the lady of Mandahl Peak —to whom Pollard dedicates her poem— what Pollard narrates in this short story; and both the poem and the short story relate the same details of the woman's story.

Caribbean woman in a general sense), in what may be called a re-assertion of her importance in the development of family and society in the Caribbean. Speaking particularly of the Jamaican context, Pollard sees her as the backbone of her society. But this short story is not merely about praising this remarkable female figure —which is what the poem tries to achieve; this short story is about re-telling the story of Dorlene, the female protagonist, because in this re-telling the author consummates her *raison d'être* as a postcolonial writer, something that she explains in her self-confessing essay “The Most Important Reason I Write”:

Perhaps the most important reason I write is that I have a great desire to record aspects of life, events and experiences which I think are worth keeping. I grew up in rural Jamaica in the forties. In the fifties I went to school in the capital city, Kingston, but continued to spend all my holidays at home in the country. I write from a memory of those times and those places. It is very easy to lose a sense of the past and have each generation evolve a notion of what existed at a time before the present. I consider that a tragedy (17).

For Pollard, the story of Dorlene is worthy of being kept and known, presumably, because she represents one of those memorable Jamaican women who bravely carry the burden of child raising and work hard to provide for their family and educate their children without male support. These women’s resilience and capacity to overcome difficulties have been admired by Caribbean critic Elaine Savory Fido in “Preface: Talking It Over: Women, Writing and Feminism”: “I have always been impressed by the way in which Caribbean women fight for their families. They are often superlatively resourceful, strong, patient and capable of immense ‘grace under pressure’”. As Fido notes, their strength comes from necessity, “from being unable to walk away from being left to raise the children” (xv). They grow strong in the face of responsibilities toward their children and a family to support. Given the general lack of father’s caring of children in the region, much of the social development of these societies is due to these women; that is why they are rightly called the backbone of these matriarchal societies.

This strong, hard-working woman is honoured by Pollard in the character of Aunti, Karl's mother in her novella *Karl*. Aunti is a single mother abandoned by her lover when he discovered that she was pregnant. She raises her son with great hardship so that he can become an educated man: "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" (121). Aunti she takes care also of her old father. However, it is in her favourite short story "Gran" where Pollard most purposely pays homage to this kind of woman. This quasi- autobiographical text tells the history of her own grandmother:

My grandfather died when my mother (the first of seven children) was nine years old. He left my grandmother the house she lived in, several acres of land planted with sugarcane and a mill-and-copper. On that she single-handedly brought up seven children. She was both man and woman on that farm, working from sun-up to sun-down supervising the cutting of cane and the making of sugar (as a cottage industry), which is what the mill-and-copper was about. She was a baker too, baking from a cottage oven, to supply bread and cheap pastry to all the shops around ("Most Important" 17-18).

This fictional story about this remarkable grandmother figure can be understood, in Pollard's view, as "an excuse to 'big up' a strong black female symbol of Jamaican peasantocracy" ("Most Important" 18). And Pollard confesses having written the story because she wanted people to know about this kind of woman. Pollard's interest in rescuing this strong female figure from the forgotten memories of Jamaican social history pursues two purposes, one is the inscription of these women's *herstory* in the official history, because, as Brown notes, "[a]cross the Caribbean the economic and spiritual struggle of such women —particularly in the rural communities— constitutes a story that has not been told in the official, male, histories of the region" (xxviii). Secondly, in revealing the female side of the region's story, or that *herstory*, Pollard highlights this strong female figure, probably aiming at counteracting the limiting image of the Caribbean woman as faithful, dependent and sometimes dominated wife,

housekeeper, and caring mother so largely found in Caribbean literature (produced by male writers mainly). Pollard's telling of the rural Caribbean *herstory* with Dorlene's autobiographical story contributes, therefore, to inscribe a different female perspective in Caribbean literary tradition through the development of a female literary model "which allows the female subject genuinely to conceive of herself as both a speaking and an active subject" (Lyonnet 97). There is here then a woman consciousness, if not feminist, responding in the form of critique to the sexism in Caribbean societies. Although Pollard's fiction does not show an explicit feminist approach, it does reveal a deep concern of the author about the sexual politics at work in her society (Bringas López, "Perspectives" 103). This kind of female consciousness revealing itself in her work is certainly necessary for uncovering the other (female) side of the region's story, as scholar Carole Boyce Davies claims in her preface to *Out of the Kumbla* (xiii). In this sense, Pollard's telling of this *herstory* supports the efforts of feminist historians in Caribbean universities for recuperating this female side of the story in the region's social history.

Also, from a social perspective, Pollard's recognition of this kind of woman in her fiction would contribute to make people realize the importance of these women (many of them grandmothers now) in the development of society, and how difficult it can be for single mothers to survive in an underdeveloped (post)colonial country like Jamaica and in an innately sexist society. She might be also calling for the attention of her society to this female situation as a social problem that need to be addressed by all, and worked out toward the improvement of the situation of women, especially single mothers like her grandmother, Aunti and Dorlene, in her society. Under the light of feminist criticism, Dorlene's autobiographical narration may stand as an example of female social testimony (similar to the oral female histories of Jamaican feminist theatre group Sistren); implicit in it a denounce of the doubly depressing situation of

women in these neocolonial and sexist societies. But it becomes, especially, the testimony of one of those female philosophers who, in Pollard's view, are teaching very important life and moral lessons with their oral stories ("Interview" 176; Appendix II).

In this short story, Pollard manages to reveal the testimony of one of these strong women and philosophers by re-telling (using the written fictional space and a homodiegetic narrator), what Dorlene has told one night: her life-story. This authorial intention positions Pollard in the role of social and cultural historian of her community —probably a modern Caribbean version of the West African griot<sup>71</sup>, recording (oral) history, preserving and passing down cultural knowledge to younger generations; so that they can evolve a true notion of their past that would guide them in their understanding of their culture and society, and hopefully, toward the forging of a better future for their postcolonial Jamaican society.

At this stage, Pollard's creative writing brings forth a political commitment expressed, in the case of this short story, in two directions. Firstly, she brings to light one of the historically unvoiced members of the community: a coloured, Caribbean immigrant woman, who is betrayed by her husband and lives by herself in the rural area of Mandahl Peak, Jamaica. By rendering her story, Pollard is voicing her out of the silencing and marginalizing structures of a (post)colonial, and still sexist society, and she purposefully grants her the word, (narrative) voice, and her Creole language for Dorlene to narrate her own story within the text. Secondly, in recording Dorlene's testimony, Pollard is documenting through fiction a folk experience that would appeal at a sociocultural identification of the Jamaican reading public with the story, since it is some part of their history and world that is being rescued and validated here through fiction. This validation of Caribbean reality and sociohistorical experience in fiction functions, according to Merle Hodge, as a valuable political strategy in counteracting the "mental desertion" (206) of Caribbean people from their social and cultural landscape, which is also a tragedy.

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<sup>71</sup> There are two kinds of storytellers in traditional West African societies: the common storyteller whose role is usually that of entertainer; and the more distinguished one (the griot) considered the official historian of the community, of great families and local rulers (*Jamaican Anansi Stories* 6).

“A Night’s Tale” tells us about the difficulties Dorlene had to face and overcome as a poor, “down-island”<sup>72</sup> woman (from Antigua) in order to procure an economically stable and tranquil life for herself —now a “woman of substance in every sense” gained through decades (75)— and her two children in some hilly place of the Jamaican countryside. She started selling hot lunch to men doing construction work in that rural site, and later on she managed to have a lunch wagon. In that way she could save money to buy a piece of land where to build her house in, and to help Jacob (her lover and eventually her husband and father of her second child, Sherwin) to buy a taxi and work as a taxi man. After Dorlene gives birth to Sherwin, Jacob goes to New Orleans as an immigrant worker for some time. There, he engages in a love relationship with a married Jamaican young woman and makes her return to Jamaica to live with Dorlene, under the false excuse of looking for a place to live after escaping from a drug addict and abusing husband in Texas. When Jacob returns, they both succeed in hiding their extramarital relationship while living in the same house with Dorlene, until the day the woman’s true husband appears to take her back with him. At this point, Dorlene finds out that she had been ungratefully cheated, and decides to banish them from the house. From then on, she stays single living in a two-storied house, which she will bequeath to her children; and having a calm life, relaxing herself from time to time in her verandah just “to enjoy what she had made [or obtained]” (75), and maybe occasionally tell her story to some friend, visitor, or anyone willing to listen to it.

The narration of Dorlene’s life-story in this short story does not occur, however, as a mere re-telling *performed* by the narrator. It is a double-voiced narration produced by an homodiegetic she-narrator and Dorlene. The former introduces Dorlene’s telling of her life-story in an

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<sup>72</sup> This is how Caribbean immigrants from the Lesser Antilles are called (“A Night’s Tale” 76).

introductory part (or presents the setting of a storytelling session in which she has been the listener); and subsequently starts to narrate Dorlene's story, (her first person narration derives here into the subjective third person narration of traditional storytelling and its I-quality is restored toward the end of the homodiegetic narrator's account). Dorlene's voice appears in the text through free indirect style to conclude the telling of her story and complete the narration. The narration of "A Night's Tale" is then set within an imaginary narrative atmosphere of storytelling, since the narrator invests herself with the role of storyteller to re-tell the story that her protagonist-storyteller told her one night, and allows Dorlene to perform her night tale herself within the narration. In this line, the short story proposes a celebration to the oral storytelling tradition in the Caribbean through one of its most recurrent functions: the fictionalisation of events and history for the entertainment and education of the community. The telling of the story of Dorlene offered in this text might be seen then to propose an alternative way for the teaching of Jamaican social history, supported by the alternative oral word-culture, and certified in literature. Pollard's crediting of this alternative way of knowing in her writing turns her into a kind of (Caribbean) literary version of the West African griot.

Precisely, the education of the Caribbean community following a Caribbean-based orientation is one of the author's concerns as a Caribbean scholar, teacher and writer<sup>73</sup>; a concern revealed, in the story being narrated, in the positive perception of the figure of Muma, Dorlene's mother, as she instructs her grandchildren about their *true* history:

It was good that she could come though. Those children wouldn't know a thing about Antigua or a thing about how Dor and the rest grew up if it hadn't been for

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<sup>73</sup> As a teacher and long time Faculty member of the University of the West Indies, Pollard has devoted much of her scholarly work to the study of Jamaican Creole and its teaching in schools, being Creole the true language of Jamaicans. (Her work *From Jamaican Creole to Standard English: A Handbook for Teachers* demonstrates that). This same interest in validating Caribbean culture from within the classroom as field of action has guided her to co-edit a collection of short stories from across the Caribbean (*Over Our Way*), that becomes a much useful literary source to be taught in Anglo-Caribbean schools.



her. And they heard all the long-time stories about herself and her brothers and sisters cutting cane and carrying bundles for the state and drinking cane liquor out of bamboo joint. Where would they ever hear those things reading about apple picking at harvest time in books full of white people? (81).

This is a question the narrator-storyteller asks his/her imaginary audience; but, above all, it is a question the author asks her (academic) community, probably pointing at the negative consequences of the teaching and endorsement of the white colonizer's culture through colonial school texts to the detriment of the native culture in the upbringing of Caribbean children as ontologically-secured sociocultural subjects.

On the other hand, the fact that Dorlene's mother uses storytelling to instruct her grandchildren implies a recognition of a tradition of women storytellers in the Caribbean who see their due to pass down a (long-marginalized) cultural and historical heritage to the young, in what Wilentz identifies as a "process of cultural preparation" or "mothering" (xxi). The homage seemingly paid to the grandmother as a bearer and preserver of tradition and culture in this short story, and the author's desire to document the story of the resourceful and hard-working Caribbean woman also through storytelling suggests a connection between the author and a body of African American and Caribbean women writers including Paule Marshall, Tony Morrison, and Alice Walker, whose works, deeply rooted in storytelling and the folk tradition, become a suitable fictional setting from which to "tell the tale of their heritage" looking back to their cultural past through their mothers and grandmothers and their oral narratives, aiming thus at a "generational and cultural continuity": "Orature and, consequently, literature are part of many women's daily struggle to communicate, converse, and pass on values to their own and other children, and one another" (Wilentz xiv).

The importance of this process of cultural preparation or *mothering* is explicitly ratified by the homodiegetic narrator in what seems to be the answer to her question, and the most relevant and conclusive statement brought forth in the short story: “Everybody is supposed to have at least one Granny. My sister says that if your mother is dead you really shouldn’t marry a man whose mother dead too. Maybe she is right” (81)<sup>74</sup>. The grandmother then becomes a valuable source of knowledge to prop against the colonizer’s culture and his version of cultural and historical conceptions endorsed in colonial school texts. She is distinguished as the mythic figure providing cultural anchorage for those Caribbean grandchildren distanced from their roots due to migration or cultural estrangement, a perception furthered in many fictional texts by Anglo-Caribbean women writers like Merle Hodge, Olive Senior, Marlene Nourbese Philip, Makeda Silvera, among others. The grandmother is usually the embodiment of a large repository of knowledge of the alternative word-culture, which she preserves orally, often through storytelling. As Brown has noted:

[T]he oral traditions of the Caribbean have been nurtured over generations by the region’s women. The image of the grandmother telling tales out of their folk heritage to an enthralled audience of her young charges may be a stereotype but, as many of the region’s writers have suggested, there is significant truth in it (xxvii).

In fiction, this mythic female elder figure is frequently represented serving as a thematic motif through which these writers claim a cultural inheritance of Caribbean oral culture, (which they are thus asserting), and, from an stylistic point of view, as a vehicle for the inscription of Caribbean orature in their oraliterary texts. Their celebration of that cultural inheritance in their creative writing usually furthers a perception of the writer as a modern, in-writing storyteller being self-asserted from within literature.

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<sup>74</sup> If an identification of the author with the narrator is forced here, it might be thought that Pollard is referring to her sister, also a writer, Erna Brodber, whose novels *Jane and Louise Will Soon Come Home* and *Myal* constitute, probably, the boldest attempts in English Caribbean literature at inscribing the orature of Jamaican folk tradition in the traditionally scribal context of the novel, to the extent of being regarded this as a kind of subversive praxis (C. Cooper 3).

In “A Night’s Tale”, the storytelling narrative intention suggested in its title is perceived throughout the text. The homodiegetic she-narrator’s storytelling vein dramatizes in the short story through her desire to re-tell and reveal Dorlene’s story. She succeeds at conjuring up the humour of the traditional storyteller while looking ironically at some aspects of the social reality she is portraying<sup>75</sup>. It can be noticed in her addressing of Dorlene’s refusal to welcome the advances of one of the working men, metaphorically explained through the seemingly remarkable difference in their physical constitutions, in the context of sexual relationships: “Mind you if she ever took him on and one of those thighs possessed him he mightn’t see the light of day again, for he was a particularly small man” (76). The expression *mind you* belongs to the realm of everyday oral speech in the Caribbean, and calls for an interlocutor: the listener is invited here to figure out the risible, would-be-possible scene of love making.

This humorous narrator seems to speak from the wisdom of the old storyteller whose knowledge of (the ways of) the world has been acquired throughout his/her life. She can know, for example, of the geography and climate of her land so as to predict the uncertain destiny of large constructions planned on hilly land by “[s]ome fearless architect who never heard of storm or earthquake [that] must have walked round there” (77). This home-grown wisdom is also suggested by the proverbial touch of the narrator’s idiom, confirming her easy handling of a large repository of communal, popular lore. The proverb-touched language of this narrator is perceived in phrases like “And she wanted a young man no need to eat grapefruit [an old man] to cut you courage” (76), “What good fi sleep good fi married” [the man that is good to sleep with is good to marry too] (78), and “Can’t forget to count your blessings or else God might

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<sup>75</sup> The use of irony combined with humour in Pollard’s fiction has been commented upon by Mordecai and Wilson, with regard to her novella *Karl*. It is frequently not outright humour though. As the author has noted, it is like putting humour into serious things that cannot really be laughed at: “there is the humorous streak, the possibility of humour, but I think the material is not humorous” (Interview 177).

take them away” (79). Such expressions corroborate the extended use of popular wisdom in Caribbean people’s everyday speech, and their presence in the narrator’s idiom implies the realization of the wise talk of the Caribbean female philosopher in the rendering of the story.

As every storyteller, this narrator seeks to entertain her audience not only with a humorous report; it turns at times dramatic as she pursues to entice her audience with her descriptions of those country sites in what becomes a poetic prose:

And there is nowhere prettier than that hill. Sometimes in the evenings after the rain, *you might see* a double rainbow as if two pieces of multicoloured ribbon lie down side by side, colours running left to right on one piece, right to left on the next. And at night if it is dark *you see* stars in the sky and some sitting on the other hill as if they fell off the edge of sky onto it . . . Full moon *you see* the moon rising bright, so bright it almost blinds *you* coming through foggy blue cloud —sheaves tipped with orange (79. Emphasis added).

The audience is personalised here through the second person perspective. It conditions the narration, pointing at the narrator’s desire to bring her audience to a closer identification with the *relateé*, to gain their involvement or participation through her empathetic narration; as it happens in oral contexts. The audience’s representation within this passage supports the narrator’s oral narrative intention and, given the poetic and dramatic tone of her description, her skills as raconteur. Her imaginary listening audience is also addressed with questions aimed at keeping their interest in the narration: “[B]ut she had been putting her case to the Lord and asking Him to send somebody, then who was she to question His way?” (77), and “And didn’t she say she was willing to give a man a start?” (78). These questions have been conceived in the repetition of some already narrated content, thus helping the narrator to keep her audience and herself on the track of the story she is telling.

The narrator's storytelling narrative attitude is self-acknowledged in her phrase: "But that is another story" (81), revealing her intention to avoid digressions in her telling to the favour of other stories that, though related to the main story, are not necessarily relevant to tell at the time. Only once in her storytelling session the homodiegetic narrator digresses; it happens when the introductory part referring the narrator's meeting of Dorlene is over and the narrator goes back chronologically to tell Dorlene's story in episodes (one about her life in that Jamaican country site before meeting Jacob, a shorter one referring her acquaintance and engagement with Jacob, and a third one about her married life until she gives birth to her son Sherwin).

At this point, the narration of Dorlene's story is resumed by Dorlene herself, who embodies the very (oral) storyteller: her oral rendering of her own story to the narrator, then listener, is what the narrator reproduces in this text also through an oral narration performed in the written page. In her narrated monologue<sup>76</sup>, her storytelling act addressed to an interlocutor functioning as audience is explicitly identified: "You mustn't laugh when you hear this part, for how I telling you now is not how it happen at the time in order so" (82). The narrator apologizes here for not following the conventional linear mode characteristic of short tales in her rendering of her story, which means that she has neglected information about important events that altered the course of her marital life with Jacob. But, as a good storyteller, she leaves that for her listener to guess when she is almost reaching the end of the story, because she wants her listener to feel surprised and stupefied as she herself felt when she learnt about it; (such information hinges on Jacob's extramarital relationship with the young woman while being abroad). In this way, the storyteller has gained the listener's involvement in the telling, appealing at the same time to an emotional and moral answer to be formulated on the audience's side. At the narrative level, her

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<sup>76</sup> The term *narrated monologue* is used by Dorrit Cohn in her work *Transparent Minds* (1978) to refer to the free indirect style as narrative mode for representing consciousness in fiction (Skinner 123).

non-linear narration ratifies the inconsistency of the oral narrator's mnemonic powers with the production of a linear plot in long oral narratives (Ong 143); she narrates according to how she apprehended and experienced the events and not how they happened chronologically.

Whereas the homodiegetic narrator's addressing of her imaginary audience functions as a narrative strategy to raise the audience's interest in the telling, Dorlene addresses her listener mostly seeking her compliance, morally, with her viewpoint and her stance in her life-story. Several phrases testify to that, such as "you know when you doing well is best to keep to yourself" (81), "Believe me" (82), "That to show you how we and she live good" (83), "You know how you know your husband. And when you behave same as how you use to do before but him not acting like how you expect" (84), and "we used to sit down and talk just like how you see me and you here" (82). In this last phrase the setting of Dorlene's storytelling is specifically identified.

The storytelling mood of both narrative voices in "A Night's Tale" is ratified, besides, by their use of story-progression formulas proper of oral narrations; notice in these examples: "*So now that she had made ends meet*" (75. Emphasis added), "Then one night" (77), and "*So every morning we would load up the truck and ...*" (83. Emphasis added), "*Then I go into my room*" (85. Emphasis added). There are also other formulaic patterns proper of oral discourse that are generally found in oral narrations assisting the progression of the plot. Some are grounded on the additive style that characterizes oral expression, like the profuse use of the conjunction *and*. It appears in this text aiding the sequence of narrated events and descriptions, as these examples show, respectively: "Until her head started turn water and she didn't know herself and started to walk away and they couldn't find her" (80-1), "And if it is moonlight the sky stretches big and clear and empty and only the electric lights shine on the hill" (79). Other instance of formulaic

linguistic patterns being used in the narration of this story is found in the expression: “They talked and talked and came to the conclusion ...” (80); this one, based on repetition, emphasises the frequency and/or quality of the action of *talking* or *discussing* here described.

The linguistic pattern of repetition noted above is an example of the reduplications found in the Creole language. The use of Creole for narration in this text reinforces the oral tone perceived in its narrative level, and validates a tradition of storytelling in Creole. The love of Jamaicans for their Creole language and its sounds is expressed in this short story through the inscription of phrases belonging to the realm of everyday speech of Jamaican people, like proverbs and other idiomatic expressions, in the text’s narrative body. Some of these aphorisms are: “[H]ow to make these end meet that” (75); “Such a transparent line” (77), referring, wittily, to the real meaning hiding behind a seemingly innocent utterance; “[H]er head started *turn water*” (80-81. Emphasis added), meaning *becoming mentally ill*; “[W]hen you doing well is best to keep to yourself” (81); “Sherwin used to love them *can’t done* (82. Emphasis added), meaning *immensely*; “And Dor could *see with* that” (79. Emphasis added), meaning *understand*; and “[T]hey wouldn’t hear that I *get on bad*” (85. Emphasis added), meaning *overreact*.

Moreover, the use of Creole as the language of narration favours the manifestation of a musical quality in this text, perceived in the repetition and parallelism of syntactical structures and the presence of rhymes. Notice, for instance, the opening paragraph, which offers a physical description of Dorlene:

When I met Dorlene she was a woman of substance in every sense. *Decades of ground provision gave her that liberate bulk that poured out of her dress: tight, flesh trembling against edge; or loose, flesh hanging against cloth. Decades of freshly sliced casi stewed with salt-fish gave the skin that smooth and shiny texture like highly polished mahogany; except the face, shadowed now with deep anguish*

marks and the *brow furrowed with* too much thinking how to make this end meet that (75. Emphasis added).

Various parallel syntactical structures in which several lexical elements are repeated occur: one given by the syntactical construction *Decades of ... gave ...*, another by the construction *(adjective) + flesh + (verb-ing) + against + (noun)*, and a third one by the syntactical construction *(noun) + (past participle-ed) + with + (complement)*. The presence of these syntactical constructions based on repetition might suggest a recreation in fictional writing of rhythmical patterns found in Caribbean songs. And the musicality produced by these repetitions is strengthened by the rhyme occurring in the words *marks* and *that* at the end of the passage, more easily perceived if the last part is read making pauses as follows: “[E]xcept the face/ shadowed now with deep anguish marks/ and the brow furrowed with too much thinking/ how to make this end meet that”. Other phrases illustrating this musical quality through repetition and parallelism in this text are: “You know how you know you husband” (84), and “And courage was high and the loving was good” (79). Apart from imparting musicality to the narration, the occurrence of these rhythm-provoking syntactical constructions demonstrate the predominantly oral nature of the linguistic culture in the Caribbean, since repetition and rhyme offer an essential mnemonic aid for articulating thought and shaping expression in oral cultures (Ong 34). That is why the Creole languages in the Caribbean are so greatly bound to rhythm and to music.

The use of Creole in this text responds, stylistically, to the representation of the Anglo-Caribbean linguistic culture largely grounded on orality, which is corroborated by the oral voices of the storyteller and of the communal, popular wisdom. But the author’s choice of Creole for narration also implies an ideological dimension of her writing with regard to the assertion of Jamaican culture (through the extended cultural practice of storytelling and



proverb-speaking) and to the legitimisation of Jamaica's *true* social history for the Jamaican reading public (through the dignifying literary treatment of the strong Caribbean woman and her history). In the former case, the use of Creole for both narrative voices (the protagonist's and the homodiegetic she-narrator's) suggests a recognition of the Caribbean culture being furthered around Creole as the main linguistic medium of expression, thus ratifying the centrality of orality and the oral culture in general in Jamaican sociocultural life. As noted before, the assertion of this oral culture in fiction becomes a necessary weapon in the struggle for cultural sovereignty in the Caribbean.

In the second case, the story of Dorlene as the hard-working Jamaican woman has served the author to rescue a part of her country's social history (in relation to immigration from other Caribbean territories, single parenting for women, the always important role of elders in family units, the migrant Caribbean workers in the United States who later return, and men's common unfaithful and irresponsible behavior toward women and their children, respectively). And Pollard does it benefiting from the perspective of her protagonist, while crediting it, through her own Creole narrating voice, and from that of an also Creole-speaking homodiegetic narrator. In this Creole-informed double-voiced text, these two Jamaican characters are made the narrating protagonists of their history; in this way the readers are offered a more real version of historical data in comparison with the conventionally credited colonial version of history in the Caribbean. The reader is presumably made to approach and learn about the historical experience through the personal (though fictional) perspective conjured up in the first person Creole voices. Consequently, fiction, like the one here analyzed, proposes a useful and perhaps more favorable context for the education of the community in their history. It is what Pollard defends when she says that there is "an interrelationship between history and literature which when exploited gives a clearer picture of any given time than either discipline would have been

able to offer independently” (“Most Important” 17). The literary treatment of history taking place in Pollard’s fiction pursues a renewed appreciation of the past that certainly corrects the view of history largely conditioned by the colonizer’s cultural perspective, at the same time that it recuperates historical experiences that eventually get lost to future generations.

As fictional narrative, “A Night’s Tale” pays homage to the oral tradition through storytelling. And storytelling becomes here “a central metaphor for the ability to communicate oral history through the generations” (Davies and Fido, “Introduction” 6), thus facilitating a continuity of historical and cultural knowledge from one generation to another. Some instances of Jamaican and Caribbean history are recorded here through fiction in the autobiographical reports of two female narrator-storytellers, which confirms the traditional role of women as oral narrators and preservers of traditional culture in Caribbean societies. Besides, storytelling is highlighted here as providing the narrative context of communication par excellence in this predominantly oral culture, for rendering the autobiographical testimony of the emblematic hard-working Caribbean woman. It offers a culturally-conditioned narrative context for the author to make her readers know about this part of female social history in Jamaica. Due to the preference of the storytelling mode for narration, the formal context of this short story points also at storytelling as a cultural practice and a sociocultural legacy that Pollard wants to preserve and pass down to her (younger) readers through their representation and validation in this short story. It becomes a (written) narrative vehicle for the writer to carry out the cultural *mothering* of her people.

**The Storyteller: A Political Agitator for the Preservation of Traditional Culture in Ismith Khan's "Shadows Move in the Britannia Bar".**

In the same line as Velma Pollard's short story previously analysed, the narrative context created by the Trinidadian-born Ismith Khan in his short story "Shadows Move in the Britannia Bar" suggests a celebration of storytelling as a traditional sociocultural practice in Trinidad and Tobago, implying its recognition as a cultural legacy that should be preserved. Khan's celebration of storytelling, however, comes forth in a particularly different way. In both short stories one can distinguish the presence of a true oral storyteller —the central character, whose story(ies) provide(s) the thematic line of the short story, and a fictional *narrating* storyteller, embodied by the narrator-persona created by the writer on the role of storyteller so as to convey somebody's story. But the representations of these two kinds of storytellers in these short stories, as well as the representation of their relationship to one another within the fictional text differ to some notable extent.

With regards to their representation in the short story, a difference is perceived in the context of narrative perspective or voice. Whereas the double-voiced narration of "A Night's Tale" is produced by two Creole-speaking narrators following the autobiographical perspective, that of "Shadows Move ..." reveals an omniscient voice in standard (Trinidad and Tobago) English, introducing and closing the autobiographical narrative account of the Creole-speaking protagonist. The former offers a story co-narrated by autonomous first person narrators; the latter proposes two storytelling narrative contexts differing in theme and narrative attitude: one is defined by the heterodiegetic narrator who relates the story about an old man who tells stories, and the other, by the monologist storyteller whose narrative account is introduced and

quoted by the heterodiegetic narrator. The narrative structure in Khan's text suggests, then, the presence of two stories: one in Creole *framed* by another in standard English<sup>77</sup>.

The presence of two narrations that differ in language and narrative perspective within this text points, clearly, at a certain distancing —just because of their disparate narrative characteristics— between both narrative contexts; despite the also clear relationship such framing entails. Such distancing is conditioned, mainly, by the choice of language: by the author's intention to represent, accurately, the Creole-bound narrative attitude of his storyteller-protagonist. (This question in relation to language use in this text will be commented on later). It is precisely this distancing on account of their differing linguistic and narrative perspective quality what dictates a distancing, also, between the two storytellers as they are configured within the textual, fictional space of this short story: one is the omniscient, educated narrator, and the other is the ordinary Trinidadian folk, learned but on the ways of the world, and who loves to tell stories.

At this point, the *standard* character of the *framing* narrative voice<sup>78</sup> in this short story indicates a contrast between this narrator and the homodiegetic narrator of "A Night's Tale", whose narration in Creole places her within the communal context of storytelling that Pollard seems to enact in her short story. In other words, through her use of Creole as the traditional linguistic medium in storytelling, Pollard ratifies the storytelling narrative attitude fulfilled in this short story, and asserts a storytelling *continuum* —initiated, in this case, by Dorlene, as she delivers

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<sup>77</sup> A framed story is a story "contained within or bracketed by another story. Usually —but not always— the story within the frame is written in a variant language, considered subordinate or inferior. Vernacular stories are mostly framed within standard English . . . , for regional and local color effect" (Jones 199).

<sup>78</sup> The *standard* character of the introductory narrator in this short story is given by the use of the conventional third person omniscient perspective associated with short fictional narrative, and the standard linguistic medium of narration in English literature (standard English). I will consequently use this term whenever I make reference to this narrator, so as to differentiate him from the Creole-speaking autodiegetic narrator.

her story to the listener, that re-tells it later on— through which oral history and cultural values are passed on to others and younger generations.

Therefore, whereas the process of passing down historical knowledge and cultural heritage is directly represented in Pollard's text through two self-acknowledged storytelling acts, in Khan's, its representation and celebration occurs through the autobiographical narrative account of the protagonist-storyteller. His storytelling act offers the standard narrator the narrative context to convey an idiosyncratic account on Trinidadian folk culture, especially in relation to the beliefs in *obeah* and supernatural manifestations. The disparity perceived in the representation of storytelling in these two short stories points at a certain divergence in the authors' creative attitudes toward the cultural forms from the oral tradition, as they are frequently represented in fiction, which also stands for distinct ways of celebrating and asserting the predominantly oral Caribbean culture within the confines of literature — apparently, one does it from inside, and the other from outside and from a certain distance.

In the case of Pollard, the experience of living and writing in the Caribbean homeland has contributed, certainly, in making her approach and appropriate the forms and resources from the oral culture in an easier, more natural way, given the fact that the cultural context which her writing springs from is predominantly oral. That explains, for instance, her direct use of Creole for narration. Besides, Pollard's preference of storytelling as narrative technique in her short story might be explained by the fact that storytelling constitutes the primary form of narration in Caribbean cultures, (which has been largely corroborated in the region's literature). But it can be also analysed, within the context of women writing in the region, as a stylistic result of the Caribbean woman writer's need to find forms of creative expression. It has entailed — frequently and not without some kind of political connotation— the representation and

validation of the alternative oral word-culture in her work<sup>79</sup>. Pollard's direct approach to and validation of the oral culture, exemplified in "A Night's Tale" through its oral-like narration in Creole, can be explained, finally, by the practicality that has characterized the women's perspective and attitude in these matriarchal societies. This practicality that lies at the core of "the business of woman" in society is defined by Pollard as the tendency "to look after the close things", to have a close and immediate concern with their social reality. As Pollard and Pamela Mordecai note, this practical perspective and attitude is not commonly found, however, in the writing of their male counterparts (178).

In the case of Ismith Khan, his experience as an expatriate Caribbean writer based in the United States conditioned a somehow detached perspective in relation to the Caribbean homeland. Such perspective —partly determined by that different, foreign sociocultural milieu— in the context of literature may become necessary for the Caribbean writer who has to publish in the Western metropolis, forced to observe certain literary conventions in his/her writing. This detached perspective, adjusted according to the conventions of the literary tradition in the English language, for instance, has conditioned the restricted or framed use of Creole, being this considered, then and in the metropolitan academic centres, as an inferior language. It is ratified, besides, in the legitimisation of the standard quality of this text through a third person narration in standard English introducing and determining the oral narration in Creole. Even though it is the storyteller's narrative in Creole that most occupies the narrative body of this text, the fact that it appears bracketed by a standard narration points, (at least in this case), at a representation of the writer's native cultural forms restricted or conditioned by Western culture. It thus becomes the representation of the postcolonial Other's culture.

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<sup>79</sup> In a general sense, contemporary women writing from the Caribbean originates from the women's response to a reality of literary silence or *voicelessness*. In coming out of her voicelessness, many of them have taken "bold steps to creative expression" (Davies and Fido, "Introduction" 2), and their creative boldness has been usually nurtured by the Caribbean oral culture.

Therefore, the expatriate writer's approach and validation of his/her native culture in literature might not occur as freely or directly as in the case of the (post)colonial writer that has stayed at home, writing close to his/her immediate reading public and from a direct rapport with his/her culture. Likewise, the practical quality proper of the female experience in the Caribbean might be contributing to the definition of a female creative attitude felt stylistically closer to the resources of the oral culture when compared with that of men writers. It is corroborated in the narrative of expatriate Caribbean women writers as well, like that of Olive Senior, Makeda Silvera, Hazel D. Campbell, among others.

Regardless of the quality of the expatriate male perspective toward his native culture, in "Shadows Move in the Britannia Bar" storytelling is celebrated as a sociocultural practice that allows the preservation of the historical memory of the community and traditional cultural values. From the beginning of this text, the author appears to profess a concern with the past and a communal act of keeping and inscribing history through the telling of stories about the past. And he offers the fictional, physic space (the Britannia bar) for developing such recovery of the historical past. The Britannia bar (housing its frequent clients) becomes, then, symbolic of a community held together through storytelling and (hi)story-(in)scribing. The Britannia stands also as the living legacy of the island's colonial past. As the narrator comments, the Britannia bar "is the only museum that Trinidad has to offer, for the island's history is written on the rum casks, the walls, the floors, the brass spittoons and, most of all, the men who gather there, held and drawn like puppets by thin threads of time and memory" (110). And history becomes here, as if by the action of some spiritual force, a magical "ether" that lures men to pass in, and "wraps about them a warm and immediate camaraderie" (110).

What makes this community of men gather in the Britannia is their sharing of a common past. They have been entrusted, apparently, the task of keeping alive a sociohistorical and cultural past that is physically dead but that remains relevant to present-day sociocultural life in Trinidad. And they perform such task by exercising their memory and their ability to tell stories, and with the assistance of the shadows or spirits from old time, the guardians of the island's history, that are seemingly hidden in the bar. Some of these men would then turn to storytelling for such purpose, as is the case of Sookoo, the central character of this short story, and the central figure in his small listening clique or group of clients of the Britannia bar.

Sookoo is an old man who used to be a coal man (coal vendor). At his old age, he frequents the bar to tell stories to those of his clique, including young people. The storytelling session that he conducts throughout his narration in this short story brings forth two personal stories: one about an experience with a female spirit or supernatural figure known among the folk as La Diabliesse, and another about a coal vendor named Rajan, (but it is Sookoo's own sad life-story that he camouflages in his rendering of this man's story). In his second story, Sookoo narrates how an ungrateful son refuses to take care of his father when the latter has reached old age, and throws him out of the house. At this point, father and son begin a violent fight and the son bites the father in his chest. The father forces the son, not without violence, to show repentance, and even though the son acquiesces, he promises to cause his father a painful death with the aid of *obeah* before he runs away and disappears from the father's life forever. After that, the father has looked forward to counteracting the bad omen also through *obeah*, though unsuccessfully, since he does not truly believe in such religious practice. By the end of Sookoo's telling, it is time for the bar to close, and Sookoo's listeners help him to go out of the bar because he is feeling some pain. At this point in the narration, the standard narrator resumes the narrative to



tell the reader how Sookoo dies right there, complaining about a pain in his chest, where everyone could see the scar of a bite inflicted long time ago.

As the narrative suggests, this short story is structured in several parts. An introductory part serves the standard narrator to set Sookoo's storytelling in the Britannia bar or in "the womb of the past", as the narrator calls it (110). It is from the island's sociocultural past that Sookoo's stories spring and, given their religious content, they might have been approved by the Britannia's spiritual entities or shadows. The narrator also introduces here the figure of Sookoo as a particular storyteller, one that is preoccupied with something or expecting someone or something to happen: "[H]is eyes are constantly searching" (110), also one whose probable personal dissatisfaction in his life finds its way into his subjective narrative through his "sometimes angry and abusive way" of talking (111).

Sookoo's storytelling session consists of four parts: introduction, the first story, the second story, and conclusion. In his introduction to his storytelling session on popular beliefs, Sookoo makes emphasis on the considerable difference between the Trinidadian society of old day and present-day society on account, mainly, of economic and social progress. But he contends that while this social progress has meant economic advancement, it has also meant, unfortunately, stagnation or deviation in the cultural *becoming* of his society. His audience's lack of knowledge, respect, or belief in things that were relevant in the sociocultural life of Trinidad in the past (like obeah) demonstrates how the new wave of modernity has been carrying young people away from their folk culture. However, Sookoo's introductory narrative does not dwell much on regretting such social and cultural situation; it rather pursues to draw his audience in the recognition of the existence of supernatural forces operating in their lives.

Sookoo's story about La Diabliesse enters his narrative as a case-example of a personal experience aimed at demonstrating, from the viewpoint of a witness and I-narrator-seer, the existence of supernatural manifestations. Consequently, Sookoo will narrate what he has presumably seen: "I see it already" (112), hoping that through his personal testimony as witness/seer of those things his audience would become seers and then believers; otherwise they will be doomed forever: "Well you ent see because you ent believe, and is your own bad luck if you ent want to listen to people what see for they-self" (112).

With such mystery-ridden warning Sookoo introduces to his audience his relate about his encounter with La Diabliesse on one of those dark nights when, as a coal man, he transported coal with his cart to be sold in the city. In describing La Diabliesse, Sookoo makes use of the repertoire of supernatural manifestations from the fairy stories of his folk culture, borrowing some of their features and probably adding some others. Consequently, La Diabliesse is not merely a female spirit that lures men with its beauty to cause them misfortune. In Sookoo's version, she resembles those sexy actresses seen seducingly holding a cigarette in many of the American films of the epoch: she "like to give a man all kind-o-ting to eat and drink and smoke", and "then after the man take them and they go to a quiet lonely place together she make him lose his senses and he wake up naked next mornin in a bush full of stingin nettle" (114). Besides smoking and drinking, La Diabliesse takes here from the *old higue* or the *soucouyant* its transforming power: "I see she turn to one ball of fire right befo me eye and it gon peltin down the road" (114); and has animal physical traits: "[S]he have one foot like a woman, and the other like a horse" (113). As Sookoo relates, he escaped from this weird and confusing creature thanks to a small silver box that he carried tied on his arm and that was made a charm through *obeah* to ward evil off him. He showed that charm to this female evil spirit and it went away.

This idiosyncratic fairy tale centred on a mysterious motif, the supernatural, illustrates a situation that can be seen symbolic of what Sookoo's young audience might encounter and not overcome if they are not cautious before the negative influences in their environment. Moreover, the figures or things brought forth in this tale —allowing for the symbolism in the interpretation of the story's content, and the narrator's intention of revivifying folk culture with his narration— may suggest a more serious reading beyond their primary semantic connotation in this text. They may stand for a more serious something else. In this line, La Diabliesse, in its weird and confusing image, can symbolize those strange/foreign cultural influences that might confuse young people with their new, exciting, and glamorous appearance, attracting their interest and taking them away from the pathways of their culture and society. She may be a symbol of American cultural imperialism that, with its trappings of modernity and American-like progress propagandised through television, undermines these postcolonial people's cultural backgrounds and attacks their cultural sovereignty.

On the other hand, *obeah*, being a religious practice inherent to these cultures and certified in their folklore, stands as a symbol of that cultural source, known as popular culture, which is the living soul of Caribbean peoples and sustains their sociocultural *becoming*. The belief in *obeah* and its practice can provide then the remedy to ward off evil and negative influences, just like the assertion of one's native culture proves to be an effective neutralizer against foreign, (neo)colonizing cultural forces, and can guarantee the cure for the ontological insecurity of the Caribbean sociocultural Self.

Sookoo's second story, about the old man Rajan and his ungrateful son, is intended to confirm the power of *obeah* alluded in the previous tale and, with that, to induce the audience into

believing not only in its existence but in its power as well. Rajan cannot live his old age peacefully and relaxed because his son's curse worked through *obeah* chases him everywhere. He himself is held responsible of his haunted experience —Sookoo seems to suggest— on account of his disbelief in obeah for breaking the bad spell.

Besides illustrating how it is necessary sometimes to believe in things like obeah, this story serves Sookoo to raise a critique of young people in their disrespect toward their elders, and of the lack of solidarity among people in these modern times. Both questions are broached, though slightly, through the narration of the fight between Rajan and his son, in which any of the neighbours interfered: “Is not like long-time you know. A boy never kick out he poopah in dem days. And what else? Nobody want to break the fight, all the neighbours only come to watch ... to enjoy theyselves” (115). As if in an attempt to start mending such negative ways/attitudes, Sookoo concludes his storytelling session calling for his audience's assistance in alleviating his sudden pain (giving him some water to drink and carrying him outside the bar to the fresh air), and calling their attention to the need to respect: “[E]verybody have to have something dat they must respect” (117). They have to respect the law in relation to the closing of bars at the established hour and abandon the Britannia bar when asked by the man in charge; and they should also pay their due respect to the old man that needs assistance.

The final part of this short story, relating Sookoo's death, is afforded by the standard narrator to conclude the story about Sookoo, which he has intended to tell himself, but has opted for the realism and idiosyncrasy afforded by the Creole-informed first person discourse in his assertion of Sookoo's role as storyteller. However, curiously, it is in this concluding part of the short story where the standard narrator is perceived as storyteller as well, because he assumes the

narrative stance again to offer the reader the end of Sookoo's history, which positions him as the teller of the story about a storyteller old man abandoned and cursed by his son.

The structure of this short story confirms the centrality —at spatial and thematic levels— of Sookoo's storytelling within the text. Seemingly, the author is more concerned with the story of Sookoo as storyteller than with his life-story. Actually, the story of Sookoo as storyteller becomes the thematic vehicle through which the author attempts to highlight the importance of this sociocultural practice and, in general, of the oral tradition, as a valid sociocultural means of preserving a historical and cultural heritage. Indeed, the preservation of a historical and cultural heritage (like the communal practice of storytelling) is what the author pursues with this fictional work, and what Sookoo pursues with his storytelling, as he insists in the presence, still, of cultural beliefs that need to be observed, or at least respected, in present-day Trinidad, in spite of the modernization of the place throughout the years:

The time dat I talkin bout, all yuh fellars didn't dream to born yet. Dem was the old time days. People uses to have a kind of belief in dem days, a respec' for all what they see happen with they own two eye. What I mean to say is dat tings still happen, but is people like all yuh young fellars, is people what blind, they eye shut, it half-close . . . Dis island uses to be different in dem days, boy ... different . . . People asking me if I ent see how the town changed up. "But look how we have six-storey sky scraper ... look how we have elevator in the department store ... look how we have Woolworth five and ten." I have to laugh because I ent see nothing change. People in Trinidad stop the same way (111).

Sookoo is questioning here whether his society has changed really *up* with a modernization brought from abroad (following the Western, capitalist, developed societal model). He thinks that his society has *stopped* rather advanced with this imported development (skyscrapers and department stores). Probably, if Trinidadians would look *inward* at themselves, at their own history and cultural resources —Sookoo seems to say, they would found more knowledgeable if not suitable ways of moving forward toward a better future. And that is why Sookoo has

decided to tell those young people listening to him “the tale of their heritage” (Wilentz xxi) — about the orature of their culture of which tales of *obeah* and La Diabliesse are a part. Sookoo sees his due to *enlighten* those boys with knowledge about their folk culture, so that they can come out of the blindness caused by the colonial and Western cultural discourse toward *themselves* and *their* world. If they learn to *see*, then they can believe in those things that Sookoo swears exist. Thus, Sookoo becomes, just as the traditional spiritual healer of the community, a sort of restorer of light/sight for the young people that are blind to their cultural roots with the Westernisation of their society and culture<sup>80</sup>. And he performs his healing through the rendering of identity signifiers found in the folk culture via storytelling.

As for the author’s part, his celebration of storytelling in this short story (through its content and form) points at a clear interest in validating folk culture within his fiction. His commitment with the grass-root culture of his Trinidadian folks is especially noted by Ramchand through Khan’s novel *The Obeah Man* (1964), standing as the only instance in the Anglo-Caribbean novelistic tradition in which an *obeah* man becomes the central character. The novel “grows away from the documentary and the spectacular to become a serious fictional study of self-definition” (*West Indian* 126).

On the other hand, there is also an authorial interest in rescuing the community’s historical memory and its past as a way of establishing identifying links with one’s ancestry. This functional notion of the imaginary journey into the historical past made through fiction pervades Khan’s short story “A Day in the Country”, in which a child from the city seems to

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<sup>80</sup> The figure of Sookoo as spiritual healer evokes that of the *obeah* man depicted in Senior’s short story “Discerner of Hearts”, who is also “Bringer of Light. Professor of Peace. Restorer of Confidence” (22). Senior proposes in this story a positive re-reading of this historically denigrated figure and his function in Jamaican society, as he helps the middle class child protagonist to restore her self-confidence and self-esteem, and to improve, in positive terms, her sight toward the culture of her poor, black folks. In Khan’s short story, a parallelism might be suggested in the figure of Sookoo and that of the *obeah* man, as the former tries to heal the young of the *mental desertion* of their social and cultural landscape.

reconnect with his past and his peasant ancestors' history while spending time in the country with relatives. It all contributes to affect in positive terms his regard toward native/rural/old-time things as they stand in opposition to the sociocultural foreign influences that he most readily finds in the city of Port of Spain. The child's journey to the countryside evokes the necessary voyage to the native/ancestral land for those Caribbean people who feel culturally or/and geographically uprooted, as a way of "looking for themselves, or looking for some ancestry", and that, as Khan asserts, "is very elemental to all of us, a special significance to people who are so far removed" (132).

The nostalgic view toward the Caribbean homeland sometimes found in Khan's fictional writing, makes possible his realization on an imaginary journey to his cultural backgrounds as a therapeutic practice for the sake of securing sociocultural wholeness. In the same line, Khan's crediting of the Caribbean (Trinidadian) sociocultural experience in fiction becomes a way of validating or (in his own words) "revivifying" the social medium that stands as one's native, sociocultural background (129), because such validation roots your Self in that necessary (back)ground/home, gives you ontological security.

Khan's use of the Creole language in this short story responds to this interest in validating his native sociocultural experience. His restricted/frame use of Creole has been conditioned by his experience as an expatriate writer. Writing in Creole or *bad English* was not encouraged in the standard-English linguistic context of literature in the United States. The texts written in an underestimated language like Creole would run the risk of being laid aside and left unpublished. Therefore, if the writer wanted that his/her works were accepted by the literary community of the Western, imperial centre s/he should adjust his/her writing according to the Centre's literary conventions in the English language. On the other hand, Khan's narrations

produced in Creole and standard English following this framing technique confirm his bilingual identity, in which the standard English is supported by his immigrant experience in the United States.

Given the fact that the narration of the storyteller is what predominates in this text, the Creole language is the linguistic medium that prevails here. Khan's presentation of Creole as the central linguistic medium in this narration attends two purposes. One is fulfilled stylistically, and has to do with the most accurate representation of the (obviously Creole-speaking) Caribbean individual. As Khan notes, "this [writing in Creole] is something that has to be done because I feel that it captures the total expression of the individual and I think a writer should do that" (128). The accurate portrayal of Caribbean sociocultural reality pursued by the author—exemplified here in the idiomatic terrain—becomes a strategy through which he makes his native society see itself and accept itself or not<sup>81</sup>. His linguistic portrayal of the Caribbean reality favours, finally, the validation of the native sociocultural reality through language.

The other purpose responds to an assertion of a Creole linguistic culture that also sustains his bilingual identity. On that account, the writer himself asserted the equal relevance of both languages (Creole and standard English) in his creative writing when someone once called his writing in Creole into question, on whether it was as proper as his writing in standard English: "Well, I do write that [good] way in bad English [Creole]!, thank you, and I can also write well in good English [standard]" (128). With his use of Creole, Khan is claiming back a linguistic cultural legacy from his Caribbean homeland, revivifying his native linguistic experience, and asserting (through language) the Caribbean dimension of his cultural identity.

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<sup>81</sup> When once asked about his frequent representation of violence in his works, Khan claimed that his description of the reality of violence in his Trinidadian society came out of an interest in holding a mirror to it for self-examination and self-rectification: "[T]he society will see itself and try to mend its ways" (126).



Khan's validation of Creole in this short story occurs, as mentioned before, through the representation of Sookoo's voice, as the latter performs his storytelling. Sookoo's Creole speech shows, above all, a notable musical quality, which is noted by the standard narrator as he introduces Sookoo's "rolling, lilting" speech (111). It abounds on reduplications, such as "even even" (112), "dark-dark" (112), "close close close" (113), "smiling smiling" (114), "today today" (115), and "at-all, at-all" (116), to quote some. This notable presence of reduplications in the storyteller's idiom ratifies the peculiar, musical tone of the Creole speech in the Caribbean, as well as demonstrates the great capacity for invention of Caribbean people toward language. This "inventiveness" of his Trinidadian folks with language is something which Khan was especially aware of (131)<sup>82</sup>.

The musicality of Creole afforded by these reduplications (or lexical repetitions) in this text is enhanced by other several rhythmic elements. One is the repetition of syntactical constructions, as the following examples show: "The cart going crick-crack, the donkey going clip-clop, clip-clop" (112), and "All a dem make him bring chicken, dey make him bring rum, dey make him bring goat brains, the obeah man he go to" (117). This second example, with the subject of the enunciation (*the obeah man*) made explicit at the end, shows an instance of the distinctive word order syntactical pattern of Creole, as well as illustrates a pattern of repetition characteristic of Caribbean popular songs. Another rhythmic element occurring in this text are rhymes; in this example: "He well coil-up when the old man bustin licks on he, and soon as he father turn he head, the boy get up and snatch a big stick and he give he father *one lick* on the head" (emphasis added through underlining) (115), the repetition of the vocalic sound /i/ through the words *licks*, *big*, *stick*, and *lick* augments the musical quality that the rhymes in the underlined

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<sup>82</sup> To this very inventiveness or highly creative attitude toward language of Caribbean people refers Ismail Talib when speaking about the way in which the clichéd expressions of the westernised characters of Derek Walcott's *Beef, No Chicken* "are pit against the rich speechifying traditions of the Caribbean" (97), (e.g.: "McDonaldizing everything" and "Kentuchy Frying everything" (55) are expressions that make reference to American cultural imperialism).

words impart to this phrase. In this other example: “[T]he old man heself begin to believe the boy work a strong obeah on he, so he gone to a *more* strong obeah man to break the spell, but it look like he ent believe in the obeah man at first, so the obeah man can’t do too much for him” (117), the rhyming occurs in the words *heself*, *spell*, and *first* through the repetition of the vocalic sound /e/, and the words *he* and *him* producing the vocalic sound /i/. The frequent occurrence of rhymes and repetition within this text is explained by the author’s desire to represent the Trinidadian Creole. As Khan has noted, the rhythmic pattern of Creole constitutes “the substance” of that language, that remains invariable in the continual processes of variation or change that languages always undergo (129).

Certainly, the high rhythmical quality of the Creole language renders an also musical quality to this text; which is reinforced, at its narrative level, through repetition. Throughout his storytelling, Sookoo repeats the Creole phrase *it have something* (meaning *there is something*) with only slight structural variations, as a rather wise narrative strategy to emphasize his belief in the existence of spiritual forces, and convert his audience to his beliefs. This phrase usually appears accompanied by other declaratory statements about Sookoo’s reasons for his believing, also bound to repetition; for example: “[A]nd I know because I see it with my own two eye” (111), “But I know dat it have something outside there, boys, something big and strong, and I see it already” (112), and “I believe dat it have something . . . something stronger than *even* this rum” (114). These phrasings appear as a kind of opening remark for the two stories narrated by Sookoo, and as concluding statements of short passages in the narration, so that they might stand as a narrative leit-motif or the repeated refrain of a song-like narrative. The presence of these several patterns of repetition aiding the realization of this song-like structure and of rhymes in this narration furthers a perception of the text as a song-like narrative. It suggests, then, a similarity between this narrator and the calypso singer, who has been usually seen as a

lyric kind of oral narrator and “social commentator” producing his report on society through the singing of rhymed verses (Warner 136). Thus, like the calypsonian, Sookoo renders his narrative stanzas followed by his assertive and sometimes frightening refrain. The song-like narrative structure perceived in Sookoo’s narration suggests an influence from the structural pattern of the calypso song in the fictional text. This type of musical narrative influenced, formally, by calypso furthers the recognition of a calypsonian narrative mode in Trinidadian literature that will be explored in the next chapter.

Above all, the representation of the oral practice of storytelling within this short story more clearly hints at the author’s celebration of cultural forms from the Anglo-Caribbean oral culture in his creative work. In presenting Sookoo’s storytelling, the author has borrowed not only from the content of Caribbean folk literature, but also from the performative aspects of storytelling. Sookoo’s telling is addressed to an audience (his clique) early identified by the standard narrator in his introduction, whom he seeks to instruct and entertain. Sookoo and his audience interact during the telling, mainly through questions and answers coming from both sides. His audience seems to ask him questions in relation to the story he is narrating, and that help him to shape its telling. As Sookoo repeats these questions and proceeds to answer them, the reader can notice some of them: “What I see? You ever hear about La Diabliesse?” (112), or “What? No police around him! Where you could find a police?” (116). Also, Sookoo appears to invite his audience to help him shape his stories through their answers to his questions, as the following show: “You living in Trinidad so long and you never hear about obeah?” (112), and “You know what dat boy do?” (115-16).

In his empathetic narration to his participatory audience, Sookoo would like to accept his audience’s answers as a valid contribution to the telling his is conducting. Notice this passage:

But what good dat lamp is? *Is for police nuh ... for dem not to give you a case, lock you up for drivin without light.* But where you do find police at dat hour? Dem rascals gone to catch a sleep somewhere too.

O-ho! So *you think dat is thief I talking 'bout?* Boy what thief want to hold-up coal-man? Is joke you makin. Everybody know dat a coal-man ent have a cent with he when he goin town. Not thief man ... not livin' people (111. Emphasis added).

Sookoo accepts here some of his audience's answers—which he repeats—as valid, possible ones, though they are not the really right ones because, as he further on relates, the most important reason for using the lantern, more than for alerting police of thieves, is frightening off evil spirits that may hunt people at night.

Furthermore, this storyteller pursues an interaction with his audience at an emotional level, and he conjures up his imaginative powers and narrative skills for achieving his goal. He attempts, thus, to attract his audience's attention and gain its emotional involvement in his telling by creating suspense, a sense of mystery, and fear, given the fact that his stories are about supernatural manifestations on people's lives. The very obscure phrase *it have something ...*, which is repeated several times, connotes mystery and raises doubtful expectations about the real existence of *obeah* or evil spirits among his audience. And the youngsters' probable disbelief is pit against Sookoo's assurance on having seen and experienced such things, which is magnified as he swears up and down:

It have something . . . And I see tings dat make me know dat. And if I ent see dem, my name ent Sookoo, and I-is-a-blasted-liar-so-help-me-God. I say my name ent Sookoo and God lick me down with a big stone if I lie! I know what I talking 'bout and if I lie I die. I see 'nuff ting to make your blood crawl and dat ent all (111).

The hyperbolic tone of the narrator's speech illustrated above is part of a narrative strategy to keep his audience interested in the telling, but based on raising their fear toward the things

narrated and not through enticement as storytellers usually do. Another repeated formula peculiar of this raconteur's narrative speech is the phrase: "... [T]rimble [tremble]! Trimblin like if he have the fo-day-fever" (113), used to describe the fearful behaviour of an animal and a person in the two stories he tells. These repetitions help to build the tension and fear that these *mysterious* stories are bound to rise.

A sense of mystery is also noticed in the standard narrator's introduction to Sookoo's storytelling, when he compares History to a magical ether that, like a sort of Diabliesse, entices men to gather in the Britannia bar. And the shadows that move in the bar may allude to the ghosts or spirits of people from the past, who may come to assist Sookoo in his telling, so that their (hi)story —the community's history— does not be lost for future generations. Mystery, then, defines a strategic narrative mood conjured up by both storytellers.

Sookoo's performative skills as storyteller are also conveyed in this text. Apart from the performative quality that the use of Creole —being the language of oral expression and narration— imparts to the narration, the performance inherent to storytelling is suggested here in the underlining of words, serving as an extratextual clue that implies some thing or action emphasized by Sookoo probably with gestures during his telling. It is an innovative technique for capturing the theatrical mode inherent to storytelling within the written text. This underlining of words in this text demonstrates how concerned the author is with the representation of storytelling not only as text but also as action/performance in fictional writing. In contrast with other writers who also appropriate elements from the oral culture in creating their works, Khan has wanted here to represent the practice of storytelling in its totality as both narration and performed narrated-action.

On the other hand, contrarily to the veracity boasted by Sookoo while relating his accounts, he does not hesitate to cheat/trick his audience for the sake of their entertainment, displaying the imaginative inventiveness of the storyteller proper. When telling Rajan's story (which is actually his own), for instance, Sookoo asserts that Rajan, in his desperate attempt to break the fatal spell cast on him by his son, could not be helped by any obeah man (or sorcerer) because he did not believe in obeah. And Sookoo's death leads the reader to believe that it was caused by the bad obeah worked on him by his son. Then, Sookoo's disbelief as a real-life person stands in opposition to his so much asserted belief in his storytelling act, and the reader is probably left with doubts concerning Sookoo's supernatural experiences, though not his listeners. All this suggests that Sookoo's cheating (lying to his audience as he speaks about La Diabliesse and camouflaging his own story through fiction) is part of his craft as an accomplished raconteur, who is always willing to sacrifice the truth for the entertainment of the audience: "[T]he 'truth', if any, is in the telling" (Gilbert and Tompkins 128).

Sookoo's lying, as well as his frightening narrative tone, spring from a noble desire: to lecture his young audience about religious/spiritual manifestations inherent to their sociocultural environment. It becomes a lecture on folk culture and communal history, which ratifies Sookoo's role as oral historian of his community and its culture. However, the import given to obeah in this short story, as it provides the thematic line of the narration, suggests that obeah has been the inspiring cornerstone for the creation of this short story. The view of obeah as a spiritual force that sustains, metaphysically, the subjective wholeness of the Caribbean Self has guided Khan in creating this story. It is a spirituality grounded on the metaphysical side of the folk culture. It is conjured up in this text by both narrators: by Sookoo with his stories about the supernatural, and by the standard narrator through the shadows or spirits of the Britannia bar that seems to bless, with their ethereal presence, Sookoo's lecture.

What Khan advocates with his emphasis on the metaphysical through obeah and supernatural manifestations in this story is the need to believe in something in other to achieve what you want, and to find a meaning to your life. The importance of such kind of profiting, saving faith is asserted by Khan himself: “[I]f somebody believes that it’s going to work” (127)<sup>83</sup>. This statement becomes, probably, the precept of Sookoo’s educational task. It is through believing in obeah (symbolizing here that saving spiritual force<sup>84</sup>) that Sookoo’s young listening pupils can be saved from evil or the negative influences in their environment. It is through cultivating a spirituality grounded on their native folk culture that the Caribbean subject can find true, solidifying meanings to his/her sociocultural existence. Through the persona of the storyteller as a kind of spiritual healer for the young listening audience that he wants to convert into *obeah* believers, the author furthers a view of spirituality (or this spiritual believing) as a vehicle for making young people turn their look toward their own culture, which is the nourishment for the spirit of their society, the rootage for their cultural identities.

The fact that Sookoo tries to make the young recognise and respect their folk culture through the fear to the supernatural positions him as a sort of political agitator to the favour of cultural sovereignty. Such militant character of the storyteller’s role in postcolonial literatures is asserted by South African playwright and storyteller Fatima Dike: “[W]e don’t tell ‘bedtime’ stories to put people to sleep; we want to scare the shit out of them and wake them up” (qtd. in

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<sup>83</sup> This phrase epitomizes Khan’s perception of the complex intercultural approach to religious beliefs within the Afro- and Indo-Caribbean communities in Trinidad, as he wanted to demonstrate how obeah is accepted by Indo-Caribbeans and how, likewise, Afro-Caribbeans would resort to East Indian religious beliefs to achieve some desired aim (127).

<sup>84</sup> The symbolism of obeah in this short story —previously alluded in relation to the thematic context of Sookoo’s story about *La Diabliesse*— is expanded here to serve a more complete interpretation of the story’s content. This multi-symbolic thematic pattern characterizes, seemingly, Khan’s oeuvre. It can be inferred from his easygoing conversation with Daryl C. Dance as he comments on both of his novels: “People ask me about *The Obeah Man*, you know. It’s a purely symbolic novel —I don’t know the first goddamn thing about obeah— just as *The Crucifixion* is a symbolic novel. Both of those books have largely to do with a society or a culture where a young person growing up finds himself in a situation where he is looking for some sort of meaning in life” (132).

Gilbert and Tompkins 137). Sookoo wants to wake the young up with a restored sight toward their folk tradition and culture. His weapon is a frightening narrative rendered from within the entertaining context of storytelling, and that contrasts with the usually friendly and dissuasive tone of the storyteller's report. He is politically advocating for the young people's acknowledgement of their traditional folk culture as providing sociocultural rootage for *them Selves*.

As for the author's part, Sookoo's political position with regard to Trinidadian cultural sovereignty is echoed in the author's intention to validate Trinidadian cultural experience with this short story. Sookoo's life-experience provides the teaching of the story that Khan narrates here: he dies because he did not believe. His dissatisfied, now ended life-experience is what Khan has wanted his society to see in the mirror for its self-examination, to see what can happen to them if they turn their backs to their culture and traditional values. At the same time, Sookoo's death is held symbolic of the vanishing of an older generation and, with them, of traditional values that are fading away and being left behind by the wave of progress coming directly from the Western cultural world in these modern times. Khan is here calling the attention of Trinidadian society to what progress sponsored by American cultural imperialism really means for them, making them see that this damaging foreign influence is bringing about the stultification of their national culture, and hoping that they become wisely enlightened for mending their cultural way.

Khan's nostalgic view of his native sociocultural experience in this short story becomes a suitable literary motif for revivifying and legitimising such experience, which supports the Trinidadian subject's sense of cultural identity. In validating his sociocultural background in



his works, Khan is also asserting his double-diasporic identity, but one that is surely grounded on the Trinidadian Creole experience.

In general, through the persona of the storyteller and his narrative, this short story celebrates storytelling as an important cultural practice that should be preserved, and one that offers a valid sociocultural context to carry out the education of younger generations on knowing and respecting their community's cultural and historical heritage; thus guaranteeing its preservation as well. Moreover, this short story corroborates the importance of the oral tradition for the Caribbean writer as part of his/her cultural identity, and that may assist his/her writing for the creation of a fiction that reaffirms, also aesthetically, the sociocultural *background* sustaining the writer's identity.

## A Trickster Tale: The Trickster Motif Propelling a Narrative of Resistance in Olive Senior's "Ascot".

Cunning better than strong.  
(Jamaican proverb)

The short story "Ascot", awarded in the 1974's Jamaica Annual Literary Competition, stands in closer relation to the tradition of storytelling in the English Caribbean when compared to "A Night's Tale" and "Shadows Move in the Britannia Bar". It celebrates this tradition through a narrative re-adaptation, in Creole, of a contemporary Jamaican trickster, Big Boy<sup>85</sup>, or the emblematic trickster figure of Anglo-Caribbean folktales, the spider Anancy, which places it as a modern and literary Big Boy or Anancy tale. Similar to Andrew Salkey's re-interpretation of Anancy according to modern times —*Anancy's Score* (1973), in this short story the archetypal myth is adapted to the Jamaican economic and sociocultural context of the seventies, embodied by the persona of Ascot, the protagonist of the story. Ascot borrows some of the behavioural traits of his folk counterpart (Anancy), like its slyness, greed, deception, immorality, and selfishness. Benefiting also from his closest oral counterpart (Big Boy), Ascot appears to draw physically from this giant and childish character through his also *big* physical measures: "Described as 'tall no langilalla' with ridiculously big feet and 'a mouth so big that when him smile him lip curl' (*Summer Lightning* 26), Ascot is literally a 'big boy'" (Simpson 836).

Ascot is a *mestizo* boy from some site of rural Jamaica singled out, physically, by having the biggest feet ever seen around the place, and "fair skin and straight nose" (26). But he is also singled out by his deceitful behaviour, which eventually serves him to fulfil his dearest

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<sup>85</sup> As Jamaican critic Hyacinth M. Simpson notes, sketches of Big Boy that often accompany Big Boy tales recorded in the field of Jamaican folktales "picture him as a giant boy who slips between the worlds of childhood and adulthood with ease" (836). And Daryl C. Dance's description of Big Boy in *Folklore from Contemporary Jamaicans* reveals him as a trickster figure: "Big Boy is often pictured as very much the fool, the moron; but even in his ignorance, he usually succeeds . . . He is absolutely lacking in moral and social values and is motivated purely by his own desires, appetites and passions" (54).

ambition: “[T]o dress up in white clothes and drive a big white car” (29). His trickery is conveyed in this narration through several stories or episodes of Ascot’s life relating, for instance, his shameful theft of a bunch of banana from Papa’s house; his lying to Kenny (Papa’s son) on his willingness to work as a gardener in May Pen; in his dropping out of farm work in Florida —a job planned and granted by the government, and thus entering the United States illegally; and cheating his wife on the truth about his origins and real family while disowning his family.

Firstly, Ascot’s theft of Papa’s bunch of banana reveals him as an ungrateful glutton who shows no remorse at having robbed the person that provides for him. He daringly tries to deny his crime and has no shame at all in continuing to frequent Papa’s house after the incident. Later on, Ascot asks Kenny to give him a job as gardener, but it is really an excuse for doing what pleases him. As Kenny reports to his family in a letter, “Ascot dont want do nothing round the yard and all he do all day is jump behind the wheel of motor car the minute people back turn and make noise like say he driving” (29). His dishonest and selfish attitude goes on here as to leave May Pen for going to Kingston, taking with him other people’s belongings, and without saying a word to his relatives back home. After that, Ascot cheats the government as he enrolls farm work in the United States, which he shortly afterwards deserts in the pursuit of his ambition. In the final stage of Ascot’s cunning enterprise, he is revealed as a lying husband, careless glutton, selfish and ungrateful son, and a dishonest person in general. However, at the end of Ascot’s misleading story from adolescence to manhood narrated in this short story, he is portrayed successful —like the trickster usually, leading an economically improved and married life in the United States, and relishing his *whitened* driving dream.

Placed within the context of an Anancy tale, Ascot's life-narrative of upward mobility can be interpreted as the several adventures of the trickster character trying to outwit others while seeking survival in a hostile environment. His cunning and tricky behaviour is explained, then, as strategic acts of resistance to the adverse. As if imitating this mythic heroic figure of their folklore, black slaves managed to survive slavery and preserve their sociocultural cosmos through subversion: carrying out a radical resistance to colonial cultural domination, camouflaged as apparent consent and submission. Such indirect strategy of resistance was also crucial, as Michael Dash notes, in the "unprecedented cultural transformations" leading to the formation of these creolised societies (47), guaranteeing the permanence of the colonized subject's denigrated cultural traditions. The protagonist of this story, seen as a (post-colonial) descendent of the black slave, tricks always to the favour and improvement of his situation toward achieving his goal/dream. Such improvement necessarily implies a journey—from that rural site to Kingston, and then to the United States—as the way to escape from an economically depressed environment.

Certainly, the economically-motivated journey has been a natural factor of Caribbean life from pre-Columbian times, through colonization, and until the post-colonial era. It is, as E. K. Brathwaite has asserted, "a permanent part of our heritage": a physical inheritance from Africa, and a spiritual inheritance from slavery, the Middle Passage, and the slaves' rootless sojourn in the Caribbean sea (qtd. in Howes 9). It becomes, also, a psychological inheritance from the entire process of creating and developing a new life in the Caribbean, which points at a permanent dichotomy between the desire to stay or belong and the desire to leave or not belong. As Brathwaite explains, "[t]his dichotomy expresses itself in the West Indian through a certain psychic tension, an excitability, a definite feeling of having no past, of not really belonging" (qtd. in Howes 9). The migrant nature of Caribbean people is determined, then, by

this psychological sense of being rootless, motherless. In this short story, Ascot is singled out as having the strongest bend toward movement. His restless, travelling spirit is probably determined by the divided, in-between condition of his experience: his fair skin, straight nose and big mouth speak for his hybridism. He is neither black, not white. . (His hybridism is what dictates, in the views of many in his community, his possibilities of success). And his fatherless family situation reinforces his divided sense of belongingness to his rural social milieu. Therefore, his journey and exile appear to be conditioned by the liminality of his racial/colour experience<sup>86</sup>, and his insecure sense of belongingness. But they are revealed in this text, above all, as a physical and sociocultural inheritance of Caribbean people, with a serious economic imperative. It is precisely through the notion of the journey —indicating movement in the geographical and social contexts— as a necessary factor in the Caribbean subject’s upward mobility that Ascot’s community forgives and even appraises his tricky/fraudulent behaviour, an appraisal suggested in the opening phrase: “That Ascot going go far” (26), and that becomes the motto of Ascot’s life-narrative of success.

Even Ascot’s abandonment of his homeland pursuing his ambition in the rich Western metropolis can be somehow interpreted as a *trickifying* act, because he leaves the Caribbean for the United States not precisely lured by the trappings of fulfilment of the American Dream, but for making his personal dream come true. In fact, Ascot’s life-ambition is centred on his white fantasy and not in achieving success and economic progress following the self-made man prototype<sup>87</sup>. But fulfilling this ambition necessarily requires an improvement of his economic

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<sup>86</sup> The idea of liminality in postcolonial theory implies an in-between position in terms of sociocultural milieus for the expression or construction of cultural identity. It has been 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 (1-2). Many of the child-protagonists in Senior’s short stories move in a universe marked by liminality: between social classes, along racial/colour lines, and between sociocultural milieus, from which they negotiate their identities.

<sup>87</sup> The Jamaican social prototype of the self-made man is defined by a personal social and economic growth achieved by oneself. It underscores a Western individualistic conception of the human being in his/her social

situation, only possible, in his case, through enrolling farm work and journeying to the developed Western metropolis. Once there, Ascot's process of economic improvement and social mobility confirms the American Dream ideal, but it is always conditioned by his white-driving ambition, as his extremely brief letters —through which the reader is informed about Ascot's experience in America— sent to his mother indicate:

Dear Ma wel i am her in New York is Big plase and they have plenty car I an going to get one yr loving son Ascot.. . . Dear mother wel here I am in Connecticut.. . . I driveing car two year now but is not wite yr loving son Ascot.. . . Dear Mother Chicago is Big plais I drevein wite car for a wite man but he don make me where wite is black uniform so I mite leave yr loving son Ascot (30).

When the narrator (Lily) relates Ascot's return to Jamaica, the elements of his ambition (white car and white clothes) are the first things to notice in Ascot's brandishing of his success: "Next thing we know a big white car no draw up at the gate and turn into the yard.. . . Ascot dress in white from head to toe and though him plenty fatter him teeth kin same way" (30-31). With this humorous and indirect comment about Ascot's ever-hungriness despite the surfeit implied in his increased weight, the narrator relocates Ascot within the rural experience of his childhood, discarding his supposedly rich experience in the American Dream and reaffirming his former identitarian/behavioural *ways* from his Jamaican experience.

In effect, this short story reveals a narrative intention uninterested in the story of Ascot living the American Dream. It is concerned, rather, with the story of Ascot living his personal dream as a postcolonial Caribbean subject, through the agency of the economic advantages of the American Dream only reached, in this case, through the journey or exile. And the journey itself or the *idea of foreign* becomes only a thematic axis in the story as Senior wanted to describe

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development, in contrast to an African and/or Afro-Caribbean conception that reinforces the collective or communal nature of the individual's social experience. References to the self-made man in a Jamaican social context appear in Velma Pollard's *Karl* and Senior's short story "The Glass Bottom Boat" from *Discerner of Hearts and Other Stories*.

how it has traditionally affected Jamaican urban and rural communities: “[T]he idea of ‘foreign’ or ‘travel’ that so many Jamaicans even in the remote countryside then had and which seemed so romantic. And the way in which the returning travellers were expected to show that they had been changed by the experience” (Appendix II). This narrative intention interested in and thus crediting the local experience is corroborated by the fact that the narration, being produced by a Caribbean (Jamaican) resident, remains in the Jamaican context, and the narrator diverts the reader’s attention from Ascot’s exile experience. (Ascot’s life in foreign is merely documented by his three brief letters to his mother).

Ascot is then portrayed as a true trickster figure and his (seemingly celebrated) *trickifying* attitude for fulfilling his white-driving ambition can be mirrored in the author’s narrative attitude, which appears to *trick*, in content and form, the canonical Caribbean literary tradition. Senior offers in this short story an instance of exile experience, so common in Caribbean narrative, but one in which the foreign experience is de-emphasized. Moreover, her protagonist is not the honest, bright fellow with a compulsion to learn, to leave and improve him/herself, socially, in the Western metropolis, frequently found in the canonical Caribbean fiction. Senior’s protagonist, in this case, does not really accommodate himself into the developed, Western (American) societal ideal. As Alison Donnell comments, “Ascot has not grown or develop as a result of his journey but remains arrested in his ‘white’ fantasy” (127).

Explained within an ideological context, Ascot’s life-narrative subverts the conventional life-narrative afforded to the Caribbean subject singled out by intelligence, resourcefulness, or cleverness: to work or continue education in the metropolitan centres and become a Westernised (educated) individual or self-made man. Although some of the American cultural ways have been appropriated by Ascot —indicated in his brandishing of his improved economic and social position (seen through his white new clothes, the rented big white car and

hotel room in Kingston, his educated wife, and his notably improved speech with a *thick* American accent), his personal identity has remained unchanged. It is suggested by the child narrator in her allusion to Ascot's gluttonous nature. And this suggestion is ratified at the end of the story where Ascot is portrayed as the same unfeeling, deceitful boy from his early youth or a "good-fe-nutten", as the child narrator angrily declares referring to Ascot's selfish and shameless behaviour toward his family and hers (35).

The inherent deceptive character of Ascot's personality is sanctioned by Papa, through a metaphorical saying, when Ascot's journey of upward mobility is about to begin: "No matter how hard yu wuk an how much money yu make yu will nevva find shoes for dem doan mek in fe yu size" (29). The very size of Ascot's feet, that denounced him as the thief of Papa's banana, would stand as an allegory of the clear fraudulent nature of Ascot. Then, Ascot's supposed accommodation into the *respectable American way* can be identified as a strategic act of compliance with the dominant order toward achieving his goal: the outfit can be American-like but the essence is still from the Caribbean. And his successful America-like outfit was that "which the returning travellers were expected to show (that they had been changed by the [foreign] experience)" (Senior, Appendix II). Trickery becomes here not only a strategy of survival in a hostile environment, but also a valid weapon for gaining empowerment and securing self-determination within the hegemonic social and cultural order. It becomes an indirect weapon of resistance.

As a matter of fact, the resistant subjectivity of many of Senior's characters is constructed around the trickster philosophy as an indirect form of resistance. As Alison Donnell notes, these characters'



acts of strategic submission are not only significant resistant strategies which present moments of empowerment that destabilize the orders of power and of agency upon which colonial cultures depend, but they are also mechanisms by which those who live in colonial and neo-colonial cultures manage to survive and, importantly, to remain (126).

Ascot's life-narrative of successful survival and permanence within the dominant, neo-colonial order is made possible with an emphasis on Ascot's cunning to resist determination from others or the imperial Other, an emphasis afforded by the trickster archetype. Therefore, the trickster functions in this short story as a trope for the inscription of (cultural) resistance through the delineation of an attitude of subversion toward an imposed sociocultural order and perspective. Ascot's life-narrative that subverts the conventional life-narrative of the intelligent Caribbean subject successfully *self-becoming* abroad through his cheating and slyness and his Caribbean-bound life-ambition ratifies the author's desire of crediting and validating the native Caribbean sociocultural reality and experience. Such validation becomes an important strategy to counter, though fiction, the Western neo-imperial cultural perspective imposing itself in Caribbean societies.

The trickster provides, certainly, the guiding motif for the creation of this short story. His cunning, being his only weapon to resist and overcome difficult situations, is what allows the humorous part of these tales usually. In the case of "Ascot", the emphasis on Ascot's cunning reveals an authorial intention of accentuating the comic over the tragic in the story. Such narrative intention favouring humour draws certainly on the storyteller's narrative. Being largely corroborated in Senior's fiction, this humorous narrative tone places her narrative in a particular thematic context within contemporary Anglo-Caribbean fiction that discards the so common representation of the suffering (post)colonial individual:

[I]n these early stories Senior begins to establish the practice of validating a world of being and of feeling which exists outside the conflicts and emotions associated with colonialism, conflicts and emotions which are too readily assumed to be the overriding preoccupation of the colonial subject's life (Donnell 121).

Senior is not interested in fictionalising the tragic side of the postcolonial Caribbean experience, but in celebrating attitudes of living through that experience while keeping being true to your Self. The trickster motif has made possible here to displace the story of identity crisis or self-alienation determined by the validation and assimilation of the dominant American or Western culture to the detriment of the local culture observed in many of Senior's stories. It has furthered here the story of the resistant postcolonial subject successfully reconfiguring his place within the hegemonic order, and avoiding to be placed or strangled by it.

Senior's representation of the comic trickster hero in this text also forces a realignment of her fiction with the canonical Caribbean literary tradition, since the comic genius has been "the prime attraction of the West Indian short story", propelling the development of a narrative of *wit and humour* within the region's short fiction (Salkey 12). Writers like V. S. Naipaul, Samuel Selvon, Andrew Salkey, among others, have cultivated this humorous narrative, in which wit and humour have been frequently used as effective weapons to provoke serious reflection<sup>88</sup>. In "Ascot", the reflection behind the humorous reading would fall on the ideological interpretation of the story, foregrounding Ascot's disavowal of his family (black and poor) and his cultural origins —exemplified in the forced American accent of his new speech— now that he has succeeded economically. The reader is then left with a case of sociocultural and historical estrangement: "It would seem that in order to possess his dreams,

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<sup>88</sup> The serious reflection becomes, seemingly, a common ground to Senior's short stories. It may spring from several levels of meaning implied in her fiction leading to several possible interpretations. In her own words: "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" (Senior, Appendix II).

Ascot has dispossessed his history” (Donnell 127); which s/he might morally judge criticizing Ascot’s conduct, as the girl narrator does at the end of the story.

To a cautious reader examining the short story not only as story but also as text, however, the post-reading reflection would reveal, at the thematic level, the celebration of an attitude of resistance to oppressive socio-economic structures and the established social order derived from colonialism—an attitude procured through the trickster motif as mentioned before. At the formal level, the presentation or *writing down* of a trickster tale in Creole borrowing the storytelling narrative style implies the validation of a long-denigrated part of Anglo-Caribbean folklore (the Big Boy or Anancy tales), the legitimisation in literature of the local oral culture, as well as the rehabilitation of the folk culture for the people who create it—important as it is in the Caribbean subject’s assertion of personhood and cultural identity.

The formal level of this text offers a context in which the trickster motif also operates, especially through its potential for subversion. Due to the appropriation of the storytelling narrative style (its form and language) in this short story, it appears as a scribbled oral form, defying, thus, the conventions of the literary narrative tradition in English. This culturally-determined text seeks to legitimise a narrative form from the alternative Caribbean (oral) word-culture, corroborating the political and cultural implications of the *told tale* device in Caribbean fiction (Brown xvii). The *wit and humour* of the trickster tale become, therefore, the credentials of an apparently innocent but transgressive fiction: behind the natural rendering of a humorous story lies a conscious intention to subvert the *anglocentricity* of Caribbean fictional narrative.

Corroborating the interpretation of “Ascot” as a *told tale*, the formal features of this short story show that some of the structural and stylistic principles of oral narrative have been

appropriated, like the opening formula, the presence of an audience, the cyclic mode of narration around the exploits of a leading character, and its formulaic and dramatic idiom.

The opening formula of this scribilised tale is represented by a saying referring to Ascot's foreseen possibilities of success in his life: "That Ascot goin go far" (26). This is the opening phrase of the text, introducing Ascot's life-narrative of upward mobility. Moreover, as a condensed expression of popular wisdom —*going far* or *to go far*— held proper in relation to Ascot, it indirectly reviews what Ascot's life-narrative will be, and that will be narrated afterwards. It becomes, seemingly, a guiding motto of Ascot's story, which is repeated by the end of the short story reinforcing the meanings around the trickster protagonist, his trickery and his success.

The opening section of this narration is formed by the statements of two of the characters (Papa and Mama) about Ascot, introduced by their daughter Lily, who narrates the story. Her voice takes command of the narrative afterwards in a demanding address to the audience: "See here! I don't think Papa ever recover from the day that Ascot come back" (26). The expression *see here* is commonly used to request someone's attention when something is going to be said. The narrator uses it here calling the attention of her presumably listening and *seeing* audience. Other instances indicating a clearly solicited audience are found in the phrases: "But mark you, from Ascot small he used to tell me how him life ambition was to dress up in white clothes and drive a big white car" (29), and "But lo [look] and behold. No [now] Ascot! Ascot dress in white from head to toe ..." (30-1). In this imperative address to the audience, one might guess the performative quality of the Creole oral enunciation suggested in these phrases, as probably uttered by the ordinary folk telling a story. A similar consideration can be raised in relation to this other example: "Papa walking bout and threatening to shoot him for him banana though

*you know* after a time that Papa enjoying himself so much telling everybody how him frighten Ascot that *you can see* that him don't mind bout the banana so much after all" (28. Emphasis added). It shows a more familiar tone in the narrator's appeal. Moreover, the inherent performative character of the storyteller's narrative aimed at entertaining the audience is suggested in instances of address like: "You should hear the noise he make" (27), and "Ascot put down a piece of eating there that I couldn't describe to you ..." (33). In the former the audience is invited to experience, imaginatively, the situation conveyed; while in the latter the audience is clearly identified as the receiver/listener of the narrator/storyteller's humorous story.

Ascot's life-story narrated in this short story comprises several episodes that might be entitled *Ascot's robbery of Papa's Harvest Festival banana* or *Ascot's robbery and his telling foot*; *Ascot as gardener in May Pen*; *Ascot in the USA*; and *Ascot's visit*. They appear as interrelated stories in chronological sequence. Probably, the most humorous story is the first one. It is introduced with an evaluative statement about one of Ascot's physical features: "Ascot have the biggest foot that anybody round here ever see. Especially Papa" (26), which triggers the telling of the story of how the particular size of Ascot's foot denounced him as the thief of Papa's banana. Ascot's attempts to conceal his theft boldly denouncing a possible robber calls to mind the folktale about Anancy and Brother Goat, in which Brother Goat is tricked and incriminated by Anancy and punished, unjustly, for a theft that Anancy himself committed<sup>89</sup>. Following the formulaic style of oral narration, this first story begins with the so common phrase *One time* and ends with another formula: "And from that day on, ..." (28). The presence of these interrelated stories about a leading character (Ascot) suggests an adaptation of the

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<sup>89</sup> Louise Bennett once made reference to this Anancy tale when interviewed by Daryl C. Dance (28); and Dance collected it for her work on Jamaican folklore ( ).

cyclic narrative pattern in storytelling for relating, in this case, the several adventures of the trickster protagonist.

The episodic narrative pattern of storytelling is noted in Pollard's and Khan's texts previously analysed, but it is more successfully developed in Senior's text. In "A Night's Tale", this pattern shapes the homodiegetic narrator's chronological relate of Dorlene's life-experience (from her early immigrant experience in that Jamaican rural site to her married life with Jacob), as well as Dorlene's autobiographical narration offering the remaining part of her life-experience. In "Shadows Move ...", Sookoo's storytelling reveals two episodes of his personal life-experience: one about his encounter with La Diabliesse, and another one about his quarrel with his son. Finally, the episodic narrative pattern deployed in "Ascot" reveals a more direct approach to the storytelling mode because it defines the cyclic structure of the narrative about the protagonist and his several adventures, rendered as an instinctively orchestrated sequence of stories without introductory part setting the circumstance or concluding part. Here the episodic pattern of storytelling determines the structure of the narration from its beginning until its end.

Furthermore, the formulaic idiom of oral narration has been borrowed in this text. Connective formulas like: "Then one day" (29), "One time" (26; 30), "*Then* he say to the wife" (31. Emphasis added), "So right then" (35), among others, alternate with other expressions belonging to the idiomatic realm of oral discourse, such as: "*Well, anyway*, one time ..." (27. Emphasis added), "Well sah [Sir]" (29; 33), "*Eh-eh*, Ascot him no rush up to my mother and start hug and kiss her" (31. Emphasis added), and "*See here*, he wearing the biggest pair of puss boot that ever make" (29. Emphasis added). They all assist the progression of the narration. Their presence in this text demonstrates that the author is concerned not only about the

representation of the traditional narrating voice of the storyteller, but also of her/his informal speaking voice (Senior, Appendix II). The oracy of the narration is then doubly asserted.

On the other hand, the formulary number grouping proper of oral narration appears in this text through the Law of Three, marking the number of short letters received by Miss Clemmie during Ascot's stay abroad. It thus marks the three instances in which Ascot's own voice comes to assist the narration of the story, reporting, basically, the episode about Ascot's stay in the United States. This Law of Three conditioning the narration of this episode is introduced at the beginning of this episode in the narrator's relate: "About *three year* pass and Miss Clemmie no [now] get letter from the United States" (30. Emphasis added).

Nonetheless, more than in the appropriation of the storyteller's formulaic idiom, it is in the emulation of her/his dramatic narrative style that this text draws the most on the idiom of oral narration. Above all, the narrator uses a hyperbolic tone to entertain her audience through humour and enticement. Both aims frequently converge in the narrator's descriptions, abundant on exaggerations, as the following examples show: "Anyhow this Ascot tall no langilalla and him not so bad looking though him have a mouth *so big that when him smile him lip curl* but all the women *melt* when Ascot smile" (26. Emphasis added), "[O]ne time *a whole heap of big thing* start disappear from the buttry" (27. Emphasis added), "[W]e children used to run in the buttry and look at the bunch of banana *till we eye water* but none of us would bold enough to touch it for *is the most beautiful thing that we ever see in our whole life*" (27. Emphasis added), "But Ascot jump back so braps and fly off like streak lightning" (28), "[H]e wearing the biggest pair of puss boot that ever make. It big so till everybody from miles around run to look at Ascot foot in shoes like is the eight wonder of the world" (29), "Ascot say and his American accent so thick you could cut it with knife" (31), "Ascot put down a piece of eating there that I

couldn't describe to you and when he done the table clean as a whistle" (33), and "So Ascot there chatting and chatting and we all getting hungrier and hungrier and the food smelling better and better" (32). The kind of exaggeration conveyed in this last example is aided by repetition, and is commonly found in oral narrative. Although a similar narrative attitude emulating the hyperbolic tone of oral narration is perceived in other short stories by Senior — like "Summer Lightning", "The Boy Who Loved Ice Cream" (from *Summer Lightning*), and "Lily, Lily", its notable presence in this scribbled trickster tale points at a narrative intention clearly committed to the representation of the oral narrative in literature<sup>90</sup>.

Corroborating this authorial intention, also, the narration of this short story is not produced, exclusively, by the homodiegetic child narrator. Instead, as if recreating the collective context of the storytelling practice, the narration is assisted by the community presented in the short story. Thus, the collective nature of Caribbean folk tradition clearly manifest in the communal practice of storytelling is transfused to this text. The collective context of storytelling therein conveyed is defined by the exchange between the storyteller and her audience, but also by the participation of the *talking* community in the telling of Ascot's story. Then, this *talking* community is apparently given the role of participatory public, assisting the storyteller in her rendering of stories. The community's participation in the narration occurs through the narrator's crediting of their spoken discourse in relation to the persona of Ascot and his history.

The importance that this collective perspective is given in this text is ratified from the beginning, because the narration of Ascot's story commences with Mama's and Papa's differing moral considerations with respect to Ascot:

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<sup>90</sup> The representation of the Caribbean oral narrative tradition in fictional writing is a necessary step in the expression of cultural identity for many writers, and fiction provides a proper context for expressing their creolised identities: "In my writing I am trying to fuse the oral and scribal traditions" (Senior, Appendix II).



“That Ascot goin go far,” Mama say, “Mark my word”. “Yes. Him goin so far him goin ennup clear a prison,” Papa say. . . . “Oh gawd when all is said an done the bwoy do well Jackie. Doan go on so,” Mama say. “De bwoy is a livin criminal. . . . Look how him treat him family like they have leprosy. Deny dem. Is so you wan you pickney behave . . .,” and with that Papa jam him hat on him head and take off down the road (26).

Further on, the narrator relies on the also differing discourses of men and women in the community in her description of Ascot: “[A]ll the women melt when Ascot smile and say how him bound to go far. But all that the men remember bout Ascot is that Ascot is a real ginnal and also that Ascot have the biggest foot that anybody round here ever see” (26). Throughout the narration, the reader/listener knows about different events of Ascot’s life-story through the narrator’s crediting of other people’s narrative voices. Apart from Papa’s and Mama’s, Kenny’s discourse is introduced to refer Ascot’s misleading behaviour in May Pen. Also that of the government official sent to find out about Ascot when the latter abandoned the farm job in Florida: “[T]he man say that they going to prison Ascot if they find him for he does do a criminal thing” (30). There is then the discourse of the community, whose comments and gossips would help to advance the story: “Well it look like Ascot dead fe true this time for nobody hear from him . . . everybody give him up for dead or prison” (29-30). This community amuses itself hearing and passing down gossips among them, as the child narrator certifies toward the end: “Next day it all over the district how Miss Clemmie have daughter-in-law with Master Degree and how Ascot prosper and hire big car and staying at hotel in Kingston” (34-35).

The collective character of the narration conveyed through these instances of indirect presentation of the community’s discourse is strengthened by a narrative attitude that eschews her individual, homodiegetic role to the favour of a plural narrative perspective. Therefore, the I-quality of the narrative act —asserted after the presentation of Papa’s and Mama’s discourses,

and serving the narrator's address to her solicited audience— changes to *we*, as a result of the narrator's intention to add to the leading narrative perspective and voice the perspectives of other children (probably relatives) and her parents. Notice these examples: “[W]e children would tief in there” (27), “[A]nd is sad we think Papa sad” (27), “[W]e all start giggle” (27), and “All we can see is the front door open and two foot stick outside” (30).

The I-quality of this narration is restored in the final episode, in which the child narrator is both eye witness and major character, but also here the collective narrative perspective is what prevails. Mainly, the narrator retakes her individual narrative role at the end to offer her personal considerations on Ascot's behaviour. The significant presence of a plural narrative perspective in this multiple-voiced text suggests that the community therein represented stands as the real narrator of Ascot's story, while the homodiegetic narrator stands as a mediating narrating agent through which the communal telling of Ascot's story is delivered to the listening/reading audience. The presence of this mediating narrative agent accounts for a narrative strategy that pursues a direct communicative connection between the reader and the characters or community in the story through the spoken voice, as it happens in the performative context of oral storytelling. The collective narration or *told tale* becomes a favoured narrative strategy in Senior's fiction, developed in other short stories like “Real Old Time T'ing” and “Lily, Lily”. It ratifies the collective character of the folk tradition of storytelling in the Caribbean but, especially, it confirms the communal essence of a culture largely sustained and developed around the spoken word, through orality.

This communal nature of Caribbean cultures maintained through storytelling as a narrative form of oral communication is also ratified in “A Night's Tale” and “Shadows Move ...”. The collective context of storytelling represented in these texts is defined by the exchange between

the storyteller and his/her audience, and by a collectively performed narrative act, like it occurs in “Ascot”. The collective narrations of the two former texts, however, are not communal (implying the crediting of the discourse of a community of people) but double-voiced, produced by two narrative voices. Besides, in “Ascot”, the homodiegetic narrator becomes an intradiegetic narrative agent that facilitates the communal rendering of Ascot’s story, while the homodiegetic narrator of “A Night’s Tale” shares the narrative role with the protagonist of the story. The double-voiced narration of “Shadows Move ...”, on the other hand, does not show an evenly shared narrative act. The standard narrator functions here as an extradiegetic *framing* agent for the rendering of Sookoo’s autodiegetic account; he introduces and concludes Sookoo’s story and his narration. These three short stories present three multiple-voiced texts with different narrative strategies for conveying a plural narrative discourse. The communally performed narration of “Ascot” is probably conditioned by the storytelling context in which the Anancy and Big Boy tales —like this modern one— are collectively told and enjoyed.

On the other hand, the fact that this trickster tale appears narrated by the rural community therein depicted explains, more readily, the use of Creole as the language of narration, besides its also clear relation to the tradition of oral narration in the region. Since it is a (Jamaican) Creole-speaking community, the use of Creole as narrative language facilitates the most accurate representation of that sociocultural context which is also the narrator’s. The author’s favouring of Creole in this text points at a desire to convey and assert a linguistic identity, belonging also to this storytelling and gossiping community. In so doing, she explicitly aims at rehabilitating the Creole language from within the very oral context of folk tradition, counteracting its status of inferiority in relation to the *dominant* standard English in Caribbean fiction. This narrative stance advocating for the *nationalization* of Caribbean fiction through Creole as an effective narrative, linguistic medium is corroborated in “A Night’s Tale”. Both

texts, being written completely in Creole, ratify the necessary militant character of a Caribbean fiction produced in the language of the colonized for the assertion of cultural identity against cultural neocolonialism. It is not implied, on the contrary, in “Shadows Move ...”, where the standard English maintains its dominant narrative status.

This subversive purpose on account of language use perceived in “Ascot” is defended in Senior’s first collection *Summer Lightning and Other Stories*, where half of the short stories are narrated in Creole and the other half in a Creole-affected Jamaican Standard English. With this linguistically Creole-identified fiction, Senior has wanted to assert the literary possibilities of Creole as narrative language: its adequacy as linguistic means of communication also for serious purposes —like the writing of fiction, and its crucial role in a culturally-situated narrative that seeks autonomous self-expression.

Certainly, the rehabilitation of the trickster and of Creole taking place in the thematic and formal contexts of this short story furthers an interpretation of Senior’s fiction as resistance writing, for the sake of asserting a cultural identity against postcolonial forms of cultural domination in the Caribbean —through American television, the free market economy, and tourism. Such resistance, showing a clear ideological dimension, can be seen to operate in different but related contexts. It can be explained as resistance, for instance, to use, solely, the narrative moulds bequeathed by the English literary tradition; to follow the ready-made narratives of postcolonialism and a Caribbean literary canon; and to easy categorization by the homogenizing tendencies in the critical agenda of postcolonial literatures in the imperial academic centres<sup>91</sup>.

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<sup>91</sup> Analysing the thematic line of Senior’s fiction from an ideological perspective, Alison Donnell has noted how Senior’s accounts of childhood become a strategic fictional domain to criticise cultural neo-colonialism in the Caribbean, and how her apparently innocent but radical texts “refute the ready-made narratives which have been

This resistant stance is emblematised in the content of Senior's fiction in the positions of her characters, who are, frequently, empowered and resistant subjects. The child protagonists of short stories like "Do Angels Wear Brassieres?", "Confirmation Day", and "Ballad" (all from *Summer Lightning*) are little, self-conscious beings who resist the orders and values of the dominant culture. In "Ascot", the trickster figure is celebrated as an idiosyncratic symbol of resistance within an oppressive neocolonial social system. And his cunning behaviour is celebrated as an indirect strategy of subversion of the prevailing order, guaranteeing the survival and success of the poor, peasant folk in a neocolonial, underdeveloped society. This celebration of the trickster is supported by a sociocultural context where the trickster's archetype represents a psychological inheritance of subversive praxis from the colonial experience in the Caribbean, and by a culture where it remains a "figure of admiration", despite its selfish and immoral nature (Dance 12).

In the formal context of Senior's fiction, this celebrated attitude of resistance is less readily recognised. It is suggested in the transgressive innocence of many of her texts, in which modes of oral narration and cultural elements inherent to the Creole folk culture are appropriated and thus validated. The Anancy/Big Boy tale proposed in "Ascot" is a clear example. Besides, the comedy and humour of the Anancy tale are here the agents for the celebration of the trickster's attitude of resistance, corroborating the celebratory tone of many of Senior's short stories (Brown xxviii). In the narration of Ascot's story, comedy usually overpowers the several situations revealing Ascot's deceitful and immoral conduct. It is the comedy what is highlighted also at the end, when the narrator/storyteller (Lily), in her "dual function of entertainer and social satirist" (Simpson 835), tries to pass a moral judgement on Ascot's

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generated by certain post-colonial theories and other Caribbean writers whose works have become institutionalised, as well as those of the more obvious colonial discourse" (139-40).

conduct. It seems that the author wants to divert the reader's attention from her moralizing critique:

But is only me one Miss Clemmie did tell how *there was not a bite to eat in the house* that day and Ascot *never even leave her a farthing*. This vex me cant done especially how *he did gormandise up all Papa food*. So right then and there I start tell her what kind of good-fe-nutten Ascot is (35. Emphasis added).

The narrator's critique of Ascot's behaviour is finally not even listened or paid attention to by Miss Clemmie, the one most hurt, presumably, with Ascot's conduct. Miss Clemmie seems to celebrate her son's boldness to move up: to step out of their depressed economic situation, an appraisal revealed in her eyes "shining like ackee seed" (35) while she re-asserts the statement predicting Ascot's success. The celebration of an attitude of resistant pursued here through the trickster prototype is supported by the fact that social critique in the story is not so much directed at Ascot's conduct but at the women in the community:

But as much as Ascot's behavior is open to criticism, the main objects of social satire are the women in Ascot's community. They cannot or refuse to see, because of their materialism and color prejudice, that Ascot's behavior violates all the codes of conduct that they and their community should hold dear (Simpson 837).

It is through the materialist and racially-biased blindness of women in Ascot's community that the author/storyteller raises her social critique to her Jamaican society's reverence for the *foreign* white culture and things American. Her social critique becomes also a condemnation of American cultural neo-imperialism in the Caribbean, which Senior describes in her own words:

[E]ach of our territories is now being subjected to a new form of cultural imperialism that is not only inhibiting the possibility of developing our own natural cultures but of developing a pan-Caribbean culture. Despite all the rhetoric about Caribbean economic integration, a new center-periphery system is evolving

which is based in Washington and a new cultural system is evolving located somewhere between Dallas and Hollywood (qtd. in Simpson 834-35).

Finally, as if verifying the celebratory tone of this trickster tale foregrounding an attitude of resistance, the moral teaching furthered in this trickster tale is not brought forth in the girl narrator's criticism in relation to the persona of Ascot, but in Ascot's behaviour itself. Ascot, with his forced American accent and his pretended prosperity and pedigree, has made himself ridiculous. From trying to fool everyone, he has made a fool of himself. His story corroborates what Anancy stories generally teach or show, according to Louise Bennett: "[W]hat Anancy is really trying to show you is that you can be tricked by your own stupidity and greed and pretentiousness" (28). Ascot is tricked, therefore, by his own pretentiousness of education, wealth, and parentage. As the rephrased saying would indicate: no matter how far you journey aided by the lie, the truth will always catch you somewhere. In the case of Ascot, his revealed ridiculousness forces him to leave again, hastily, in his rented big white car, to *fly off like streak lightning* like when Papa revealed him as the thief of his Harvest Festival bananas. As it usually happens in these Anancy tales, the trickster remains unpunished, and an admired figure of undefeatable spirit: a continuing symbol of resistance.

In general terms, Senior's fiction affirms the resistance to be determined, culturally, from abroad, and from others. Like many of her resistant subject/characters, her fiction claims the right to self-articulation on Caribbean cultural grounds, and pursuing a constant dialogue between contesting cultural discourses in a creolised sociocultural space.

The analysis of these three short stories reveals different ways in which the writers approach the oral culture in creating their fictional works. The narrative of the storyteller, for instance, fulfils different purposes in the thematic level of these texts. In Senior's text, the several

humorous stories about Ascot and his adventures are presumably aimed at entertaining a listening/reading audience. The shifted emphasis from the moral scrutiny of his behaviour to his adeptness at deceiving for his own benefit only, implies a celebratory tone in Senior's portrayal of the Caribbean experience. This celebratory tone seeks to highlight an attitude of resistance within the Caribbean society before the adverse (poverty, suffering, social distress, and neocolonialism); rather than the tragic side of this experience. Then, the humorous rendering of Ascot's devious life-experience of upward mobility in this short story has been conditioned by Senior's *writing of resistance*, developed around the inscription of resistant subjects or the celebration of resistant attitudes. It is the resistant attitude of the trickster against the adverse —showed through lying and deceit— what is celebrated with this witty, modern Anancy tale.

On the other hand, the storyteller's narrative celebrated in Khan's text also seeks to entertain a listening audience (Sookoo's clique). However, the preferred agents for the entertainment of this audience are not humour and comedy like in Senior's text, but mystery and fear. The frightening tone of Sookoo's storytelling is justified by the educational aim of his oral narration: making the young generations learn about and respect the traditional values of their folk culture. Fear becomes a suitable agent for guaranteeing such respect, and mystery, the key agent for the entertainment of the audience.

Pollard's text stands in closer relation to Khan's with regard to the educational dimension of storytelling asserted in them, and in an arguably opposition to Senior's on account of the social archetype celebrated in the central character. The storytellers of "A Night's Tale" are concerned with lecturing their audience on the region's social history, and the life-story of a woman (Dorlene) affords the guiding theme for carrying out this lecture on Caribbean social



history. However, this instance of female testimony reveals a gender perspective shaping the storyteller's educational narrative. This gender perspective makes possible the celebration of the female paradigm of the strong, hard-working woman, also single mother, who is the backbone of these societies. Then, the storyteller's narrative provides here a context for the expression of a political position of defence of cultural sovereignty, but also to the favour of women and the improvement of their situation in these matriarchal but highly sexist societies. This politically partisan character of much of the women writing in the region is noted by Brown in his critical approach to this writing: "Implicit in that engagement with the oral tradition —and indeed in the concern to tell the region's *herstory*— is an awareness that stories are inherently untrustworthy, are biased, partial" (xxviii). Pollard's text is born, then, out of a dual purpose: to tell the tale of her (sociohistorical) heritage and that of her region's heroines.

Pollard's objective portrayal of the suffering Caribbean subject in this text —through Dorlene as poor, immigrant, single parent, and betrayed lover— stands in clear opposition to Senior's celebration of the Caribbean subject who tries to counteract and overcome the depressing/*downpressing* influences in his/her social milieu. One is the real world's hero who struggles hard to surpass vicissitudes, and the other is the fraudulent anti-hero whose attitude of resistance is magnified through a fictional, humorous relate. But, ultimately, what Pollard and Senior are validating with these Caribbean protagonists are different ways in which the Caribbean subject faces and works out his/her neocolonial experience.

Furthermore, the personal, particular way in which these writers approach and validate their native oral culture in their fictional writing determines a difference of style perceived in these three texts. In relation to their linguistic properties, for example, even though there is a shared concern with the representation of the Creole language as a way of validating a Caribbean

linguistic culture, one can also notice different creative positions from which these writers assert their native linguistic culture. As previously noted, the expatriate condition of Khan's position in relation to language's use in his fiction has determined his *framed* use of Creole, being demarcated by standard English. It affirms a status of dependence or inferiority of Creole in relation to its dominant forbearer. Pollard and Senior's texts, on the contrary, being created in Creole alone, point at the real political connotation of their authors' assertion of their linguistic culture. Their validation of their native linguistic experience through their free, direct representation of Creole in their texts analysed here becomes a political strategy to counteract the undervalued status of Creole in Caribbean society and writing. The political connotation of this use of Creole in fictional writing is more strongly implied, seemingly, in Senior's text, whose communal narration calls less readily for the obvious identification of the autobiographical first person narrative perspective with the Creole-speaking character.

As a matter of fact, the fictional writing produced by women in the Anglophone Caribbean clearly exhibits more audacious authorial attitudes toward the legitimisation of the oral culture through the appropriation of its elements and narrative forms, when compared with that produced by their male counterparts. The use of Creole offers a valid example, as these three texts demonstrate. Senior's and Pollard's narrations in Creole corroborate the defiant creative stance of women writers as many of them attempt to reverse the enthronisation of Western literary standards in Caribbean fiction. And a firm and conscious affirmation of the alternative oral culture becomes here the most effective weapon. The highly creative quality of many of the literature written by women, perceived in its formal characteristics, is a consequence, then, of this revolutionary, creative impulse of women writers in their approach to the oral culture. Their varied way of legitimising Creole—voicing out their folks in narration through multiple-voiced narration, indirect style, dialogue-conditioned narration, and autobiography—defines,

stylistically, a diversified narrative that differs, notably, from a male narrative generally produced in the standard language.

This difference in the style of female and male fictional writing in the region on account of their celebration of the oral culture can manifest itself, also, in their appropriation of the storyteller narrative mode. The storyteller narrative has generally found its way into Anglo-Caribbean short fiction, conditioning its thematic and formal contexts. The former case refers to the recognition of a common bend toward the telling of stories in the Caribbean and, sometimes, to the celebration of the persona of the storyteller. In the latter case, when the storytelling mode determines the quality of the narrative act in these texts, one can perceive a narrative intention committed to the telling of a tale (or tales, given the frequent presence of the tale-within-tale technique in this narrative). In this writing, the storyteller's narrative strategies as well as his/her oral rhetoric are appropriated. However, since the short fiction written by women authors more frequently illustrates a militant position for the sake of cultural sovereignty, their validation of the oral culture in the thematic and formal contexts of their works seems to be developed more consciously. Their conscious appropriation of the storytelling mode in some of their works reveals a narrator self-conscious of his/her role of storyteller. This self-conscious storytelling narrative act is illustrated in the oral reports of the homodiegetic narrators in "Ascot" and "A Night's Tale", but not in the relate of the standard narrator of "Shadows Move ...". In Khan's text the storyteller narrative role is not credited outright, but is handed over to a second narrator. There is not, then, a direct assertion of a narrative form inherited from the native oral culture that needs to be validated.

In general, the celebration of the cultural practice of storytelling that takes place in the three short stories previously analysed demonstrates that the appropriation of the storytelling

narrative mode in Anglo-Caribbean fiction has cultural and political connotations. Storytelling becomes, primarily, a form of cultural historiography, providing a suitable narrative context, socioculturally, to communicate oral history through generations. Moreover, the storytelling mode offers a culturally-situated narrative and discursive context for the education of the community on their native cultural values and heritage. And it is a traditionally enjoyed practice in which entertainment blends with the teaching of moral and cultural lessons.

On the other hand, the appropriation of the storytelling narrative form in this fiction becomes a stylistic strategy through which writers pursue the authentication and preservation of traditional cultural forms. It is a real militant strategy serving two important, interrelated purposes: the affirmation of the local culture against foreign cultural penetration, and the assertion of a Creole cultural identity ratified in this hybridised narrative genre. Stylistically also, the storytelling narrative attitude, favouring collective forms of narration and a highly culturally-informed narrative, is used by these writers in their works as a strategy to counteract the enthronisation of Western aesthetic values in Caribbean narrative, while validating the local cultural forms. The writing of this *oral-narrated* fiction becomes, then, a subversive praxis of cultural resistance; in other words, the continuing, simple narrative of the storyteller stands as an innocent disguise of a subversive praxis against cultural domination, which is ratified by Derek Walcott:

Our art, for the time being, because it emerges from and speaks to the poor, will find its antean renewal in folklore and parable. We present to others a deceptive simplicity that they may dismiss as provincial, primitive, childish, but which is in truth a radical innocence (qtd. in Gilbert and Tompkins 133-34).

And it is through this radical innocence grounded in the Caribbean folklore that these writers/storytellers are trying to reconnect their people to their culture and its literature, giving them back their historical and cultural heritage, and their selves through fiction.

CHAPTER FOUR. SONG, ORAL POETRY AND CREOLISATION  
 AS STYLISTIC SIGNIFIERS OF CULTURAL IDENTITY  
 IN THE EXPRESSION OF AN IDIOSYNCRATIC  
 LITERARY AESTHETIC

The three short stories examined in this chapter also partake, as oraliterary fictional texts, of the Anglo-Caribbean articulation of cultural resistance in literature. The recreation of artistic manifestations from the Afro-Caribbean culture of resistance in these texts supports the articulation of social and cultural protest furthered in their thematic context. This subversive way of validating the Anglo-Caribbean oral culture and sociocultural experience in fictional writing amounts to a stylistic strategy through which these writers pursue the assertion of an indigenous literary and cultural identity.

**Writing a Calypso: The Celebration of Grass-root Culture in Michael Anthony's "They Better Don't Stop the Carnival"**

This short story has been plotted around the composition of a calypso song, whose title "They better don't stop the carnival" or "The governor stop our carnival" makes reference to a sociohistorical event in the Trinidadian society of the early forties. The song itself unfolds from its title to tell about the sociopolitical and historical circumstances serving as inspiring (back)ground for its creation: the prohibition of carnival celebrations during World War II in Trinidad and Tobago.

In the story, the calypsonian Lord Invader, the major character, silently analyses the news about the possible banning of carnival by the colonial governor Sir. Hubert Young, feeling discontent and anger, while sitting idly in the yard of his friends, the Manette family. Meanwhile, the Manette boys, Ellie and Birdie, are banging on their hot steel pan drums testing the sound for getting the desired notes, not knowing yet about the news. When Lord Invader reads it from the newspaper to them, they all are shocked with disappointment and irritation, bursting out their thoughts and views on the problem, which Lord Invader incorporates to his creative reflection (as a calypsonian) on the news and the whole situation. Their comments give him ideas and lines for a new calypso song that he begins to create right there in their yard, in his mind. Its composition is continued after Lord Invader leaves them and while he is travelling by bus to his house in Carenage, close to the sea. Weeks later, Lord Invader's new calypso "The governor stop our carnival" becomes a favourite song in the calypso season. That is why he returns to the Manette's yard to reward the boys for giving him ideas for the lyrics of his calypso, and to know, then, much to his satisfaction, that they would also benefit from his recent success through their preference of the name *Invaders* over *Oval Boys* for their steelband.

Lord Invader's echoing of his friends' views and concerns through his calypso confirms the role of the calypsonian as social commentator or the "people's newspaper" (Warner 40), voicing the people while keeping his finger on the sociopolitical and cultural pulse of his country. As Gordon Rohlehr noted, they addressed the incidents of everyday life in their lyrics: "Calypsonians were . . . confronted with the challenge to create fiction from observed domestic situations, current events read in the newspapers, and rumors" ("Images" 199). The social commentary that Lord Invader would raise in his calypso would address the difficult socioeconomic situation lived by the country as a consequence of the war:

Things were hard enough. There was no rice in the shops, no flour. The war was raging, and German submarines were reaping havoc in the Caribbean Sea. None of the ships could come in, and what did people have to eat? There was plantain, green fig, and mocoe; dasheen, cush-cush, potato. Or if you down by the sea, you could dig you chip-chip because its free. . . . He was excited. “That is what I should sing”, he said to himself. “That is the rouso! That is true for 1942” (201).

As Lord Invader realizes in his inner thoughts, the success of his calypso would be, precisely, in singing his commentary on the 1942’s Trinidadian experience. It would be heightened, probably, by raising also a protest in favour of carnival as a vital sociocultural practice for the people, that alleviates, spiritually, their sufferings derived from deprivation and their precarious economic situation. Thus, implicit in the calypsonian’s social and economic commentary there is his complaint about the governor’s policy. His calypso would become an artistic expression of protest against one of those instances in Trinidad and Tobago’s social history in which the Afro-Creole grass-root culture —carnival, calypso, stickfighting, the steelbands— has been censured, controlled, or even suppressed as is the case here. But contrarily to the strategic disguising tendency that has accompanied calypso in its development or *reinventions* to avert such controlling policies, Lord Invader’s tackling of this socio-political and cultural issue through his complaint in his calypso song would occur, seemingly, without resorting to indirection. He would rather use a milder form of critique suggested, for instance, in the phrase *Things were hard enough*, which may allude not only to the economic hardships, but to the more alerting difficult situation of deprivation of political, social and cultural will unfolding in a colonial social context enduring military blockade.

The calypsonian’s role as social commentator and spokesman for his people is asserted by his community. This affirmation is brought forth in this short story through the words of Ma Manette, as she tries to calm her enraged sons, though without dispiriting them:



“Boys, don’t worry. They could do what they like, but not for as long as they like. You like your steel band and you preparing for Carnival, but if Young ban Carnival, so what? I know it’s hard on you. Invader could still go to the tent and sing about that . . .” (203).

In such view, Lord Invader is propped up as some kind of (lyrical) political representative of his community, who delivers his social critique and his people’s concerns through a cultural, artistic form of expression: the singing of calypso, and within the limits imposed by their political colonial status. The fact that the calypsonian’s critical commentary that would give shape to his calypso shapes as well the body of this text points at the development of a narrative exercise parallel to that produced by the calypsonian, whereupon the calypsonian is composing his song while the narrator is creating a calypso-moulded narration.

Certainly, the lyrical protest in defence of carnival raised by the calypsonians —the fictional one (Lord Invader) and then the narrator— acquires here a political dimension due to the significance of carnival as a festive context of cultural expression, but also as an expression of rebellion and resistance for Trinidadians. The spirit of rebellion of the black slave permeated the Trinidadian carnival in the 1840s, when the canboulay<sup>92</sup> parades held to celebrate the emancipation date on August, 1 since 1838 were moved into carnival, opening the carnival ever since and inaugurating the Jouvay<sup>93</sup>, the first day of carnival. The canboulay processions in those early days of freedom are described by Dawn K. Batson as an unrestrained revolution, a powerful celebration of rebellion in which the main protagonists were the stickfighters with

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<sup>92</sup> Canboulay, derived from the French *cannes brulees* for *burning cane*, is “a celebration of resistance and emancipation, reenacting the days when enslaved Africans were driven with cracking whips to put out fires set by vandals on sugarcane plantations. Cane was also burnt before harvesting to control reptiles, centipedes, scorpions, and other pests. Thus, canboulay may have been associated both with dangerous and cruel forced labor and with the harvest festivals at the end of a season of heavy labor marked by the final burning of the cane stubs” (Martin 285).

<sup>93</sup> The Trinidadian Jouvay derives from the French *jour ouvert*. It is the opening day of carnival which begins the Monday morning before Ash Wednesday. Jouvay is a nocturnal *mas* (masquerade feast) that breaks up shortly after dawn (Martin 288).

their ritualised martial performance, and the chantuelles (the lead singer of canboulay and kalinda bands, and an early version of the calypsonian):

Just after midnight on Dimanche Grass [the Sunday before Ash Wednesday] the processions began. Led by the chantuelles singing songs of defiance and satire, musicians blowing conch shells, cow horns, and beating drums, stickmen carrying flambeaux and bois (wood for stickfighting), the voices of resistance proclaimed: “When Ah dead bury mih clothes, mama doh cry for me”. Folk characters such as the Lagahoo, Soucouyant, and La Diabliesse haunted the streets calling out, “Jour Ouvert, jour p’oncecore ouvert” (the day is breaking: the day is not yet broken) . . . In this way, the jouvert celebrations were born. The music was traditional African call and response with the chantuelle or lead singer singing the verse or dead lines, answered by the crowd singing the chorus (196).

The Trinidadian carnival —opened with those early calypso songs of defiance sung by the chantuelle— was therefore conceived from its beginnings as a festive expression of resistance and rebellion within the Afro-Creole community. It was the resistance of the black slave to the white master’s domination and the rebellious spirit of the liberated slave that must still face the white master’s domination due to their colonized status what they were celebrating.

This spirit of rebellion and resistance kept alive by canboulay revellers, stickfighters, chantuelles and drummers during carnival has resisted several official attempts at repression — like the banning of stickfighting and the beating of drums in the 1880s and in 1919, as the people devised different and more elaborate methods of expression, usually through fusion, disguise, and several other strategies of subversion. Other times, it was cultivated by the Afro-Creole community away from the controlling sight of colonial authorities, out of the street in close spaces, like in the calypso tents and the pan yards in the 1940s and 1950s. As the narration of this short story suggests, Lord Invader would keep on singing his lyrical protest in the calypso tent and competitions and the Manette boys would still bang on their steelpans preparing, perhaps, for the steelband competitions that were held in the island in those years in

spite of the ban on carnival. It was in the steelbands, an essential element of the Trinidadian carnival, where the Afro-Creole rebellion against colonial domination took the form of social incivility with the street violence in the post-war period. The violence of the steelbands that appeared then as the communities' gangs was memorialised by the voices of the calypsonians like in Lord Blakie's "Steelband Clash" (1954) and the Mighty Sparrow's "Outcast" (1954). In "Steelband Clash" the calypsonian describes a famous clash between Invaders and Tokyo, two of the period's steelbands:

It was a bacchanal Nineteen fifty Carnival,  
 Fight fuh so with Invaders and Tokyo,  
 Mih friend run and left he hat  
 When dey hit him with ah baseball bat  
 Never me again to jump up in a steelband in Port-of-Spain (Batson 200).

This spirit of rebellion and resistance is still conjured up in contemporary Trinidadian carnivals favouring the expression of cultural reaffirmation and resistance: the affirmation of the pride of a culture and a people that pursues a positive social self-articulation in the neocolonial Caribbean context. It is also echoed, ostensibly, in the Afro-Creole expression of non-conformism at the general social situation of inferiority of the black community in this society. This Trinidadian resistant, rebellious spirit is masked in contemporary carnivals with threatening costumes like the Jab Molassi (a traditional devil character), and the dragon.

In Earl Lovelace's novel *The Dragon Can't Dance*, for instance, Aldrick plays his dragon carnival costume as an affirmation of his rebellion, of his non-conformity with the marginal place he has been left to occupy in his society. But it appears as a mocked rebellion that cannot be ultimately channelled into really achieving empowerment. That is why Aldrick will play the

dragon *mas*<sup>94</sup> for the last time: “[T]he last symbol of rebellion and threat to comfort Port of Spain” (*The Dragon Can’t Dance* 103). Here the threat, the pretence to be terrible, epitomizes the rebellion, the people’s discomfort, and becomes their response to their state of colonized subjects: “There are two different postures to powerlessness, and one posture is that of threat” (Lovelace, “Interview” 155). Lovelace’s protagonist cannot play the dragon anymore because he cannot live in the gesture of the threat forever without reaching the desired revolution, because, in the author’s own words: “There was certainly possibly the potential for the actualisation of the threat, but somehow we got caught or trapped in the centre without ever organizing the threats to take power” (“Interview” 155). That is why carnival, with its threatening characters and spirit of rebellion, becomes a performed revolution: the great festive play of emancipation for Trinidadians.

However, this mocked or masked rebellion performed in carnival has functioned as a strategy of resistance for the sake of preserving an Afro-Caribbean cultural legacy, and validating a native sociocultural context for self-expression. Being an artistic form of expression created, developed, and maintained by themselves, the carnival provides Trinidadians with a sociocultural space of their own in which to express and assert those selves that have traditionally been discouraged, prohibited, discriminated, and allowed only once a year to claim and assert a cultural heritage and identity of their own. It becomes a Trinidadian artistic expression of cultural identity and of cultural resistance.

Being another essential element of the Trinidadian carnival from its beginnings, calypso has afforded a vehicle for the articulation of the Afro-Creole cultural resistance. It became a *reinvented* or transformed version of the kalinda/battle songs of stickfighting in the twentieth

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<sup>94</sup> *To play mas*, in Trinidadian carnival tradition, means to put on a costume and participate in carnival masquerade (also known as *to jump up*). It is the key action of carnival from which everything else comes (Martin 292). The masqueraders, the steelbands and the calypsonian are the three most important elements of this carnival.

century, from which it inherited the litanic refrain following the African call-and-response pattern and, certainly, the combative spirit and aggressive and satirical verbal attitude of the chantuelle. Calypso's stanzaic structure derived (as noted in Chapter Two) from the nineteenth century *belair* song and the influence of the English verse and oratory; the latter came to define the rhymed-couplet format of the narrative/ballad calypso from the 1930s on. Like other Afro-Creole artistic manifestations, calypso resisted several censoring policies through its transformations. And indirection became a valid disguising strategy in the calypsonian's tackling of sociopolitical and cultural issues and the articulation of the people's rebellious and resistant will. It conditioned the tone of the calypsonian's idiom through verbal coding, fiction, humour, ridicule, censure, and complaint.

The calypso song that the calypsonian Lord Invader composes in this short story is aimed at defending carnival as an antidote to mitigate the social anguish caused by the country's difficult situation (scarcity of goods, starvation, and military blockade). But, above all, it defends carnival as probably the one thing truly of their own for Trinidadians: their only context of communal assertion of their culture and themselves as a people. This calypso's probable chorus lines corroborate that: "They better don't stop the Carnival,/ Carnival is a Creole Bacchanal,/ They better don't stop the Carnival ..." (203). The feast and excessive confusion implied in the term *bacchanal* justify the people's desire of making carnival a Creole revolt through which their resistant selves find free expression. Their spirit of rebellion, livened up during carnival, is conveyed in the phrase *They better don't stop the carnival*. The threat implicit in this statement is formulated around the feelings of anger and indignation of the people at the impossibility of celebrating their festive rebellion. It implies a possibility of real revolt if the people are denied the right to celebrate their emancipation, to assert themselves as a culture and a people. This spirit of rebellion is upheld by Lord Invader through his resoluteness at composing his

calypso for the calypso competition, which is affirmed in the words of Ma Manette: “Whether they stop Carnival or not, you think they could stop Lord Invader? . . .” (204). It is also asserted by Ellie and Birdie, as they foresee the possibility of rebellion because of the banning of carnival:

Ellie said, “Somehow, I don’t think they’ll stop the Carnival. It’s too much of a big thing. People will riot.” . . . “I wasn’t thinking of that,” Birdie said. “I was just thinking that if anybody want to play mas —if anybody really want to jump up— he’ll have to go out in the country . . .” (204).

Birdie forwards here the view that people will still celebrate carnival out of the urban scenario, in the countryside, as a sort of maroonaged celebration. Running away to the countryside to play *mas* would translate here into one of those strategic acts of subversion of the colonial order developed by Trinidadian colonized subjects to resist domination.

This rebelliousness among Trinidadians furthered in the comments of Ellie and Birdie is conveyed in the lyrics of the calypso that Lord Invader is composing. The entertaining mood of the calypso singer would allow here the singing of a somehow humorous report about the people’s rebellious attitude, that surely implies a censure to the colonial governor’s policy:

The Governor stop our festival  
But some say they’ll still play their Carnival,  
The Governor stop our festival  
But some say they’ll still play their Carnival,  
So the Lord Invader went out of town,  
I was afraid they’d shoot me down” (205).

The amusing part of this calypso song is afforded in the story of secret love affair between Lord Invader and his neighbour’s daughter, suggested in the last rhymed-couplet of this stanza: “So I went down Carenage Water/ Playing hide and seek with my neighbour’s daughter.” (205).

These lines further the view of the Caribbean macho man as sex symbol, generally asserted in the world of calypso. At the same time, they corroborate the indirect rhetorical style of the calypsonian through the metaphoric connotation of *playing*, diverted from the sexual terrain through the implication of those other contexts of playing a game or playing *mas*. But indirection functions here, most importantly, in the humorous allusion to Lord Invader's love affair with the girl, which provides an entertaining motif around which the calypsonian's tackling of a sociopolitical issue is expounded. The indirect idiom of calypso seems to be confirmed by the calypsonian himself in the final lines of his calypso: "I finally decided I could not go, and now I'll tell you in calypso/ That I went down Carenage water/ Playing hide and seek with my neighbour's daughter" (206). The calypsonian means in calypso —interpreted as a lyrical and narrative form of indirect commentary and expression— that he could only play his (sex) game/his *mas* (or jump up) hidden away from the sight of the girl's father/the colonial governor. He will then continue singing his chant of resistance for the people in disguise if necessary, Anancy-like, subverting the controlling or banning policy of the colonial government. Lord Invader's calypso "The Governor stop our Carnival" articulates the people's rebellious attitude and spirit of resistance.

This very spirit of resistance of Trinidadians is celebrated by the extradiegetic narrator with his presentation of his narrative commentary on the Trinidadian sociopolitical reality of 1942 and the rebellious and resistant will of the people through the guiding motif of the composition of a calypso song. As a lyrical, narrative form, Lord Invader's narrative/ballad calypso offers an autobiographical account alluding to this sociopolitical and historical circumstance and carrying social protest. This same circumstance is expounded in this short story through an omniscient narration about the calypsonian and his composing his calypso. Thus, the sociopolitical and historical commentary presented in this omniscient narration becomes a

meta-narrative exercise of calypso composition: a calypso-moulded narration about the composition of a calypso song. And this sociohistorical circumstance has provided the thematic background for the creation of Lord Invader's narrative/ballad calypso and the calypso-like narration offered in this short story. It is, as mentioned before, the sociohistorical reality of Trinidad in the early forties: according to Dawn K. Batson, from 1942 to 1946 during World War II carnival was banned. The testimony of Stella Abbott, a Trinidadian music teacher interviewed by Batson at the age of 84, tells about the event:

[A]t the beginning of the war carnival was still allowed but one year the Governor banned carnival. I remember the chantuelle singing, 'the Governor say no mas' and the crowd would answer, 'The Governor mother ass,' I don't know if it was related but there was no carnival for the rest of the war! (198-99).

This event and other elements belonging to that sociohistorical reality have been incorporated into the story, serving the fictional relate. Lord Invader, for instance, was a well-known calypsonian of the forties and fifties. He was the author of "Rum and Coca Cola" (1946), a classic calypso presenting a "bitterly protesting lament about prostitution and social distress" during the Yankees' occupation of Trinidad (Rohlehr, "Calypso" 217). The sociopolitical implications of many of Lord Invader's calypsos, corroborated in this calypso, are also verified in this short story with the fictional one "The Governor stop our Carnival".

Furthermore, Oval Boys and Invaders were the names of two steelbands of the period. Many of these bands' names —Batson notes— were taken from American films of the time (their titles), and "were calculated to strike fear into the hearts of other bands", as is the case of "Red Army, Desperadoes, Renegades and Invaders". This threatening sensation aimed at with the choice of these names was necessary at the time, given the great rivalries between bands and the communities represented by these bands (200). As for Invaders, it has been noted that it was



the great steelband of the forties and fifties (Johnson 208). This creative attitude or inventiveness of Trinidadians with language in the choice of bands' names is illustrated in this short story when the Manette boys decide on *Invaders* as the name for their band. These are Birdie's words: "I mean, now it's war, that's why the Governor stop the Carnival. Look, they have a war picture called 'Invaders', and Lord Invader making havoc in town. That's the name we want, Invaders . . ." (207). With this name, they would like to make havoc in the steelband competitions, just like the German submarines in the Caribbean sea and Lord Invader with his new calypso song.

The presence of these elements from that episode of Trinidad's social history in this short story suggests that this story was created out of the fictionalisation of historical data relevant to the epoch referred to in the story. The fictionalisation of the past serving creative purposes has certainly marked the fictional writing of Michael Anthony. As he himself has suggested, his stories are generally grounded on his country's historical past: "[O]ne of the things that happens quite a lot is that whenever I intend to write, whenever I write I tend to go back in a time which fascinates me" (20). His love for history and his nostalgia for a gratifying past experience seem to come together in his desire to make history into stories. His love for history has surely guided him in writing his many historical works (see Appendix I). Moreover, his personal childhood experience crops up within his fiction in his quasi autobiographical novels *Green Days by the River* (1967) and *The Year in San Fernando* (1965).

This creative narrative strategy of making a story based on a past reality has been developed in his short story "They Better Don't Stop the Carnival" as well. The very names of the main character and the steelbands speak for the historical time recreated in the story. Anthony's use of the same name of the actual person or a similar one for his characters responds to the fact

that his characters are based on real people, and it would impart solidity to the story. It is ratified by the author as he explains why the protagonist of his first novel *The Games Were Coming*, based on a real person named Lyons, was named Leon for the novel: “I usually have to, for myself, choose a name that is near to the person because I must believe in the person, and if it is too far, then you know, it is somebody different ...” (22). The closeness to the reality obtained with Anthony’s method of choosing the names of his characters contributes to make his stories sound, convincing. That is why, perhaps, many of his works are very compact and whole, a view furthered by Daryl C. Dance in her interview to the author (Anthony 21).

This closeness to a reality that belongs to the past pursued in Anthony’s fiction through the making into story/fiction of historical data becomes a central strategy in his creative writing. It points at an understanding of his work not merely as a recreation in fiction of the past but, rather, as a fictional interpretation of the Trinidadian sociohistorical reality. This authorial act of rescuing through fiction the past parallels the literary acts of recording history for the cultural and social education of younger generations found sometimes in Velma Pollard’s stories. Seemingly in Anthony’s story here, his fictional interpretation of sociohistorical reality is aimed at entertaining a Caribbean audience, and at teaching them, probably, about their cultural history and their folk culture (specifically about calypso and carnival). Since Anthony’s lesson based on the fictional interpretation of a sociohistorical and cultural reality is developed here within the context of fictional writing and, in the case of this short story, within the context of calypso as oral narrative, it positions the author in the role of literary commentator of historical content. He becomes a literary version of the calypsonian, rendering his commentary not on the present social situation, but on a social and cultural experience of the past. And the most significant element that the literary calypsonian wants to highlight in his fictional relate about that experience is the rebellious stance of the Trinidadian crowd of that

time defying the colonial governor's banning of carnival with their chant of mockery and defiance. Similar to the calypsonian singing the people's discontent, he has made his fictional commentary on that experience into a celebratory chant to the spirit of rebellion of the Trinidadian people, using calypso which has been a most popular form of expression of the Afro-Creole cultural resistance.

This view of the writer as calypsonian is supported in this short story by the fact that the composition of the calypso song "They better don't stop the Carnival" or "The Governor stop our Carnival" is the guiding motif of the story. The process through which Lord Invader invents his calypso "The Governor stop our Carnival" defines the thematic line of the story: the story of the composition of a calypso song echoing a sociopolitical event, which conditions the narration or composition of the text "They Better Don't Stop the Carnival". There are, therefore, two narrators and two singers. One is Lord Invader, who is trying to make a sociopolitical event relevant to his personal life-experience into a narrative/ballad calypso. And the other is the writer, who is making a sociohistorical event into a fictional story through the composition of a calypso song-like text. Both are composing here their narrative calypso: the calypsonian, within the thematic context of the text, and the writer, from within its formal context specially. The musical content of this story has seemingly influenced the narrative style for its presentation.

On the one hand, the realization of the calypsonian as both singer and narrator is supported by the critical recognition of calypso as oral literature: "[L]iterature', considering the conception, 'oral', considering the method of transmission", rendered through rhythmic music (Warner 3). It is also reinforced by the parallelism between the calypsonian and the storyteller furthered by Gordon Rohlehr in his critical analysis of the evolution of calypso in the first half of the

twentieth century (“Images” 198-200). On the other hand, the view of the Trinidadian writer as a calypsonian is supported by a fictional writing that sometimes resembles the narrative of the calypsonian. Its rhetorical and structural features have influenced the works of Trinidadian writers like Samuel Selvon, Lawrence Scott, and Earl Lovelace.

This perspective of the Trinidadian writer as literary inheritor of the calypsonian’s rhetorical and narrative style is ratified in Selvon’s short story “Calypsonian”. The narrator’s relate about the calypsonian Razor Blade turns at times, as if in the manner calypso, into a commentary on the distressing socioeconomic situation lived by the country at the time. Such commentary conveyed by the extradiegetic, Creole-speaking narrator and opening the narration of the story is also raised by Razor Blade in the calypso that he begins to create. Similar to what is noted in relation to Michael Anthony’s text “They Better Don’t Stop the Carnival”, the narrative style of the calypsonian illustrated in the text in the presentation of the calypsonian’s act of composition is apparently conditioning the construction of the fictional text. Then, the easygoing Creole narration of this narrator-storyteller and social commentator becomes rhymed in certain instants during the relate, as if imitating the rhymed-couplet format of the ballad calypso. This rhymed-narrative pattern is also found in Lovelace’s prose, and in the narration of Sookoo, the storyteller in Ismith Khan’s “Shadows Move in the Britannia Bar”. Besides, the pattern of repetition defining the song-like structure of Sookoo’s narration in this text suggests an adaptation of the chorus-and-stanza structure of calypsos. It also occurs in Scott’s “Ballad for the New World”, where the repeated refrain reproduces the lines of the most known, probably, of Lord Invader’s calypsos: “[R]um and Coca-Cola ... working for the Yankee dollar” (326). These examples of fictional narrative influenced, stylistically, by calypso corroborate the view of these writers as literary versions of the calypsonian, and point at a new musical (calypsonian) narrative mode in the literature of Trinidad and Tobago.

In “They Better Don’t Stop the Carnival”, the calypsonian’s narrative invades the terrain of the extradiegetic narration. It occurs through the notable crediting of the narrative discourse of this calypsonian amidst his process of composition in the construction of this narration. Thus, Lord Invader’s message of social protest in defence of carnival and criticizing the colonial governor’s policy reported by the narrator shapes the body of the extradiegetic narration. The voices of the narrator and the calypsonian composing this narrative/ballad calypso commenting the 1942’s Trinidadian experience during World War II and defending carnival come together in the rendering of the story, and thus the rebellious chant of sociopolitical protest and resistance offered in this calypso is seemingly produced by one narrating agent. The narrative of the calypsonian conveying this rebellious chant becomes, then, bivocal.

The calypsonian’s voice blends with the narrator’s through free indirect style when the narration is advanced from within his consciousness. Notice this example, describing the calypsonian’s enthusiasm in the first stage of the process of composition of his calypso:

Lord Invader grew excited. Yes, this could be one of his numbers this year. This could be one of his great ones in the tent. They were starting the calypso season on Saturday, and apart from the one he had composed about the Yankees, this one and maybe another in the same vein could bring down the house (203).

Despite the third person and the past tense —which both indirect and free indirect discourse consist of, according to Gates (210), and the standard idiom of this narrative discourse, the above example presents an account of the silent words that the calypsonian is producing in his mind. The expression *Yes* indicates the presence of a reported speech (the calypsonian’s) without resorting to dialogue or direct discourse. The interspersion of free indirect discourse (indicated by the expression *Yes*) with indirect discourse (suggested by the third person

indicated in the possessive pronoun *his*) in this sentence corroborates the prominence of the calypsonian's discourse in this fragment. The calypsonian's idiom and sensibility are asserted here in the idiomatic expression *could bring down the house*. This expression and the previous instance of free indirect speech "direct the reader to the subjective source of the statement, rendered through a fusion of narrator and a silent but speaking character" (Gates 210). This fusion is reinforced at the linguistic level of the text with the choice of a same linguistic register to produce the converging voices of these two narrators. The fact that their voices appear in standard English —the narrator's in a Trinidad and Tobago Standard English (TTSE) slightly influenced by Creole and the calypsonian's in a Creole-influenced TTSE— facilitates the approximation of both narrative voices in the rendering of this narration obviously conceived in the standard regional variety of English. The linguistic standardisation of the narrative exercise here produced supports the bivocal character of this narration.

The subjective character of the reported silent speech of the calypsonian is more clearly manifest in this other instance:

He sat up, worried. The knocking of hammer on oil drum distracted him a little and made him even more irritated. Just imagine —Governor Young was calling on all Trinidadians to strain every muscle to help in the war effort, and yet he didn't want to give the all clear for bands to practice. Instead, he had made a statement saying that Carnival at this stage of the war was a big risk (200).

The expression *Just imagine* and the idiomatic one *give the all clear* refer to the voice of the calypsonian coming from his inner thoughts, and reported by the narrator. His reported silent speech is introduced with the expression *Just imagine*, and shapes —except for the paragraph's two first sentences— the narrative body of the text's second paragraph. As this second excerpt also show, it is through this bivocalism that the reader is presented the social commentary of the calypsonians, implying also a critique to the colonial governor's policy. It is illustrated as

well in the paragraph describing the difficult socioeconomic situation in the country, where the reported silent speech of the calypsonian materializes itself in the final sentence with the Creole-related phrase: “Or if you [are] down by the sea” (201), showing the dropping of the verb *to be*.

In fact, as Lord Invader’s reported direct speech shows, the omission of the auxiliary verb *to be* in the continuous tense is a common trait in his speech. The omissions that characterize the Trinidadian Creole language specially in its grammatical level are also corroborated in this text in the extradiegetic narration. It happens in very few instances, like: “Now, forgetting [that] he [Lord Invader] was in their yard instead of the other way [a]round, he said, ‘Ellie man, what [are] you and Birdie doing?’” (200), and “[A]nd the applause was so deafening [that] he had to turn away . . . And there he was, wearing his white flannel pants and his pink silk shirt, and a handkerchief [a]round his neck” (201). In the first instance, it seems that Lord Invader’s Creole-influenced speech which is quoted thereafter has influenced the TTSE language of the narrator showing omissions as it happens in Creole. In the second, the language of Lord Invader’s consciousness from which this description is produced has probably fostered the occurrence of these omissions in the language of the omniscient narrator reporting the calypsonian’s inner thoughts. The calypsonian’s narrative is then signifying upon the omniscient narration not only at the semantic level but also at its linguistic level. The fact that the commentary on the Trinidadian experience of the epoch is rendered through a double-voiced narration marked by the presentation of the calypsonian’s narrative discourse reinforces the perception of the extradiegetic narrator as calypsonian as well, and of the writer, then, composing a narrative calypso.

The bivocalism produced in this text through the simultaneous convergence of the voices of the calypsonian and the extradiegetic narrator for rendering this sociopolitical narrative commentary has brought about the realization of a narrative informed by the idiom of social critique and protest of the ballad calypso of the forties. This narrative strategy certifies here the Trinidadian writer's inheritance of the style of the calypsonian fostering a calypsonian narrative mode in this fiction. Such outright crediting of calypso's cultural legacy within the formal context of this fictional narrative does not occur, in comparison, in Ismith Khan's text "Shadows Move in the Britannia Bar". The realization of the calypsonian narrative mode occurs in the storytelling account of Sookoo, which is framed/bracketed by the extradiegetic narration. Thus, the song-like narrative pattern is contained together with the storyteller's narrative, alienated from the standard narration (the third person narration in TTSE), whereas in Anthony's text calypso is made to signify, transgressively, upon the traditional narrative pattern of omniscient narration in the standard linguistic variety. Like in Pollard's and Senior's texts already analysed, this direct crediting of the Caribbean oral culture through a multiple-voiced narration allows the clear celebration of this culture in a literature being developed around the legitimisation the oral within and through the literary. The Trinidadian calypsonian mode revealed in "They Better Don't Stop the Carnival" is a result of this consistent attitude of the writer toward his oral culture, and confirms the synergistic perspective of this writer as literate and oral narrator and singer.

The calypsonian narrative mode is ratified in this text through the appropriation of various formal elements of calypso as song-text, such as its structural and rhythmical patterns. The stanza-refrain-stanza format of calypso is materialized in this narration through the repetition of a theme that mediates between the several narrative sections of the text. As it happens in many Caribbean popular songs and calypsos in which the repeated refrain provides the title of the



song, the title of this narrative calypso, “They Better Don’t Stop the Carnival”, reverberates all throughout the story as a sort of refrain, resuming the feelings of indignation of Trinidadians toward the possible banning of carnival. This enunciation triggers Lord Invader’s composition of his calypso song as well as the creation of this short story or narrative calypso. It is reiterated several times in the narration, functioning as refrain and concluding statement that occurs at the end of a narrative section/stanza. Other times the refrain gets rid of its threatening meaning to convey only the idea of the banning of carnival, also at the end of a passage: “[W]ould Governor Sir Hubert Young stop the Carnival?” (200), “It said they want to stop the Carnival” (202), “Look at the headline: ‘Governor May Stop The Carnival’” (202). And this notion of the prohibition of carnival celebrations is the one reiterated in the final narrative sections of the text. What it is narrated in the sections/stanzas of this calypso are the psychic and physical reactions of the characters of the story toward the news of carnival not being celebrated: Lord Invader’s inarticulate thoughts of dissatisfaction and his daydreaming about singing his calypso in the coming calypso season before a highly excited and applauding multitude, the stupefaction of the Manette family at knowing the news, the disappointment and anger of Ellie and Birdie, the resignation of Ma Manette, and the sadness of Mr Manette.

The first narrative sections/stanzas of the text present Lord Invader’s silent mental and physical reactions to the news of the possible banning of carnival and his process of composition of his calypso song. Following the narrator’s account, it seems that the beginning of a new narrative stanza is furthered by Lord Invader’s physical movements described as a change in his seating position —like seating up, leaning against the breadfruit tree or lying back, turning around, crossing one leg over the other— and, primarily, in the movement of his head, which is where his composition process is developed. Many times in the text a movement of Lord Invader’s head indicates a new stage in the creation of his calypso, and the development of another

narrative section/stanza. Firstly, the opening sentences of this text locate, geographically, the starting point of Lord Invader's process of composition and his seating position: "Lord Invader sat on a bench *underneath* the breadfruit *tree*. He had his right leg crossed over the left *knee*, and his head *leaned* against the *tree* trunk" (200. Emphasis added). This direct descriptive setting of the story differs, because of its directness and brevity, from the usually long descriptive first sentence of many of Earl Lovelace's novels and short stories, for instance, and suggests an approximation to the short lines/verses narrative pattern of a calypso song that refers, in this case, a story about a calypsonian called Lord Invader. The rhyming pattern that appears through the repetition of the vocalic sound /i/ in the underlined words within this passage may support the interpretation of these sentences as the first verses of a calypso song-text.

Furthermore, in the narrative stanza in which the refrain *They Better Don't Stop the Carnival* appears for the first time and concludes the paragraph, Lord Invader's inner reflection is signalled with his diverting his sight implying a movement of his head: "He looked across the road at the huge sward of green that was the Queen's Park Oval and there were a few cyclists riding around the track . . . he looked at them without even seeing them" (200-201). The refrain was reverberating in his mind propelling, unconsciously, the creation of his calypso and proposing itself as its title. Further on, this repeated refrain (turned the title of a possible calypso song) at the end of a paragraph provokes another head movement in Lord Invader, which introduces the stanza referring the economic hardships derived from the war and a relevant instance of the social protest articulated in this calypso: "He turned his head the other way and said, 'Stupes.' Why should he be singing that? He didn't even want to think that such a thing could happen" (201). And after this paragraph, "He turned his head" (202) again opens a new stanza that refers Lord Invader's communicating the news to the Manette family, which

concludes with the assertive refrain: ““Yes. It [the *Evening News*] said they want to stop the Carnival”” (202). Right here the second part of the text begins with narrative stanzas that refer the reactions of the other characters of the story to the news and the most important phases of Lord Invader’s process of composition. From here on, the notion of the prohibition of carnival, known then to all, defines the refrain that continues to be reiterated throughout the text; and Lord Invader’s movements of his head continue to advance the composition of his calypso and thus the narrative stanzas of the text.

The characters’ responses to the repeated enunciation carrying the notion of the prohibition of carnival (*they better don’t stop the carnival* or *stop the carnival*) help to advance the calypso’s creation for both the fictional calypsonian (Lord Invader) and the literary calypsonian. This incremental repetition functions, then, as a catalyser in the creative, composing processes here developed, bringing the progression of the story or event narrated forward. Besides, through this repetition as a narrative technique, the meanings carried within the prohibition and the threat are reinforced; the notion of prohibition is made to be felt more present and disapproving for the people and the characters in the story, and their anger and rebellious will is emphasized. As a linking and unifying element within the narration, this repetition imparts solidity to the fictional text from within both its semantic level and its narrative context.

Since repetition is an essential rhythmical element in songs, this incremental repetition realized as the chorus of this calypso song-text explains, at a first level, the rhythmical quality of the text. Besides, there is a pattern of syntactical repetition occurring sometimes previous to the refrain, that appears to ratify the rhythmic character of the phrases or lines leading to the chorus of the song. It is observed in both narrative idioms (Lord Invader’s and the narrator’s). The following instance of Lord Invader’s reported direct speech addressed to the Manette boys

illustrates this pattern of repetition: ““But what you’ll do with it? That’s why I asked you if you read the papers. What you’ll do with it if the Governor stop the Carnival?”” (203). This repeated question held in relation to the boys’ steelpans comes to shape the last line/verse of a stanza containing at the end the main repeated enunciation of the song-text. This pattern of repetition aiding the completion of other verses suggests the realization of a *synthetic rhythm* (Cuddon 678) in this song-like narrative.

This rhythmical narrative style defined by repetition and found in the calypsonian’s speech is echoed in the narrator’s relate, as these examples show: “He looked at them, but they did not hold his attention. In fact, he looked at them without even seeing them” (201), and “Lord Invader kept lying still, and now his eyes were closed. But he was not sleeping. In fact, although his eyes were closed, the scene before his eyes could not have been more vivid” (201). In both examples, the connective expression *In fact* facilitates the occurrence of the repeated syntactical constructions *he looked at them* and *his eyes were closed* in the narration. Besides, in the first example the repetition of the pronoun *them* signalling the pauses within this enunciation suggests the realization of a brief rhyming scheme that reinforces the rhythmical quality afforded by this pattern of syntactical repetition. In another instance, the realization of this pattern of repetition suggesting the synthetic rhythm in the construction of verses is determined by the narrator’s refusal to supply a pronoun to substitute an already cited element, thus the re-cited or repeated syntactical construction furthers this rhythmical pattern in this passage:

He turned his head, and as he looked at the window, he caught Mr Manette looking at him. Mr Manette had no time to pull back in his head. Mr Manette pretended he was looking up at the breadfruit, then at the sky, then shamefacedly he said, “Invader boy, the war look tough. Yesterday the *Evening News* said ...” He stuttered a little bit because he did not know what the *Evening News* said yesterday. Because he did not buy a copy of the *Evening News* (202).

The most clearly repeated elements in this excerpt are the nominal syntactical constructions *Mr Manette* and *the Evening News*, occurring three times. But other elements are also repeated close to this second nominal construction, like the past verb *said*—signalling then a repeated verbal syntactical construction— and the syntactical construction *Because he did not*. Certainly, these intended repetitions shaping the subsequent lines afford rhythm to the narration, as it happens in the song-texts.

Moreover, as these several examples also show, the repetition of a same discursive element before a pause may imply the occurrence of a rhyming pattern. It is explained not only in the repetition of a same word—like *them* in the example previously cited, but also of a same or similar vocalic sound in words before a pause, suggesting the end of a verse. The following fragment illustrates this:

Lord Invader turned into Abbé Pougade *Street*, but he did not go right down. His mind was still aflame. He made for the almond *tree*, not far from which was the sandy *coastline* upon which the waves rushed up and rushed back. He could have gone home, which was the last house on the *right*, but he could not wait. He was afraid to lose the words which felt red hot and pouring from his *mind* (206. Emphasis added).

Here the repetition of the vocalic sounds /i/ in the words *Street* and *tree*, and /ai/ in the words *coastline*, *right* and *mind* may indicate the presence of rhymed lines forming this narrative stanza. A similar rhyming pattern is suggested in this other passage from the text presenting Birdie's words:

“If the British and the Germans want to fight for ten thousand years, let them fight, but they don't have to touch this Carnival. We didn't do them anything. If the Germans bombing London every night, it ain't have nothing to do with me. I'm here tuning up me pan for Carnival and you telling me this” (203).

There are two apparently parallel clauses introduced with the conditional *If* and reaching a pause in the rhymed words *fight* and *night*. Also the repeated word *Carnival* and the repeated sound /l/ in the words *me* and *this* before a pause support the idea of a rhyming pattern occurring in these lines. The presence of these *narrative rhymes* in this text enhances the rhythm provoked by repetitions (incremental, syntactical and lexical). They all infuse the text with a musical quality like in songs, in which rhymes and repetition are two essential rhythmical elements.

Finally, and more interestingly, the rhythmic quality of this narration afforded by the realization of these patterns of repetition described as rhymes and syntactical repetition is ratified throughout the text by its narrative discourse. The narrative discourse of the calypsonian-narrator offering this story shows a general stable pattern in the arrangement of the syllables or the duration of the enunciation, which is defined by the occurrence of short utterances—as the two previously quoted fragments illustrate. This discursive pattern, that may be held evocative of the short-line format of the texts of songs, creates an internal rhythm that develops rather rapidly due to the continuing presence of short utterances in the narration. This rapid rhythm points at the brevity of a narrative act that will not last long. On this account, it draws parallels with the calypso song-text because of the brevity that characterizes it and the conciseness and directness of its act of enunciation determined, partly, by this brevity.

Especially, this rapid rhythm provoked by the discursive pattern of short utterances in this text reveals a narrative exercise committed to the exposition (or critical commentary) of a situation—the situation of economic depression and colonial domination in the 1942's Trinidadian experience. There is not, then, a thorough description of the situation, the environment, the

characters, their sentiments —the narration does not delve into the emotional state of all the characters; it does not offer a psychological or sociocultural study of the characters. That is why there are not long descriptive passages in the narration that would allow, probably, for long sentences and utterances. Therefore, like the calypsonian, the narrator has just aimed at reporting and commenting this experience while rendering the story of a calypsonian composing a calypso. He has appropriated also the critical and denouncing stance of the calypsonian, which has determined the tone of social protest of his report. Then, the calypsonian's discourse reveals itself in the narrative context through these rhythmical patterns conditioning the structure of this song-text, which supports its interpretation as a calypso song: a narrative/ballad calypso.

This narrative calypso that relates the 1942's Trinidadian social experience through a metafictional process of calypso composition confirms the role of calypso as a musical and narrative vehicle for the rendering of social commentary and stories about the everyday lives of Trinidadians. It defends carnival as the Trinidadian sociocultural context par excellence for the expression of cultural resistance and rebellion, where calypso and the calypsonian are key (artistic) agents in the voicing of the people and their concerns. The chantuelle's voice of resistance producing this narrative/ballad calypso celebrates here the rebellious spirit of the people, evoked in the reiterated refrain of defiance *They better don't stop the Carnival* that appears to be sung by the rebelling crowd answering the calypsonian's resistant verse, singing their resistance as well.

Interpreted as a calypso song, this text also furthers the recognition of calypso as sung narrative, or rather, as oral literature rendered through music. This oral literature, when incorporated into fictional writing, makes possible the realization of a narrative that legitimises

the culture from which it springs, and of the writer as a firm literary exponent of that culture. Anthony was certainly promoting here the development of a Trinidadian literary aesthetic based on the folk culture of calypso through his adaptation of calypso (its content, idiom, and form) into this short story. He was advancing then (in literature) the integration of calypso, a folk musical form, within the sense of cultural aesthetic in the Caribbean, which is what Barbadian scholar and writer Edward K. Brathwaite defends for the articulation of cultural sovereignty from within the context of Caribbean arts. Only a few years ago Brathwaite addressed, critically, the disavowal of the folk culture in the Caribbean as a hindering factor for the attainment of cultural sovereignty. He pointed at the importance of the positive recognition of autonomous folk cultural and artistic forms like calypso for such purpose: “The kind of [musical and narrative] patterns that the calypso has evolved . . . is miraculous and something which we have not started to essentialise as part of our sense of aesthetic” (“New Aesthetic” 148). Anthony’s adaptation of the stylistic patterns of calypso in this short story defines somehow a literary praxis of articulation of a Caribbean aesthetic based on and asserting the region’s folk culture and experience.



**The Lyrical Politicising of Narrative: Dub Poetry and Social Protest in Makeda Silvera's  
"Caribbean Chameleon"**

When yuh succumb to certain tings in silence  
yuh build up di power of di oppressor  
to exploit a next person.  
(The words of one of the women in Sistren's *Lionheart Gal*)

The sample of short narrative offered in Silvera's text has been conceived as a prose-type of poetic declamation furthering a politically conditioned argument, as in the style of dub poetry: the Jamaica-born oral, poetic form of political art. This is a poetic declamation in prose revealing the author's political responsibility, as an expatriate black Caribbean woman writer, toward the Third World experience in her Caribbean native country (Jamaica), and toward the reality of racism lived by black (Caribbean) people in Canada. It is the text, then, of a writer of fiction, of a scholar committed to the struggle for equal rights among the races<sup>95</sup>, and of a dub poet and community worker<sup>96</sup>. The several interpretations that can be afforded to this text (fictional narration, poetry, and political statement) attest to the transforming/chameleonic quality conveyed in its title. It confirms, stylistically, the hybridism inherent to Caribbeanness, defining every form of expression in the Caribbean. The analysis of this short story proposed below is focused on its interpretation as a text of dub poetry, in which the message of social protest of the Caribbean woman dub poet and community worker is rendered through an adaptation of the stylistic features of this oral poetic form to the context of short fictional

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<sup>95</sup> This very scholar is also the author of *Silenced*, an acclaimed collection of oral histories of Caribbean domestic workers in Canada, published by Sister Vision: Black Women and Women of Colour Press, of which she is co-founder.

<sup>96</sup> Silvera's writing realigns itself with that of other Afro-Jamaican female dub poets living in Canada, like Lillian Allen and Afua Cooper, who see themselves as cultural and community workers, pursuing social change with their poetry.

writing. Above all, the militant, lyrical and rhythmically-bound rhetoric of the dub poet informing this text advances its perception as a hybrid dub poetic-narrative work.

This text offers the brief story of a black Caribbean woman, resident in Canada, travelling from Jamaica to Canada after a two-week vacation in her native country. The story centres on the description of the moment previous to the departure of the flight from Jamaica's airport, and on that of the passengers' passing through the immigration control after their arrival to Pearson International Airport (Canada). The depressed Jamaican social panorama revealed in the airport, as well as the racially-prejudiced Canadian immigration control are exposed through the critical, denouncing gaze of the dub poet/writer. On the former moment, a great variety of would-be passengers are waiting for the departure, moved by also a multiplicity of causes for their journey: "Gunman, mule, don, cowboy, domestic, refugee, tourist, migrant, farmworker, musician, political exile, business exile, economic exile, cultural exile, dreadlocks, locks-woman, fashion-dread, press-head, extension hair, higgler" (27).

Many of the Jamaican travellers are leaving the island for settling in the North and starting a new life, a purpose concealed to the immigration officers regulating the entrance to the developed Northern country. Such is the case of the woman dressed in red frock, who also lies to her crying child on the duration of her journey, trying to console him and the older woman, probably his grandmother. She is leaving "to seek better life, tell Immigration is holiday. Send for little boy and older woman when life tek [take]" (29). This peculiar case (though fictional) is reminiscent of the well-known and painful story of Caribbean children separated from their emigrating parents and being left behind to be raised by the grandmother<sup>97</sup>.

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<sup>97</sup> Life-experiences marked by this sociohistorical circumstance are fictionalised in the works of several Caribbean writers, like "Maria", by Jamaican D. Maria Corwill, and "My Mother", by Velma Pollard.

The economically motivated exile as the way to escape from an unpromising social milieu seems to explain, also, the case of the cowboy-type young man, a rogue, who parades in this story as another of the main characters. Visiting his mother is the pretext for resuming in Canada his devious social conduct: “Cowboy cool, cowboy determined, ‘Foreign land, north light, fi me and you, anyone, land of opportunity, to buy di latest model gun, to slaughter di baddest bwoy’” (29). Another main character is a Rastafarian<sup>98</sup> (referred to as Dreadlocks<sup>99</sup>), for whom the experience of living permanently abroad is uncertain: “Dreadlocks leaving the sunshine, collie weed [marijuana], ‘just for a time, just for a time, Babylon force I [me]’” (29). The exile or *self exile* —as Silvera describes it— of many Caribbean people in the 1960s and 1970s was a necessary experience for those who wanted “to seek ‘better’” or “to ‘get away’” from a distressing environment highly marked by social unrest —as it was the Jamaican society of those years (Silvera 413). Despite the more stable social climate of Caribbean countries in the subsequent decades, the economic exile of Caribbean people to the rich Northern countries continues to be a patent reality.

The central character of this short story, however, is not an economic exile travelling for settling in a rich country. She probably made that choice time ago. She, referred to as the black woman dressed in black polka dot pant suit, is an immigrant Jamaican woman in Canada who

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<sup>98</sup> 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. One of the Movement’s principal aims was blacks’ repatriation to Africa, which was to be fulfilled through the agency of the Ethiopian Emperor. 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).

<sup>99</sup> The word *dreadlocks* describes “the unshorn style in which the stereotypical Rasta wears the hair” (Pollard, “Innovation” 160).

*exiles* herself for a short time occasionally but from an onerous and humiliating job in Canada and from its severe cold. She then visits her homeland like this time, though for two weeks only, and regrets having to return to her oppressive and cold immigrant reality while drinking “one last coconut water” before leaving her sunny homeland (28).

It is through the portrayal of this diversified social and human environment in the Jamaican airport that the thematic context of this text yields more explicit meanings for its title. The transforming quality of the chameleon might be held suggestive of the variety implied within Caribbeanness here. There is a variety of Caribbean experiences, subjects, personalities, interests, perspectives, social beings, and exiles composing this mosaic of future travellers to Canada. Moreover, the chameleon’s characteristic of changing its colour in agreement with the surrounding environment might imply here a metaphoric allusion to a commonly changing state for Caribbean subjects forced to move and live between usually severely contrasting social and geographical realities, due, basically, to economic imperatives. (The economically-motivated journey or exile to escape from a depressed Caribbean environment constitutes a common social phenomenon frequently addressed in the region’s literature, as Olive Senior’s story “Ascot” also demonstrates). In a general view, and allowing for the larger conceptual context of a Caribbean experience of underdevelopment inserted within the Third World experience, it is the forced chameleonic state of Third World experience for guaranteeing survival that is conveyed here. It is explored through the reality of exile lived in the Third World Caribbean experience. Certainly, the panorama of forced exile described in this short story has served the dub poet/writer to highlight and denounce one of the gloomiest aspects of present-day Caribbean social reality, which is a by-product of the long experience of colonization endured in the region.

On the other hand, the description of these passengers' arrival in Canada centres on the immigration control. Immigration officers are portrayed here as the guardians of the doors to the civilized, predominantly white, developed social space. They decide who is admitted into their society and who is not. They are in charge of keeping the barrier up for the alien, unwelcome Other, as dub poet Lillian Allen tells in her poem "I Fight Back": "I came to Canada and found/ the doors of opportunity well guarded" (Allen 260). As the narration furthers, the racial/colour quality of the Other seems to be a question of special (discriminating) attention in the immigration control.

This discriminatory bias on account of people's racial identity in the immigration controlling procedures is noticed by the narrator: "Tourist, white, safe every time, unless foolish to take a little collie weed, a little spliff [marijuana]" (30). The black woman dressed in black polka dot pant suit, on the contrary, is interrogated several times and held suspect of committing illegal acts (like trafficking drugs), only because she, being Jamaican-born, has stayed in a hotel and not with her Jamaican relatives. She was supposed to visit her family in Jamaica and not to go on vacation, as any tourist, to her native country. Disconcerted, the woman tries to assert her rights: "What yuh saying, sir? Black people can't tek vacation in dem own homeland?" (30). Nonetheless, she is re-interrogated and her luggage searched. No longer patient, and feeling really embarrassed and outraged, the woman begins to protest angrily, raging like a furious, mad person over her suitcase being searched and her disordered belongings, and over herself and her put on clothes when the then frightened officer requested a body search in a locked room. Finally, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police is called for taking the black woman away and arrest her for indecent exposure. She is, by then, a very disturbing image: "Hair standing high. Head-wrap drop off. Eyes vacant. Open wide", avoided by an unsupporting crowd of

fellow Jamaicans: “Sister. Brother. Cousin. Mother. Aunt. Father. Grandparent. Look the other way” (32).

The militant standpoint of the dub poet/writer revealed in the presentation of this story as a literary exposition of social denounce is defined by several political *positionings* that advance the narration: against the exploitation through neocolonization of the Third World, racial and gender discrimination, and the labour exploitation of the black immigrant woman.

At a first level, the voice of the dub poet condemning imperial practices of domination seems to promote here the perception of tourism as a modern (neocolonial), and more subtle form of domination and exploitation in the Caribbean. Tourism is the basic economic activity in the region at present, having supplanted the monoproduktive agricultural scheme derived from the colonial Plantation economy. It became an economic imperative in the post-independence Caribbean that perpetuated, in the economic terrain, the dependence of these islands to the Western ex-colonizers. The Western tourist becomes a potential agent within the neocolonial mechanism favouring such dependence and dominance. Through the tourist, as a foreign sociocultural subject and a wanted visitor looking for a comforting vacation, these societies experience a foreign cultural penetration of Western societal models and their cultural values that seriously undermines their cultural sovereignty. But the negative results of tourism are not only traced in what it brings into these societies with this cultural penetration, but also in what it takes away: the island’s resources that are being sacrificed for the comforting benefit of the tourist and the economic benefit of a few. This situation is broached by Olive Senior in her lamenting poem “Rejected Text for a Tourist Brochure” (from her most recent book of poetry *Over the Roofs of the World*):

Come see my land  
 before the particles of busy fires ascend;  
 before the rivers descend underground;  
 before coffee plantations  
 grind the mountains into dust; before  
 the coral dies; before the beaches  
 disappear (53).

The island's resources will be finally saved —Senior foresees— but only imaginatively, for being celebrated in a song:

Take for a song  
 the Last Black Coral, the Last Green Turtle,  
 the Last Blue Swallow-tail (preserved behind glass).  
 Come walk the last mile to see the Last Manatee,  
 the Last Coney, the Last Alligator, the Last Iguana  
 Smile (54).

Then, the island's tropical resources, like its coastal landscapes and animal species, are disappearing with tourism. Some things are directly taken away by tourists, usually as souvenirs. This new type of cultural neocolonizer carrying away the island's fruits is the prevailing Western human type waiting for his/her flight back to Canada in the Jamaican airport in "Caribbean Chameleon":

Tourist with straw baskets, suntan, skin peeling, rum-filled stomach, tang of jerk pork Boston-style. Lignum vitae carvings, calabash gourds, a piece of black coral, earrings out of coconut shell . . . A little ganja, lambsbread, marijuana, senseh, collie weed, healing herbs, mushrooms; you can get anything, no problem, as long as there are U.S. dollars (27).

This passage reveals the Caribbean country as an exploited, cheap market revering the Yankee dollar: dependant, economically, on the Northern neighbour country that has been the major cultural new colonizer in the post-independence Caribbean. Moreover, there is the perception of the Western (American) tourist as an unpleasant being —an unpleasantness explained and

described by Jamaica Kincaid in her anti-(neo)colonial, (sort-of-tourist-brochure) short fictional work *A Small Place*. The reasons for this unwelcoming and disdainful view toward the generic white Western tourist in Caribbean fiction are to be found, as Kincaid claims, in the painful experience of exploitation, cultural domination, and racial discrimination brought forth by British colonialism in the region (22-26). This view is born out of the indignation of these writers for what the colonial past brought about and what it is still yielding in present-day Caribbean societies.

The enduring negative results of this long experience of colonial exploitation are also addressed in “Caribbean Chameleon” through the anti-(neo)colonial (authorial) perspective censuring Western practices of domination and exploitation. They are exposed in the narrator’s description of the daunting Jamaican social context at the time:

Temper crackle in dis small island. Sufferation pon di land. Tribulation upon tribulation. Some cyan tek di pressure . . . Badmanism reign, rent a gun, like yuh rent a car. Gunshot a talk, cowboy, dons, police and soldier tek over di streets. Woman have fi tek man fi idiot —learnt survival skills. Man tek woman fi meat —ole meat, young meat, sometimes ranstid (29).

In this underdeveloped and economically depressed social environment ridden with disorder, women are always the most severely affected ones, forced to provide for themselves and their families on their own, and having to endure men’s disrespect. Through this critical view of the Caribbean as an oppressive social context, the image of the Caribbean as a tropical paradise is seriously revoked. The myth of the Caribbean as an ever beautiful and gratifying sunny paradise, certified in touristic propaganda, is then dismantled. It cannot even be, ultimately, a paradise for the innocent tourist, due to the critical social conditions that would surround him/her (poverty, malnutrition, lack of vital resources, unemployment, etc.), not to mention the cool antipathy sustained in the look of the native defining him/her as an *unpleasant* being. It



appears to be, then, that Jamaica (the Caribbean chameleon) is showing the same sad colours for everyone: for the Rastafarian, the black and poor, the lower class people, the Jamaican-born expatriate, and the tourist as well. It is the sad colours of the postcolonial Jamaican social context that the denouncing voice of the dub poet is portraying to the reader in this narration.

Several words in the passage quoted above suggest the presence of the idiom of Rastafarians, such as *Sufferation*, *Tribulation*, and *Badmanism*. The former two words are part of Rastafarians' rhetoric of social protest against exploitation and racial discrimination. The *sufferers*, in the Rastafarian idiom or Dread Talk<sup>100</sup>, are the "poor ghetto dwellers": the people at the bottom of the social ladder, the black and poor (Pollard, "Innovation" 161). The latter word, *Badmanism*, meaning male roguishness, constitutes another instance of the inventiveness within the lexicon (*wordology*) of Dread Talk. This highly creative attitude of Rastafarians toward language use comes out of the need to enlighten —from within a black consciousness— the English-related word with new meanings, so that these new words would reflect their experience. As Pollard has noted, "when mention is made of the 'word', certainly in the language of Jamaica, it is to the Rastafari that one immediately looks since that group re-organized the vocabulary of Jamaica Talk to force the word to reflect a particular philosophy, a particular point of view" ("Dread" 215). And the Rastafarians' point of view corroborated this group's social and political ideology in favour of the dispossessed, suffering Jamaican. It was formulated, besides, around an opposition to colonialism and the culture of the British colonizers. The presence of the Rastafarian idiom in "Caribbean Chameleon", credited in the narrator's broaching of the Jamaican social crisis, points at an identification with the Rastafarian perspective, and thus, with the Jamaican *sufferers*. The anti-(neo)colonial narrative

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<sup>100</sup> This is how Velma Pollard describes the speech of Rastafarians. Other terms used to refer to it are: I-tally, I-ance, Iyaric, and Rasta Talk. (See Velma Pollard's articles "Dread Talk—The Speech of Rastafari in Modern Jamaican Poetry" and "Sound and Power: The Language of the Rastafari").

perspective bringing forth this narration is then imbued with the Rastafarian's sociopolitical standpoint against Western imperialism.

Other instances of the use of the Rastafarian code in this text confirm a militant narrative standpoint conditioned by the Rastafarian sociopolitical perspective. The Rastafarian perspective is credited in the opening line of this text: “Yard. Xamaica. Jamdown. Jah Mek Ya” (27). Jamaica is here defined, first, as the homeland for the Jamaican black people (Yard<sup>101</sup>); then as a Spanish colony in the New World, a colonized state (Xamaica<sup>102</sup>); and finally as a Rastafarian land, but one that restrains the social becoming of its natives. In the Rastafarian code, *Jamdown* means “‘place that inhibits one’s progress’ (Jamaica)”, and *Jah Mek Yah*, “‘Jah made this place’ (Jamaica)” (Pollard, “Innovation” 160). The crediting of the Rastafarian perspective through the use of Dread Talk in this text hints at an identification of the narrative agent or the writer with the black, lower class Jamaican people (represented in the main characters of the story), and with the Rastafarian ideological position in defence of the oppressed —or *downpressed* as the Rastafarian speaker would say— and discriminated ones. The Rastafarian expression *Jamdown* is seemingly chosen as the epigraph to introduce this narration denouncing a continual state of underdevelopment and dependence in the neocolonial context of Jamaica. The presence of the Rastafarian idiom in this narration adds to the parallelism between this text and dub poetry on account of the close relation between dub poetry and Rastafarianism as artistic and religious manifestations —respectively— of social protest in Jamaica. In dub poetry, social protest has been very often articulated by Rastafarian dub poets.

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<sup>101</sup> As Carolyn Cooper suggests in her analysis of Louise Bennett’s poem “Nayga Yard”, *Yard* is how the proverb-speaking rural and urban Jamaican nayga (nigger, black) folk refer to their homeland (41). Nayga Yard is Jamaica: a predominantly black society. The term *Yard* reflects, clearly, a black consciousness.

<sup>102</sup> The word *Xamaica* derives from *Xaymaica*, the name that Spaniards gave to the island modifying its former aboriginal Taino name *Haymaica*.

Paradoxically, the exile away from the homeland in a white developed country, also the Rastafarian Babylon, is thematized here as the chosen way to escape from the stifling social environment in the native country. But the ironic tone of the dub poet/narrator in describing the reality of exile —and condemning this common phenomenon of postcolonial underdeveloped countries— lived in the Jamaican airport suggests that this way out toward progress is uncertain. This ironic description implies a critique to the pro-Western-culture social attitudes among the Jamaican youth, as if echoing the Rastafarian ideology against cultural imperialism. The narrator's ironic glance reveals the future Jamaican immigrants as ridiculous beings or clowns playing their last tropical show before reaching the cold North: "Theatre, live at the airport" (28). They are *showing off* their best outfit in this important enterprise they are carrying out (journeying to the better life, the land of opportunity): "Woman in red frock, red shoes, red extension hair, black skin. Dreadlocks, Clarke's shoes, red, green and gold tam, smoking on last spliff. Cowboy in felt cap, dark glasses, nuff [enough] cargo round neck to weigh down a plane" (28). The narrator immortalizes them and their ludicrous travelling costumes in her narrative, descriptive mosaic with the Creole phrase "dressed to kill" (28). She derides them not for their appearance actually, but for their ignorance on what awaits them: "winter, snow, frostbite" (28). They will know soon that not even the frock, the expensive shoes, the sunglasses, or the gold or silver chains will protect them from the Canadian cold.

Furthermore, the ironic glance of the black Jamaican immigrant woman in Canada delivering the story<sup>103</sup> becomes a vehicle for the dub poet/narrator's articulation of her critique to the

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<sup>103</sup> Commenting on this short story, Silvera has noted that it is partly autobiographical: "Let me first say that while the characters in the story are fictional, it is a dramatization of something that happened to me some three to four years before I wrote the story. It was a hellish nightmare at Pearson International Airport on a return flight from Jamaica. I had gone on a week's vacation and stayed in one of the resort hotels. On arrival in Toronto, I was questioned, interrogated, searched. I told the immigration officer that I found her questioning me over and over again insulting and smacking of racism. She looked at my Canadian I.D. and still wanted to know my place of birth. When I told her my place of birth —one which I had left over twenty years ago— she wanted to know why I had to stay in a hotel. Why didn't I stay with family? Immediately I was a suspect —a drug trafficker or something like that. When I refused to follow her to be strip-searched the RCMP was called in ... and on ... and on. It ended

reality of racism and labour exploitation of non-Western subjects in Canada. Silvera's political awareness which furthers her denunciation of the fateful social effects of Western imperial practices in her native island is then oriented toward the immigrant Caribbean-Canadian reality. Besides the cold weather, Caribbean immigrants are faced with a very unfriendly and racist society that mostly offers squalid and humiliating jobs for these unwelcome newcomers. This Canadian reality of racial discrimination and of immigrants' dashed dreams is addressed by Makeda Silvera in *Her Head A Village*, especially in the short stories "Canada Sweet, Girl", "Baby", and "Welfare Line".

In "Caribbean Chameleon" Silvera expounds the question of topmost sociopolitical concern, ostensibly, for the black expatriate Caribbean-Canadian subject: the racial discrimination in Canada. It becomes a central theme, illustrated in the story of the central character narrated here. The fact that the woman dressed in black polka dot pant suit was black influenced the immigration's officer's suspicion of illegality in relation to her persona, because she was not supposed to go on vacation to her homeland and stay in a hotel. In these immigration officers' prejudiced view, only white tourist can afford the privilege—for long a privilege of only white, middle/upper class people—of paying a hotel stay. Their racial prejudice is explained by the long historical experience of institutionalised racism in Canada described, for example, in racist immigration laws and practices, and the racially-biased streaming of black children in the school system (Allen 259). Talking about her adolescent early experience in Canada, Makeda Silvera relates how the racist Canadian school system made her early expatriate experience "disastrous". It made her feel the climatic cold even bitter:

I found them [Canadian schools] very cold and unfriendly. During grades seven and eight, I was one of two Black kids in the school, and during my high school

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very badly, and I was angry, horrified, and wanted literally to murder somebody. Instead, I raged like a madwoman" (414).

years one of four. We were made to feel like unwelcome guests . . . Everything was so white, the libraries, the curriculum, the bias. I don't know how some of us from that era survived (410).

This racism was so strong, because it was institutionalised by the society's cultural state apparatus: through cultural institutions and academic centres. It has functioned in the non-recognition of the black Other's input in the Canadian cultural and historical landscape. This severely racist reality was realized by Afua Cooper, a Caribbean-Canadian dub poet and a Ph.D. candidate on History at the University of Toronto, when doing research on the history of the black people's presence in Canada. As she notes,

one shouldn't be surprised [to know] that Black people are not included in the history texts in spite of our 400 years here in Canada . . . Look at Toronto, which has large Black and so-called ethnic populations. Look at the history courses being taught in the institutions. It's still white British-oriented or white American or white Canadian. When you raise the issue of inclusion, you either face being stonewalled or you meet a wall of silence and hostility . . . The racism we mentioned earlier, it appears on every front. It appears in subtle ways, it appears in overt ways, but it's here. The Canadian history profession and the university are two of the last bastions of white supremacy . . . In my department I'm the only Black woman right now. We're not encouraged, and a lot of people expect you to drop out ("If you're true" 303-5).

It is important to note here that the strong racial awareness of black Caribbean subjects is a product of their expatriate experience, because the racial question in the Caribbean is not actually an urging one. The racial hybridism that developed in the region has determined, greatly, the stratification of these societies not on racial lines, but on colour lines. The lack of a real black racial consciousness in the Caribbean is due, also, to the fact that, in a general view, the majority of the populations of these territories are of African ancestry; white people were the minority. This is the case of Jamaica, a predominantly black nation. The Rastafarian group was the only one to develop a sense of racial consciousness and identity. However, as the Jamaican writer and sociologist Orlando Patterson has claimed, their racial consciousness was

developed on the basis of their opposition to British cultural supremacy: the supremacy of a colonizing culture that happened to be white: “[Y]ou had to confront the predominant white culture, but this was seen as British rather than as white and the sense of racial oppression was not great” (199). That is why the Rastafarian’s racial consciousness took the form of racial nationalism against the colonial situation and the cultural domination it entailed: “It is cultural imperialism they’re objecting to [which they identify with white people], and they themselves are not hostile to whites” (Patterson 200).

Then, on the other hand, several Afro-Jamaican writers have declared having experienced a racial consciousness when having being abroad. Louise Bennett, for example, attested to the irrelevance of racial tensions in Jamaica when explaining her unacquaintance with racial etiological tales in Jamaican folklore. She confessed that it was while travelling once in the United States when she first grew aware of it: “When I went on a train in Miami and they told me that I couldn’t go into the first class section . . . until I passed the Maxon-Dixie line! . . . this is the first time that I had really come up against something that was really tangible and hard” (30). Another Jamaican writer, Sylvia Winter, describes her process of developing a racial consciousness living in the United States as a readjustment of her identity:

[F]or me as a West Indian, coming to America has been a learning process, in which one aspect of my identity in the Caribbean becomes more dominant in response to the total way in which Blacks are stigmatised in this society. So you shift from a primarily Caribbean identity to a primarily Black identity when you’re here in the States (278).

This very shift in the evaluation and recognition of the racial/colour condition of one’s identity has presumably taken place in the experience of black expatriate Caribbean writers in Canada. The black racial signifier of their former Caribbean identity had to be emphasized in their *black* Caribbean-Canadian identitarian condition. It was a necessary strategy in the struggle against

white supremacy and the purpose of seriously asserting themselves in a racist social milieu that stigmatises and marginalizes them.

This struggle against racism is developed in the writing of many black Caribbean-Canadian women authors: dub poets, novelists, short story writers. One of the results of their assertion of their racial identity is perceived, in the idiomatic terrain, in the significance accorded to the adjective *black* in both their literary and academic writing. It generally appears with capital letter (Black), as Silvera's writing illustrates, which indicates a clear militant position in favour of the social and political recognition of black people<sup>104</sup>. In Silvera's also partly autobiographical short story "Her Head A Village", *the Black woman writer* becomes the identifying label used to refer to the female protagonist. Also, *Blacks* are the Afro-Canadian people waiting to collect welfare aid in "Welfare Line". The narrator of "The Girl Who Love Weddings" participates in a street demonstration to protest against the violation of the rights of *Blacks* in South Africa. And the lesbian woman in "Baby" needs to redeem and express herself as a "black-skinned woman" primarily: "I'm tired. I don't want to live like this. I can't stop my life because some people hate Blacks. And I am bloody well not going to stop living my life because another group hates lesbians" (69). This need to define and defend themselves against marginalization through the affirmation of their racial identity turns into a priority in the struggle against discrimination. Although there is not an assertion of a black identity in the linguistic context of narrative in "Caribbean Chameleon" as it occurs in these other short stories, the story of racial discrimination here narrated constitutes a criticism of these marginalizing practices. The condemnation of racism by Caribbean-Canadian dub poets and

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<sup>104</sup> As Carole Boyce Davies explains in her analysis of black women's writing and identity, the term *black* is only meaningful, politically, "when questions of racial difference, and, in particular, white supremacy are deployed". It is then oppositional and resistant to "overwhelming 'whiteness' or Eurocentricity, which tries to pose itself as unmarked but is historically linked to technologies of destruction" (7-8).

writers entails a serious militant exercise in the scholarly field in the struggle against Eurocentric discriminatory practices.

The politically-conscious inscription of the black, non-Western subject developed in Silvera's writing serves the purpose of articulating an identitarian selfhood and, above all, a political stance against the continuing marginalization of those selves through discrimination in terms of race, gender, class, and sexual attitude. The fact that the majority of the protagonists in Silvera's collection of short stories *Her Head A Village* are women demonstrates that the situation of women is also of special concern for the author. Her writing often becomes, then, a political statement against racial and gender (female) discrimination. Silvera's self-definition as a feminist realigns both axes of her political standpoint. In her own words,

I am a feminist. I am, because I am not satisfied with the imbalance in the world . . . Equally, I am not happy with the notion of feminine being less than masculine. As a feminist my job is to continue to contribute and struggle against gender oppression, race and class oppression, and of course heterosexual oppression. My feminism is not a banner against Black men. I struggle with them to let go of false power, to respect woman (417-18).

Obviously, her political concerns as a feminist are echoed in her short stories, in as much as many of them denounce the several forms of discrimination endured by black women. Like the author through her writing, many of Silvera's black female characters express themselves and their political viewpoints as discriminated subjects, like the Black woman writer in "Her Head A Village", and Baby in the homonymous short story. They are also asserting their right to be respected by black men and the society in general.

The Caribbean-Canadian black woman in "Caribbean Chameleon" demands respect from the incivil cowboy-type young man who wants to jump the queue in the Jamaican airport. He



threatens to beat her because she is asserting her rights: “[A]h [I] only asserting mi rights” (28). She would also like to assert her right to have a respectable job in Canada that would allow her to live decorously, and the right to escape the enslavement of her present burdensome job as live-in domestic:

[S]hut out her job in di North Star. Walk baby in pram. No matter what weather. Snow high. Shovel it. Walk dog. Feed the baby. Feed the mother. Feed the father. Clean up after. Wash the clothes. Iron some. Fold up the towels and sheets. Vacuum the carpet. Polish the silver. All in the name of a honest day’s work (30).

Her honest Canadian work translates, clearly, into labour exploitation. Her story of labour exploitation re/cited —pun intended— in this short story is intended to further a denunciation of this situation, which is lived by many immigrant women of colour in Canada, as Silvera’s collection of oral histories of Caribbean domestic workers, *Silenced*, demonstrates.

Although in a different context, the story of female hard work, single parenting and resilience offered by the also Jamaica-born Velma Pollard in “A Night’s Tale” reveals, as well, a positive concern of Caribbean women writers toward the situation of women and the sexual politics at work in their societies. With the story of the immigrant domestic woman worker in “Caribbean Chameleon”, Silvera is presenting an instance of the female *Other* (Black) side of the Canadian social experience, at the same time that is destroying the myth of prosperity and success in the North that has, for a long time, lured many Caribbean people into self-exile<sup>105</sup>.

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<sup>105</sup> The *demythification* of the Canadian experience for black immigrants is a process undertaken by many Caribbean-Canadian women authors in their writing like the Trinidadian-born Dionne Brand, Claire Harris, Marlene Nourbese Philip, and the Jamaican-born Dianne Maguire. They are engaged in the construction of a *new place* within their double-diasporic experience in the Canadian social scenario as subjects and writers, which involves, ironically, the destruction of a number of fantasies about the real space (the promising Canada) (Condé 52). These writers’ dismantling of the myth of prosperity and well-being in the North has been conditioned by their political awareness toward the reality of social marginalization and racism that they have found in Canada.

Moreover, when interrogated and searched by Canadian immigration officers at the airport, this woman tries to assert her right to have a fair, unprejudiced treatment, regardless of her race, sex, or class. And she does it violently, with rage, and freeing her no-longer-silenced and rebellious Creole voice: “Black polka dot woman speaking in tongues. Dis woman gone, gone crazy. Tongue-tie. Tongue knot up. Tongue gone wild” (31). This is the exploited Caribbean-Canadian black domestic woman worker who rebels against the discrimination and oppression of the black female subject. Her outburst of rage becomes a physical expression of her non-conformity with her situation of racial and gender discrimination and labour exploitation in Canadian society. It becomes a way for her to oppose that situation.

Also anger, as an expression of dissatisfaction with the imbalance in the world, becomes a stimulating agent for the author in her struggle against inequality. This anger is relieved through a definitely politically-conditioned writing: “I think writing is fighting, is struggle. There are times the world is the last place I want to be. I get pessimistic, feel in a rage —not necessarily physical— and writing is a way of channelling that” (419). The short story “Caribbean Chameleon” becomes an instance of this militant writing, through which the raging, protesting black immigrant woman and writer critiques Eurocentric discriminatory practices. The anger, protest, and irony of the dub poet declaiming her social protest come together here propelling the narration of this story denouncing neocolonialism, racial and gender discrimination, and the marginalization of the non-Western Other.

Especially, the writer’s clear political standpoint against racism revealed in this short story is explained by the fact that racism has kept the racially different Other in a marginal position within the Canadian society and in a seemingly permanent state of non-belongingness. This situation is corroborated in the Other’s feelings of being displaced or *out of place* —thus feels

one of the female protagonists in Dionne Brand's *Sans Souci and Other Stories* (Condé 53). This very sense of insecurity of the immigrant subject about her/his experience in the xenophobic and racist Canadian real space is described by several of the Caribbean domestic workers interviewed by Makeda Silvera in *Silenced* as *having no place to go or not knowing if you are coming or going*. And Silvera has attempted to represent their *unbelongingness* in her fiction as a critique of this situation. Thus, this desperate sensation of having no place to go is conveyed by Silvera with the story of a black immigrant Jamaican woman hopeful, in her ignorance, about a nice Canada in the short story "Canada Sweet, Girl". This woman is trapped between a system that does not recognize, officially, her nine years living and working hard in Canada or her Canadian-born child for declaring her illegal and sending her back to Jamaica, and her native Jamaica which she had long ago forsaken as an unpromising environment for developing her life.

Moreover, the uncomfortable uncertainty of a life-experience of permanent foreignness —not from there (the Caribbean), not from here (Canada)— is evoked by Silvera in the ever-pending-travelling neurosis of Maddie, the mystic old Caribbean-Canadian woman in "Her Head A Village". Uncertain about when she will have (or will be forced) to move off to another place, she always wears several of her clothes together:

When I first come to this country, I use to wear one dress at a time. But times too hard, now you don't know if you coming or going, so I wear all my clothes. You can't be too sure of anything but yourself. So I sure of me, and I wear all my clothes on my back. And I talk to meself, for you have to know yourself in this time (12).

As this mystic old woman says, in this permanent state of non-belongingness the most important thing is to know yourself. What this self-assured woman is suggesting out of her

lucid neurosis<sup>106</sup>, is that one should secure him/herself in his/her identitarian grounds for living through this marginalizing social experience. The black Caribbean-Canadian subject should then reaffirm the racial, gender, and class significations of his/her identity for the sake of a safe ontological experience of selfhood. The reaffirmation of these identity signifiers has certainly assisted the development of a *consciousness of difference*, which has been a necessary factor in these subjects' assertion of personhood and cultural identity in a discriminatory and marginalizing social environment.

Ultimately, the process through which these Caribbean-Canadian women writers assert *them* Selves in their militant writing, stimulated by their self-consciousness as the racially and sexually *different* Other in the Canadian social context, translates into a process of asserting a *different* cultural identity. This cultural identity becomes a sort of sociocultural ground supporting their expression of their political views and their struggle against discrimination. The writing of Makeda Silvera demonstrates that her acts of self-articulation and assertion as a culturally identified *different* Other in her expatriate Canadian experience are grounded, primarily, on her sociocultural reality as a Caribbean-born subject. As a matter of fact, the Caribbean universe occupies a meaningful place along her creative and scholarly work<sup>107</sup>. The

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<sup>106</sup> The lucid mad subject appears to be a frequent social phenomenon in the Caribbean, usually represented in literature. Such representation generally functions as a thematic vehicle for furthering an ironic reflection on Caribbean sociocultural reality. The alleged irrationality of the mad subject offers a context of introspection from which the self-reencountered and self-assured being looks critically at his/her former rational experience and the sociocultural context shaping it. This critical view of the lucid neurotic is credited in Olive Senior's short story "You Think I Mad, Miss?" (from *Discerner of Hearts*), and in Velma Pollard's novella *Karl* and her short story "Miss Chandra" (from *Karl and Other Stories*). In Pollard's short story the protagonist, Miss Chandra, becomes mentally ill, but she eventually finds calmness and self-assurance through her neurotic state of introspection: "[I]t was clear that she had found her Jerusalem this side of the great divide" (106). This representation of madness suggests the idea of madness as a liberating experience that enables the individual to find his/her true Self, ontologically secured, and get rid of the non-comfortable experiences of selfhood and identity determined by a (post?) colonial Caribbean society that lacks self-assurance and autonomous (cultural) self-worth (O'Callaghan 103-104).

<sup>107</sup> It is relevant to note here that not all Caribbean-Canadian writers equally regard the Caribbean-based quality of their cultural identities. Dionne Brand, for example, prefers to emphasize the racial category in her identity, defining herself as Afro-Canadian or black Canadian rather than (black) Caribbean-Canadian. Her collection of oral histories of black working women in Canada —*No Burden to Carry: Narratives of Black Working Women in*

Caribbean still provides rootage, thematically and stylistically, for her creative writing. Silvera's validation of her Jamaican sociocultural reality in "Caribbean Chameleon" through its content and form —illustrated in the presentation of this text as an instance of dub poetic narrative in the Jamaican Creole language— suggests that this militant poetic-narration has served the author's purpose of asserting a cultural identity from which to express her *Self* and her opposition to white or Eurocentric supremacy. It becomes then, just like dub poetry, a literary exponent of cultural resistance.

Silvera's reaffirmation of her Caribbean sociocultural reality marks the beginning of her career as a writer and of her *resistant* self-articulation in her writing. As she comments, *Remembering G*, her first collection of short stories, was the result of a long process of reconnection with her Caribbean sociocultural background: "By the time I came to *Remembering G*, I had come through a whole period of searching, of finding and taking root" (413). Writing about the "ordinariness" of a Caribbean life marking an adolescent female experience aided Silvera to find her "own Caribbean voice and with it, the language that spoke for" her (414). It was the literary voice that would narrate and critically address the Caribbean-Canadian experience of ordinary people, and the language that would redeem her characters from the silencing context of social, racial, and gender marginalization. Also, it was through a direct connection with her Jamaican homeland in a holiday visit that she found the redemptive Creole voice that would release the raging black female tongue of the exploited and humiliated immigrant woman in "Caribbean Chameleon". This was a narrative voice consonant with the author's Caribbean-based sociocultural experience. Silvera's connection with her Caribbean *Back Home* was also pursued in her article "Manyoral and Sodomites" —a sociohistorical exploration of an Afro-Caribbean lesbian presence in the family and communal context of her Caribbean childhood.

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*Ontario 1920s to 1950s*— is a more embracing parallel (geographically) to Silvera's *Silenced*, focused on the Caribbean.

This article speaks for the author's recognition of the Caribbean native experience grounding her cultural identity in the category of sexuality or sexual inclination, besides those of race, gender, and class.

Silvera's connection with her Caribbean Back Home/ground is represented in her fiction suggesting a variety of signification. The Caribbean is the warm native village remembered through souvenirs: "[C]oconut husks, ackee seeds, photographs of birds, flowers and her [the Black woman writer] grandparents' house near the sea" in "Her Head A Village", the first short story of this collection (14). Later on, the Caribbean is realized as an underdeveloped Third World country ridden with social distress through the room of departures of the Jamaican airport in "Caribbean Chameleon". This short story, narrating the journey from Jamaica to Canada, is the story that describes an instance of the link between the two sociocultural worlds informing the Caribbean-Canadian experience presented here. It also addresses the controversial state of *unbelongingness* of the exile—in fact, the ironic, detached view describing this journey is that of the liminal, *unbelonging* self. The narration of the story and, thus, the characters are arrested in the immigration line in the Canadian airport, suspended between two different realities at an uncertain door that may be open or close. And the black woman's belongingness to any of these two worlds is questioned due to a racially prejudiced immigration control. Finally, the Caribbean homeland is asserted in the last short story of the collection, "Blue Belle", through the story of a family (a mother and a son) leading their lives in their own and best terms in a more stable sociopolitical and economic Caribbean (Jamaican) environment—more stable, certainly, compared to the distressing Jamaican social context portrayed in "Caribbean Chameleon".

Furthermore, the Caribbean is honoured as a sociocultural mothering source providing rootage and ontological support through the persona of Maddie, the old mystic female character in “Her Head A Village”. This “woman of spirits” represents a sort of Caribbean spiritual essence that offers security to all. At the end of the story she calls for unity among the expatriate villagers discussing their representation by the Black woman writer at an international forum to be held soon: “All this shouting and hollering won’t solve anything — it will only make us tired and enemies. We all have to live together in this village” (18). Since the Black woman writer’s head is overridden with noises and preoccupations, Maddie is apparently entrusted the task of writing the essay to be presented at the international forum for Third World Women, with the “sharpened pencil” that she always carries behind her ear (12) or stuck in her hair. It will occur, of course, spiritually, refreshing the Black woman writer’s head in her sleep with a balm of “wild flowers, dandelions, Easter lilies” from the fields, certainly, of the Caribbean Back Home (18).

Through her validation of the Caribbean in her writing Silvera is affirming the Caribbean sociocultural background of her cultural identity. It constitutes a fundamental step in the expression of difference in terms of cultural identity in the marginalizing Canadian social context, and in the assertion of a secure, culturally identified racial Other. Consonant with the underlying political connotations of the literature produced by these Caribbean-Canadian women authors, their view of the Caribbean is not shaped out of a nostalgic idealization of the lost motherland. It is informed, rather, by their political awareness about the need to struggle against oppression in its different forms and operating in different contexts: social, racial, gender and heterosexual oppression, neocolonialism, and cultural imperialism. As Stewart Brown notes when analysing the relationship of contemporary expatriate Caribbean writers with the native Caribbean through their writing, “living in Florida or Toronto or Europe as

‘home’ —not now isolated migrants but as part of established ‘Caribbean’ communities, their ‘take’ on Caribbean issues is inevitably complicated by those other perspectives” (xxxix). The perspectives of the Caribbean-Canadian writers, conditioned by their immigrant experience in the multicultural and racist Canada, are revealed in their critical addressing of their Caribbean-Canadian experience. The story of the immigrant black woman in “Caribbean Chameleon” is born out of this militant perspective, evidencing the political concern and responsibility of the author toward both the immigrant Canadian experience and the Caribbean experience of Back Home.

The perspective of the contemporary expatriate Caribbean writer conditioned politically and culturally —by the multicultural Western, metropolitan context and the creolised Caribbean native context— finds expression in this narrative through what Brown describes as “a kind of stylistic liberation”. It is manifest in their “resistance to limitations in terms of style or indeed subject matter” (xxxix). They would bring forward, thus, a global ideological discourse expressed in an also very inclusive and diversified narrative discourse. The diversified narrative discourse of Caribbean-Canadian women writers may be explained, besides, by the highly creative tendency within Caribbean women writing, responding to these writers’ need to come out of literary voicelessness. These writers, then, straddle several cultural worlds in creating their works: the folk, musical, oral and literary traditions of the Caribbean, and the modern literary Western discourse (American and Canadian). The most obvious result of this artistic call to arms in literary creativity is the production of a highly hybrid writing. Hybridism appears to be the most noticeable feature of the migrant text produced by postcolonial expatriate writers. It is largely determined, according to postcolonial critic Elleke Boehmer, by the transcultural context of migrant experience, moving the writers to search for “symbols and patterns with which to explain the world on various planes of experience” (234).



This literary hybridism is explained, stylistically, by the combination of literary genres, artistic forms, and narrative and linguistic forms. Makeda Silvera's text "Caribbean Chameleon" illustrates this hybridism in as much as it suggests the amalgamation of two literary genres: short fictional narrative and poetry. The mix of prose and poetry becomes a notable stylistic tendency in the writing of Caribbean women authors, explained, mainly, by the fact that most of these writers have been poets before writers of fiction. This cross-fertilization of the poetic and narrative genres in these writers' works is illustrated in the poetic prose and in the narrative poetry illustrated in some of their texts. The narrative poetry of many of these women poet authors reveals the incorporation of narrative strategies (oral and written) into the text of a poem; (it is exemplified in several poems by Olive Senior and Velma Pollard). On the other hand, the incorporation of poetry (its idiom and style) into fictional prose is manifest in the works of authors like Olive Senior, Opal Palmer Adisa, Claire Harris —*Drawing Down a Daughter*, and Marlene Nourbese Philip —*Looking for Livingstone: An Odyssey of Silence*.

Silvera's short story "Caribbean Chameleon" is another example of poetic fictional narrative. It is informed by the idiom, content, and style of dub poetry. It is a dub poetry text, thematically, because of the message of social protest it conveys: against the discrimination of the black female subject and neocolonialism in the Caribbean. The text becomes a declamation of a political statement against racial and gender oppression, which are two main themes of criticism in the dub poetry produced by Caribbean-Canadian women writers. The ironic tone of protest of the woman dub poet/narrator's declamation does not accord here with the usually friendly, entertaining mood of the raconteur telling a story. There is, on the contrary, violence in the narrator's report of social protest. The raging tongue and mood of the woman narrating and declaiming this story of racial and gender oppression corroborates the truly militant

character of the creative, literary act here developed. “Every thing we create and put life into becomes political”, thus says Makeda Silvera, describing the sometimes unconscious way in which the political and the creative come together in her writing (419). The great significance of the political in Silvera’s work, together with her firm militant critical attitude, makes her work an explicit vehicle for a definite, overt expression of social protest. On this account, it stands in clear contrast with the indirect, *entertaining* presentation of social protest of the literary calypsonian in Michael Anthony’s text “They Better Don’t Stop the Carnival”. In Anthony’s song-like text, the social protest (against the banning of carnival) becomes the thematic motif propelling the creation of a calypso song/text, which is the central theme of this short story. Silvera’s short story “Caribbean Chameleon” shows the reverse: the creation of a poetic/narrative text becomes a literary vehicle for the expression of social protest.

The violence or restlessness of this raging female declaiming tongue/voice is revealed in the formal narrative context of the text here analysed through the rapid rhythm of the narration. It is produced by the occurrence of short syntactical units that are formed by either a single word, a nominal or verbal syntactical construction, a phrase, or a sentence. In fact, the overall text of this short story is constructed with short syntactical units. This structural pattern forces a rapid rhythm in the silent or vocal realization of the text through reading. It reveals the presence of a restless narrative mood, presumably conditioned by the feeling of indignation of the black female narrating subject at being humiliated and outraged.

The structural pattern of short syntactical units developed in this text corroborates, stylistically, the conciseness characteristic of poetic idiom. It might suppose an adaptation of the short-line structure of dub poetry into the narrative context of this short fictional text. Similar to the narrative attitude of exposing or commenting a situation revealed through a narrative structure

of short utterances seen in Michael Anthony's short story "They Better Don't Stop the Carnival", the predominance of short phrases instead of sentences or unpunctuated longer syntactical units implies here an attitude of expression of stating or declaring (through commentary and description) rather than of narrating. For example, the long passage relating the situation in the line for passing through the immigration control in the Canadian airport appears as a description of the circumstance; there are no narrative connective formulas assisting the progression of the story being narrated. The continual exposition and description of facts in relation to that circumstance noticed in this passage confirms the narrator's intention of conveying and denouncing the situation of racially-prejudiced attitude toward the black immigrant woman. The narrator is more concerned here about furthering a critique to racial discrimination than about narrating the story of the black woman protesting —out of insanity— being discriminated on account of her racial condition. This is, therefore, a dub poetic text of social protest against racism, aimed also at *dubbing in* political consciousness among the black people enduring racial discrimination —including the brothers, cousins and sisters unmoved by the discriminating situation faced by the black immigrant woman at Pearson International Airport.

The conciseness of this dub poetic text, provoked by a short-line narrative structure, has determined the brevity of this short fictional text. It becomes noticeably evident when this text is compared with the other texts included in this collection by Makeda Silvera. It is the third shorter short story; and the other two shorter ones, "Old Habits Die Hard" and "The Travelling Man", appear constrained, also, to the conciseness of poetic idiom. They also exhibit a poetic prose. Notice the opening verse of "Old Habits Die Hard", offering a metaphorical description of an old man in an incrementally-rhythmic narrative tempo: "Old man, skin scaly tree bark to touch. Rust eyes, water hazy. The iron is gone. Legs, arms, ready kindling. Bedbug. Bedridden.

Bedlam. Bedpan. Bedraggled. Bedfast” (96). This rhythmic narrative tempo advancing a metaphoric prose can be also noticed in this passage from “The Travelling Man”: “This mystery man. This travelling musician. This dancing chameleon. I wish I could hold on to him, look at him, feel him, smell him, touch him, perhaps kiss him, let him hold me” (94). Other instance of poetic idiom in this short story reveals the divided sense of identity of the female narrator/author, between the warm Caribbean island-scape (evoked in the remembrance of her father musician) and the cold North (where her mother brought her to when she was a baby child): “I’m split. I’m two persons: one the little girl, standing with blue-green water on each side; one the woman in the cold. Frozen bones. I’m a child struggling to wake from a nightmare. I’m a woman looking for lost bones, searching” (94). This woman frozen in the hostile Northern environment is searching for the warming spiritual strength that only her homeland can provide, and that solidifies her ontological sense of selfhood. This woman narrator doubly marked by the cold Northern experience and the sunny Caribbean background could be identified, also, in the persona rendering the story narrated in “Caribbean Chameleon”.

The lyrical prose of the dub poetic text “Caribbean Chameleon” is characterized by a metaphoric idiom and, above all, by rhythm. This rhythm—which is an inherent element of dub poetry realized through its language and the musical background of its performance/delivery—is provoked in this text through repetition. It is the rhythm of the Caribbean oral culture that manifests itself in fictional writing through a rhythmical narrative style defined by repetition mostly, also illustrated in Michael Anthony’s text “They Better Don’t Stop the Carnival” previously analysed. In “Caribbean Chameleon”, repetition is the stylistic resource that forwards the realization of a metaphoric idiom in some passages of the text. Several metaphorical phrases occur in a narrative language marked by repetition. Notice the following excerpt: “Airport personnel hard at work. Bag weigh too much. Too much

clothes, too much food, too much herbs, too much souvenirs. Too much sun packed in suitcase and cardboard boxes” (28-29). All the many things and souvenirs that the Jamaican travellers want to take to Canada will remind them of their homeland, metaphorically alluded here through its ever sunny weather. These sunny items might alleviate the nostalgia felt bitter due to the cold Canadian weather, with the evocative warmth probably suggested by their presence. Other instances of metaphoric idiom are found in the already quoted fragment describing the distressing Jamaican social context through the Rastafarian perspective, like “Temper crackle”, “Gunshot a talk”, and “Man tek woman fi meat” (29).

Repetition operates in almost every level of this narrative/poetic text: phonological, lexical, syntactical. Repetition at the phonological level defined, stylistically, as alliteration is exemplified with the repeated phonemes /s/, /l/, and vowels in the following sentence: “Goodbye *slave wage, stale* food, ranstid meat, tear-up clothes, rag man, tun’ cornmeal, dry dust” (29-30. Emphasis added). Besides, this kind of phonological repetition is implied through the repetition of a same lexical element in other long nominal constructions. Notice this example: “Destination America. Destination Britain. Destination Europe. Destination Canada. Destination foreign land” (29). This type of repetition furthers the realization of a synthetic rhythm: the reiterated first lexical element of the phrase/verse motivates and forwards the completion of the following verse. This synthetic rhythm also assists the description of the farewell feelings of the would-be travellers toward Jamaica, through the repetition of the word *Goodbye*. When it is the last word of the verse/phrase rather than the first one that is reiterated, repetition aids the realization of rhymes, as this passage illustrates: “Suitcase get search. Hand luggage search. Handbag search. Sweat running down woman black face. Line long behind her. Officer call for body search (31). The rhyming produced here through the repetition of the word *search* at the end of some of these short lines is reinforced with the word *her* at the end of the

fifth line —repeating the sound /er/. This rhyming pattern favours the perception of the passage as verse.

The poetic narrative of this condensed short fictional text justifies its interpretation as an example of dub poetry accommodated into the context of fictional writing. Besides revealing several of the stylistic features of written dub poetry —above all its concise and highly rhythmic language, this fictional text becomes a dub poem, most importantly, because of the message of social protest that it conveys: against racial and gender discrimination, the exploitation of immigrant domestic working women in Canada, and Western neocolonialism in the Caribbean. The narrative mood in this text, conveying a non-conformist attitude of critique through anger and irony, is that of the dub poet denouncing these marginalizing and imperialist practices. The conception of this short story in both its formal and content levels as a literary adaptation of an artistic form from the Caribbean oral culture (dub poetry) that furthers a political statement points at an authorial intention of representing and, thus, validating her native Jamaican (oral) culture in her fiction. A similar militant, literary attitude is noted from the texts of her compatriots Velma Pollard and Olive Senior analysed in the previous chapter. They both pursue the validation of their national cultural heritage through the celebration of Jamaican oral tradition in their fiction as a strategy to counteract Western cultural imperialism in Jamaican society, whereas Silvera's validation of her Jamaican cultural background serves the author's desire of self-articulation as a culturally-identified, different Other in the racist and marginalizing Canadian context. With this affirmation of their native cultural grounds vis-à-vis Eurocentric or Western hegemonic tendencies, these authors are certainly developing personal acts of cultural resistance in their writing.

Furthermore, Silvera's act of cultural resistance illustrated in "Caribbean Chameleon" through her narrative adaptation of a Jamaican oral, poetic form (dub poetry) furthering a political statement parallels that developed by Michael Anthony in his short story "They Better Don't Stop the Carnival", previously analysed. Silvera's and Anthony's celebrations of their native Caribbean oral cultures through the adaptation of dub poetry and calypso —two musically rendered forms of Caribbean oral literature, respectively, in these short stories bear political implications. These political implications are explained, on the one (more explicit) hand, in the political statements brought forth through these texts' thematic contexts: against racial, gender, labour, and neocolonial oppression in Silvera's, and against colonialism in one of its most enduring and damaging aspects: cultural domination, in Anthony's. On the other hand, the political connotation of these two literary works is explained in the acts of asserting cultural identity developed by these authors through their validation of the Caribbean Creole culture as the sociocultural base of their identities that has to be ratified and defended against a continuing situation of stigmatisation and de-legitimation (first through colonialism and now through cultural imperialism). In relation to the case of Makeda Silvera, the political statement of the postcolonial writer becomes even more urging due to her expatriate experience. Her double-diasporic condition has entailed a double marginalizing situation in terms of race and place of birth. The racially hostile Canadian social context has conditioned the clear militant perspective of the black Caribbean-Canadian woman writer. This female militant perspective of the writer, dub poet and community worker is the one sustaining the social critique furthered in this narrative dub poem. It becomes an oral/written political declamation: a Caribbean-Canadian lyrical narrative text of social protest.

## Creole Cultural Resistance in Earl Lovelace's "A Brief Conversion": Asserting Personhood and Cultural Identity Through Creolisation

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.

(Earl Lovelace's words from a talk delivered in 1983 at the University of Kent)

Like the also black, Caribbean-born writers Michael Anthony and Makeda Silvera, who celebrate their Afro-Caribbean culture in their texts —through their appropriation of artistic forms from the oral culture— as the primary cultural foundation of (black) Caribbean cultural identity, Earl Lovelace ratifies the positive validation of the Afro-Creole sociocultural experience for the wholesome *becoming* of Caribbean societies in his short story "A Brief Conversion". But Lovelace's celebration of his Trinbagonian<sup>108</sup> Afro-Creole culture does not occur, formally, through his appropriation of an art form from that culture —like his compatriot Michael Anthony did in relation to calypso, and Silvera did in relation to dub poetry. Instead, it is pursued from within the context of creolisation determining the hybrid nature of every form of social, cultural, and artistic manifestation in the Caribbean. And it is through creolisation, defining the cultural hybridism that gave birth to these societies and implying the necessary interaction of several and sometimes disparate elements in the sociocultural *becoming* of Caribbean societies, that the Caribbean (Trinbagonian) Afro-Creole culture is validated in "A Brief Conversion". It is asserted as the true cultural entity sustaining the standpoint for the

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<sup>108</sup> *Trinbagonian* is a coined term denotative of Trinidad and Tobago. I use it specially in the analysis of Earl Lovelace's text because this author lived part of his childhood in the small island of Tobago.



Afro-Caribbean subject's secure expression of selfhood and of his/her creolised cultural identity.

As Lovelace suggests with this short story, the rural Afro-Creole sociocultural context constitutes the foundation of the protagonist's identity and the cornerstone of his process of articulating selfhood and identity here narrated. It proves to be a difficult process given the long historical cultural irreconciliations —between the white (British) colonizing culture and the black (African) colonized culture— in the development of Caribbean societies, and, especially, given the long-standing disavowal and stigmatisation of the African cultural legacy in these societies. But it will be from the standpoint of his Afro-Creole sociocultural milieu, reaffirmed, that Travey (the protagonist) will have to negotiate the sociocultural components of that milieu and those provided by the wider creolised and mostly Euro-Creole oriented social context of Trinidad and Tobago<sup>109</sup>.

This process of negotiation for the articulation of cultural identity in Anglo-Caribbean postcolonial societies becomes, therefore, a modern manifestation of creolisation, and ratifies the region's syncretism as the fundamental sociocultural signifier of identity in these cultures. The story of Travey and his process of articulation of personhood and cultural identity narrated in this short story confirm creolisation as a basic sociocultural principle in Caribbean life observed in every context of expression. It becomes a story of assertion of Afro-Caribbeanness as a manifestation of cultural resistance through creolisation. The centrality of creolisation in

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<sup>109</sup> By negotiation —in terms of the articulation of cultural identity in a hybridised society— I mean the reconciliation of and accommodation by agreement to the different sociocultural elements provided by a hybridised 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. But the process of negotiating these different sociocultural discourses within postcolonial societies becomes a necessary sociocultural experience.

these processes is confirmed, likewise, at the formal level of this text with a narrative act defined by the combination of several narrative traditions in Trinidad (the oral Afro-Creole, the literary Euro-Creole, and the musical narrative of calypso), linguistic codes (Trinidadian Creole and standard English), and narrative voices. This syncretic or creolised narrative text guarantees the validation of the oral Afro-Creole Trinidadian culture also in the formal context and supports, thus, the delineation of a creolised literary aesthetic. Consequently, the process through which Travey asserts his personhood and creolised identity reaffirming his Afro-Creole sociocultural experience is mirrored in the formal context of this text with the articulation of a creolised Trinidadian literary aesthetic through the validation of narrative and linguistic forms from the oral Afro-Creole culture in the literary context of fictional writing.

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 a rural Afro-Creole community. But it 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 city of Trinidad and Tobago, which, in Lovelace's views, can represent a deceiving and hostile environment for the (rural) Afro-Caribbean subject<sup>110</sup>.

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<sup>110</sup> Very often in Lovelace's novels and short stories the city represents an adverse power that undermines the values of Afro-Caribbean communal life, and oppresses the innocent, rural Afro-Caribbean subject. This oppression is materialized in the *moving* to the city, when the subject realizes the negative forces threatening to repress his/her development. Such perception of the city is conveyed in Lovelace's first novel *While Gods Are Falling* through the portrayal of the families of a yard or ghetto area in the capital divided and falling apart. Also in his second novel *The Schoolmaster*, the urban milieu is described as "that big, fast and terrible city of Port of

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 neighbours, 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 to gain a higher social status. Pearl is here “The Mother”, as Lovelace calls her, “the great pillar and presence anchored in enduring” (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. 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 turns into a painful process for Travey, strongly attached to his Afro-Creole milieu, but it is, nonetheless, necessary and, eventually, unavoidable.

As noted previously, this process of negotiation defines the articulation of cultural identity for the postcolonial subject. In the Caribbean context, the complexity of such process is explained

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Spain” (17). This disfavoured perception toward the urban milieu is even more severe in *A Brief Conversion and Other Stories*. The city is here discovered as a deceiving environment through the revelations that Blues confides to the homodiegetic narrator in “The Fire Eater's Journey”: “I realised that Blues was giving me another bit of information. It was this: that he had found Port of Spain out. The city was a lie, a sham, a con. It was appearance” (42). For the rural Afro-Caribbean subject, then, the move to the city turns usually into a sad and disappointing experience.

by the ambivalent dialogical relationship of the (black) colonized subject with the dominant colonizing European cultural discourse: “The dialogue of power and resistance, of refusal and recognition, with and against *Présence Européenne*” (Hall, “Cultural” 118). But the dialogue with the European cultural discourse has been a required factor in the sociocultural development of the Afro-Caribbean individual. The dialogue of recognition with the British cultural world has been staged in the Anglophone Caribbean through education, mainly. Colonial education constituted the fundamental context for the enthronisation of European cultural discourse in Caribbean sociocultural life. It afforded the colonized subject the only way to overcome his/her condition of inferiority in the social panorama of these colonial territories. In fact, in the colonial and postcolonial Anglophone Caribbean experience, education (following the Western cultural perspective) has been 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 Nourbese Philip describes part of the process that favoured the development of the English Caribbean middle class in the era of decolonisation and independence. But the notion 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 colonizer’s culture. 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 a Eurocentric cultural perspective.

In the fictional worlds created by Lovelace in his literary texts, education is recognized as the fundamental vehicle for upward social mobility. It is even more crucial in the individual's pursuit of progress than moving to the city. Such perception is corroborated in *The Schoolmaster*. This novel relates the story of a rural community that wants a school and a schoolmaster, because they seriously believe that education is what they need to move forward and to cope with the inevitable and powerful current of progress that would soon reach the village with the opening of the forest and the building of a road connecting the village with other more developed towns and the modern world. These are the words of one of the villagers who goes to see the parish's priest looking for his help and advice on this question:

We would like very much for a school to be built in Kumaca, Father-priest. There is no place for the children to learn to read and write . . . It is education that everyone needs today, and we by ourselves cannot give it to our children, so we decided, and I come from the village to speak to you, and to ask you to help us with a school (33).

The import that this rural village affords to education has to do not only with the social development of their children, but also with the building up of the nation, politically, since these then literate children would be able to partake of their country's political life through self-developed, autonomous judgement. As this requesting villager claims, “[i]n the old days, maybe [education] was not so important, but now a man who cannot write a letter and read the newspaper is nothing. Later it will be worse for him” (34).

Likewise, in “A Brief Conversion”, education is what will enable Travey to progress and become a successful social being, for which his rural community and his family will be proud

of him. It is realized by Travey as he interprets the appraising salutation of his uncle Bango, whom he sees as the Afro-Caribbean heroic figure of his family and community's world: "[H]is one word, salutation, greeting, 'Bull!' conveyed that he was proud of me, that I was also part of the struggle, that he was depending on me to achieve with my education the substance that he had been seeking all his life" (27). It is through education that Travey's dialogue with the Euro-Creole sociocultural perspective —illustrated with his conversion— will be staged in the formation of his creolised identity.

Indeed, to this self-conscious child-narrator charting his social growth in the Euro-Creole context of school education his social *becoming* implies a struggle. In the general context of Anglo-Caribbean societies, this is the struggle of the dispossessed black majority in order to achieve social and political recognition, which also implies, at the level of the individual, the assertion of dignity for the black subject so detrimentally trampled on by the colonial and postcolonial system. The defence of the black subject's dignity becomes a political slogan brought forth in Lovelace's fiction, for instance, in the protesting speech of a black leader of a peaceful demonstration in "The Coward" (from *A Brief Conversion and Other Stories*): "We are going to walk with black dignity and black pride and in black peace" (47). This struggle for black people's dignity constitutes a crucial thematic axis in Lovelace's oeuvre. It is displayed through Lovelace's criticism of corruption and the individual's compromising of his moral integrity in the pursuit of the upper social class Euro-Creole ideals in Caribbean societies. His censure of the corrupt black politician in the fictional persona of Ivan Morton in his fourth published novel *The Wine of Astonishment* ratifies Lovelace's critical standpoint on this account. In her preface to this novel, the Anglo-Caribbean scholar Marjorie Thorpe notes that "Lovelace's criticism of West Indian society emerges most clearly in his delineation of character; and in the person of Ivan Morton he holds up to public scrutiny two figures who have

consistently attracted his censure: the uncommitted politician and the apostate schoolmaster” (xi). The apostate schoolmaster had been previously scrutinised in *The Schoolmaster*; and the scrutiny of the uncommitted politician is furthered also in Lovelace’s last published novel *Salt*.

For the self-conscious Afro-Caribbean child in “A Brief Conversion” this is the struggle for defending the black subject’s dignity through his process of social development and formation of his creolised identity. It entails, then, achieving social development (necessarily through a Euro-Creole oriented education) and maintaining his personal dignity as an Afro-Caribbean human being. In this struggle, education becomes a necessary burden that he has to carry in moving forward to progress. This clear truth is what Travey discovers in his father’s eyes “lightning up with a new wisdom”, as he advises Travey to correct, conformingly, his attitude toward his Euro-Creole socialization. It means, in this case, to button up his shirt and agree, thus, with the Euro-Creole established norms of proper physical appearance:

‘Button up your shirt, man,’ gently, firmly, with comradeship and compassion and love, laying a hand on my shoulder, his eyes lightning up with a new wisdom, as if he had just glimpsed the possibility that this *burden that he had come to acknowledge that I must bear* might be the armour to protect me against that power that he had himself not triumphed over, but had not surrendered to (16. Emphasis added).

The necessary burden of Travey’s Euro-Creole socialization through school education would free him from being forever left aside, depressed and discouraged by the neocolonial social and political system. The enduring of such burden—which stands for Travey’s conversion—constitutes a primary stage in the process of formation of Travey’s creolised identity. However, it turns into a complex process and a painful experience for Travey because it entails the refusal of his male pride or dignity, which can be identified, within the process of formation of his personal and cultural identity, with the Afro-Creole side of his identitarian experience: his Self,

being until then articulated from within the sociocultural context of his Afro-Creole rural community and sustained by it. Through his Euro-Creole socialization developed in the context of school education Travey will be introduced to the biding *other* side of his postcolonial experience of selfhood: to the controversial Other of (post)colonial cultural identity. How this Other emerges is a question that has received critical analysis by postcolonial scholars, such as Frantz Fanon, Homi Bhabha, and Stuart Hall<sup>111</sup>.

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 within the individual although they seem to stand in opposition to one another. 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. The postcolonial subject should, therefore, negotiate his/her experience of selfhood through the agreeing accommodation of his Self and his Other or the two sociocultural experiences his two selves represent. In order to achieve such negotiation satisfactorily, the liminal postcolonial subject caught between two sociocultural milieus/experiences like Travey, should assert his Afro-Creole sociocultural background (his black pride) while accepting the positive side of his experience as Other in the

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<sup>111</sup> In his psychological study of the colonized black subject *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz 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 (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” (“New” 445).



Euro-Creole *Westernised* milieu (of his conversion). Accepting his Other side is essential because it provides a European/Western cultural reference which has shaped, together with that from Africa, his Caribbean identity, and, more fundamentally here, because it facilitates his social mobility and recognition<sup>112</sup>.

In Lovelace's viewpoint, this process of negotiation that the Afro-Caribbean subject must develop translates into the imperative progress or moving forward of the individual "out of the bosom of race, tribe, family, [community] and so on into the world" (153). It will be ultimately successful if the individual manages to retain his integrity and dignity throughout his movement for personal and social development. For Lovelace, the assertion of personhood and identity for his male characters translates into the need to assert their male pride and human integrity, which should be given always in terms of his relationship to people, to his community. When interviewed by Caryl C. Dance, Lovelace explains that his male characters' need to assert their manhood should be interpreted, rather, as their need to assert "personhood" and their integrity as men within their community: "I think that what we're talking about is a man in a community, man's view of his integrity, and this is defined, not by him alone, but by the community in which he lives" (149). The Afro-Creole community constitutes, therefore, the grounding sociocultural context supporting the individual's assertion of personhood and his sociocultural *becoming*.

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<sup>112</sup> The experience of Otherness has usually furthered the context for the Caribbean subject's necessary process of negotiation, since it is generally from the *Westernised* Euro-Creole experience of the Other that the subject would try to effectuate such negotiation. It has been specially true for many Afro-Caribbean writers/intellectuals whose personal and social development has been marked by a Westernised Euro-Creole education, and it is from this context that they attempt through their work to re-validate the Afro-Creole culture and assert a cultural identity.

On the other hand, Lovelace also acknowledges the compelling action of *the vector of difference and rupture*<sup>113</sup> from the Afro-Creole grounding sociocultural source determining the nature of the black Caribbean experience of personhood. The Afro-Caribbean subject should attend to a culturally diversified (creolised) social experience; but it is a social experience in which the also pertinent European cultural perspective has been the one long emphasized, “which is endlessly speaking —and endlessly speaking *us*” (Hall, “Cultural” 117). That is why the complex process of *becoming* for the Afro-Caribbean individual should be negotiated attending to the past colonial reality of European cultural domination (still speaking to him) and to the creolised nature of Caribbean experience. As Lovelace explains, “one begins to decide what that integrity [or personhood] is in terms of one’s own growth, that later you begin to add dimensions to it, that you haven’t had before, or to de-emphasise certain things that you had emphasised before” (149). It would mean, for instance, to de-emphasize the unilateral British dominating and discriminating cultural perspective, as well as the also one-dimensional, rebellious stance of the black Caribbean subject seeking liberation —like the one promoted by the Black Power Movement in the 1960s. As a matter of fact, the permanent rebellious stance of the postcolonial subject depressed culturally and socially has been criticized by Lovelace. Commenting on his third novel and explaining why the dragon could not dance, Lovelace says that

you couldn’t carry one-dimensional almost rebellion all the time. And I suppose a question that man has to face, I mean even beyond Carnival, is, ‘Can one continue

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<sup>113</sup> In his second definition of cultural identity in terms of *positionings* in a constant process of *becoming* and transformation, Stuart Hall explains the positionings of black Caribbean cultural identity as determined by both the continuity with an African cultural source and the difference afforded by the interaction between different cultures that took place in the region. “We might think of black Caribbean identities as ‘framed’ by two axes or vectors simultaneously operative: the vector of similarity and continuity; and the vector of difference and rupture. Caribbean identities always have to be thought in terms of the dialogic relationship between these two axes. The one gives us some grounding in, some continuity with, the past. The second reminds us that what we share is precisely the experience of a profound discontinuity: the peoples dragged into slavery, transportation, colonization, migration, came predominantly from Africa —and when that supply ended, it was temporarily refreshed by indentured labour from the Asian subcontinent” (“Cultural” 113).

to rebel all the time in a certain dimension? . . . You can do better than that . . . You can't just rebel in the practiced way; you have to do more (156).

To do more and better means to move on while accepting the other possibilities/dimensions afforded by the creolised social and cultural Caribbean experience. In Lovelace's views, then, this process of negotiation for the articulation of personhood and cultural identity constitutes a vehicle that will enable the Afro-Caribbean subject to step out of the complacent postures of supervisor of the Western civilized model and of resistant victim of oppression in Caribbean life, and to face the predicaments of their postcolonial situation and build a healthy, creolised human society.

In "A Brief Conversion", Travey's process of negotiation confirms the author's view in as much as it becomes the articulation of a creolised (Euro-Creole and Afro-Creole) cultural identity grounded on an esteemed Afro-Caribbeanness. This process is possible due to Travey's awareness of the need to add the *other* Euro-Creole dimension to his social growth through education, that is why he agrees to his conversion. But he wants to accommodate this other dimension in his self-becoming in his own terms, so that the grounding Afro-Creole dimension of his identity be not depreciated or deterred. Lovelace would not want for him the paradoxical *white destiny*<sup>114</sup> of the schoolmaster in the homonymous novel, of whom Benn, the drunken (though rational) black character, says to the Irish priest: "He is black, yes. But not my own people. Priest, he is closer to your people . . . He learned in your schools, and he wears the clothes the way you wear them, and he talks the way you talk, and his thinking is that of your people. He is yours, priest. He is not mine" (78). Yet, Travey is also aware of the fact that for moving on some things have to be de-emphasized, like his apparently innate rebellious spirit — which ratifies his link to the Afro-Creole tradition of stickfighting through his father and his

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<sup>114</sup> "For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white"; this is how Fanon addresses, pessimistically, the process of *otherization*, in racial terms, of the black man colonized by the European white culture (*Black Skin* 12).

uncle Bango, and thus, his belongingness to his Afro-Creole community. Travey's abandonment of his rebellious spirit for the sake of his social progress is what allows his conversion from being the son and nephew of stickfighters to "become a scholar, a saint" (16).

The first steps in Travey's conversion representing his 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* appearance<sup>115</sup>. At first, Travey does not agree with these hair cutting and shirt buttoning rituals, but eventually he comes to accept them as the right 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 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.

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<sup>115</sup> Here *socially* refers to the wider Caribbean social context, where Western cultural and moral values have been emphasized.

Finally, Travey decides to fight due to a recovered sense of self-pride and identification with his uncle Bango and, through him, with his Afro-Creole world. He needs to fight in order to recover his integrity and to assert his belongingness 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. 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.

The narration of this story illustrates Travey's process of assertion of personhood and identity as an assertion of his integrity as a male individual. Travey must accept an Euro-Creole sociocultural perspective present in his Afro-Creole rural context which entails for him a change of his personality and a damage to his self-esteem. But, when he realizes that this change affects his sense of male personhood negatively, he attempts to regain his self-pride through a reaffirmation of his identification with his Afro-Creole milieu. He will then have to negotiate the Afro-Creole and the Euro-Creole sociocultural perspectives in a way that does not undermine his self-pride and sense of personhood as an Afro-Caribbean subject.

Due to Travey's strong sense of identification with his Afro-Creole sociocultural milieu which sustains his secure sense of personhood and self-pride, his acceptance of the Euro-Creole sociocultural perspective occurs in a context of resistance. This resistance is primarily conditioned by Travey's rebellious spirit. That is why his mother believes that she must restrain her son's rebellious spirit —“to tame the warrior” in him (6), which is pursued through the acts

of having his hair cut short and his shirt buttoned up. The whole haircutting ritual, which opens the narration of the story, is perceived by Travey as depriving him of his pride as an Afro-Caribbean subject, of his Afro-Creole vanity. Dominated by the barber's hand fixing his head and his mother's commanding supervision of this rite of trimming his vanity, Travey has no option but surrender: "Do not learn the vanity of a muff. Do not learn the vanity of a covering of hair"(1). It is the vanity or pride of an afro hairstyle that stands symbolic of the African lion's mane what takes Travey closer to the African warrior or stickfighter. And, in Pearl's view, trimming her sons's afro vanity would hinder the African dimension of these boys' identities to be overemphasized in their process of negotiating their sociocultural *becoming*; she should, then, refrain in her sons "that more splendid and provoking quality that, without restriction, would be too much for the world to accept" (6). Nonetheless, it is the dignity and recognition of the African racial and sociocultural legacy what Lovelace's male characters are defending in their expression of pride and their assertion of *manness* as black Trinidadian subjects.

On the other hand, Pearl's demanding Travey to button up his shirt essentially when he goes to school is more relevant in his 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<sup>116</sup>. Thus, Travey is constantly being induced to recognize that he must accept the social norms of a Euro-Creole context. The ritual of buttoning up the shirt is, then, important within Travey's process of

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<sup>116</sup> 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 in 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.

negotiation, but is also more conflicting for the child because it realizes for him the liminal or in-between position pertinent to most postcolonial experiences of negotiating cultural identity:

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 that his father would like to recognize<sup>117</sup>. This embarrassing costume represents a primary stage in Travey's process of negotiation for his social growth and articulation of his creolised cultural identity. Travey's enduring of his clown camouflage in his conversion points at his acknowledgment of the need to move forward through this negotiation. It is what enables him to understand his mother's attitude with regard 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 warriors she had birthed" (6). In spite of her pain, Pearl is conscious of the fact that the *taming* is necessary in her sons' social growth in a postcolonial Caribbean creolised society.

Ultimately, Bertie (Travey's father) grows aware of the need to move forward through this kind of sociocultural negotiation. And it is Bertie's self-*taming* of his own rebellious spirit, and his wise look of peaceful resistance or insubstantial submission that moves Travey to endure his conversion. Like Travey, Bertie must face the complexities of such process, because he cannot find the way to channel his strong communal sense of living into the new trends of modern

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<sup>117</sup> This *costume of clown* that is imposed on Travey parallels the Babylon suit or the steel cap that Karl, in Velma Pollard's novella, identifies with accepting and appropriating the Euro-Creole sociocultural perspective.

(individual) life that are shaping the world of his postcolonial Trinidadian social experience. He is trapped between “his loyalties” to his community and “his guilt” for not being able to accommodate himself into the new trends of progress (9). His discomfort with his present situation reveals itself in Bertie’s acquiescent smile. It is a forced smile camouflaging his resignation: his acknowledgment that there was “no alternative but to bend to the weight and sway of the world” (7). As Travey notes in his relate:

[His father] has learnt that the smile is a superior weapon, that it can create ease, give a sense of control; but, it is not a weapon that he has mastered; it is one that masters him; so that far from giving the effect he desires, it twists his face into another truth, the truth. It makes him look weak, appealing, sly, as someone who is telling a lie (7).

This physical expression of camouflage, of hiding some truth, becomes an agent of creolisation in Bertie’s process of negotiation. It has been recognized as a superior weapon than physical strength —probably implying violence, revolt, rebellion. This smile implies Bertie’s acceptance or momentarily submission to the established order along the Euro-Creole sociocultural perspective. It becomes Bertie’s physical expression of his “apology and penance” (26) for his compliance with the Euro-Creole oriented social order. Bertie’s efforts at coping with this sociocultural reality of his postcolonial society are recognized by his wife: “He trying” (10).

One of the results of Bertie’s *trying* is his decision to get married in the local church after several years of living together in a common-law union, but without the Euro-Creole official recognition of their relationship as a married couple, as husband and wife: Mr. and Ms. Jordan. The wedding itself becomes a creolised celebration held along both the Euro-Creole tradition (in the church) and the Afro-Creole tradition (following the African-derived religious rites at home, and the traditions of speech-making and exchange labour for building a tent in the yard, for the important occasion): “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 ratified in this communal labour 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”. It is as if these women have “descended” to bless the wedding in the representation of a “strong female [spiritual] source” coming from the African cultural legacy (11). However, as Bertie lets his friends know, this wedding represents a primordial step in his move on for progress according to the Euro-Creole sociocultural perspective: ““After this wedding, don’t look for me in the stickfight and *parang*. I is a family man now. Is me and my wife and my children”” (12). Then, he has stopped being a community’s man for being a man committed only to his family. He is asserting here his primary due now toward his nuclear family—the family type of the Western world—over his community, that might stand for him as a kind of extended family. Certainly, Bertie’s acquiescent attitude influences Travey’s inclination to develop his conversion.

As mentioned before, Travey’s submission to the determining power of the Euro-Creole milieu through his conversion, by his own will, to discipline and *sainthood* causes him to be abused by his schoolmates, which affects his male pride and 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). It is the warrior or that side of his identity and selfhood grounded in his Afro-Creole sociocultural experience and solidified by his rural community that is being renounced. Travey may escape being humiliated by this gang of schoolboys if he passes the examinations that will lead him to college education and out of his rural village. But he knows

that he will have to move on, then, with an insecure sense of belongingness to his afro-Creole milieu and, thus, with an insecure (humiliated) personhood. In a sense, he will be then forming part of the defeated army of mad *celebrities* of his village—a group of neurotic or ontologically insecure subjects whose *fallen pride* has made them lost to themselves and roam over the place in “defeat, penance, and apology”. 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 mental disease. The common presence of the neurotic individual hinting at a frequent social phenomenon in the Caribbean is asserted by Travey when he says referring to these mad characters: “This was our folklore” (25)<sup>118</sup>.

As Travey comes to realize later, escaping from this fateful *neurotic* destiny becomes even more fundamental than to escape from his abusing schoolmates and his community. That is why Travey needs to confront the boys abusing him and regain, thus, his self-esteem and integrity, i.e., to reassert his Afro-Creole sociocultural world in his creolised experience of identity. Travey’s decision to fight Police shows his realization “that [he] had to pay attention

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<sup>118</sup> The causes for the common neurosis in Caribbean social reality are to be found, according to Frantz Fanon, in a cultural situation derived from the colonial experience of European cultural domination. 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 subtly—with the help of books, newspapers, schools and their texts, advertisements, films, radio—work their way into one’s mind 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: 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 (*Black Skin* 81-197). In her analysis of neurosis in Caribbean literature Evelyn O’Callaghan’s states that “[t]he interior schisms dramatized in fiction may be interpreted as the symptoms of the dangerous lack of ontological security still prevalent in our region . . . all revealing a lack of secure pride in our society and its image” (104).

to the presentness of [his] world or forever surrender” (21). And it ought to be done from the standpoint of the Afro-Creole warrior, not from that of the Euro-Creole saint.

Travey’s recovery of his self-pride occurs, primarily, through a reaffirmed identification with his Afro-Creole world, conditioned by the salutation of acknowledgment and pride that he receives from his uncle Bango: “Bull, he had called me. In that call was comradeship, acknowledgment, was a pride in me, in himself, in all our family. I felt a sense of thankfulness, I felt save. Out of this landscape [of penance and apology], I had plucked a hero” (26). Bango is the hero that Travey needs for becoming a hero himself through his assertion of an Afro-Caribbean pride and integrity. Bango represents here a supporting entity through his Afro-Creole maleness —ratified in his stickfighting and rum drinking, his drive for gambling and *fete*, his sculpture works, and his polygamous nature. He is the embodiment of Travey’s Afro-Creole sociocultural world, which *solidifies* his 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 asserted 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” (“Culture” 136). Then, an Afro-Caribbean community with a strong sense of cultural identity will strengthen the Afro-Caribbean individual’s sense of personhood and cultural identity. Lovelace’s portrayal of a strongly culturally-identified Afro-Creole milieu in this short story ratifies the importance afforded to the Afro-Caribbean community as providing rootage or solidity in the Afro-Caribbean subject’s process of sociocultural *becoming*.

The reaffirmation of the Afro-Creole sociocultural world is vital for Travey in effectuating his process of negotiation for the assertion of cultural identity satisfactorily. And the *presentness* of

his experience of selfhood demanded the reaffirmation of his Afro-Creole world, which he does when he decides to fight Police and prepares himself for the battle: “My costume of clown had been transformed to that of warrior, I became, ‘Young Bull’, nephew of Bango the stickfighter” (28). Consequently, Travey’s conversion to sainthood following the Euro-Creole sociocultural perspective occurs *briefly*. The humiliating burden that he had agreed to carry necessary for moving forward was momentarily put down in his attempt to recover his pride and his Self: “At last I was feeling that my life was my own, that somehow I had found a way to confront the penance and apology of our town. I had had a brief conversion; I knew I was saying goodbye to my ambition to be other than my father’s son” (28). Travey has come to realize, then, that his moving forward—but self-assured, with pride and integrity—depended not on his conversion, but on his realization of self and identity grounded on his Afro-Creole sociocultural experience, from which the other dimensions (like the Euro-Creole) would be added to or grappled with in a dialogical interaction. It is through this realization and through his identification with his uncle heroic figure that Travey becomes the real hero of this story: “[My uncle Bango] was depending on me to achieve with my education the substance that he had been seeking all his life. 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).

Travey’s story of enduring tribulation/humiliation leading, finally, to liberation confirms Lovelace’s fictional archetype of the heroic persona: “The informing idea behind the creation of all Lovelace’s hero-figures is the Christian concept of redemptive suffering” (Thorpe xiii). Travey’s conversion to sainthood, by which he sees himself as “the bearer of a redemptive penance that shall lead me to glory” (16) is the beginning of his way toward redemption through his recognition that only with a self-assured experience of personhood sustained by his Afro-Creole milieu he can negotiate, safely, his social and cultural experience in the creolised

context of Trinidad and Tobago's society. Then, it is from the solidifying standpoint of the Afro-Creole culture that Travey would construct his sociocultural experience of personhood, in wholesomeness, and articulate his creolised cultural identity as an Afro-Trinidadian subject.

The legitimisation and assertion of the Afro-Creole culture in the context of the Afro-Caribbean subject's expression of selfhood and cultural identity furthered in this short story ratifies the articulation of a culture of resistance from within the Afro-Caribbean universe. Actually, a cultural movement of resistance is what many Caribbean writers are supporting with a literature greatly committed to the authentication and defence of their native culture against the colonial and postcolonial experiences of cultural stigmatisation and domination in the Caribbean. The importance of the positive recognition and defence of the Afro-Creole culture in the Caribbean individual's sociocultural *becoming* and in the construction of ontologically-secure, self-assured Caribbean societies is realized by these writers. Like them, Lovelace is conscious of the fact that the process of transformation/negotiation for the development of Caribbean cultures comes together with the assertion of an Afro-Creole culture of resistance. As Lovelace's stories show, his characters' small acts of resistance, however difficult (like Travey's), can provide the means to personal and social liberation. The Afro-Caribbean cultural resistance will guarantee the ultimate validation of the Afro-Creole sociocultural experience in the Caribbean, necessary as it is for the autonomous self-becoming of these creolised cultures and societies.

In "A Brief Conversion", the articulation of an Afro-Creole culture of resistance through Travey's process of negotiation of his personhood and cultural identity reveals that this culture of resistance is sustained by and through creolisation. It demonstrates that both cultural notions (a reaffirmed Afro-Creole culture and creolisation) are of equal significance for Lovelace in the resolution of the Trinidadian experience. The characterization of Lovelace as "native and

national” rendered by the outstanding Trinidadian writer and scholar C. L. R. James ratifies that (Lovelace, “Interview” 146). These two words, seen as denotative terms of the two cultural notions in question (folk culture and creolisation), signify upon the process of expression of cultural identity expounded by Lovelace in this short story. Lovelace asserts the grounding solidity afforded by the Afro-Creole folk culture while recognizes that the idea of building the nation (Trinidad and Tobago) necessarily entails exploring the other possibilities offered in the diversified sociocultural Trinidadian context. The Afro-Caribbean individual must, then, chart his/her path toward personhood and integrity living, forcefully, through his creolised cultural, national experience.

The significance of these two cultural concepts in Lovelace’s personal and sociocultural experience as an Afro-Caribbean subject and scholar is corroborated in his literary works. They ratify, in content and form, the understanding of the Trinidad and Tobago’s experience in terms of the required convergence of the two sociocultural universes implied by folk culture and creolisation. This convergence is defined here as the intimate interaction of the part with its whole, because the Caribbean folk culture so largely determined by the African cultural legacy constitutes a fundamental cultural source fuelling the sociocultural development of these creolised societies. Within Lovelace’s literary oeuvre, this intimate interaction is staged through the reaffirmation of the Afro-Creole culture as an essential part within the whole creolised sociocultural experience of Trinidad and Tobago, especially in the Afro-Trinidadian context. Therefore, Lovelace’s celebration of the Afro-Creole culture and its manifestations of resistance is always articulated from the background of creolisation: asserting the Afro-Creole through creolisation in a positive contribution to the solid construction of the creolised Caribbean social and cultural space.

The formal context of Lovelace's literary oeuvre corroborates this standpoint in as much as it reveals a formally hybrid (creolised) narrative constructed through a *validating* appropriation of elements from the oral folk culture within the written context of fiction. Thus, his validation of the oral Afro-Creole folk culture within the traditionally written context of literature has brought about the realization of a formal syncretism that characterizes Lovelace's narrative style. This formal *creolisation* can be described as the agreeable juxtaposition and interaction of several elements and techniques from different cultural traditions in this narrative: narrative idioms, voices, and linguistic registers. As the text "A Brief Conversion" shows, the *native* and *national* signifiers defining Lovelace's standpoint in the literary world that he creates have operated simultaneously in the realization of a popular narrative idiom that, while it follows the narrative model of the contemporary short story in English, owes equally to the storyteller and the calypsonian (two kinds of oral narrators). Thus, this mixed or hybrid narrative idiom confirms a synergistic perception of this writer as literary and oral narrator and singer, a perception already furthered when analysing Michael Anthony's text "They Better Don't Stop the Carnival". Yet, whereas it was furthered in Anthony's text from within the context of calypso as oral literature, in Lovelace's it occurs from within the context of fictional writing functioning as a formal *tabula rasa* space where these several narrative and cultural traditions are made to converge and mix together.

Firstly, this hybrid narrative idiom of the literary storyteller-calypsonian rendering the autobiographical account in "A Brief Conversion" exhibits a notable influence from the oral practice of storytelling (which has always influenced Caribbean narrators, as many of the texts here analysed demonstrate). Several storytelling narrative strategies are deployed in this text allowing the realization of an oral-like, *telling* narrative voice through the *standard* narrative context of fictional writing in English —Trinidad and Tobago Standard English (TTSE). This

*oraliterary* narrative voice occurs, then, with the incorporation of these oral narrative strategies into the written fictional text. They can be identified as the profuse use of the conjunction *and*, the narrator's identification of an audience to which he seems to address the story that he tells, and his appropriation of the entertaining mood of the raconteur. The narrator's role as the teller of his autobiographical story is finally self-acknowledged in this narration.

At a first (idiomatic) level, the recurrent use of the conjunction *and* —explained, socio-linguistically, by the additive style that characterizes the orally-based expression in oral or predominantly oral cultures (Ong 37)— reveals the oral narrative art of this raconteur in his descriptions, enumerations, and his presentation of the sequence of events in the story. On this account, a parallelism is furthered with Pollard's "A Night's Tale", whose narrative act largely marked by the use of the connective *and* emulates with that of the storyteller. The following example from "A Brief Conversion" illustrates the use of this oral connective formula 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). Also, Travey's description of his aunt Irene's physical appearance and personality is advanced through the use of *and*:

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 additive connective *and* in this text hints, presumably, at a desire to build up a copious narrative that will add up to the enticement to which the raconteur wants to drive his audience. It certainly imparts this text an oral quality while ratifying the influence from the oral story or folktale.

The storytelling mode also converges in this hybrid text through the presence of an audience presumed in the narrator's use of a friendly, familiar tone in the narration of the story, which suggests his recognition of the readers as listeners, i.e., as a kind of audience. This familiar tone crops up into the narration, for instance, in the following sentences: "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 phrase *Of course* may imply a familiarity in the narrator's addressing his presumably listening audience. In the second example, the expression *let me* suggests a direct address to a personalized audience —like that of storytelling. This verbal construction signals the narrator's asking (his audience) for permission to do something. But, out of this verbal construction's direct semantic connotation, the phrase *let me not* constitutes an idiomatic expression from the oral speech in the Caribbean.

Like in the other three Anglo-Caribbean texts analysed in Chapter Three and that show a notable influence from storytelling, the narrator appears to tell this oral story to an audience whose presence he credits and which is personalized within his narrative 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 that he narrates here. (This type of empathetic narration that seeks the listener/reader’s emotional compliance with the narrator’s standpoint is also found in Pollard’s “A Night’s Tale”). 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 presence of this personalized audience favours the entertaining vein of the raconteur to occur, for arising interest in the audience and amusing them with the telling. The narrator uses the raconteur’s hyperbolic narrative tone, characteristic of popular narrations, in the descriptions of characters, specifically, those of Pearl and Bertie. 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 —ratified in the metaphorical hyperbole contained in the phrase *to bleed slowly from the wounds of his loyalties and his guilt*— and by his enchanted view describing an idyllic scene, ratified in the also metaphorical phrase *magical fiddling with the derelict radios . . . brought . . . to resurrect*. Similar to the literary raconteur narrating Senior's "Ascot", the narrator's desire to entertain his/her audience through enticement and humour conditions this hyperbolic narrative tone. Although a less laugh-provoking text than Senior's, humour blends here with hyperbole determining the narrative tone. It arises at the end of this quoted passage describing a change in Bertie's mood from emotionally hurt to festive and careless. The narrator's verbose and eloquent style at the beginning changes to a 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 the calm tone of his hyperbolic report and refers to Bertie's careless behaviour 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 belonging to Travey's family as well).

Finally, the influence of the storytelling mode in this text ratified by the presence of these elements proper of oral narration—connective formulas, audience, and the entertaining narrative mood of the storyteller—is confirmed with 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 himself a hero. Travey's role as storyteller is asserted when he tries to find a way to produce a rightful description of the figure of his uncle Bango, whom he sees as a kind of hero. In his description, he takes 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 the figure of Bango as a cowboy hero from an American Western movie would bring forth an unreal and deceiving story: "[T]hat 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, instead, as a Trinidadian rural and popular hero, and proceeds to tell his uncle's true story following this line returning to the narration of his own life-story. This very self-conscious narrative attitude of creating and telling stories is found in Pollard's "A Night's Tale". In these two texts the narrative act is focused on the telling of a main or more relevant story.

In addition to these influences from storytelling in this narration, the calypsonian's idiom converges in this hybrid, oraliterary text, noticed in the rhythm and musicality of certain passages. It mixes, for instance, with the storyteller's narration in the previously quoted passage, which points at the simultaneous realization of the rhythmic narration of the calypsonian and that of the storyteller. The calypsonian's narrative style is revealed here, just like in Michael Anthony's text "They Better Don't Stop the Carnival", in the internal rhythm provided by the repetition and parallelism of syntactical structures. It can be noticed 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 is enhanced by rhymes, like the one occurring in the words

*came* and *say*, and *head* and *again* at the end of phrases. They may be seen to stand as couplets of a calypso song's text that, if put together, may form a quartet. This rhyming pattern echoing that of calypso songs is also noted in the narrations of Ismith Khan and Michael Anthony already analysed, which suggests a common inheritance from the musical and narrative world of calypso among the writers of Trinidad and Tobago.

Several passages in this text show the simultaneous realization or mix of the narrating voices of the storyteller and the calypsonian. They exhibit a somehow rhythmic prose conveying a beautiful imagery through either metaphor or hyperbole. An example of this metaphoric, hyperbolic prose is the description of the attitude of the protagonist's mother. It is a description conditioned by the narrator's view of Pearl as the Mother (a big, strong, protective figure), hence his comparing her with the setting hen always ready to attack whenever it feels that its offspring is in danger:

There is a sense of largeness about my mother. Not only is she physically large, she moves large, she talks loud, she fusses, she bustles, she flies up. She prowls our world like a setting hen, with its eyes suspicious and its wings fluffed, as if to present a grater mass against the catastrophes she predicts and expects (17).

The rhythm of this passage is provoked, essentially, by the repetition of the personal pronoun *she*. In other descriptive fragments of this beautifully rendered, rhythmic prose, rhythm is produced by the repetition of the connective *and* and of a same vocalic sound in the final syllables of a stanza-orchestrated sequence of utterances or phrases.

A similar rhyming pattern can be perceived in the following excerpt describing also Pearl's attitude through metaphor and hyperbole: "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 in this text makes them appear like stanzas of a song, and hints at an influence from the narrative style of the texts of calypso songs.

The convergence of the narrative idioms of calypso and storytelling in the narration of this short story corroborates the hybrid/creolised character of Lovelace’s narrative in terms of the validation of the Caribbean oral culture in the written context of fiction. This hybrid narrative primarily defined by the mix of narrative idioms is also asserted, at the narrative level, with a mix of voices or narrating agents. The mixing of voices becomes a narrative strategy finely developed in Lovelace’s latest works, and is frequently accompanied by a mix of languages. This narrative strategy that justifies in the literary terrain the common bend toward hybridism or syncretism in the Caribbean validates this hybrid/creolised sociocultural reality, but, above all, the communal character of the Caribbean folk sociocultural experience. Consequently, the mix of voices allows the presentation of a collective story (the story of a community of people) that is collectively told in “A Brief Conversion”. This collectively rendered narration parallels the collectively told story of Ascot presented by Olive Senior, that ratifies the communal nature of Caribbean folk experience. Like in Senior’s text, the collectively rendered narration of “A Brief Conversion” occurs through the narrator’s crediting of the voices of other characters and members of the community here depicted.

The discourse of this also telling/narrating community is credited at various times with phrases like: “my mother says” (24), “my father says” (25), and “The story, which circulated through

the village afterwards, and which came to us at school was that . . .” (27). This is the story of how Bango countered a disrespectful adversary. In the same line, the life-story of Bango is told and re-created by people in the village and 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). Also Michael, Travey’s brother, becomes part of this storytelling community: “Michael, had reached home ahead of me and has . . . *given her* [Pearl] *the story*” of Travey’s fight with Police (29. Emphasis added).

The polyvocal quality of this collectively rendered narration is corroborated, most certainly, in the mix of voices signalling the presentation of the characters as both discursive and narrative agents within the narrative act being developed. This insertion of the characters as participants into the narrative process is explained by Velma Pollard in her sociolinguistically-based analysis of Lovelace’s novel *Salt* as “making the object subject”, i.e., making the object voice (usually conveyed through direct or indirect discourse) the subject of the narrative enunciation (which occurs through free indirect discourse) (“Mixing” 98). This occasional shift and mix of narrative voices in Lovelace’s stories through which the characters seem to take over the narration is conditioned by the author’s probable view “that both the consciousness of the subjects of a story and the consciousness of its teller are actively involved in the story-telling process” (qtd. in Pollard, “Mixing” 100). This active interaction of the consciousness of the character and the narrator in the rendering of the story also occurs in Anthony’s “They Better Don’t Stop the Carnival”, producing a bivocal calypso-like text in which the message of social protest in defence of carnival appears to be articulated by the calypsonian-protagonist and the literary calypsonian or extradiegetic narrator.

This perception of a collectively produced narrative exercise is projected in many of Lovelace's stories. The realization of the mix of voices in the narration of a story through a shift from subject to object and to subject voice again often entails a shift and mix of linguistic codes. Usually the Creole-speaking character takes command of the narration through his/her voice or consciousness from an English (TTSE)-speaking narrator. It happens, for example, in the extradiegetic third person narration of the short story "Fleurs", in which, almost by the end, the inner voice of a Creole-speaking female character (Fleurs' wife) materializes itself assisting the narration through free indirect style: "She still kinda hoped Phipps or somebody would come before he disappeared down the hill. She really wished one of them would come" (102). The expression *kinda* (kind of) is idiomatic Creole; its intrusion in a text produced in Trinidad and Tobago Standard English (TTSE) suggests that the narration is advanced from and by the character's consciousness. The second sentence of this cited example, which appears as an almost literal translation in the standard code (of the extradiegetic narrator) of the Creole-related previous utterance, implies that this is a double-voiced narration produced by both the character and the narrator.

This same double-voiced and double-coded narrative pattern is noticed in the first chapter of *Salt*, in which the narration is furthered by an intradiegetic boy-child narrator using the *standard* model and by his uncle Bango through his Creole language. In this example, "There was no natural subservience here. *Nobody didn't* vow down to nobody *just so*" (*Salt* 6. Emphasis added), the second sentence is a Creole translation of the first one, revealing two Creole features: the double negative and the idiomatic expression *just so*. One of the functions of this code-switching strategy here is, according to Pollard, to make "information accessible to both insider [Anglo-Caribbean] and outsider readerships" ("Mixing" 95). At other instances, however, the mix of voices is not noticed only through the mix of linguistic codes, but



sometimes a change in the pronominal quality of the enunciation favouring the perspective of the object—which becomes subject then— points at a clear case of mixing of narrative voices occurring independently of the mix of linguistic codes. In Lovelace’s short story “George and the Bicycle Pump”, for instance, sometimes the consciousness of the protagonist (George) interrupts the narration placing his discourse in the subject narrative position. Notice in this instance, “Look at them, he thought, as he watched people go by in front the printery, one of them is the one who thief my bicycle pump” (91), how the possessive pronoun *my* reveals the perspective of the character as the subject voice of the narrative enunciation independently of the mix of codes aiding here the occurrence of the mix of voices. (The Creole voice of the character comes alive in this narration in TTSE through the Creole prepositional phrase *in front*—without *of*, that would render it English— and the Creole change of the category of the word *thief* from noun to verb—which would be *thieve* in English).

In “A Brief Conversion”, there are two relevant instances of a double-voiced narrative discourse signalling also a mix of linguistic codes. In the first one, the Creole voice of Travey’s mother takes command of the narrative in her reproach to her husband’s irresponsible conduct when the time of carnival celebrations comes:

[U]ntil 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 by Loy shop and meet Bango and Mano and John and Rago and William and go until Ash Wednesday when he would return home, burdened with repentance (9).

The Creole features of the narrative discourse that precedes Pearl’s quoted direct speech and that signal a continuation of her speech now in the free indirect style are: the Creole unmarked verbs *to leave*, *to take up*, *to go down*, *to meet* and *to go* (that, just like the quoted one *to fly up*, corroborate the Creole grammatical pattern of the verb without inflexional content), and the

Creole changed meaning of the preposition *by* which might translate to English *near to*. By the end of this long sentence, the English verbal phrase *would return* suggests that the former narrating subject voice of the autodiegetic child narrator is restored for continuing the narration. Commenting on a quite similar example of this pattern of mixed narrative voices and codes in *Salt*, Pollard reviews that “[i]t is as if the narrator wishes to conjure up the recollection of mother by an approximation to her voice” (“Mixing” 96). Certainly, the fact that the recollected speech of the mother in the quoted passage from “A Brief Conversion” does not show a change in the pronominal quality of the enunciation ratifying her narrating subject position might hinder our appreciation of it as free indirect discourse. However, the lack of quotation marks in the preceding Creole discourse points at a deliberate authorial intention of making the object voice subject. Then, the free indirect style, in this example, might result from the author’s intention of mixing both alternatives (the direct and indirect speech), seeking to *free* the discourse of the characters from the constraints of the conventional narrative model. The voices of the *standard* and the Creole narrators, then, converge in the presentation of a double or collective narrative perspective.

A collective narrative perspective is conjured up and realized also through free indirect discourse in the second instance of mixed narrative voices and codes in this text. This collective perspective furthers the story of Priscilla —a neurotic woman from Travey’s village— probably told by Pearl and Aunt Irene, and retold by Travey in 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 anybody so good looking. When it had a dance fellars used to line up just to dance with her, she was so popular. People see a drunkard now, my mother says. But, in those days, Priscilla was a star. Then she went to the city. She went Venezuela. Her pictures used to be in the papers. She was a model. She used to give away dresses to her relatives. Good good dresses, she used to give away, pretty pretty dresses. A big shot man was engaged to marry her. She had a good job in the civil service. She was up in

society. But, poor Priscilla see what she shouldn't see; she hear what she shouldn't hear. Her boss was a big racketeer, defrauding the country of thousands and thousands of dollars. He bribe everybody, but no Priscilla. She give evidence against him in the enquiry. That was the end of her. She lose her job. The man that she was to marry leave her. Her family who she used to give those pretty dresses to disown her. They try to poison her. She come back to Curinapo to try to catch herself. They drag her down. They drag her down. She start to drink rum. She lose her looks, her reputation. People forget her, my mother says; but, not my mother. Aunt Irene remembers her too. They talk of her. They remember when she was a star<sup>119</sup> (23-24).

This short narration is produced by the Creole voice of Pearl, probably also that of Aunt Irene, and by Travey's voice narrating in TTSE. Several Creole features can be noticed here, like the unmarked Creole verbs *to see*, *to bribe*, *to give*, *to come back*, *to drag*, *to start*, and *to lose*; the idiomatic expressions *it didn't have* (there wasn't) and *it had* (there was); the Creole double negative in *didn't . . . nobody*; and the reduplications *good good* and *pretty pretty*. The Creole and *standard* voices are continuously converging in the rendering of this story, being equally credited. It is demonstrated in these juxtaposed TTSE and Creole discourses conveying Priscilla's success through her journeys: *Then she went to the city. She went (to) Venezuela*. This whole passage illustrates a mix of codes, narrative perspectives, and narrators.

These instances of collectively performed narration materialized through the mixing of voices and linguistic codes ratify, primarily, the collective nature of the overall Caribbean experience: this is a collective narrative aesthetic that testifies to the communal *modus vivendi* that this cultural, narrative aesthetic celebrates. Furthermore, this mixing of voices and codes points at an authorial intention of crediting the language of the folk within the narrative body of the text, and with it, the folk Afro-Creole experience. Lovelace's celebration of this folk experience in his stories is demonstrated, also at their linguistic level, with narrations frequently rendered in a slightly stilted Trinidad and Tobago Standard English which he had started to create from his

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<sup>119</sup> This neurotic woman was eventually rejected by this urban social context, her friends and her family until she became a drunkard and turned neurotic.

early novels. Here, very few and minor instances of Creole discourse determine the Creole flavour of a predominantly *standard* narration. In “A Brief Conversion” the occasional Creole features “Nobody didn’t talk” (14) and “In front the rum shop” (24) add the Creole flavour to the autobiographical narration in TTSE.

Lovelace’s narrative attitude of celebrating the Afro-Creole folk experience in the formal context of his fictional texts through the mixing of the TTSE and Creole’s codes and voices, and the simultaneous appropriation of the narrative idioms of the storyteller and the calypsonian ratifies his standpoint of articulating and authenticating the Afro-Creole experience through creolisation: through a creolised/hybrid narrative that certifies, in literature, the creolised sociocultural experience of Trinidad and Tobago. Therefore, his narrative strategy grounded on hybridity appears conditioned by the subversive attitude of the postcolonial subject and writer that pursues the validation of his/her native folk culture. This perception is furthered by Velma Pollard as she describes Lovelace’s hybrid narrative strategy as the *merging*, “Anansilike” of narrative discursive elements “in a seamless web” that might represent, symbolically, the hybrid intercultural Caribbean experience (“Mixing” 99). Then, Lovelace has relied on a sociohistorical and sociocultural legacy—the *Anansilike* strategy of apparently innocent subversion through disguise that permitted the preservation of the African cultural legacy in the Caribbean through the process of creolisation—for creating a syncretic/creolised narrative and literature that, besides authenticating the oral Afro-Creole culture, represents and validates a hybrid/creolised sociocultural reality. As Travey’s process of constructing his personal and cultural identity demonstrates, the authentication of the Afro-Creole sociocultural experience becomes fundamental for the positive articulation of a creolised cultural identity in the Afro-Caribbean context. Lovelace’s oral literature, then,

constitutes a creolised narrative manifestation that affords, aesthetically, a securing way of asserting cultural identity in the Afro-Caribbean universe.

The sample of Anglo-Caribbean narrative analysed in this chapter reveals the writers' adaptation of oral forms from the folk culture in creating these three short stories. These texts, highly informed by the Caribbean folk culture —especially by the oral art forms of calypso, storytelling, and dub poetry— have provided these writers with a literary medium through which legitimise the native folk culture, that sustains their articulation of cultural identity as Afro-Caribbean-born subjects. These literary attempts at validating the long-stigmatised Caribbean Creole culture through fiction point at an interpretation of this creative, literary acts of cultural authentication as a subversive praxis of cultural resistance.

Actually, the thematic level of these three short stories reveals the authors' celebration of a culture of resistance. It is proclaimed, clearly, through the rebellious human prototype promoted in these stories in the persona of Silvera's protagonist in "Caribbean Chameleon", and of the protagonists and other characters belonging to the communities depicted by Anthony and Lovelace in "They Better Don't Stop the Carnival" and "A Brief Conversion" respectively. The rebelliousness of Silvera's character is manifest in her raging and seemingly irrational behaviour with which she wants to protest against being discriminated in terms of race and probably of gender as well. Besides, Anthony's fictional Trinidadian community of the early 1940s protests against the banning of carnival by the colonial authorities. The spirit of rebellion of the Mannete boys is evinced in their continuing hammering on their hot steelpans in spite of the learnt news of the prohibition of carnival celebrations; and Lord Invader, the calypsonian, goes on composing his song text of social protest rendered indirectly through the entertaining context of the singing of calypso. In Lovelace's short story, the rebellious figures of the Afro-

Caribbean community here presented are, mainly, its male characters, including the protagonist who manages to oppose (through rebellion and violence) being abused and separated from his pride/self-securing Afro-Creole sociocultural context.

Furthermore, the stories rendered in Anthony's and Lovelace's texts further the expression of a political standpoint against Western cultural domination through the validation of the Creole folk culture. Anthony's story celebrates carnival as the most valid Trinidadian sociocultural context for the expression of resistance to colonial cultural domination, and calypso as providing an artistic, narrative vehicle for the voicing of the people's protest and the expression of this resistance. On its part, Lovelace's story asserts the necessary validation of the Afro-Creole sociocultural experience for the wholesome development of the social and cultural Afro-Caribbean subject in a postcolonial context still determined by a Westernised sociocultural perspective. This defence of the Creole folk culture as an entity that provides rootage in the secure sociocultural development and the assertion of cultural identity in the Afro-Caribbean universe translates, in the double-diasporic context of the black Caribbean immigrant experience in Canada from which Silvera's story is born, into a reaffirmation of the native Caribbean sociocultural context as providing grounding in the Caribbean-Canadian subject's process of sociocultural self-articulation.

It is precisely the immigrant Caribbean experience in Canada that forces the expatriate postcolonial writer, like Silvera, to pay a more urging attention to the *presentness* of this reality in "Caribbean Chameleon". This attention manifests itself in this short story in the clear political connotation of the story in relation to issues like economically-motivated *self-exile*, racial and gender discrimination, social marginalization and oppression, and neocolonialism. The present, political view of the female expatriate Caribbean writer shaping Silvera's story

contrasts, certainly, with the narrative perspective harking back to a kind of idyllic past in Anthony's and Lovelace's stories (one located, historically, in the Trinidadian social context of the 1940s; the other in that of the 1960s). Therefore, the particular expatriate experience of the Afro-Caribbean writer in Canada defines here Silvera's militant perspective in her addressing of social and cultural issues in "Caribbean Chameleon". Like Anthony and Lovelace, Silvera celebrates here a culture of resistance, but hers is a cultural resistance based on the articulation of cultural difference. Silvera's political consciousness as the different cultural Other in the Canadian social and cultural landscape conveyed in her short story is strengthened, then, thanks to her reaffirmation of her Caribbean sociocultural background, which is pursued in this text through its thematic and formal levels.

In the formal contexts of these three texts, these writers' celebration of a culture of resistance materializes in different ways. In "They Better Don't Stop the Carnival", the incorporation of the idiom and narrative of the calypsonian into the literary context of short fictional narrative in standard English —Trinidad and Tobago Standard English (TTSE) — implies the validation of an oral narrative and musical form (calypso) historically stigmatised and sometimes banned, officially, from within the conventional scribal context of narrative according to Western literary tradition. Anthony's validation of his Afro-Creole sociocultural experience in this story through his legitimisation of calypso as a Trinidadian folk narrative form also occurs through his crediting of the calypsonian's narrating voice in this text. This double-voiced narration informed by the *standard* narrator's voice and the calypsonian's becomes a narrative attempt at conjuring up and asserting the collective nature of the folk Caribbean experience.

On the other hand, Silvera articulates her Caribbean (Jamaican)-based cultural difference in the form of lyrical social protest, which materializes itself through a hybrid narrative. The narration

of “Caribbean Chameleon” is then born out of the juxtaposition of the poetic and short narrative genres. But this instance of poetic narrative is defined by the adaptation of the insurgent, lyrical, and rhythmic oral voice of the dub poet in the narrative context of fictional writing. Together with the oral, militant voice of the dub poet, the oral Creole voice of the Jamaican folk and the also militant voice of the Rastafarian are credited in this oral/literary poem/narration in Creole. Therefore, Silvera’s expression of a culture of resistance is described here in terms of her reaffirmation of her oral Afro-Jamaican culture, which provides the cultural signifiers sustaining her expression of cultural difference in her articulation of a culturally-identified black female personhood.

Like Silvera’s, Lovelace’s reaffirmation of his Afro-Creole Trinbagonian experience occurs through a hybrid narrative. However, the hybridism of “A Brief Conversion” is not determined by a mix of literary genres, but by the mix of narrative forms and techniques from the oral and literary narrative traditions, and by the mix of narrative voices and linguistic codes. Like his compatriot Michael Anthony, Lovelace’s validation of the Afro-Creole sociocultural experience of Trinidad and Tobago in “A Brief Conversion” is explained by his dual crediting of the idiom of the storyteller and the calypsonian in rendering this narration. But Lovelace steps even further in his creation because the voices of the characters come to assist this narration in their real, native linguistic quality, i.e., in Creole, their mother tongue. Consequently, Lovelace’s collectively performed narration in this text corroborates the communal, but also predominantly Creole-speaking Anglo-Caribbean experience.

The literary acts of validating the Caribbean Creole folk culture through the appropriation and legitimisation of some of its elements and forms in fictional writing developed in these three short stories can be interpreted as personal attempts of these writers to assert a Caribbean



cultural identity with which to counteract contemporary neocolonial forms of cultural imperialism operating in Caribbean societies. Within this context, these highly culturally-identified Anglo-Caribbean texts become fictional narrative exponents of a literature of resistance that seeks to contest the enthronisation of Western aesthetic values in the literature of the region. Through this literature of resistance these writers are certainly contributing to the development of an indigenous Caribbean literary aesthetic.

## CONCLUSION

The Anglo-Caribbean *oral literature* has been the product of continuing and recently more renewed encounters between Caribbean writers and the Caribbean oral tradition and culture in the field of literature. The oral tradition has offered these writers an artistic and sociocultural foundation for their creative expression and for their own sociocultural self-articulation, which is expanded at the level of the national to signify the self-articulation of a culture and a people through literature. These writers' approach to the *alter/native* Caribbean oral culture has entailed, indeed, the identification of processes of assertion of a Caribbean cultural identity being developed from within the context of literature. Therefore, literature and fiction in this case —that same discursive context through which the ideological apparatus of European colonialism ruled the colonized subject's experience —proposed a discursive vehicle for these writers in their re/cognition and validation of their folk culture and experience. The Caribbean writers' look at themselves (as a people and a culture), toward the inside of their traditions, has made possible the correction of the alienating images of *Them Selves* enthroned by the colonialist discourse in literature. This look at themselves has been a necessary precedence for the recuperation and validation of the Caribbean oral cultural heritage that takes place in this fictional writing, through which the writers are expressing and asserting a cultural identity (Them Selves) and, as Erna Brodber claims, are giving back to their people their true (culturally-identified) Selves in fiction.

The orality of Anglo-Caribbean fiction comes out, therefore, *highlighted*, due to the revolutionary look of the Caribbean writer toward his/her folk culture and tradition, that provide the writer with a most suitable sustaining cultural source in the literary processes of assertion of identity for the defense of cultural autonomy in the region (against the dominant

colonial sociocultural legacy and cultural neocolonialism). Orality constitutes, then, the most noticeable feature of this literature, and a signifier of cultural identity within it. The writers' exploration of the *orature* of their culture with this validating approach to the oral tradition has certainly expanded the possibilities of this literature through the creation and /or adaptation of the oral standards (in content and form) in the written context of fictional narrative. This stylistic syncretism in narrative has brought about the development of oral/scribal narrative modes that are coming to define the region's *oral literature*. Thus, these oral/literary texts generally propose a critical reading that identifies them as sometimes complex and undefined narrative constructions that defy the standards of Western literary tradition.

Seen as the discursive embodiment of the postcolonial writer's struggle against Western cultural domination, these fictional narrative constructions become postcolonial textualities of resistance. The enunciative resistance in cultural terms of postcolonial narrative is corroborated by postcolonial critic Stephen Slemon when noting the also ideological valency of postcolonial literature in its oppositional *writing back* to the imperial colonizing centre; paralleling the (discursive and material) agency of the canonical texts/books of European literature in the colonialist settling of Empire, "the [postcolonial] *text* should also become the material site in and against which so much counter-discursive activity comes to direct its transformative energies" (103). The Anglo-Caribbean *oral literary* texts offer a counter-discursive narrative material in their expression of cultural resistance through the legitimisation of the oral standards of the Caribbean alternative word-culture in the conventional scribal context of Western literary tradition. And when the Anglo-Caribbean oral cultural forms most transgressively work upon the scribal/literary narrative standards at the formal level of these texts —as Silvera's "Caribbean Chameleon" here analysed shows— the transformative energies of this counter-discursive activity of cultural resistance, propelled by social and

political movements, are directed toward the creation of *uprising textualities*, which is how Carole Boyce Davies critically defines the writing of black women that resist dominations of (colonial and imperialist) discourse: [T]extualities which seek to destabilize the established knowledge/authoritarian bases. It is a new resistance to imperialism which eschews colonial borders, systems, separations, ideologies, structures of domination (108).

The six *oraliterary* texts analysed in this dissertation are part of now a large body of Anglo-Caribbean textualities of resistance. Their critical examination allows the identification of subversive creative acts and resistance articulations of cultural identity. The cultural resistance inscribed in the formal context of these texts is formulated around the representation of several elements and narrative forms from the Caribbean oral culture and tradition in these written narrative constructions, such as the oral rhetoric and narrative strategies of the storyteller — which is supported by the region's so popular tradition and common practice of storytelling, the musical and oral narrative idiom of the calypso singer, the resistant and subversive potential of the trickster, the militant, oral poetic voice of the dub poet, and the proverbial Creole idiom and communal/collective perspective of these cultures. The notable validation (through this representation) of these oral elements in these texts, especially in their formal context, corroborates the subversive praxis of *oralisation* of written narrative discourse that consolidates, also from these examples, the inevitable *oraliterary* narrative aesthetic of Anglo-Caribbean postcolonial literatures.

The stylistic principles of storytelling, inherent to primary Anglo-Caribbean narrative forms, govern the three narrative contexts created by Velma Pollard, Ismith Khan, and Olive Senior analysed in Chapter Three. At their thematic level, the storyteller's narrative has furthered the recuperation of part of the Caribbean *orature* and oral history: the region's social history of

labour migration through a matriarchal social perspective, folktale and oral story, and the trickster tale. This recuperation of the cultural legacy of oral tradition implies a view of these writers as cultural historians, pursuing in the field of literature the revivification of this legacy for the cultural education of their people and younger generations. This literary kind of cultural lecturing of Caribbean peoples pursued in fictional writing constitutes, as Merle Hodge has noted, an important strategy in the struggle against the cultural neocolonialism in the region. Consequent with this role of the storyteller's narrative in these texts, the functional motifs of this cultural, narrative praxis operate here in terms of the educational and entertaining dimension of storytelling. The educational purpose of storytelling is asserted in Pollard's "A Night's Tale" and Khan's "Shadows Move in the Britannia Bar" with the presentation of the storyteller lecturing her/his audience on social, cultural, and historical issues. On the other hand, the entertaining motif of storytelling supports the rendering of the cultural lecture produced in Khan's text, as well as the celebratory narrative of resistance of the trickster figure in Senior's "Ascot".

Furthermore, the oral narrative style of the storyteller is manifest in these resistant written texts through the appropriation of his/her oral rhetoric and narrative strategies produced in the Creole language. The presentation of the Creole language in these six texts varies in terms of male and female narrative creation. The male presentation of Creole in the fictional texts of Khan, Anthony and Lovelace here analysed points, seemingly, at a validation of Creole as the language or oral speech of Anglo-Caribbean peoples. But Lovelace's syncretic narrative demonstrates that the advancement of Creole in the narrative terrain of the fictional writing by male authors—in the standard variety of English, traditionally—is being more certain. In contrast, the female narrative in Creole illustrated in the texts by Pollard, Senior and Makeda Silvera shows that Creole is being clearly legitimated in much of the Anglo-Caribbean women

writing as the most rightful linguistic signifier of cultural identity for these Caribbean peoples. Women writers' firm validation of Creole in their narrative corresponds with a clear militant standpoint against the cultural domination by Western and literary standards.

While the oral quality of the three female texts analysed is magnified by their legitimising use of Creole, the orality of the three male texts by authors from Trinidad and Tobago is enhanced by the influence of the musical idiom of the calypsonian. The calypsonian narrative, which might come to define a musical narrative mode within the Anglo-Caribbean *oral literature*, undermines the Western narrative standards bequeathed to Trinidadian narrative in the realization of a fictional narrative that incorporates the rhythm-bound discourse of the calypsonian. The calypsonian's discourse enters the formal context of these three narrative texts through repetition and rhyme. And Michael Anthony's "They Better Don't Stop the Carnival" recreates the calypsonian's rhetoric of social critique and protest in a fictional historicizing of a case of social rebellion in defense of the Afro-Creole Trinidadian folk culture. Thematically also, these three texts from Trinidad and Tobago articulate the defense of the Caribbean folk culture against a dominant Western or Western-oriented (colonial and postcolonial) cultural order.

Moreover, the *oral literary uprising* text "Caribbean Chameleon" by Makeda Silvera offers, with its oral social poetry in Creole fixing the written context of fiction, an instance of a transgressive oral signifying upon the narrative space of fictional writing. This instance of resistant textuality articulates opposition to a dominant and oppressive white and Western sociocultural discourse. This *migrant*, resistant text reveals an authorial position of the expatriate (female) Caribbean writer committed to her expatriate and double-diasporic experience in political, cultural and social terms. On this account, Silvera's migrant narrative

reveals a different perspective to that articulated in other Caribbean-Canadian fictional writing less preoccupied with their expatriate dimension. Fitting in this case, the fiction of the also Caribbean-Canadian Olive Senior looks more toward the native Caribbean scenario due, probably, to the author's interest in representing and validating the Caribbean sociocultural experience as a strategy in the defense and assertion of cultural identity. But as these two migrant narratives ultimately show, Senior's validation of her native Jamaican sociocultural experience and Silvera's crediting of her Jamaican-based sociocultural reality speak for these writers' reaffirmation of a Caribbean sociocultural grounding that sustains their narrative self-articulation in a postcolonial era marked by Western cultural hegemony.

Vis-à-vis this postcolonial reality, these Anglo-Caribbean writers have become cultural politicians in the field of literature. Their *national compromise* toward their people, envisaged by Franz Fanon in the struggle for cultural sovereignty, has determined these writers' crediting look toward their folk culture. They have been doing in the literary terrain what, according to Brathwaite, their politicians have been unable to do: "to understand the structures of the folk and apply those structures to national political life" ("New Aesthetic" 149). The writer's legitimizing representation of the predominantly oral Caribbean folk culture (its content and formal structures) in literature constitutes an important contribution in the struggle for gaining cultural autonomy. For, besides making their people recognize and accept themselves through their culture and sociocultural experience thus validated, these writers have contributed to the development of an indigenous literary aesthetic based on folk culture. This literary aesthetic was formed along the very strategic patterns of the process of creolisation that gave birth to these societies and cultures: juxtaposition, transformation, amalgamation, and disguise; but also through a subversive praxis of opposition to Western dominant cultural and literary standards. Consequently, the Anglo-Caribbean *oral literature*, which defines, aesthetically, the region's

contemporary literature, has been promoted by literary acts of cultural resistance to Anglocentricity and Western cultural neocolonialism. The oral, sometimes musical and collective quality of this resistant narrative discourse constitutes an identitarian stylistic emblem of these overwhelmingly oral cultures in literature.



## APPENDIX I. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON THE AUTHORS

Anthony, Michael. Afro-Caribbean novelist, short-story writer, historian, and scholar. He was born in Mayaro, Trinidad, in 1932, and was educated at the primary school in his hometown and the Junior Technical School of San Fernando. He worked as a moulder in an iron factory until 1954 when he went to England, where he worked in factories, on the railways, as a telegraphist, and began his career as novelist. Later he lived in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, for two years before returning to Trinidad in 1970. Since then he has worked with the National Cultural Council of Trinidad and Tobago. His novels include *The Games Were Coming* (1963), *The Year in San Fernando* (1965), *Green Days by the River* (1967), *Streets of Conflict* (1976), *All That Glitters* (1981), and *High Tide of Intrigue* (2001). He has also written a children's novel *King of the Masquerade* (1974); a collection of tales *Folktales and Fantasies* (1976); three collections of short stories: *Sandra Street and Other Stories* (1973), *Cricket in the Road* (1973), and *The Chieftains Carnival and Other Stories* (1993); and many historical works: *Glimpses of Trinidad and Tobago: With a Glance at the West Indies* (1974), *Profile Trinidad: A Historical Survey from the Discovery to 1990* (1975), *Trinidad-Tobago* (1975), *The Making of Port of Spain* (1978), *Bright Road to El Dorado* (1981), *Port of Spain in a World at War 1939-45* (1983), *Historical Dictionary of Trinidad and Tobago* (1997), *Heroes of the People of Trinidad and Tobago*, and *Anaparima: The History of San Fernando and its Environs 1595-1900* (2002). His fiction and that of Earl Lovelace are said to have ushered in a new stage in the Anglo-Caribbean literary tradition, in which the ordinary Caribbean experience was addressed and validated from a native and national perspective, also that of ordinary people.

Khan, Ismith. Caribbean novelist, short-story writer, and scholar. He was born in Trinidad, in 1925, and grew up within a Muslim family who came from the country of Port of Spain, strongly influenced by his grandfather, a Pathan from Northern India who was a militant community leader who had been shot and wounded by the colonial authorities in their suppression of the Hosay rebellion of 1884. Khan attended the Queen's Royal College in Trinidad and later worked as a reporter for the *Trinidadian Guardian*. He left Trinidad in the 1950s to study at Michigan State University and John Hopkins University in the United States. He taught in several American universities and lived in New York until his death on April, 2002. He wrote three novels: *The Jumbie Bird* (1961), *The Obeah Man* (1964), and *The Crucifixion* (1987), several scholarly essays; and the collection of short stories *A Day in the Country and Other Stories* (1994).

Lovelace, Earl. Afro-Caribbean novelist, playwright, and short-story writer. He was born in Toco, Trinidad, in 1935, and grew up in Tobago. He first worked as with the Trinidad Publishing Company, and later joined the Civil Service, serving first in the Forest Department and then in the Department of Agriculture as an agricultural assistance. Thus he gained an intimate knowledge of rural Trinidad that has informed much of his fiction. After the publication of his first novel, *While Gods Are Falling* (1965), which won him the British Petroleum Independence Literary Award, he went to the United States to study at Howard University, and received his MA in English from John Hopkins University in 1974. In 1980 he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship and spent that year at the University of Iowa. He returned to Trinidad in 1982, where he now lives and writes. His first novel was followed by *The Schoolmaster* (1968), about an isolated rural community in Trinidad coming in touch with progress —

implying the destruction of cherished values— with the arrival of a new teacher. The promise evident in these novels of the sixties was fulfilled in *The Dragon Can't Dance* (1979), and the *Wine of Astonishment* (1982) which, *West Africa* magazine argued, put him in the front rank of Caribbean writers. His most recent published novel *Salt* (1996) won the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best Book in 1997. He has also written a collection of plays, *Jestina's Calypso* (1984); the collection of short stories *A Brief Conversion and Other Stories* (1988), which groups together twelve of the author's best short stories; *Crawfie the Crapaud* (1997), stories for youth, and several of his essays are gathered in *From the I-lands* and *Growing in the Dark*. He works in the Folk Theatre in Trinidad and teaches creative writing at the University of the West Indies.

Pollard, Velma. Afro-Caribbean poet, short-story writer, and teacher and scholar. She was born in the parish of Saint Andrew, Jamaica, in 1937, and was educated in Jamaica (Excelsior High School and the University of the West Indies at Mona), Canada (McGill University in Montreal) and the United States (Columbia University). Since 1975 she has been a lecturer in the School of Education of the University of the West Indies at Mona. Her scholarly research into the Creole language includes seminal work on the Rastafarian discourse, like *Dread Talk: The Language of Rastafari*. She has written several books of poetry: *Crown Point and Other Poems* (1988), *Shame Trees Don't Grow Here: But Poincianas Bloom* (1992), and *The Best Philosophers I Know Can't Read or Write* (1996); and the novel *Home Stretch* (1994). She has edited several anthologies, such as *Nine West Indian Poets. An Anthology for the C. X. C.* (1980), *Anansesem* (1994), and has co-edited with Jean D'Costa *Over Our Way* (1994), a collection of Caribbean short stories for young readers. She has also written the collections of short stories *Considering Woman and Other Stories* (1989), and *Karl and Other Stories* (1993). Fuelled by a female perspective, several of her stories and poems evoke women's powerlessness and lack of freedom within marriage, as well as become a kind of testimony (sympathetic, angry, and proud) to the enduring potential Caribbean women. In her works, a fine dry wit and often comic irony complement her seriousness of purpose.

Senior, Olive. Caribbean poet, short-story writer, and scholar. She was born in Trelawny, Jamaica, in 1941, to a peasant family; and grew up between that environment and the more privileged one provided by comparatively well-to-do relatives, with whom she spent mucho of her time after the age of four. Her poetry and prose continually draw landscape and characters from that place and time, and treat the tension between the different social levels of urban and rural Jamaica. She worked for the Jamaican paper *Daily Gleaner* after leaving school, and later studied journalism at Carleton University, Ottawa. She lives between Toronto and Jamaica. Among her writings are non-fiction and scholarly works such as *The Message is Change* (1972), *A-Z of Jamaican Heritage* (1983), *Working Miracles: Women's Lives in the English-speaking Caribbean* (1991), and *Encyclopaedia of Jamaican Heritage*; the collections of poetry *Talking of Trees* (1985), *Gardening in the Tropics* (1994), and *Over the Roofs of the World* (2005), and the short story collections *Summer Lightning And Other Stories* (1986), which won the Commonwealth Writers Prize in 1987, *Arrival of the Snake Woman and Other Stories* (1989), and *Discerner of Hearts and Other Stories* (1995). In her short stories, the favoured voice is that of the child who describes, with honesty, wit and sometimes humour, the surrounding (Jamaican) reality in the Jamaican language. Her characters are usually constructed along resistant subjectivities that question and defy the conditions or situations of dominance and over-determination by others or the established order.

Silvera, Makeda. African-Caribbean-Canadian writer and scholar. She was born in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1955, and spent her early years there before immigrating to Canada in 1967. Now living in Toronto, she is co-founder of Sister Vision: Black Women and Women of Colour Press, where she is managing editor. Her writing explores identity and language from a lesbian feminist perspective. Among her publications are scholarly works such as *Sight Specific: Lesbians and Representation* (1988); *Silenced* (1984), an acclaimed collection of oral histories of Caribbean domestic women workers in Canada; *Growing Up Black*, a resource guide for youth; and *Piece of My Heart*, a ground-breaking anthology of writings by lesbians of colour, edited by herself. Her first book of fiction *Remembering G and Other Stories* (1991) presents stories about a female childhood experience in the Caribbean (Jamaica). In her second collection of short stories *Her Head a Village* (1994), Silvera speaks of what it means to be Black, working class, lesbian, immigrant, and “other” in a racist and marginalizing Canadian society. Her stories are punctuated with humour, irony, and the lyrical rhythm of the Jamaican language.

APPENDIX II. A BRIEF EXCHANGE OF IDEAS WITH SOME  
OF THE AUTHORS

The following exchange of ideas was conducted with these three authors via e-mail on May, 2003, and June, 2006.

OLIVE SENIOR ON “ASCOT”.

On two occasions in the course of our relationship in the scholarly field I have broached to Olive Senior my view on the interpretation of her fictional stories from the standpoint of the expression of cultural identity, which furthers the idea of a process of asserting a Caribbean (Jamaican) cultural identity being developed in both the thematic and formal levels of her work. And both times she has answered that she had not thought about cultural questions such as that one when writing her stories:

Senior: When I wrote these stories —she is referring here to her stories from her first collection *Summer Lightning*— I had no idea of their meaning beyond trying to tell a good story. So you as the critic will have to decide what the story is doing in cultural terms.

As the critical analysis of her stories show, the exploration and articulation of identity at the level of the individual and the community becomes a central motif in Senior’s fictional work, which is corroborated by Alison Donnell when she claims in her article “The Short Fiction of Olive Senior” that “Senior’s work demonstrates a sustained interest in the complex and difficult task of the negotiating of identities, particularly cultural identities, for all groups within the Caribbean” (118). In my view, as I have already noted, Senior’s representation and validation of the Caribbean reality and sociocultural experience in her fiction may respond to a literary

purpose of defending and asserting a Caribbean cultural identity with which to counteract Western hegemonic forms of cultural domination operating in the postcolonial Caribbean.

In a question specifically about the articulation of identity for her characters in a short story such as “Summer Lightning”: Do you think that that question 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: I see you as a kind of storyteller. Frequently your stories resemble an oral narration more than a written one, regardless of the standard English in which it seems to be narrated. Do you imagine the reader as a kind of listening audience to which you are 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, Big Boy 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.

In relation to Senior’s use of language in her fictional texts, I quoted several examples from her work.

Q: In 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 these phrases: "Now, he reasoned deeply with himself . . ." and "Now when Papa not looking. . .", (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* Ascot stay round . . ." ?

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.

In relation to "Ascot", my questions were focused on the meanings around Ascot's travel and experience of exile, and on the interpretation of his persona as trickster.

My first question has to do with my assumption that Senior's infrequent interest in the exile experience of Caribbean subjects in her fiction is explained by her desire to validate the native Caribbean experience as a strategy in the assertion of a Caribbean cultural identity.

Q: "Ascot" is one of those few stories of yours that treat the experience of exile, so common for many Caribbean people, but Ascot's life in foreign is de-emphasized. It means, then, that you were not actually interested in thematizing that exile experience when writing the story?

A: While the notion of 'exile' is one currently fashionable, I had no such notion when I was writing about Ascot. What I was concerned about was the idea of 'foreign' or 'travel' that so many Jamaicans even in the remote countryside then had and which seemed so romantic. And the way in which the returning travellers were expected to show that they had been changed by

the experience. Some, like Ascot, fulfil their goals and desires, others, like the Uncle (in “The Case Against the Queen” in *Discerner of Hearts*) and others I have written about displaying the negative experience of travel.

Q: In this story you give a sympathetic treatment (through humour) of the persona of Ascot as a character in spite of his dishonest and deceitful behaviour. That’s why I am more inclined to think that you are not really interested in raising here a moralizing commentary on his persona and his story but in highlighting/celebrating his capacity of resistance (through his slyness) to be over-determined by others and by the established social order. Do you agree with this view?

A: To me Ascot is the representation of the Trickster which would explain the lack of ‘moralizing commentary on his persona’.

Although her answer does not extend so as to sustain the sociocultural question alluded here, it is, certainly, the representation of the trickster as subversive and resistant prototype that confirms the celebration of an attitude/behaviour of resistance vis-à-vis the dominant social order in this story. And Ascot’s subversive and resistant character through his trickery is what allows him to fulfil his life ambition.

#### 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:

Pollard: I do believe in that notion of ‘text’ from Reader Response Theory.

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: I know that you have lived in Matura, has it being for most of your live?



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.

There is a book of my essays called *Growing in the Dark*. It has been published by Lexicon publishers in Trinidad. It would be useful.

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