

*Postcolonial Hauntologies:*

*Creole Identity in*

*Jean Rhys, Patrick Chamoiseau and David Dabydeen*

*by*

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## CONTENTS

<i>Introduction</i>	1
<b>From ‘White Hush’ to ‘Nigger Talk’: Postcolonial Hauntologies of Creole Identity</b>	
 <i>Chapter One</i>	15
<b>The White Creole as Hottentot, Mulatto Ghost and Souciant: Creoleness as Abjection in Jean Rhys’s <i>Voyage in the Dark</i></b>	
- Abjection: Text and Context	22
- Rhys’s ‘Two Tunes’ of Black and White	32
- A ‘Sick Revolt’: Creoleness as Abjection in <i>Voyage in the Dark</i>	37
- ‘Like a Souciant’s Eyes’: Morphing Dark Doubles	53
- ‘And Blackness Comes’: The Horror of ‘Black Skin, White Masks’	64
 <i>Chapter Two</i>	70
<b>The Djobbers, Zombie-Slave and Jablesse: Conjuring Muses of History in Patrick Chamoiseau’s <i>Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows</i></b>	
- Dis-possessed and Dis-embodied Zombies	71
- Martinique’s ‘Happy Zombie’	76
- Ghostly Djobbers Wheeling ‘Trace-Memories’	79
- Conjuring the Zombie of the Soul: ‘Muses’ and ‘Specters’ of History	83
- Jableses: Memory and Markets as Deathly Consumption	96
 <i>Chapter Three</i>	104
<b>Dis-possessed Zombies and the Opaque ‘Zone of Nonbeing’ in <i>School Days</i></b>	
- The ‘Occult Instability’ of the ‘Zone of Nonbeing’: Disalienating Fanon	105
- ‘Engrave the Body Politic’: The Language of Slavery	112
- The Uncanny and the Opacity of Creole Counterculture	121

<b><i>Chapter Four</i></b>	132
<b>Creoleness ‘Impaled on Hyphens’: Ventriloquism in Writing the Erotics of <i>Texaco</i></b>	
- Creoleness ‘Impaled on Hyphens’	133
- Ventriloquism: The Erotics of Writing the Subaltern	141
 <b><i>Chapter Five</i></b>	156
<b>Erecting Migrant Identity in a ‘Library of Graves’: Abjection and Entombment in David Dabydeen’s <i>The Intended</i></b>	
- Black Blood, Black Words: Abjection in an Anglo-Guyanese ‘Family Romance’	162
- Entombments and Epitaphs: Intertextuality and Identification in a ‘Library of Graves’	169
- Erecting ‘Intended’ Entombments: Inscribing Female Bodies	181
 <b><i>Chapter Six</i></b>	185
<b>The ‘Phantom Limb’: Hybrid Frames of Influence and Identification in <i>Turner</i></b>	
- ‘To Write the Absence of the Body’: Turn(er)s of Hybridity	191
- Framing the ‘Sea’s Craft’: Turns of ‘Creative Amnesia’ and ‘Creative Anxiety’	199
 <b><i>Chapter Seven</i></b>	208
<b><i>A Harlot’s Progress</i>: A Postmodern Trickster Slave Tale</b>	
- ‘Your Name is Legion’: Trickster Slave in Trickster Tale	212
- The Craft and Consumption of Aesthetic Harlotry	224
- Postmodern Tricks(ter)	230
 <b><i>Conclusion</i></b>	238
<b>‘A Devil in the Garden’</b>	
 <b><i>Endnotes</i></b>	244
 <b><i>Endnotesphy</i></b>	286

## SUMMARY

This thesis focuses on the works of Caribbean writers Jean Rhys, Patrick Chamoiseau and David Dabydeen, specifically as they draw upon the mythic and religious beliefs and practices of the Caribbean in their constitution of individual and cultural Creole identity through textuality. The Caribbean tropes of haunting are surreptitious passageways leading to the Creole subject's struggle with the divided affiliations, cross-racial identifications and various forms of dispossession that are colonialism's legacy. As conduits to forbidden and unspoken fantasies, fears and desires, they also serve as the means of reformulating Creole identity.

The study of Jean Rhys explores her agonized formulation of Creole identity as an abjection, where the self is (un)made in the nauseating identification with the black female other in the form of the hottentot, mulatto ghost and souciant. Rhys's racialized abjection establishes Creole identity as a vacillating border state that is fraught with sadomasochistic violence and sickness.

Patrick Chamoiseau uses the zombie trope to figure the loss of history, memory and language endemic to the dehumanization of Martinican man. Suppressed Creole culture becomes a part of the collective unconscious, and its uncanny return unmasks the misrecognition of white identification and serves as a strategy of disalienating opacity. Chamoiseau's Creolist manifesto is critically examined against the framework of an erotics of colonialism, to reveal the ventriloquism of the female subaltern who is made to embody the schizophrenic anxieties of the Creole male writer.

David Dabydeen's work demonstrates how the family romance of the Creole migrant is erected upon the entombments of native ancestors, literary forefathers and female figures, the phantoms of which return to haunt with the anxieties of influence and the threats of disappearance and perpetual exile. His ekphrastic revisions accomplish the destabilizing and hybridizing functions of tricksterism, but also perpetuate an otherness under the guise of postmodern rewriting.

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# *Introduction*

## **From ‘White Hush’ to ‘Nigger Talk’: Postcolonial Hauntologies of Creole Identity**

Sailing on the Caribbean, Africa arrived in tears; she came with her  
orichas, myths and legends, magic rituals. [. . .]

The islands were peopled on the Caribbean Sea, children sprouted:  
white and black, black and white; white, black, mulatto, on  
the Caribbean Sea on which the ships sailed, where the  
drum was heard, where the voice of the master was felt, by  
way of the hides, by way of the whip, hands were clasped:  
yours and mine.

-- Excilia Saldaña<sup>1</sup>

The myths and magic of Africa and the identifications of black and white come together here in the formulation of individual and cultural Caribbean Creole identities. This thesis explores the identitarian politics and textual poetics in the works of Caribbean writers Jean Rhys, Patrick Chamoiseau and David Dabydeen, particularly as they draw upon the mythic and religious beliefs and practices of the Caribbean.

To examine the postcolonial hauntology of Creole identity is to summon the revenants that haunt the Creole self. These are the revenants of historical memory, ancestral voices, and the fears and desires of cross-racial identification that determine yet disturb the constitution of the Creole self. The hauntological, a term derived from Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (1994), refers to that which is ‘neither substance, nor essence, nor existence, *is never present as such*’ and yet which ‘disjoins the living present’, ‘secretly unhinges it’ and exposes the ‘*non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present*’.<sup>2</sup> Unlike ontology, which is the discourse of being, and speaks only of what is present or absent and cannot account



for what is neither, hauntology focuses on the *revenants* or *specters* which are 'neither living nor dead, present nor absent'.<sup>3</sup> These are the ghosts which render the present somehow incomplete, shadowed by that which is repressed or forgotten. The word *hantise*, translated as 'haunting', is the etymological root for Derrida's hauntology, and it implies 'an obsession, a constant fear, a fixed idea, or a nagging memory'.<sup>4</sup> This impinges upon identity as being tormented by specters that produce fixations, fears, desires and anxieties that threaten the self with dissolution. The nuances of the hauntological illuminate the divided nature of Caribbean Creole identity, stemming from the hybridized nature of the Caribbean.

The Caribbean is viewed as a paradigm for modern, syncretic cultures because of the intense cultural and racial hybridization that resulted from the colonial enterprise.<sup>5</sup> The systematic annihilation of the indigenous Arawaks and migrant Caribs that accompanied the constitution of plantation slavery in the Caribbean and the later system of indentured labour resulted in diverse migrant groups of African slaves, European settlers, and Indian and Chinese workers. Interaction between the different native and migrant communities was characterized by coercion, appropriation and strains of resistance, as well as the more reciprocal process of assimilation.<sup>6</sup> The region's complex racial and cultural interactions resulted in mutations of personal and cultural identity, with each culture playing a part in shaping a creolized Caribbean society.

The term 'Creole' is a variable signifier, initially used to designate those of European descent born in the West Indies but acquiring the meaning of possessing mixed racial ancestry resulting from colonialism, and in its more generic understanding, referring to a syncretic cultural or linguistic practice.<sup>7</sup> The

discursive and locational slippages of the term and the changing vocabulary used to define colonial identities reflect the shifting relationships between races and nations, as well as perceptions of racial difference. Barbadian poet and historian, Edward Kamau Brathwaite notes that the Caribbean's heterogeneous cultural and racial elements interacted to create a new concept of personhood, 'a more truly creole norm: not white (or black) but black / white: mulatto'.<sup>8</sup> Even this notion of Creole identity is limiting if its consideration of black and white is restricted to race alone. According to H. Adlai Murdoch, the Creole's 'suspect beginnings as colonialism's model for the fearfully unnameable and unplaceable hybrid monstrosity' have been supplanted by the 'multiplicity, displacement, and creative instability' undergirding 'creole-driven theories' in the contemporary English and French-speaking Caribbean.<sup>9</sup> Exemplifying this view, the Martinican writer, Raphaël Confiant argues that 'the term "Creole" is [. . .] eminently modern, not backward-looking and colonial as some might think; indeed, it is even postmodern insofar as it signals the emergence of a new model of identity that one might call "multiple" or "mosaic", which is in the process of developing and making itself visible everywhere in the world, notably in the West's megalopoli'.<sup>10</sup> The use of Creole as a model of identity that looks beyond the essentialisms and binaries of colonialism to the multiple constituents of a multivalent identity expresses the tenets of the créolité movement.

In their seminal text 'In Praise of Creoleness' (1989; English trans. 1990), Confiant, Patrick Chamoiseau and Jean Bernabé argue that Creole identity is opposed to claims of essentialism and singularity, and is constituted of 'the *interactional or transactional* aggregate' of various national and cultural

elements.<sup>11</sup> They define creoleness as the ‘double process’ of ‘the adaptation of Europeans, Africans, and Asians to the New World’ and ‘the cultural confrontation of these peoples within the same space, resulting in a mixed culture called Creole’ (‘IPC’, p. 894). Creolization is the process of ‘a nonharmonious (and unfinished therefore nonreductionist) mix’ of the practices and beliefs of these culturally different populations (‘IPC’, p. 893).<sup>12</sup> The creolists specify that such ‘brutal interaction’ was experienced in Martinique, Guyana and in the small Caribbean islands (like Dominica) where Europeans and Africans were forced to confront each other (‘IPC’, pp. 893-94). Significantly, the three writers being studied here are from these countries. Their Creole identities evolved from the interracial and cross-cultural interactions in question.

A creolized identity is fundamentally a hybrid. Originally employed to name the cross-breeding of two different species, hybridity is used in cultural theory to define the process of resistance and contestation whereby mixed identities challenge and subvert the assimilative dominant narrative. Robert J. C. Young traces the term’s development from racialized discourse in the eighteenth century where the hybrid embodied ‘threatening forms of perversion and degeneration’, to the twentieth-century social linguistic theories of Mikhail Bakhtin and Homi K. Bhabha, whereby discursive hybridity undermines structures of domination.<sup>13</sup> As Bhabha explains, hybridity ‘reverses the effects of colonialist disavowal, so that other “denied” knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority’, and it ‘breaks down the symmetry and duality of self / other, inside / outside’ and besieges the ‘boundaries of authority’ with “the other scene” of fixations and phantoms’.<sup>14</sup> Although Bhabha posits that

this subversive hybridity is inherent in colonial discourse, the original usage of the term to describe the mixing of species must not be overlooked. In relation to creolization, hybridity, according to Robin Cohen and Paul Kennedy, refers to the 'evolution of commingled cultures from two or more parent cultures' in the 'creation of dynamic mixed cultures'.<sup>15</sup> Steven G. Yao points out that "'hybridity" carries with it a sense of sexual, and implicitly violent, transgression of "natural" categories that produces a new entity with a complex and multiply determined lineage'.<sup>16</sup> In the commingling of cultures and lineage, the hybrid crosses national, cultural, racial and gendered boundaries, impacting upon affiliative ties and identifications.

In this respect, hybridity implies an unsettling of identities as it is precisely in the border encounters, where self and other, local and global, black and white meet, that cultural identities are shaped. To understand the hybridity of Creole identity, it is necessary to examine the interstitial spaces where lines of influence intersect to initiate changing subjectivities. These are what Bhabha terms, 'border lives', which are formulated in the 'in-between' spaces, 'where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion'.<sup>17</sup> Border lives are constantly permeating boundaries – geographical, cultural, identitarian – and traversing binaries that seek to delimit identification. As Bhabha explains, it is the '*in-between* space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture'.<sup>18</sup> The 'in-between' becomes a site of collaboration and contestation and of the overlap and displacement of domains of difference wherein values are negotiated. In these variously termed 'hyphenated', 'syncretic', 'liminal', 'interstitial' spaces, cultural

enunciations continue to vacillate between moments of contestation and complicity, regeneration and regression. It is also in this space that creolized identity is formed. The hybridized enunciations and identifications of the Caribbean writers considered in this thesis are located in the in-between spaces that provide the basis for elaborating strategies of selfhood that initiate new conceptions of cultural and individual Creole identities.

Creole identity is constituted of divided and mixed identifications. In Diana Fuss's definition, identification operates as 'the place of difference and similitude in self-other relations', such that 'at the same time that identification sets into motion the complicated dynamic of recognition and misrecognition that brings a sense of identity into being, it also immediately calls that identity into question'.<sup>19</sup> As identification is fundamentally relational, of self to other, inside to outside, it is infinitely reversible and subject to change. Furthermore, identification 'invokes', according to Fuss, 'ghosts from the past', 'the phantasmal relics of our complicated psychical histories'.<sup>20</sup> Hence, identification is imbricated in past traumas and present fears and desires. Accordingly, identity is rendered unstable and continually haunted by its dissolution.

The writers Jean Rhys, Patrick Chamoiseau and David Dabydeen all struggle with the ambivalent dualities of their Creole identities. In Bhabha's terms, each is '*less than one and double*',<sup>21</sup> caught in the colonial neither / nor binary ensnared in the (im)possibilities of its own duality. Their doubleness is irrevocably inscribed in their subject formations and narrative constructions.

All three writers spent their childhoods in the colonies where they were exposed to Caribbean practices, beliefs and speech. They were subsequently

inculcated in the colonial system of education, which is represented as being both oppressive and liberating to themselves as Caribbean writers. The effort to reconcile an attachment to their birthplaces in the former colonies with the disparagement of the native wrought by colonialism manifests itself in the variable identifications adopted in their works. The white-black dichotomy that is the legacy of colonialism torments all three authors.

In their fraught construction of cultural and individual identities, Rhys, Chamoiseau and Dabydeen turn to the mythic and religious beliefs and practices of the Caribbean. The various Caribbean tropes of haunting pervading their works lead us to the central predicaments as well as unspoken phantoms of fear and desire haunting the constitution of Creole identity. When summoned, they prove to be more than an externalization of the shadowy or repressed aspects of character. They signal an attempt to recover and make use of a partially erased cultural history. Hence, they are hidden passageways not only to individual psyches but a people's historical consciousness. The turn to the mythic and supernatural in the process of recovering histories emphasizes the difficulty of gaining access to a lost or denied past, as well as the degree to which historical reconstruction is essentially an imaginative act, carrying historically acquired meanings that clash with the inscriptions and the impalpable desires of postcolonial writers. Although the Caribbean myths are derived from African traditions, in the hands of the writers, they become creolized symbols of the Creole experience. Thus, the materialization of the supernatural will be examined for the way it is played out over anxieties of race, colour, ancestry, sex and gender, leading us to the troubled core of the Caribbean's discourse on creolization.

In 'Jean Rhys', St. Lucian poet Derek Walcott invokes the vanishing world of the white Creole plantocracy in a way that offers a fleeting but telling glimpse into the identitarian politics and poetics of Rhys's work:

And the sigh of that child  
is white as an orchid  
on a crusted log  
in the bush of Dominica,  
a V of Chinese white  
meant for the beat of a seagull  
over a sepia souvenir of Cornwall,  
as the white hush between two sentences.<sup>22</sup>

Through a depiction of some faded colonial photographs, Walcott captures the disintegration of the white Creole class which is suspended between a world of lost imperial power and a sense of unbelonging, brought about by the dismantling of the British Empire in the Caribbean.

The sigh emitted by the young Rhys in Walcott's poem floats, bird-like, between the cultural divide of a vivid and immediate portrait of Dominica and the faded and distant country of England. It journeys across the 'Wide Sargasso Sea', embodying the suspension of the white Creole between two divergent races, cultures and nations. Rhys was born in Dominica and raised by Afro-Caribbean servants before moving to England. Like the 'white' orchid growing out of the crusty log of the Dominican bush, Rhys is different from the whites of the motherland; her whiteness is suspect and viewed as irreversibly sullied or 'blackened' in some way by the Caribbean milieu in which it is bred. For the white Creole is neither imperially white nor Dominican black. Trapped between the Caribbean and England, native and settler, black and white, Rhys relates the ambivalent identifications of the white Creole to the wider historical disjunctions of postcolonialism.

For Rhys, racial and national categories are complex and fluid social and cultural constructions. Rhys challenges the equation of race with blood or colour by exploring the relationship of racial categories to power and culture, ideology and fantasy. Her work demonstrates how racial and cultural roles are forms of identification shaped by psychological fears and desires. Judith L. Raiskin points out how Rhys begins to 'identify creolization as a cultural, racial, and psychological phenomenon', moving the concept of the 'Creole' from 'a colonial claim of European presence in the colonies to an understanding of cultural influence, racial mixing, and "border crossing" that contemporary writers [. . .] are exploring today'.<sup>23</sup>

In Rhys's novels, the position of political and psychological division is manifested not in direct confrontation but in the understated and ephemeral 'hush between two sentences'. As Walcott's poem affirms the haunting qualities of metaphor and figurative language, Rhys's poetics of Creole identification finds expression in the subterranean subtext of figurative images, allusions, juxtapositions and the echoes of repetition. It is in the unseen logic of the metaphorically unsaid that the hush is more revelatory than that which is enunciated. The hush also points to an unutterable secret, an account that needs to be suppressed. This is the disconcerting narrative of Caribbean myth and magic which Rhys inserts surreptitiously into her early novels, often as a forbidden means of female identification.

Chapter One examines Rhys's agonized formulation of Creole identity as an 'abjection'. In relation to Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection, the narratorial constitution of Creole subjectivity in the jouissance of textual abjection is explored



with particular focus on *Voyage in the Dark*, to show how it is the abjection of both black and white identifications that forms Creole identity in the text. In a 'revolt of being', the Creole subject is formed through the dissolution of the self and its monstrous becoming in its identification with the powerfully disruptive bodies of the Hottentot, mulatto ghost and the souciant.

The notion of the Creole as a cross-cultural, multiracial and border identity initiated by Rhys is theorized in depth by Patrick Chamoiseau. For Chamoiseau, to be French-Caribbean in departmentalized Martinique is likewise to be part of two distinct nations and yet belong to neither. It is a divided and schizophrenic identity founded upon complex relations of erasure, assimilation, mimicry and adaptation. In Chamoiseau's work, the plural and paradoxical condition of Martinique finds expression in the ambivalent figure lurking in all his novels: the zombie. Trapped in the liminal state between presence and absence, body and soul, and the inability to live or die, the zombie gives voice to Martinique's multifarious crises of history, language and identity. By focusing on the trope of the zombie in its myriad manifestations, the three chapters on Chamoiseau examine the ways in which the zombie is both host to the unspoken meanings that tell of the fractured history and psychology of the Caribbean, as well as to the recuperation of Creole identity.

In Chapter Two's reading of *Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows*, Chamoiseau confronts the Caribbean 'muse of history'. To recover the lost memories of the amnesiac Martinicans, Chamoiseau conjures the zombie of the soul and the zombie of the body, the *jablesse*, to represent a dis-embodiment of the bodily in the form of colonial history, race, and the written word, each of which functioned oppressively as a colonizing force. The zombies each embody a host of 'trace-

memories', and in their spectrality, signify the instability of historical memory and its haunting duality.

Chapter Three addresses identity, or rather, redresses its perennial absence on the very level upon which colonial fragmentation was first carried out, that of the discursive. In Chamoiseau's autobiographical novel *School Days*, zombification serves a dual purpose, exemplifying both the threat of dehumanization under neo-colonial departmentalization and the converse undermining of power by the uncanny and opaque threat of voodoo. The zombification of man is read in relation to the theoretical insights of fellow Martinican, Frantz Fanon.

In Chapter Four, *Texaco* is read against its theoretical representation in the Creolist manifesto, 'In Praise of Creoleness', and its self-representation as an expression of subaltern testimony. The Chamoisean figure of the 'Word Scratcher' that pervades his novels is examined in relation to the Martinican models of masculinity established within the gendered dynamics of the 'erotics of colonialism'. The zombie trope surfaces in the ventriloquized female body, which comes to embody the anxieties of male Martinican identity. The gender politics of the novel raises doubts about Créolité claims to an egalitarian diversity transcendent of binarisms and essentialisms that will be addressed in the chapter.

The final writer, David Dabydeen, was born on a sugar plantation and is a descendent of the Caribbean diaspora of Indian indentured workers to Guyana and subsequently England. In 'On not being Milton: Nigger Talk in England Today' (1990), Dabydeen explains the form of his first collection of poems entitled *Slave Song* (1984).<sup>24</sup> The poems are written in a form of Guyanese Creole, which

Dabydeen describes as inherently ‘angry, crude, energetic’.<sup>25</sup> ‘If one has learnt and used Queen’s English for some years’, Dabydeen observes, ‘the return to creole is painful, almost nauseous, for the language is uncomfortably raw’.<sup>26</sup> Accompanying the Creole poems is an elaborate set of explanatory notes and translations in English. The contrast between the use of Creole and English is striking in both form and content, as the stark and concrete imagery and first-person Creole voice that make up the poems are followed by the mediations of the author which range from the explanation of symbolism and cultural practices to an exposition on the theoretical, thematic and psychological underpinnings of the poems. This juxtaposition of Creole and English, ‘Nigger Talk’ and ‘Miltonic rhetoric’,<sup>27</sup> the Caribbean and the Queen’s England is a reflection of the battle between Dabydeen’s Indo-Caribbean and English affiliations that shapes his work and formulation of Creole identity.

As a migrant with multiple affiliations, Dabydeen identifies himself with the Caribbean trickster figure, inhabitant of borders and crossroads. Chapter Five focuses on Dabydeen’s semi-autobiographical work *The Intended*, to explore his attempt at rewriting his ‘family romance’ while grappling with the ‘abjection’ of his native affiliations and the accompanying ‘anxieties of influence’ in claiming a literary lineage. The modern migrant Creole identity is erected upon the ‘entombments’ of native ancestors, literary forefathers and female figures.

Chapter Six examines Dabydeen’s resurrection of the drowned slave in J. M. W. Turner’s painting, ‘Slavers throwing overboard the dead and dying – Typhoon coming on’ (1840), in order to voice his forgotten tale in the poem, *Turner*. It is an attempt to restore what Wilson Harris has fittingly termed the

‘phantom limb’ and reclaim the Middle Passage as a ‘limbo gateway’, transforming a site of dispossession into grounds for generating the partializing and proliferating process of a hybrid Creole identity. The probing of Dabydeen’s framing of the poem in theoretical exposition (as in *Slave Song*), will expose the masked desires and anxieties of the migrant Creole.

Chapter Seven reads *A Harlot’s Progress* as a postmodernist trickster slave tale that weaves a web of aesthetic harlotry in a performance of seduction and manipulation in order to destabilize the various forms of enslavement engendered by the structures of textual, economic, racial and sexual power. By creating a multivocal and multigeneric text, Dabydeen creolizes the slave tale and exposes the perverse motivations underlying its narration. In the novel’s self-conscious and self-reflexive revelling in the ostensible multiplicity and arbitrariness of signs, what emerges is the question of how a creolized ‘historiographic metafiction’ can end up reinscribing a racist and sexist discourse of otherness and betraying itself to the apoliticism of postmodern play.

The ambiguous etymology of ‘Creole’ offers a starting point for this study. Sources trace its root from the Spanish *criado* (one bred or reared) to *criar* (to breed) and the Latin root *creare* (to create),<sup>28</sup> suggesting that the Creole is both the product and agent of creation. Indeed, this tension is evident in the work of all three writers. The Creole is a product of the colonial enterprise and its dehumanizing system of racial difference. Creole identity is irredeemably haunted by the revenants of a suppressed history and culture, and the racial conflicts wrought by colonialism. The Creole writers here are, nevertheless, reclaiming their creolized histories, challenging fixed notions of identity and initiating alternative

forms of identification in their constitution of identities. It remains to be seen if Creole identity can indeed be a divergent mosaic or if it continues to rely upon and revert to colonial categories of identity based on hierarchies and binaries.

## Chapter One

### **The White Creole as Hottentot, Mulatto Ghost and Souciant: Creoleness as Abjection in Jean Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark***

There looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside.

-- Julia Kristeva

But the end of my thought was always revolt, a sick revolt and I longed to be identified once and for all with the others' side which of course was impossible. I couldn't change the colour of my skin.

-- Jean Rhys<sup>1</sup>

Jean Rhys was born on the Caribbean island of Dominica in 1890, to a white Welsh father and a white Creole mother, a descendant of the island's plantocracy. She was raised by Afro-Caribbean servants who exposed her to Caribbean traditions and beliefs, which were necessarily amalgamated with her own experiences as a white Creole. In 1907, she moved to England, where as a white Creole woman, she found herself at the intersection of changing notions of racial, gender and migrant identities. Rhys's constant dis-ease in the metropole and her unrelenting desire to be elsewhere or someone else, to inscribe herself in a place of belonging, have been extensively studied by critics. Her agonized formulation of Creole identity as an *abjection*, on the other hand, has yet to be explored. The horror of abjection in the formation of the subject, as theorized by Julia Kristeva in

*Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1980; English trans. 1982), gives new insight into Rhys's constitution of Creole subjectivity as a racialized abjection. In a reading of *Voyage in the Dark* (1934), the narratorial constitution of Creole subjectivity in the jouissance of textual abjection will be examined to show how it is the abjection of both black and white identifications that forms the Creoleness of the text. Exploring Creoleness as a racialized abjection will account for the dynamics of desire and revulsion, sadism and masochism that drives the text. In a 'revolt of being', the Creole subject is formed through the dissolution of the self and its monstrous becoming in its identification with the powerfully disruptive bodies of the Hottentot, mulatto ghost and the souciant.

Rhys's sense of being an outsider, displaced from both the Caribbean and Britain, has been widely examined. In her autobiography, *Smile Please* (1979), she avows, 'I would never be part of anything. I would never really belong anywhere, and I knew it, and all my life would be the same, trying to belong, and failing. Always something would go wrong. I am a stranger and I always will be'.<sup>2</sup> This sense of estrangement from place, people and self is a defining feature of her life and work that has been duly noted by critics. Helen Tiffin finds that 'The white Creole is, as a double outsider, condemned to self-consciousness, a sense of inescapable difference and even deformity in the two societies by whose judgements she always condemns herself'.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Judith Kegan Gardiner describes how 'on both sides of the Atlantic [Rhys] felt in the position of a member of a racial minority living among a resentful majority'.<sup>4</sup> As a Creole, Rhys occupies a border between the Caribbean and Britain, black and white, and she felt excluded by both sides alike. This mutual exclusion becomes the core of her

subjective interstitiality.<sup>5</sup> Shaped by the conjunction of history and race that undergirded colonization, slavery and their subsequent dismantling, Rhys's subjectivity is ineradicably tied to the social context. In her study of the white West Indian woman, Elizabeth Nunez-Harrell finds that she is 'an outcast, a sort of freak rejected by both Europe and England, whose blood she shares, and by the black West Indian people, whose culture and home have been hers for two generations or more'.<sup>6</sup> Here a critical distinction is made between the identifications wrought by blood and by place. This suggests a racial determinism which not only neglects the complexities of cross-racial identification, but elides the corruptibility of blood that haunts Rhys's writing.

Rhys repeatedly expresses a longing to be black that is underpinned by an ambivalent perspective on black people and suspicions about her own racial lineage. Teresa F. O'Connor summarizes the various motivations behind Rhys's desire to be black, which include the lack of self-acceptance engendered by her mother's rejection, a need for the West Indian to confirm her 'outcast' position by identifying with an outsider group that has a strongly bonded unit, an envy of black culture and practices, and racial guilt.<sup>7</sup> Rhys's construction of a desirable blackness lies in opposition to a deprecated whiteness. Lucy Wilson, for example, contrasts Rhys's characterization of West Indian women as resourceful and resilient with the 'powerlessness' and 'passivity' of white women.<sup>8</sup> In a more critical analysis of Rhys's stereotyping of black and white femininity, Maria Olaussen argues that 'Rhys constructs black womanhood as exactly that which is desirable and lacking in the white women's position' in order to serve her motivation for flight from the ideologically determined limits of her own femininity.<sup>9</sup>



Rhys's self-serving and oppositional construction of black versus white

femininity is evident in her autobiography:

Side by side with my growing wariness of black people there was envy. I decided that they had a better time than we did, they laughed a lot though they seldom smiled. They were stronger than we were, they could walk a long way without getting tired, carry heavy weights with ease. [. . .]

Also there wasn't for them, as there was for us, what I thought of as the worry of getting married. [. . .]

Black girls on the contrary seemed to be perfectly free. Children swarmed but negro marriages that I knew of were comparatively rare. (*SP*, pp. 50-51)

In Rhys's depiction, repressed white bodies restrained by the institution of marriage are contrasted with the strong, fertile and uninhibited bodies of the blacks. Sue Thomas observes how Rhys 'represents African Dominican people through identifiably modernist primitivist tropes', such as those noted by Marianna Torgovnick, of the savage as 'a threatening horde, a faceless mass, promiscuous, breeding'.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Rhys's description of 'swarming' natives recalls racist colonial discourse.<sup>11</sup> Her apparent envy of their strength, physicality and stamina figures them as 'beasts of burden'. Hazel Carby has written of the nineteenth-century 'cult of true womanhood' that defines white women as physically delicate and sees this as an outward sign of chastity, sensitivity and refinement, in contrast to the physical strength and endurance necessary for the work required of black women, who are seen as figures of moral and spiritual depravity.<sup>12</sup> Sander L. Gilman has demonstrated the ways in which fantasies of sex and race were derived from cultural stereotypes in the nineteenth century to evoke blackness as an attractive but dangerous sexuality, an abundant but threatening, uncontrollable fertility.<sup>13</sup> The way Rhys marks the distinction between the races ultimately harks back to the separatist discourse of those like Edward Long, a Jamaican slave-owner

who, in his influential *History of Jamaica* (1774), makes the infamous claim, ‘for my own part, I think there are extremely potent reasons for believing that the White and the Negro are two distinct species’.<sup>14</sup>

It is thus understandable why Rhys elicits charges of racism. Veronica Gregg observes that the ‘profoundly racialized, even racist, structure of her imagination insistently reveals itself in her use of West Indian “black people” as props to the Creole identity and as cultural objects’, resulting in the ‘appropriation and recruitment of “race” as an accessory of power and a trope of otherness’ in her ‘self-fashioning’.<sup>15</sup> However, Gregg reaches the nuanced conclusion that ‘there is in all of Rhys’s writing a knotted dialectic tension between the ontological negation / appropriation of “black people” and a formidable critical intelligence that understands and analyzes the constructed nature of the colonialist discourse that passes itself off as natural and transparent’.<sup>16</sup> This idea of a knowing appropriation of blacks is shared by Leah Rosenberg in an analysis of Rhys’ *Black Exercise Books*, in which she claims: ‘Reading Rhys’s masochistic or passive self-portrait as a critique of English colonial and European psychoanalytic discourse reveals that she actively shaped and deployed her masochistic identification with enslaved Afro-Caribbeans as a strategy of resistance’ and as ‘a voluntary, individual strategy of self-representation’ that is both ‘anti-colonialist and colonialist’.<sup>17</sup> Yet, neither Gregg nor Rosenberg’s insightful readings of Rhys accounts for the fears and anxieties expressed by Rhys towards blacks.

Kenneth Ramchand’s article, ‘Terrified Consciousness’, draws on Frantz Fanon’s writing in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961; English trans. 1965) to examine the effect of decolonization on the white Creole of the planter class.

Ramchand cites Fanon's introductory description of decolonization as 'a violent phenomenon [. . .] *experienced in the form of the terrifying future in the consciousness of another "species" of men and women: the colonizers*'.<sup>18</sup>

Ramchand explains that by '[a]dapting from Fanon we might use the phrase "terrified consciousness" to suggest the white minority's sensations of shock and disorientation as a massive and smouldering black population is released into an awareness of its power'.<sup>19</sup> Terror, in Ramchand's framework, describes the destabilizing fear experienced by the white Creole subject who is confronted by an emancipated black population and its acts of defiance and revolt. Ramchand illustrates how the pervading 'sense of menace and persecution' is established in Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) in direct relation to the Black population's threatening acts of rebellion and intimidation.<sup>20</sup> He cites the slave rebellion witnessed by the young Antoinette as an instance when the 'smouldering Negroes become a nightmare avenging force'.<sup>21</sup> For Ramchand, the 'terrified consciousness' expresses the white Creole's fear alone.

Fear, however, does not wholly account for the complexity of psychological and emotional states that inevitably arises from the contact between colonizer and colonized. Rhys recounts a strikingly similar description of the slave riot experienced in her own childhood:

I remember the Riot as if it were yesterday. [. . .] I heard far away a strange noise like animals howling but I knew it wasn't animals, it was people and the noise came nearer and nearer. [. . .] We could run as far as Mr Steadman's house on the bay but long before we got there they'd kill us. Kill us! This strange idea didn't *frighten* me but *excited* me. (SP, p. 47; italics added)

In this account of slave insurrection, 'fright' and 'excitement' are experienced simultaneously by Rhys. The 'Negroes' are not only a source of fear but of thrill

and exhilaration as well. The 'terrified consciousness' of the white Creole is an ambivalent mixture of fear and excitement, revealing an unspoken desire.

Ramchand's uni-dimensional reading of the 'terrified consciousness' overlooks the tangled psychological and historical dimensions of its multifarious nature. This is revealed in another illustration Ramchand gives, this time concerning the black girl who intimidates and taunts the young Antoinette in an incident which ends with the black girl's muted menacing laugh.<sup>22</sup> When one returns to Rhys's novel, Ramchand's citation reveals a significant omission: 'The girl began to laugh, very quietly, *and it was then that hate came to me and courage with the hate* so that I was able to walk past without looking at them'.<sup>23</sup> In Rhys' text, the terror felt by Antoinette gives way to '*hate*', which in turn bolsters her '*courage*'. In the complex of emotions encompassed here, anxiety mingles with abhorrence and audacity. The 'terrified consciousness' is an ambivalent state. Ramchand's dismissing of 'the emotional intensities in which Jean Rhys involves us' as 'being explored for their own sakes' and 'in excess of any given determinant',<sup>24</sup> shows a reluctance to recognize and engage with the biological, psychological and cultural issues wrought by decolonization. Considering this scene from *Wide Sargasso Sea* in its entirety reveals that the narrator's 'emotional intensities' are, in fact, rooted in the 'determinant' of miscegenation as the illicit product of colonization, as the Creole narrator's admission of fear and hatred is preceded by a description of her male tormentor:

[H]e had a white skin, a dull ugly white covered with freckles, his mouth was a negro's mouth and he had small eyes, like bits of green glass. He had the eyes of a dead fish. Worst, most horrible of all, his hair was crinkled, a negro's hair, but bright red, and his eyebrows and eyelashes were red.  
(WSS, p. 41)

The disconcerting mixture of white, black, green and red gives full materialization to the horror of miscegenation, which is not only a fear of interracial sexuality but also of the degenerative products of a mixed-race union that would bring about a decline of the population.<sup>25</sup> The narrator's 'hatred' is linked to her revulsion at the frightful and repulsive combination of black and white. Her 'courage' stems from her contempt of his racial difference, as revealed in a description that is riddled with racial hatred.

Beyond the 'terrified consciousness' theorized by Ramchand and Fanon, and the knowing appropriation of black stereotypes as a strategy of resistance posited by other critics, Rhys's ambivalent treatment of blacks stems from the blending of desire and fear, identification and renunciation, and the longing and hatred for both black and white alike. Rhys's particular ambivalence towards the figure of miscegenation and her fraught identification with the racial other in the formulation of Creole identity can be elucidated by Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection.

### **Abjection: Text and Context**

In *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, Kristeva theorizes subject formation as an abjection. Abjection is a 'revolt of being' in that while the subject seeks to maintain the illusion of an autonomous and discrete self-identity by emphatically denying any threat to that self-conception, it conflictingly embraces the confrontation that breaches the boundaries of the ego and casts the self down into the vertiginous pleasures of indifferentiation. It is the state of being repulsed and

sickened yet stimulated and aroused by the possibility of self-deformation and the loss of self-identity that characterizes abjection.

Kristeva explains that the most primordial experience of abjection lies 'within our personal archaeology, with our earliest attempts to release the hold of *maternal* entity even before ex-isting outside of her, thanks to the autonomy of language. It is a violent, clumsy breaking away, with the constant risk of falling back under the sway of a power as securing as it is stifling' (*PH*, p. 13; italics in original). In the Kristevan scenario, the yet to be constituted subject exists in the maternal phase as a body that has yet to identify itself as a discrete entity.<sup>26</sup>

Abjection begins when the body attempts to separate itself from its surroundings and differentiate itself. The moment is a horrifying one as it recalls the trauma of birth and the 'immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be' (*PH*, p. 10). An in-between state is viscerally remembered from the moment of birth, during which we are simultaneously inside and outside of the mother, both alive and yet not fully in existence and in that sense dead. It initiates the paradoxically composite experience of abjection as being both internal and external, intimate and foreign, enlivening and deadening, pleasurable and excruciating, accounting for Kristeva's opening claim that the threat of abjection stems from both the outside and inside.

The attempt at separation from the maternal is rendered impossible for the objects that surround the body have yet to be differentiated from the self. 'Even before things for him *are* – hence before they are signifiable – he drives them out' (*PH*, p. 6; italics in original). Not yet integrated into the signifying systems of language and the law that structure the cultural order and determine one's place in

it, the body fails to distinguish between the 'I' and 'not-I'. As a result, what it drives out is effectively itself. The subject is thus formed in abjection, whereby, as Kristeva puts it, 'I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which "I" claim to establish *myself*. [. . .] I give birth to myself amid the violence of sobs, of vomit' (*PH*, p.3; italics in original). In this central tenet to Kristeva's theory, subjectivity is formed in the violence of self-repulsion and evacuation. That which is expelled or abjected remains to torment the self because it is always already part of the self. The object is 'the jettisoned object [which] is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses' (*PH*, p. 2), and where the self, too, dissolves into indifferenciation. While threatening the self with dissolution, the object also tempts the desiring body with a return to primal origins, which is why Kristeva says abjection 'simultaneously beseeches and pulverizes the subject' (*PH*, p. 5). In this border state in-between the incomplete ejection of the maternal and the unattained acquisition of language, the subject experiences 'maternal hatred', 'fear' and 'loathing' (*PH*, p. 6). This primordial experience of abjection characterized by conflict, anxiety and violence remains as a body memory of nausea and convulsion, rather than a repressed memory, because the experience occurred before the formation of the unconscious.

Abjection is henceforth triggered by the confrontation with 'what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite' (*PH*, p. 4). It is objects and events which spill over the lines of demarcation meant to contain them, thus calling into question the efficacy and permanence of any boundaries, most notably those erected by the

self to maintain itself as a distinct entity, that can be characterized as abject. The things we experience as abject evoke the early anxiety about materiality and the borders of the self. The bodily reactions of spasms, vomiting and nausea function to 'protect' the self by expelling that which threatens the boundaries of the subject (*PH*, pp. 2-3). As Toril Moi explains, 'Nausea, distaste, horror: these are the signs of a radical revulsion (or *expulsion*) which serves to situate the "I", or more accurately to *create* a first, fragile sense of "I" where before there was only emptiness'.<sup>27</sup> The transgression of the borders of the self brings about the convulsions of nausea through which bodily boundaries are redrawn in the constitution of subjectivity.

Abjection, according to Kristeva, 'is above all ambiguity' (*PH*, p. 9). The abject occupies the border zone between desire and the symbolic. The subject confronting the abject is torn between two ontological possibilities: one which is rigidly invested in the construct of a stable self-identity, and the other which is attracted to the turbulence and indifferentiation associated with the maternal phase. Kristeva postulates that by embracing abjection, the subject is then able to experience both possibilities in a state of *jouissance*. This, according to Kristeva, explains 'why so many victims of the abject are its fascinated victims – if not its submissive and willing ones' (*PH*, p. 9). Abjection is 'a *jouissance* in which the subject is swallowed up but in which the Other, in return, keeps the subject from foundering by making it repugnant' (*PH*, p. 9). In the process of abjection, the subject surrenders its self-image and is threatened with a dissolution into the undifferentiated plenitude of the maternal. It is withheld by the Other at the cost of its subjectivity being inscribed within the symbolic order.



Following the work of the anthropologist, Mary Douglas, Kristeva further explores abjection within a social context. 'The human body is always treated as an image of society and [. . .] there can be no natural way of considering the body that does not involve at the same time a social dimension', writes Douglas, and 'If there is no concern to preserve social boundaries, I would not expect to find concern with bodily boundaries'.<sup>28</sup> Kristeva explains that 'filth is not a quality in itself, but it applies only to what relates to a *boundary* and, more particularly, represents the object jettisoned out of that boundary [. . .]. [T]he danger of filth represents for the subject the risk to which the very symbolic order is permanently exposed, to the extent that it is a device of discriminations, of differences' (*PH*, p. 69; italics in original). The repudiation of dirt and decay happens only in so far as they relate to the cultural determination of a boundary whereby clean is delineated against unclean. The threat of crossed boundaries and pollution lies in exposing the falsity of the symbolic order in which and through which the subject is constituted, and hence, the frailty of subjectivity itself. That which is perceived as threatening crosses the demarcations of self and other that regulate the various boundaries of identity, be they national, cultural, racial or gendered. The function of taboos and rules is to establish and maintain demarcations that stave off the abject horror of the in-between. The process of abjection then is as thoroughly social and cultural as it is personal.

Abjection also engenders the psychodynamics of sadism and masochism. It has been established that the primordial abject is the maternal and the abject is placed on the side of the feminine. In order to enter into the paternal symbolic order where individuality is formed, the subject must reject all that is associated

with the maternal – the unclean and in-between – which is also inherently a part of the self. The psychodynamics of sadism and masochism is then triggered. The violent expulsion of the maternal is a sadism that impinges on the self as it must subject itself masochistically to the paternal law of the symbolic.

In *About Chinese Women* (1977), Kristeva writes specifically of the ecstatic sadism and melancholic masochism of a female jouissance.<sup>29</sup> Kristeva finds that women are represented as the unconscious of the symbolic order, and the two ways through which women may attempt to gain access to the symbolic order are by an ‘ecstatic’ and ‘melancholic’ jouissance. Ecstatic jouissance is experienced as a woman identifies with the symbolic father and is ‘able to triumph’ in her ‘sublimated sadistic attacks on the mother whom she has repressed’. However, this ecstatic jouissance occurs ‘at the price of censuring herself as a woman’ as she is ‘recognized not as herself but in opposition to her rival, the mother’, with whom she henceforth has to fight an eternal battle.<sup>30</sup> Melancholic jouissance indulges in a ‘sensuality of tears’ in which ‘submission to the father’ is experienced as ‘punishment, pain and suffering’.<sup>31</sup> Melancholic jouissance also surfaces when the woman sets herself in opposition to the father. As Kristeva explains, ‘If what woman desires is the very opposite of the sublimating Word and paternal legislation, she neither has nor is that opposite. All that remains for her is to pit herself constantly against that opposite in the very movement by which she desires it, to kill it repeatedly and then suffer endlessly: a radiant perspective on masochism’.<sup>32</sup> The combination of ecstatic and melancholic jouissance results in a sadomasochistic engagement with the symbolic order, which, Kristeva argues, ultimately fails to offer women avenues of liberation. Woman must either embrace

her defined role as the unconscious of the patriarchal order or identify with the father, in avenues of prescribed femininity that lead to self-destruction.

Kristeva's conception of female *jouissance* is based on her reading of Judeo-Christian tradition, and it is here that the inextricable thread of race is seen to inflect her psychoanalytic theory. Kristeva finds that it is the serpent which is the 'opposite of God, [. . .] that which, in God or Adam, remains beyond or outside the sublimation of the Word'. Eve has no relationship other than with that, and even then because she is its very opposite, the "other race".<sup>33</sup> Adam occupies the place of the Father but his repressed desire to transgress is also figured in the serpent. Eve, as the embodiment of female transgression, can only have a relationship with the serpent, man's repressed other. Kristeva's problematic articulation of Eve as the 'other race' assumes a 'raced' psychological model that seems to conflate sex with race. Kristeva's failure to distinguish race as a differentiating factor between women results in the elision of race as an axis in subject formation.

In a study of early psychoanalytic theories, Jean Walton finds that the decisive role of race is ignored in the construction of female subjectivity.<sup>34</sup> The conception of a supposedly universal white subjectivity is dependent for its coherence on the racist figuration or elision of black men and women. Walton observes that 'maturity' in psychoanalytic discourse is being understood as the completion of a developmental sequence that culminates in the assumption of a 'heterosexualized *raced* adulthood' wherein 'one must be fully "white" (or perhaps fully one's "race," however that might locally be constructed) in order fully to become a subject'.<sup>35</sup> This entails the internalization of normative definitions of a

gendered and raced subjectivity that are symbolically determined. In this way, Walton shows how the perceptions and fantasies of racial difference that play a crucial role in subject formation are indelibly shaped by what had become, in the early twentieth century, 'commonplace' associations of racialized sexuality that viewed the 'libido as black' or deviant female sexuality as the result of possessing 'Hottentot nymphae'.<sup>36</sup> Walton's study not only uncovers the racial subtext of psychoanalytic discourse but proves that one's psychological makeup and psychoanalytic theory in general are shaped by socio-historical factors.

In the same vein, although Kristeva's scene of abjection is set forth as a universal and inevitable product of infantile experience, its conception and manifestation need to be historicized. As Kristeva herself observes, '[a]bjection accompanies all religious structurings and reappears, to be worked out in a new guise, at the time of their collapse' (*PH*, p. 17). Kelly Hurley reasons that 'Kristeva's revisionist psychoanalytic model of the subject (liminally human, fragmented, [. . . and] convulsed with symptoms) could not have been conceived without the benefit of fin-de-siècle models of the abhuman subject drawn from both pre- or proto-Freudian psychology and a constellation of evolutionist discourse'.<sup>37</sup> The 'abhuman' describes the subject 'characterized by its morphic variability, continually in danger of becoming not-itself, becoming other' and Hurley locates this 'general anxiety about the nature of human identity permeating late-Victorian and Edwardian culture' as being generated by biological and sociomedical sciences, evolutionism, criminal anthropology, degeneration theory, sexology and pre-Freudian psychology.<sup>38</sup> Charles Darwin's seminal work on evolutionary biology, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or*

*the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (1859), set the stage for the dismantling of traditional notions of identity and raised questions about species purity and changeability. Reversing the progressive views of evolution, degeneration theory posited the socio-biological devolution of the human species to diseased, depraved, criminal or atavistic states.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps the most successful example of the late-Victorian subgenre of the sociomedical text is Max Nordau's *Degeneration* (1893; English trans. 1895) which incorporates biology, evolutionism, psychopathology, moral philosophy, and sociocultural analysis in a sweeping critique of the degenerative effects of modernity.<sup>40</sup>

As social and scientific discourses resonated with anxieties over the transgression of racial, sexual, national and species boundaries, late Victorian Britain became obsessed with the classification and ranking of difference, as if to reassure itself of biologically determined racial and sexual differences. As Elaine Showalter explains:

In periods of cultural insecurity, when there are fears of regression and degeneration, the longing for strict border controls around the definition of gender, as well as race, class and nationality, becomes especially intense. [. . .] Racial boundaries were among the most important lines of demarcation for English society; fears not only of colonial rebellion but also of racial mingling, crossbreeding, and intermarriage, fueled scientific and political interest in establishing clear lines of demarcation between black and white, East and West. [. . .] Late Victorian science, especially the new science of physical anthropology, devoted itself to establishing the legitimacy of racial differentiation and hierarchy.<sup>41</sup>

Showalter sees the intensification of discourses on racial demarcation as a direct result of fears engendered by racial admixture. Robert J. C. Young details a similar obsession with interracial sex and miscegenation at the heart of Victorian culture, as it became reflected in racial science.<sup>42</sup> H. L. Malchow examines the 'particularly Victorian, middle-class obsessiveness' 'over class and sexuality' and 'issues of

respectability and identity', reaching the conclusion that '[i]n the course of the nineteenth century, apprehension over a *hidden* racial identity became fear of "infection," via "miscegenation" and "the half breed" that took on a progressively gothicized form, as a terrible, warping, secret aberration'.<sup>43</sup> Societal fears of the 'mixed-breed' and the degeneracy of 'bad blood' are evident in the 1847 novels of the Brontës. In *Wuthering Heights*, the savagery and vindictiveness of Heathcliff is linked to his dubious origins, made visible by his appearance as a 'dark-skinned Gypsy', 'black as Satan'. *Jane Eyre*'s madwoman is a West Indian Creole, with a 'goblin appearance' and 'swelled black face' whose hysterical, uncontrollably passionate and animalistic nature is rooted in her hidden blackness.<sup>44</sup> She is the "'paper tiger" lunatic' that 'vexed' Rhys for the ten-year period it took for Rhys to make her 'plausible with a past' as Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea* (L, pp. 262 and 156). Rhys was clearly aware of the demonizing of the racial other that pervaded nineteenth-century literature, which reaches a climax in the fin-de-siècle text of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), where the vampire as threatening 'racial other' embodies the 'fear of race-mixing and "miscegenation" that allows racial others to pass for whites and continue secretly to infect their blood'.<sup>45</sup> The climate of late Victorian and Edwardian Britain is summarily one of anxiety over the infectiousness of 'bad blood', the degeneration brought about by miscegenation, and the categorization of both visible and undetectable racial difference. This is the climate into which Rhys journeys in 1907.

## Rhys's 'Two Tunes' of Black and White

*Voyage in the Dark* is based on Rhys's diary accounts which were compiled in the unpublished journal, *Black Exercise Books*.<sup>46</sup> The various shifting kinships and dis-identifications Rhys establishes with blacks and whites are evident in a journal entry that highlights key issues in Rhys's formulation of a Creole subjectivity, and cues us to the workings of abjection:

I was curious about black people. They stimulated me and I felt akin to them. It added to my sadness that I couldn't help but realize that they didn't really like or trust white people. White cockroaches they called us behind our backs. (Cockroach again.) One could hardly blame them. I would feel *sick with shame* at some of the stories I heard of the slave days told casually even jocularly. The ferocious punishments the salt kept ready to rub into the wounds etc etc. I became an ardent socialist and champion of the down-trodden, argued, insisted of giving my opinion, was generally insufferable. Yet all the time knowing that there was *another side* to it. Sometimes being proud of my great grandfather, the estate, the good old days, etc. . . . Sometimes I'd look at his picture and think with pride. He was goodlooking anyway. Perhaps he wasn't entirely ignoble. Having absolute power over a people needn't make a man a brute. Might make him noble in a way. No – no use. My great Grandfather and his beautiful Spanish wife. Spanish? I wonder.

I thought a lot about them. But the end of my thought was always revolt, *a sick revolt* and I longed to be identified once and for all with *the others' side* which was of course impossible. I couldn't change the colour of my skin.<sup>47</sup>

This passage sets up oppositions – black versus white, slave versus master, and the downtrodden versus the powerful – that it steadily destabilizes by the shifting identifications taken by Rhys and the complex feelings of pride, shame, guilt, disgust and desire that are expressed. Rhys is trapped between two places: her family history identifies her with the slave-owners and her skin colour reinforces that identification. Her own private thoughts and actions, however, place her with the oppressed. In the confrontation of these opposing positions, Rhys sings 'two tunes' in her shifting identifications.<sup>48</sup> At the beginning, desire is pointedly

expressed for the 'black people'. They are a source of 'curiosity', 'stimulation' and 'kinship' for Rhys. It is also the condemnation of slavery and her disgust at the actions and attitudes of the slaveholding whites that propel her to cross over to '*the others' side*'. However, it is a side that rejects, judges and condemns her. After initially claiming to identify with the oppressed blacks, Rhys becomes ambivalent in her judgment of her family's complicity in the atrocities of slavery. She succumbs to the overriding 'pride' taken in the wealth of an estate, the 'nobility' of a corrupt power, and the enticing romance of a 'goodlooking' great Grandfather and his beautiful wife. Rhys's changeable positionality is reflected in her shifting affiliations from '*the others' side*' to '*another side*', symptomatic of her fragmented dis-identifications with white and black respectively.

Rhys's diary account reveals itself to be a scene of abjection. Kristeva defines abjection as 'a composite of judgment and affect, of condemnation and yearning, of signs and drives' (*PH*, p. 10). The dialectical structure Rhys sets up becomes the basis of an abjection whereby each side is made to desire, judge and, finally, repudiate the other in the constitution of a self. Boundaries between the opposing sides are repeatedly crossed to create a composite, in-between site of dis-identification. The truth of slavery, being on the base side, is marked by torture and death, discomfort and sickness. It is a truth that Rhys claims makes her '*sick with shame*'. The desire for alterity clearly expressed here is predicated upon the recognition of her non-Englishness. Her attempt to occupy this space is repelled by the black's deprecation of her as 'white cockroach'. By absorbing blame, Rhys assimilates the derogatory term, 'white cockroach', which shows her acceptance and internalization of the black's loathing of the whites. Accordingly, the



‘cockroach’ signifies Rhys’s self-loathing and her hatred of her whiteness.

Elsewhere, Rhys admits to ‘fear[ing] cockroaches hysterically’ (*SP*, p. 30). To be called the very thing that one desperately fears and to assimilate it in the construction of the self is a sign of the abjection that constitutes the creation of a Creole subjectivity.

However, the Creole subject here also takes refuge in the cultural position afforded by her race and status. It is a reinscription within the symbolic that characterizes abjection. It is in her complicit position of power as a member of the white colonizing class that she can fashion herself as ‘an ardent socialist and champion of the down-trodden’. Rhys’s political agenda is crossed with that of race. The subject that is dissolved in embracing difference is, according to Kristeva, ‘withheld by the Other at the cost of its subjectivity being inscribed within the symbolic order’. This is why abjection is ‘immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady, a terror that disassembles, a hatred that smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter’ (*PH*, p. 4). Rhys’s identification with the black people serves a political purpose, acting as a way for her to reject her own whiteness and sever her complicitous ties to British colonization and slavery. It ‘uses the [black] body for barter’, to serve as a platform upon which to script her criticism of the whites. The opposing thrusts of abjection prevent her from occupying any position of stability and constancy.

Beyond the politically motivated appropriation of blacks lies a covert desire for blackness driven by an obsession with the possibility of possessing black blood. ‘Spanish?’ Rhys wonders of her great Grandmother, a suspicion she reiterates in *Smile Please*: ‘I was told she was a Spanish countess from Cuba but even then I

doubted that' (*SP*, p. 34). Rhys's intrigue regarding the identity of her great Grandmother is less national than racial. Her seeming nonchalance about her bloodline belies an intimation of mixed blood. The reference to the Americas is significant for it is associated with a degenerative racial mixture. Edward Long infamously remarked: 'Let any man turn his eyes to the Spanish American dominions, and behold what a vicious, brutal, and degenerate breed of mongrels has been there produced, between Spaniards, Blacks, Indians, and their mixed progeny'.<sup>49</sup> O'Connor points out that there was 'well-grounded supposition that the Creole may have "mixed blood"'.<sup>50</sup> Rhys's knowledge of the white plantation owners' sexual abuses of their black female slaves would have sowed the seeds of doubt over the possession of black blood. Indeed, Rhys was haunted by the possibility of possessing not only mixed blood, but specifically black blood. It is worth noting that neither Charlotte Brontë nor Rhys reveals Bertha's and Antoinette's racial lineage in *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* respectively; it is the mere possibility of their possession of black blood that becomes the basis of their racial denigration. Across the Atlantic in America, the 'one-drop rule' was legally constituted in 1830. It stipulated that 'people without even a hint of African features or skin tone, [. . .] are classified as members of the Black endogamous group [. . .] because of an un-measurable, invisible touch (one drop) of black ancestry'.<sup>51</sup> The implementation of laws discriminating against persons of mixed race brought about various tests devised to track any furtive vestiges of blackness.<sup>52</sup> Rhys may have professed a desire to be black but she was haunted by the possibility of possessing black blood. Walton records evidence of the white

woman's 'desire, and her anxiety about this desire, to identify with blackness'.<sup>53</sup>

For Rhys, blackness was an ambiguous source of desire and fear.

This was compounded by the fact that Rhys, as a white Creole, was stigmatized as being non-white and laden with the stereotypes ascribed to black West Indians. In the *Black Exercise Books*, Rhys recounts how the figure of Mr. Howard imaged her as a naked servant, dressed only in large jewels. Rosenberg examines this fantasy as evidence of the English africanization of the white Creole: 'Mr. Howard exoticizes and enslaves her in much the same way that European discourse eroticized Caribbean and African women. [. . .] Howard's vision of her reflects the English construction of white [C]reole women as culturally and sexually "black"'.<sup>54</sup> The white Creole is associated with the stereotypes of primitivism and licentiousness ascribed to blacks, and correspondingly viewed as having gone native in moral character. In Ford Madox Ford's fictional account of his affair with Rhys, *When the Wicked Man* (1932), the Martinican Creole, Lola Porta, is fair-skinned but seen as having 'gipsy blood'.<sup>55</sup> The racial ambiguity of Lola is signaled by her 'appetites', namely for alcohol, 'for toughs and low life', for 'smut', the hurling of 'mournful sewer[s]' of abuse, and 'dancing half nude with a very formidable racketeer in a regular tohuwabohu of negroes, mulatresses and gangsters'.<sup>56</sup> Lola also has a penchant for telling 'fantastic and horrible details of obi and the voodoo practices of the coloured people of her childhood's home'.<sup>57</sup> These inclinations condemn her to having the 'appetites of a Caribbean savage'.<sup>58</sup> Rhys's biographer, Carol Angier, cites Ford's representation of Rhys here as a sign that Ford 'felt there was black blood in her'.<sup>59</sup> Angier posits that 'black blood [. . .] was part of her mystery and her difference, both as a woman and as a writer', and

she observes that Rhys' eyes are 'like a black person's eyes in a white face'.<sup>60</sup>

Ford's long-term partner, Stella Bowen, also writes about Rhys in her autobiography, *Drawn from Life* (1941). Sue Thomas's analysis of Bowen's account uncovers the racial and class othering of Rhys, from the stereotype of the Carib as 'savage' to the more contemporaneous stereotype of the Carib as 'a member of a demoralized and doomed race', stricken with 'destitution and listlessness'.<sup>61</sup> Rhys undoubtedly encountered these racist stereotypes of the white Creole in her life. Helen Carr sees *Wide Sargasso Sea* as Rhys's way of 'writing back' to these stereotypes, as they are echoed in Rochester's condemnation of the white Creole woman as 'intemperate and unchaste'.<sup>62</sup> The desire and disdain of blackness, as well as the resented yet internalized white gaze that defined her as non-white, together shaped the formulation of Rhys's Creole subjectivity.

### **A 'Sick Revolt': Creoleness as Abjection in *Voyage in the Dark***

*Voyage in the Dark* is Rhys's account of a white Creole woman's experience of London in 1914. Anna Morgan is the migrant Creole who finds herself uprooted from her West Indian home to live in England, in which she tours as a chorus girl and where she has an affair, drifts into a life of amateur prostitution, and undergoes an abortion, in what has been described as Rhys's 'most clearly autobiographical novel'.<sup>63</sup> Anna's opening statement, 'It was as if a curtain had fallen, hiding every thing I had ever known. It was almost like *being born again*',<sup>64</sup> captures the disjuncture of the Creole's confrontation with the British motherland. Her description of the encounter as a *re-birth* points to the primordial experience of abjection that shapes the novel's textuality and its constitution of Creoleness.

Abjection is experienced as a bodily reaction to the transgression of the self. The physical symptoms of horror signal the expulsion of that which threatens the self, and allow for the boundaries of differentiation to be reconstituted. In *Voyage in the Dark*, Anna processes her experiences through bodily senses and sensations, physical symptoms of sickness, feelings and memories. From the start, she transmits her feelings through the bodily memories of smells and colours, and the sensations of hot and cold. Meaning is thus expressed through the materiality of the body.

The body of the text itself becomes the expression of its abjection. Abjection in a narrative representation, according to Kristeva, threatens to burst the narrative web: 'its makeup changes; its linearity is shattered, it proceeds by flashes, enigmas, short cuts, incompleteness, tangles, and cuts' (*PH*, p. 141). The forms of linear narrative and linguistic structure are violently disrupted as they become shaped by the desire and repulsion, and the sadism and masochism of the textual jouissance of abjection. *Voyage in the Dark* cues the reader to its mode of communication: '[T]he endless procession of words gave me a curious feeling – sad, excited and frightened. It wasn't what I was reading', Anna says, 'it was the look of the dark, blurred words going on endlessly that gave me that feeling' (*VD*, p. 9). This suggests that beyond the content of the text lies a deeper meaning that is being conveyed in its form and flow. Rhys herself says that her novel was 'written almost entirely in words of one syllable. Like a kitten mewing perhaps' (*L*, p. 24), suggesting, as Angier observes, that Rhys 'put her meaning behind the words' for us to 'feel it in the same hidden and wordless way'.<sup>65</sup> It is in the 'flashes' of fleeting references, the 'incompleteness' of partial memories, the borders between

juxtaposed images, the currents of repetition, and in the unsaid, that abjection reveals itself. Accordingly, Rhys's novel will be read as a textual body whose form, rhythm, gaps and tropes are symptomatic of its abjection.<sup>66</sup> Abjection provides the psychological framework needed to decipher the ambivalent patterns of a Creole subjectivity that is trapped between the opposing forces of identification and disavowal, of black and white alike.

From the novel's opening chapter, abjection stages the perverse desire for blackness. The Creole protagonist is obsessed with being black, in the specific form of being of mulatto ancestry and possessing black blood. The desire to identify with blackness becomes mutated by the confrontation with the racist discourse prevalent in early twentieth-century England, which associates the white Creole woman with the Hottentot. The novel's early depiction of Anna reading Emile Zola's *Nana* (1880), covertly sets the stage for a narrative that will delve into *Nana*'s rendering of prostitution, atavistic sexuality and racial degeneration, in its own quest for identity. Anna (an anagram for Nana) is shown reading *Nana*, which has on its cover, 'a coloured picture of a stout, dark woman brandishing a wine-glass [. . .] sitting on the knee of a bald-headed man' (*VD*, p. 9). Gilman notes how the sexuality of the prostitute became associated with the image of the Hottentot, the paradigm of black female sexuality, notable less for her dark skin than for her supposedly enlarged genitalia and buttocks.<sup>67</sup> Opposed to the 'civilized' white woman as exemplar of racial purity and culture, Gilman explains, 'The antithesis of European sexual mores and beauty is embodied in the black, and the essential black, the lowest rung on the great chain of being, is the Hottentot'.<sup>68</sup> With the theories of evolution and degeneracy, there arose the fear that beneath the

façade of civilization lay a primitive barbarism identified with blackness and specifically with the black female as sexual being. The Hottentot was seen to embody the primitiveness, lasciviousness and disease of a pathological female sexuality. In Gilman's reading of Manet's portrait, *Nana*, upon which Zola developed his novel,<sup>69</sup> Gilman shows how Manet draws upon the physical traits of the Hottentot to portray the white prostitute. Manet endows Nana with the enlarged buttocks characteristic of the Hottentot, to indicate, according to Gilman, that '[e]ven Nana's seeming beauty is but a sign of the black hidden within. All her external stigmata point to the pathology within the sexualized female'.<sup>70</sup> What is insinuated in Manet's portrait becomes inscribed by Zola, who details a fair and childlike Nana in possession of an atavistic sexuality that functions as the sign of a corrupting disease as she dies of smallpox. In his reading of Zola's ending, Gilman argues that by showing how 'in death Nana begins to revert to the blackness of the earth, to assume the horrible grotesque countenance perceived as belonging to the world of the black', her 'disease' and 'uncleanliness' become the final link between the prostitute and the black.<sup>71</sup> The 'representation affinity' made between Nana and the Hottentot indicates, to Mary Ann Doane, 'a strong fear that white women are always on the verge of "slipping back" into a blackness comparable to prostitution'.<sup>72</sup> This was especially pertinent for the white Creole woman whose apparent whiteness was viewed with suspicion.

In *Voyage in the Dark*, Maudie discloses that Anna is called the Hottentot by the other chorus girls (*VD*, p. 12). This derogatory colonial trope constructs the white Creole woman as a blackened sexualized object who must bear the projection of racialized anxieties, such as having an atavistic sexuality that is

diseased and degenerative. Anna, however, continually claims this black identity for herself, most dramatically in the evocation of the ghost of the female slave during her sexual encounter with Walter.

The narratorial structuring of this pivotal episode of Anna's loss of virginity manifests the abjection of black identification. Kristeva describes the experience of abjection as follows:

Apprehensive, desire turns aside; sickened, it rejects. A certainty protects it from the shameful – a certainty of which it is proud holds on to it. But simultaneously, just the same, that impetus, that spasm, that lead is drawn toward an elsewhere as tempting as it is condemned. Unflaggingly, like an inescapable boomerang, a vortex of summons and repulsion places the one haunted by it literally beside himself. (*PH*, p. 1)

Here, Kristeva describes abjection as a current of attraction and revulsion. The abject occupies the border zone between desire and the symbolic and is pulled and pushed in both directions. The abject is enticed by an 'elsewhere' that is forbidden and yet repulsed by the primal indifferenciation it affords. At the same time that the abject disrupts the boundaries of the symbolic, it clings to the 'certainty' of the self inscribed in the symbolic that prevents it from descending into utter dissolution. In the process of abjection, the subject surrenders its self-image and is threatened with the dissolution of meaning and boundaries that determine one's existence but the process is halted by the incursion of the symbolic within which subjectivity is thus inscribed. Abjection brings one to the limits of what is imaginable and permissible, and then it must be repelled for fear of self-annihilation.

The 'summons and repulsion' of abjection is manifested in the narrative structuring of Rhys's text, specifically in the patterns of repetition, spatial-temporal juxtapositions and gaps. Abjection involves the crossing of boundaries, and in Rhys's novel, this takes the form of racial borders. Blackness functions as the other



side of the border, that 'elsewhere' that is at once 'tempting' and 'condemned'. Black identification allows the narrator, in Kristeva's terms, to cross over to 'the other side of the border, the place where I am not and which permits me to be' (*PH*, p. 3). Crossing the border exposes the constructedness and fragility of the roles ascribed to the white woman within the symbolic order, and entices with the thrilling terror of the undifferentiated. At the same time, the text repeatedly reverts to an affirmation of symbolic positions that guards the 'certainty' of its own white identity. The desire of black identification is an abjection that drives the narrative in currents of desire and disapproval, of self-loathing and censorship.

Leading up to having sex with Walter, Anna repeatedly seeks to identify herself not only as West Indian but as possibly being black West Indian. She reiterates, 'I'm a real West Indian', 'I'm the fifth generation on my mother's side' (*VD*, p. 47). Anna's claims function to denounce her identity as a British subject. Beyond a national repudiation, Anna's claims also enter into the discourse of blood inheritance. She reveals of her drinking habit, 'It's in my blood, [. . .] All my family drink too much' (*VD*, p. 44). Anna's reference to blood inheritance points to the late Victorian preoccupation with degeneration, which viewed alcoholism as one of the many stimulants that resulted in hereditary enfeeblement.<sup>73</sup> Anna's reference to blood also specifically recalls Zola's first mention of Nana in *L'Assommoir* (1877), in which she is presented as the offspring of an alcoholic couple, and in which her heredity signals her propensity to a deviant sexuality, to which she eventually succumbs by turning to prostitution. As previously established, Nana functions as a symbol of the stigmata and pathology of the Hottentot, the black primitivism hidden in the white prostitute. Anna herself

becomes a prostitute in the course of the novel and her claim to a degeneracy wrought by blood raises the nineteenth-century problem of 'bad blood' and the white woman's reversion to a primitive blackness. The link between bad blood and being black is consolidated by Anna's declaration, "I always was rum," I said. "When I was a kid I wanted to be black" (*VD*, p. 45). The implicit conjoining of the white Creole woman to the Hottentot is reinforced by the repetitive phrase, 'you rum child, you rum little devil' (*VD*, p. 48). Rum was a by-product of the sugar plantations and labeling Anna as a 'rum child' suggests she is likewise a product or offspring of slaves. Anna's reference to her black boatman as 'Black Pappy' (*VD*, p. 46), a name which signifies black paternity, further reinforces Anna's imagined black family ties.

The desire to be black climaxes in the invocation of the slave ghost. At the onset of sex, Anna mentions the 'old slave-list at Constance' which holds the record of 'Maillotte Boyd, aged 18, mulatto, house servant', followed immediately by the memory of Hester's condemnation, 'The sins of the fathers [. . .] are visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation' (*VD*, pp. 45-46). The invocation of the historically repressed other in the ghost of the nineteenth-century slave woman during Anna's sexual liaison with Walter brings the historical weight of colonialism and slavery to bear on the union. Critics have examined Anna's masochistic identification with the slave as Rhys's indictment of the interlocking ideologies of empire, race, gender and class, in their construction of the West Indian slave woman, the prostitute, and the poor white woman as sexualized objects.<sup>74</sup> Joseph Clarke makes the valid point that despite Rhys's exposure of gender and racial oppression, blackness ultimately 'functions as a contextual

grammar for proto-feminist politics', as a means for the white woman to 'liberate herself – to find a place outside of the ensnaring, exploitative patriarchal norms of proper "womanhood"'.<sup>75</sup> However, one might argue that because the self is written as sharing an ideology with the other, and the construction of the 'I' is implicated in that of the 'not-I', the formulation of a Creole subjectivity has to confront its shared identity with the black slave.

By establishing this ghostly kinship between the white Creole and the black slave, the text effects a 'revolt', not just against the race and gender oppression that enslaves women, but the 'sick revolt' of abjection as it is forced to assimilate that which it fears and desires the most: being tainted by black blood and becoming mulatto. In Edwardian England, the black woman is still perceived as the Hottentot: animalistic, primitive, unclean and contaminating. Anna's identification with Maillotte Boyd is specifically with a mulatto, rather than a black, slave. The mulatto is of black and white lineage and was frequently the illicit offspring of the white master's sexual relation with black female slaves. Hazel Carby observes that the mulatto is the physical consequence of a social system that exercised supremacy through rape and the use of the mulatto as a literary device demythologizes concepts of 'pure blood' and 'pure race'.<sup>76</sup> Anna's invocation and possession by the mulatto ghost of Maillotte Boyd establishes a kinship of mixed blood. Significantly, the name, Maillotte, resurfaces in Rhys's later novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, in the character of Tia's mother; Tia being the black double of the white Creole, Antoinette.<sup>77</sup> As Maillotte in turn doubles as the mother to the white Creole, Maillotte Boyd too is invoked as the ancestral mother to Anna Morgan. Significantly, Kristeva's notion that the 'revolt of being' in abjection is 'directed

against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside' (*PH*, p. 1) is realized here in the threat of black blood that now lies within and without. Rhys harbors the desire for and fear of possessing tainted black blood. In this episode, the prospect of becoming mulatto is embraced in the vertiginous pleasures of abjection.

Prior to the liaison, the text also establishes a parallel between Walter and Anna's father. When Anna chooses to have a whisky, Walter's admonition, 'but don't start too early', is echoed in the recollection of her Father's voice, 'we don't want to have you starting too early' (*VD*, pp. 44 and 45). This identification of Walter with Anna's father draws the latter into the union as an ancestral figure. Just as Anna's grandfather is 'turn[ing] in his grave' (*VD*, p. 45), ancestral ghosts and their history of colonial oppression haunt the present generation. The relationship between Anna and Walter becomes shadowed by the sexual union of Maillotte, the mulatto slave, and the white slave owner, and the accompanying burden of rape, violence and exploitation that it carries. The incest taboo is also transgressed in the doubling of Walter and Anna's father.

On one hand, the event of Anna's intercourse with Walter is a scene of perverse pleasure, not just of sex but illicit sex between black and white, slave and master, parent and child. Furthermore, it is not just Anna's intercourse with Walter, but her kinship with the mulatto, that is sealed in the event. The forbidden pleasure of abjection here is of the penetration of black blood into white, of death to the white subject by mulatto possession. This is a fantasy not only of interracial union but of becoming Other. In the throes of both desire and loathing for the prospect of a horrific and scandalous becoming, the text remains silent over the actualization

of the unspeakable transformation. The monstrous becoming of the mulatto remains an unspoken gap in the narrative.

There is a perverse pleasure taken by the text in the structuring of a forbidden desire that needs to be abjected or thrown off, and this generates the textual current of attraction and revulsion. This explains why the unspoken sexual act is followed immediately by the memory of the Catholic meditation on the 'Four Last Things' and its accompanying simulation of death: 'Children, every night before you go to sleep you should lie straight down with your arms by your sides and your eyes shut and say: "One day I shall be dead. One day I shall lie like this with my eyes closed and I shall be dead"' (*VD*, p. 48). The juxtaposition of this religious invocation with the prior summons of the mulatto ghost establishes the act of implied interracial copulation and racial mixing as a religious abomination. In her reading of religious abjection, Kristeva writes of biblical abomination as that which is 'inscribed within the logical conception of impurity' such as 'intermixture, erasing of differences, threat to identity', which defile the 'boundaries of the self's clean and proper body' (*PH*, p. 101). Accordingly, an abomination is a border entity existing at the interstices of oppositional categories. It is this logic of abomination, Kristeva argues, that explains the 'condemnation of hybrids and migrant beings' (*PH*, p. 103), for the hybrid is a mixed and contaminated body whose boundaries have been penetrated, while the migrant's crossing of borders threatens the sense of the selfsame. Religion's role, according to Kristeva, is to inscribe the 'evocation of defiled maternity' 'within that of a limit, a boundary [. . .] as foundation for the organization that is "clean and proper," "individual," and [. . .] subject to law and morality' (*PH*, p. 100). The

implied interracial coupling in the novel is an intermixture of black and white, of past and present, human and ghost, that breaches the boundaries of the self's 'clean and proper' body. The notion of 'purity' is utterly defiled. By the invocation of the black female slave, the sexual act is no longer 'individual', but a historical and communal union of black and white, slave and master, which violates the taboos of 'law and morality'.

With the religious abomination realized in the interpenetration of black and white and the birthing of the mulatto, the text needs to restore its boundaries in order to prevent the dissolution of the subject. The symbolic inscription of boundaries is central to Kristeva's reading of the abject: 'An unshakable adherence to Prohibition and Law is necessary if that perverse interspace of abjection is to be hemmed in and thrust aside. Religion, Morality, Law' (*PH*, p. 16). Historically, the religious ritual of meditation on 'Death, Judgement, Hell and Heaven' and its accompanying simulation of death functioned as a purification ritual. Anna's mention of the '*Little death*' (*VD*, p. 48; italics in original) goes beyond a reference to orgasm to implicate the spiritual death brought about by the religious abomination of her interracial coupling. The corpse, according to Kristeva, signifies one of the most basic forms of pollution, namely a 'body without soul, a non-body' (*PH*, p. 109). It functions here as the abject which sickens and repulses the self so that it can be expelled in the restoration of the sense of 'I'. By placing Anna's defiled and polluted body in the framework of religious purification, the text works to reinscribe the borders of the 'clean and proper' self. The workings of abjection demand that the self-inflicted blackening of the white body must be reconstituted in the whiteness of religiosity.

In the rhythm of ‘summons and repulsion’ that drives the text, the narrative returns again to the scene of abjection by the incantation, ‘*Maillotte Boyd, aged 18. Maillotte Boyd, aged 18*’ (VD, p. 48; italics in original). That which is repelled returns to haunt the subject because it is an inescapable part of the self. In this instance, Anna’s insistence, ‘*But I like it like this. I don’t want it any other way but this*’ (VD, p. 48; italics in original), signals a choice that was absent to the black female slaves. This subsequent assertion is spoken from the place of privilege that is only afforded to the white subject. This privilege is the ‘certainty’ that Kristeva speaks of, which ‘protects [the white Creole] from the shameful’, which in Rhys’s novel is the shame of desiring blackness, the scandalous fantasy of being mulatto, and the perverse pleasure of interracial coupling.

The confrontation with the abject in the form of miscegenation and contamination symbolized by the mulatto slave is followed by its expulsion, as embodied by the censorious voice of the imperial mother. Anna’s stepmother Hester represents the voice of English imperial law and directly after the illicit triangulated union of Anna, Maillotte and Walter, is positioned in the text to articulate a racist ideology of miscegenation and segregation. As the voice of racist imperialism, Hester suggests that blackness is somehow contagious and capable of infiltrating the borders of whiteness which must hence be safeguarded by a system of segregation and propriety. She makes reference to Anna’s ‘unfortunate propensities’ (VD, p. 56), implying that Anna’s deviant behaviour is rooted in a maternal genealogy possibly tainted by colored blood. Even after Anna asserts her biological whiteness, Hester counters by pointing to her degenerative speech as another instance of racial contamination: ‘I tried to teach you to talk like a lady and

behave like a lady and not like a nigger and of course I couldn't do it. Impossible to get you away from the servants. That awful sing-song voice you had! Exactly like a nigger you talked – and still do. Exactly like that dreadful girl Francine. When you were jabbering away together in the pantry I never could tell which of you was speaking' (VD, p. 56). This representation of black speech is stereotypically racist for, as Fanon has noted, 'It is said that the Negro loves to jabber'.<sup>78</sup> Hester's view reflects the racist ideas of social devolution which can be traced further back to Long's *The History of Jamaica*, in which he writes of the 'contamination' of Creole girls by their 'Negroe domestics, whose drawling, dissonant gibberish they insensibly adopt, and with it no small tincture of their awkward carriage and vulgar manners; all of which they do not easily get rid of, even after an English education'.<sup>79</sup> Rhys's incorporation of Hester's racist views may be an attempt to parody colonialism's racist discourse or a mockery of the English gentlewoman she so despised.<sup>80</sup> Either way, its placement in the narrative bespeaks an anxiety to contain the specter of miscegenation unleashed in the preceding episode of ghostly copulation. The undifferentiated body that emerges therein needs to be reconfigured into the normative categories of blackness and whiteness, for while abjection 'fascinates desire', it also threatens the self with dissolution.

Even as the text effects a containment of its abject pleasure by the figuration of the imperial mother, it works, in the logic of abjection, to distance itself from the repression of the law. The entry of Hester is framed in a subtext of food aversion. The text's repudiation of Hester is projected onto images of distasteful foods, such as the 'stew [that] tasted of nothing at all' and the 'tinned



pears' that Anna and Hester eat (*VD*, p. 50). The dis-taste or lack of taste highlights the unnatural processed state of colonial consumption. In relation to Anna's musings on 'What is Purity? For Thirty-five Years the Answer has been Bourne's Cocoa' (*VD*, p. 50), Anna's subsequent mention of the cocoa trees in the West Indian island where she grew up highlights the discrepancy between notions of 'purity'. It makes a statement about the export and contamination of native produce, in this way undermining the vigorous stand Hester makes on preserving the 'purity' of race against racial mixing and miscegenation. The use of food is a sign of the expulsion which serves to remake the textual 'I' in the contractions of distaste.

The Creole subjectivity of *Voyage in the Dark* is also figured in the abjection of whiteness. The repudiation of Hester is necessary because she functions as a symbol of a hated whiteness that Anna is made to assimilate. As Anna confesses, 'I hated being white. Being white and getting like Hester, and all the things you get – old and sad and everything. [. . .] And I knew that day that I'd started to grow old and nothing could stop it' (*VD*, p. 62). Being forced to assume an abhorrent whiteness brings about an expulsion of the self manifested as a death-wish in the text. As Anna recalls:

'This time I'll die.' So I took my hat off and went and stood in the sun.

The sun at home can be terrible, like God. This thing here – I can't believe it's the same sun. [. . .]

I stood there until I felt the pain of the headache begin and then the sky came up close to me. It clanged, it was so hard. The pain was like knives. And then I was cold, and when I had been very sick, I went home. (*VD*, p. 63)

The vivid description of the cutting pain, the bodily aches and the deafening oppressive sky is symptomatic of the bodily convulsions of the text, as Anna is

made to accept and internalize her whiteness as aging, sadness and death. The island sun has irrevocably altered from the earlier memory of 'the heat pressing down on you as if it were something alive. I wanted to be black. I always wanted to be black. [. . .] Being black is warm and gay, being white is cold and sad' (*VD*, p. 27). The contrasting effects of the Caribbean sun reinforce the impossibility of Anna's desire for racial transformation. Coldness and sadness are racialized as whiteness. Through the slippage of a flashback, the revulsion of an unchangeable whiteness is manifested as a bodily sickness, symptomatic of abjection in the reconfiguration of the Creole self.

The abjection of the whiteness that constitutes the self is further manifested in the novel's rendering of whites, particularly of white women, as species abominations, part-human and part-animal. Rhys draws upon theories of degeneration and devolution, to effect a deformation and dehumanization of white women. While racial discourse oftentimes represented the non-white body as an abomination, *Voyage in the Dark* brings the prospect of a degenerate whiteness home. Anna's matron, with 'her little, short nose and her long, moving lips, [. . .] was, like a blind rabbit' (*VD*, p. 19). Her landlady has 'bulging eyes, dark blobs in a long, pink face, like a prawn' (*VD*, p. 89). Ethel is described as '[a]n ant, just like all the other ants' (*VD*, p. 91). A lady in the restaurant has 'a face like a hen's – and like a hen's behind too' (*VD*, p. 102). Even her friend Laurie has a voice 'as hoarse as a crow's' (*VD*, p. 97) and a couple kissing 'were like beetles clinging to the railings' (*VD*, p. 30). The poor white people, including herself, lead 'beastly lives' and '[th]ey swarm like woodlice when you push a stick into a woodlice-nest at home. And their faces are the colour of woodlice' (*VD*, p. 23). This compulsive

dehumanizing of whites not only rewrites the discourse that renders the non-white as animalistic and inhuman, but it characterizes the white species as one of intermixture and degeneracy. This assault on whiteness is the jouissance of textual violence directed against the whiteness that constitutes the Creole self. O'Connor makes the observation that, 'If depression is often anger turned inward against the self, Anna rarely reveals her subterranean rage'.<sup>81</sup> In fact, Anna's 'rage' is manifested as a textual sadism in the obsessive deformation of white women. Moreover, it not only takes pleasure in the repeated attacks on others, but also allows for the projection and provisional destruction of a hated whiteness within the self.

The abjection of whiteness also extends to the dehumanization of England itself as the novel depicts a country of spatial indifferentiation and paralyzing uniformity. In Anna's account, 'this is London – hundreds thousands of white people white people rushing along and the dark houses all alike frowning down one after the other all alike all stuck together' (*VD*, pp. 15-16). England is repeatedly described as being 'exactly alike', 'perpetually the same' (*VD*, p. 8). While the depiction of England as an indistinguishable mass and faceless horde may be a parody of colonial representations of 'swarming natives', the lack of differentiation becomes a source of terror. As Anna elucidates, 'that story about the walls of a room getting smaller and smaller until they crush you to death. *The Iron Shroud*, it was called. It wasn't Poe's story; it was more frightening than that. "I believe this damned room's getting smaller and smaller," I thought. And about the rows of houses outside, gimcrack, rotten-looking, and all exactly alike' (*VD*, p. 26). The reference to the gothic text of *The Iron Shroud* by Edgar Allan Poe points

to the claustrophobia of living in the stifling space that is England.<sup>82</sup> The text makes explicit that the suffocating space of the room is symbolic of the wider deadening place that is England. Its uniformity is terrifying as it is achieved by the denial of its own alterity and its condemnation of difference, as well as its stifling of individuality in the process. The feelings Anna associates with whiteness, such as coldness, stillness and lifelessness are reminiscent of the corpse, and England is the shroud-like room or coffin that kills life.<sup>83</sup>

### **‘Like A Souciant’s Eyes’: Morphing Dark Doubles**

In her reading of the narrative representation of abjection, Kristeva writes that ‘when narrated identity is unbearable’, it ‘yields to a crying-out theme of suffering-horror’ that coincides with the ‘boundary-subjectivity’ of abjection, and in this state, identity ‘can no longer be *narrated* but *cries out* or is *descried* with maximum stylistic intensity’ (*PH*, p. 141; italics in original). *Voyage in the Dark* climaxes with the ‘suffering-horror’ of Anna’s discovery and abortion of her foetus, which begins a series of textual ruptures and imagistic disjunctures, which effectively ‘decries’ rather than ‘narrates’ the unspeakable abject horror of a mulatto birth. In the stylistic ruptures and currents of attraction and revulsion that signal textual abjection, the narrative structuring of Anna’s discovery of her pregnancy is key to unraveling its unspoken significance. The abjection of the Creole subject becomes manifested in the textual body, in the symptoms of stylistic disruption, the haunting of supernatural tropes and the echoes reverberating from repetitive structures. Anna’s awareness of her pregnancy is followed by a procession of imagistic recollections and dreams: of Colonel Jackson’s illegitimate

and allegedly mulatto daughter, followed by the vampiric Caribbean souciant, and Anna's macabre nightmare of 'The boy bishop' in a child's coffin. Each of these seemingly disparate scenes reflects on what the others cannot say. Rhys also turns to her dark doubles, the souciant and Bois sèche – black Caribbean supernatural females – in an abjection of the self through which the Creole 'I' is formed.

The text's initial reference to Anna's pregnancy lies in a description of her nausea: 'Like seasickness, only worse, and everything heaving up and down. And vomiting. And thinking, "It can't be that, it can't be that"' (*VD*, p. 138). The unborn child is a horrifying and sickening presence that transgresses the boundaries of subjectivity and begins to break the syntactical norms of the narrative. From this point on, island memories and hallucinations – patois, singing, haunted mountains, obeah, zombies, souciantes – begin to surface, 'heaving up and down' within the text like Anna's nauseated sensations. Syntax ruptures into dashes, ellipses and fragments, and seemingly disjointed images that traverse time and space increasingly materialize.

Anna's discovery of her pregnancy is followed immediately by the memory of the illegitimate daughter of Colonel Jackson. The significance of this pairing lies in the unspoken intimation of the race of Miss Jackson's mother, in the partial phrase, 'of course her mother was – ' (*VD*, p. 138). The description of Miss Jackson's 'dead-white face' and 'currant-black eyes' (*VD*, p. 139) emphasizes her black and white constitution, which in the context of the colony, points to her racial status as a mulatto. This juxtaposition highlights not only the illegitimacy of Anna's unborn child, but its status as a horrifying miscegenation, which becomes further reinforced by the following allusion to the souciant.

The Caribbean myth of the souciant becomes a potent symbol of the racialized abjection of Rhys's Creole identity.<sup>84</sup> Anna expresses a dread of the souciant, and more significantly, a fear of the souciant within the self:

Obeah zombis souciant – lying in the dark frightened of the dark frightened of souciant that fly in through the window and suck your blood – they fan you to sleep with their wings and then they suck your blood – you know them in the day-time – they look like people but their eyes are *red* and staring and they're souciant at night – *looking in the glass and thinking sometimes my eyes look like a souciant's eyes . . .* (VD, pp. 139-40; italics added).<sup>85</sup>

The souciant in Caribbean folklore appears as an old wrinkled woman by day and sheds her skin by night. The skinless phantom flies through the air as a ball of fire and enters houses to suck the blood from her victims. The souciant is believed to hide her skin under a stone mortar, returning at dawn to reenter it. Potential victims can thwart attacks by sprinkling rice nearby, since the souciant must count every grain before leaving and thus risk discovery or incineration by sunlight. If the souciant's temporarily discarded skin is found and salt and pepper rubbed onto it, when the souciant returns to put on her skin, she will expire from her burning flesh.<sup>86</sup> The souciant takes on the regular appearance of a human being during the day, but its eyes are red and glazed.<sup>87</sup> In their study of Creole religions in the Caribbean, Margarite Fernández Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert briefly note the souciant as 'a Caribbean version of the vampire, which sustains itself on human blood'.<sup>88</sup>

While the vampire has garnered much critical attention, there has been little sustained examination of the souciant, even though it figures prominently in Caribbean folklore and appears intermittently in literature of the Anglophone Caribbean. An exception to this is the work of Giselle Anatol, which examines

how the souciant has conventionally been employed to condemn female power and socialize women according to patriarchal dictates. According to Anatol, the powerful, and hence threatening souciant is cast in 'witch-like terms' as aged and evil, in order to justify her punishment through banishment or destruction.<sup>89</sup> The independent travels of the souciant and the shedding of her skin suggest 'a dangerous participation in an otherworldly realm outside the private sphere', indicative of society's 'fear of women's movement and anxiety over the inability to control it'.<sup>90</sup> In this way, the aberrant, powerful and independent woman who threatens social order is demonized in the folk figure of the souciant.

Heightening the notion of the 'unnatural' woman, the souciant is also 'anti-maternal' because it sucks the 'lifeblood' of infants to prolong its own life.<sup>91</sup> Nalo Hopkinson notes that the souciant myth might have been invented to explain the mysterious deaths of babies, attributing its cause to the sinister mystic power of older women who were believed to have stolen the life force of babies to extend their own longevity.<sup>92</sup> The souciant's anti-maternal behaviour is an inversion of the patriarchal ideal of the nurturing mother.

The souciant holds a fascination for Rhys because it is a border creature, inhabiting the space between the living and the undead, the corporeal and spiritual. The souciant is characterized by its morphic variability, continually in danger of becoming other than itself, a not-self. As a bodily boundary, skin demarcates the inside from the outside, forming the boundaries of the self's 'clean and proper' body. As a skin-shedding creature, the souciant sheds its human form to become an-other. To abject is literally to throw off or in Kristeva's terminology, to 'jettison', and to abject the self is to establish the self (*PH*, p. 2). To throw off

one's skin as the souciant does, is to experience both a loss and a becoming, a movement away from one state that is also necessarily a movement towards another. In the souciant myth, the woman's skin can be seen as a form of constriction, the shedding of which is a form of release. As Hopkinson writes, 'Skin gives these skin folk their human shape. When the skin comes off, their true selves emerge. They may be owls. They may be vampiric balls of fire. And always, whatever the burden their skins bear, once they remove them [. . .] they can fly'.<sup>93</sup> In her feminist recuperation of the souciant, Anatol argues that the souciant can be read as 'a model of female agency' who rids herself of the layers of 'metaphorical encasements that have grown too constrictive' in order to be a 'transformed being [. . .] endowed with the freedom of flight'.<sup>94</sup> The 'burden' of skin for Rhys is the whiteness that she views as constrictive and alienating. Her white skin is seen as a form of imprisonment, confining her to the sterile world of metropolitan whiteness which refuses to accept her. Her dis-ease in her own skin is seen in her increasing alienation from both England and the Caribbean, as she is caught between the impossibility of her desire to be black and the unsustainable repudiation of her own whiteness. The souciant allows for a metamorphosis through which skin is metaphorically shed.

The souciant's vampiric practice of sucking blood makes it a creature of mixed blood. It is a polluted body in which different bloods mingle, signaling the fear of contamination and miscegenation. Malchow makes the significant connection between the vampire and the 'half-breed':



But there is also lurking in the vampire the powerful suggestion of an explicitly racial obsession – that of the ‘half-breed’. Both vampire and half-breed are creatures who transgress boundaries and are caught between two worlds. Both are hidden threats – disguised presences bringing pollution of the blood.<sup>95</sup>

That the souciant is a ‘half-breed’, and more specifically, a mulatto, further points to its existence as Anna’s dark double. Anna identifies the souciant within herself in an awareness of its mixed blood, in a recognition that stimulates and frightens her. Interestingly, Malchow notes that the ‘half-breed’ is ‘unfairly rejected, martyred, by both worlds’.<sup>96</sup> This notion of dual rejection and alienation is a familiar characterization of Anna and even Rhys’s own position between the Caribbean and Britain, black and white.

The source of horror in the discovery of her pregnancy lies in the hybridizing of Anna as vampiric half-breed. In this spatial-temporal slippage, the unspeakable horror of the birth of a mulatto child is decried. The unborn child is figured as a monster: ‘And all the time thinking round and round in a circle that it is there inside me, and about all the things I had taken so that if I had it, it would be a monster. [. . .] No eyes, perhaps. . . . No arms, perhaps . . .’ (*VD*, p. 143). Anna’s nightmare of a deformed and dismembered baby is a sign of the abject horror of the monstrous progeny of a racially polluted body. It is in the echo of Miss Jackson and the transformation of Anna into a souciant at the moment of her recognition of her pregnancy, that the unspoken abject fear of a miscegenated birth is conveyed.

The figuration of Anna as souciant renders her as disturbingly abject.<sup>97</sup> In her study of female vampires, Barbara Creed contends that ‘Insofar as the act of vampirism mixes the idea of blood / semen / milk, it becomes a particularly abject

act in relation to the biblical taboos on mixing blood and milk'.<sup>98</sup> Creed draws a connection between the female vampire's blood-sucking and oral sex. Semen, as Creed points out, has been referred to as milk, as in *Moby Dick*, when Ishmael refers to the whale's spermaceti as 'the very milk and sperm of kindness'.<sup>99</sup> Significantly, the definition of the soucriant derives from the French verb 'sucer', meaning 'to suck'.<sup>100</sup> The equivalence of blood-sucking and oral sex ties into Anna's prostitution.<sup>101</sup> It is, however, as the aborting mother that Anna fully materializes the infanticidal, anti-maternal trait of the soucriant. Like a soucriant, Anna drains the blood of her infant, except that it is her own blood that flows. In the description of Anna's botched abortion, Anna's blood cannot be explicitly named. Like the foetus, her hemorrhaging is referred to as 'it'. Anna's landlady says, 'it come on at two o'clock' and Laurie replies, 'It's bound to stop in a minute' (*VD*, p. 155). Anna's hemorrhaging is unnamable because it is abject. Kristeva has stressed that blood, particularly as it relates to women, is a fertile site for abjection. Blood indicates the 'impure' and death, but also 'refers to women, fertility, and the assurance of fecundation. It thus becomes a fascinating semantic crossroads, the propitious place for abjection where *death* and *femininity*, *murder* and *procreation*, *cessation of life* and *vitality* all come together' (*PH*, p. 96; italics in original). Anna's blood is unspeakably abject because it signifies bad blood and death as well as the life force that sustains her. Flowing from her womb, where the transgressive act of miscegenation physiologically occurs, it visualizes the eradication of the forbidden mulatto progeny that is both desired and abhorred.

In the most explicit link to the soucriant, Anna looks in the mirror and envisions herself possessing the red eyes of the soucriant. This mirroring of the

white Creole and souciant sets up a chain of doubles and reversals wherein the opposing currents of abjection are played out in the text's desperate and untenable desire to be other. The wider significance of Rhys's reference to the souciant can be traced to the deity Bois sèche, who is invoked as part of the story-telling ritual from her childhood. Anna recalls the ritual initiated by her black servant, Francine: 'Sometimes she told me stories, and at the start of the story she had to say "Timm, timm," and I had to answer "Bois sèche"' (*VD*, p. 61). Rhys elaborates on this in her autobiography:

Francine would say, 'Tim-tim'. I had to answer 'Bois sèche,' then she'd say, 'Tablier Madame est derrière dos' (Madam's apron is back to front). She always insisted on this ceremony before starting a story and it wasn't until much later, when I was reading a book about obeah, that I discovered that 'Bois sèche' is one of the gods. (*SP*, p. 31)

The invocation of the Bois sèche instills in Rhys the potential for reversal engendered by the black goddess and story-telling. The Bois sèche functions as a symbol of reversal, bringing about a shift from 'back to front', and a form of empowering exchange achieved through the bond created between the black goddess and story-telling. At the onset, the Bois sèche transforms the terrifying stories of Meta into the empowering tales of Francine. In Rhys's account, her black nurse Meta is the 'terror of my life', tormenting her with talk of 'zombies, souciantes, and loups-garoux' and other tales 'tinged with fear and horror' (*SP*, pp. 29 and 30). The refuge Rhys finds in books is further imperiled by Meta's taunt, 'If all you read so much, you know what will happen to you? Your eyes will drop out and they will look at you from the page' (*SP*, p. 28). Meta is the 'Black Devil', who, according to Rhys, 'had shown me a world of fear and distrust, and I am still in that world' (*SP*, p. 32). This frightening world can be reversed by the Bois sèche

ritual created by Francine. In *Voyage in the Dark*, Francine is remembered as a childhood source of happiness, protection, warmth and companionship. She is a nurturing surrogate mother to Anna and represents a union with the Caribbean island.

The Bois sèche also brings a chain of historical signification to bear upon Rhys's formulation of Creole identity. In her study of voodoo and obeah, Holly Fils-Aimé notes that the Bois sèche is the Marinèt Boisseche or Brasseche of vodun lore.<sup>102</sup> Although Rhys attributes her knowledge of the Bois sèche to obeah, the Marinèt Boisseche is, in fact, the principal female lwa / loa or god in the Petwo / Petro rites of Haitian voodoo.<sup>103</sup> In her extensive research on the voodoo loa, Joan Dayan states:

The feared Marinèt-bwa-chèche (Marinèt-dry-bones, dry-wood) [. . .] is also called Marinèt-limen-difé (light-the-fire). Served with kerosene, pimienta, and fire, she is the lwa who put the fire to the cannons used by Dessalines against the French. Marinèt, [. . .] as a national image of revolution and republican fervor, also reconstitutes legends of ferocity distinctly associated with black women.<sup>104</sup>

The Marinèt Bois sèche which Rhys summons is the goddess of fire and revolt. The Marinèt-bwa-chèche, according to Dayan, is also associated with the other Petro loa of 'revolt' and 'revenge', the 'Ezili-je-wouj (Ezili with red eyes)'.<sup>105</sup> In addition, Dayan notes that the Marinèt-bwa-chèche represents one side of the double faceted Ezili. The Ezili, who is 'best known as the elegant lady of love', is the Ezili Freda, the 'light-skinned',<sup>106</sup> 'beautiful coquette', adulated with perfume and flowers,<sup>107</sup> and 'fond of beauty and finery'.<sup>108</sup> Her 'savage transformation' is explained by Dayan: 'Ezili the gracious *mulatto*, enraged by too much coercive praise and worn out by too much use, turns into the cunning and cannibal woman of the night, Marinèt, the spirit of the bush', and sometimes assuming her other

form as the cold-hearted and vicious Ezili-je-wouj.<sup>109</sup> The Ezili, as saintly and evil, giving and vengeful, embodies the familiar dualisms of femininity. It replicates the western cult of femininity that constructs woman as an object to be desired or abhorred. It is a patriarchal ideology that imagines the purity of a woman against her dark debased other.

The Bois sèche grants Rhys the imaginative power of reversal; of transforming the Ezili Freda into the Ezili-je-wouj. The depiction of the 'Jean Rhys woman' and Rhys's heroines themselves can be seen as sharing the mold of the Ezili Freda. The female protagonists of Rhys's novels, like Rhys herself, are sporadically kept women, amateurs who rely on coquetry to exchange their bodies for the finery of fashionable clothes and undergarments, wine, and money. Marya Zelli in *Quartet* (1928) is described as 'the desired mistress, the worshipped, perfumed goddess'.<sup>110</sup> The 'Jean Rhys woman' has been typically described as 'weak and passive',<sup>111</sup> and viewed as the quintessentially female masochist, 'bearer of the bleeding wound', who 'can only exist in relation to castration'.<sup>112</sup> However, Rhys's mirroring of herself as souciant, as well as the invocation of Bois sèche, aligns her with the Ezili-je-wouj, symbol of black female ferocity and revolt. On a literary level, the depiction of Bertha Mason in Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, as having 'bloodshot', 'fiery' and 'red eyes' in a 'discoloured face – a savage face', frighteningly like the 'vampire',<sup>113</sup> is repeated in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which charts the transformation of Antoinette into this 'red-eyed wild-haired stranger', who is herself said to have 'eyes red like *couciant*' (*WSS*, pp. 122 and 96; italics and misspelling in original). The reference to the souciant draws upon a Caribbean chain of signification to establish a mirroring of the white Creole woman and the

black female figures of revolt and revenge, the Ezili-je-wouj and the Marinèt Bois sèche. As the Rochester figure, representative of patriarchal and colonial law, tries to reduce Antoinette to a 'marionette' (*WSS*, p. 123), the chain of Anna-Antoinette-Marionette-Marinèt reverses the disabling process to transform the white Creole woman into a symbol of black ferocity and revolt. In this framework, the burning of Thornfield Hall becomes an act of rebellion linked to the slave insurrections of burning colonial homes and the wider Haitian revolution against the French. The voodoo subtext subverts the imperial narrative and transforms an individual act of mad destruction into a national rebellion against colonial rule.

The Bois sèche thus functions as a potent symbol of reversal for Rhys. It enables the imaginative 'back to front' transformation of Meta to Francine, the Ezili Freda to the Ezili-je-wouj, Bertha as 'madwoman in the attic' to black revolutionary rebel. Rhys's recognition of the *soucriant* within the self is a sign of her desire for reversal; of turning submission to rebellion and throwing off white skin for black. Rhys attempts to cast off the burden of her white skin by mirroring the white Creole woman and the *soucriant*, and claiming the black rebel identity for herself.

In the 'summons and revulsion' of abjection, the fantasy of possessing black female power is immediately repudiated by the dream of 'The boy bishop', which functions to counter the novel's invocation of obeah and, more obscurely, voodoo power, as well as to abate the horror of a mulatto birth. The boy bishop's appearance in priest's robes chanting the Catholic liturgy recalls the religious ritual Anna practiced as a purification process. As the images of Miss Jackson and the *soucriant* figure the foetus as mulatto, the boy bishop works to abject this

horrifying notion that transgresses the boundaries of the self's 'clean and proper body'. However, the boy bishop is itself abject as it exists in the in-between state of doll and human, child and man, mirroring Walter with its 'light eyes in a narrow, cruel face' (*VD*, p. 141). It is also a composite of the past, in its figuration as the Catholic bishop, and the future, in the unborn child. The fact that it emerges from a child's coffin links it to Anna's infanticidal act of abortion and to the image of the un-dead vampire as child. The unsettling ambiguity of the boy bishop is testament to the text's ambivalence over its abject identification with the dark doubles of Caribbean myth and religion.

### **'And Blackness Comes': The Horror of 'Black Skin, White Masks'**

The concluding part of *Voyage in the Dark* is structured in a pattern of narrative shifts between the real time of Anna's abortion, flashbacks of her prostitution, and vivid depictions of the West Indian carnival of Anna's past. The journey across time and space is no longer signalled, apart from the italicized scripting, as the abjection of the text exceeds the bounds of linguistic structure and punctuation. The past and present exist 'side by side', as the Caribbean and England merge in the abjection of Creole identity. All three activities – abortion, prostitution and carnival masking – centre on the disruption of bodily boundaries and the disorder of identity. We have shown how Anna's sexual relations exceed the limits of a union between individual bodies. The novel sets up Anna's first and defining act of sex as an illicit, interracial, and incestuous union of black and white, slave and master, parent and child. The ghost of history was evoked to situate sex within the reverberations of Anna's colonial past. Anna's ghostly possession signalled the

fantasy of possessing black blood and of racial transformation. Together with the pervasive trope of the Hottentot, the prostitute functions in the novel not only as a symbol of racial stereotyping but also as an abject means of reconstituting the self via the assimilation of the racial other.

The event of Anna's abortion is interspersed with memories of the Caribbean carnival.<sup>114</sup> Critics have observed the subversive undercurrents of the street performers who transform themselves through elaborate masks and costumes.<sup>115</sup> The most disturbing performers to Anna are the black women, '*with their dark necks and arms covered with white powder*', wearing the wire mesh masks, with the '*small straight nose*', painted on '*mild blue eyes*' and the '*little red heart-shaped mouth*' bearing a slit through which the women stuck out their tongues (*VD*, p. 157; italics in original). Mary Lou Emery correctly points out that the carnival masks 'imitate to excess, to the point of ridicule' in order to 'parody [. . .] the white's behaviour, including the censorship imposed upon white women within their own culture'.<sup>116</sup> Despite a comprehensive reading that takes into account the political and psychological investments in the mask, Emery overlooks the paralyzing fear inspired in Anna and in Rhys by the black women in white masks. Before her abortion, Anna conveys her persecutory anxieties:

But most of all I was afraid of the people passing because I was dying; and just because I was dying, any one of them, any minute, might stop and approach me and knock me down, or put their tongues out as far as they would go. Like that time at home with Meta, when it was Masquerade and she came to see me and put out her tongue at me through the slit in her mask. (*VD*, p. 151)

The image of the black woman behind the white mask induces the persecutory fears of her phobic projections. In her autobiography, Rhys makes strikingly similar observations about the desire and fear incited by the masks:



I would give anything, anything to be able to dance like that. The life surged up to us sitting stiff and well behaved, looking on. As usual my feelings were mixed, because I was very afraid of the masks.

Once when a friend of Victoria's came to visit her I was in the pantry. I was terrified of the way the visitor talked in a strange artificial voice with much rolling of the r's. I was terrified of her mask. (*SP*, p. 52)

The image of the black women in white masks is horrifying because it materializes the unspeakable desire that drives the novel, namely the white body's possession of black blood and its unassimilable miscegenation. The blackness underlying white skin is made fully visible, particularly in the frightful image of the black tongue protruding through the white mask. The black body projects itself from behind the white mask and breaches the boundaries of inside-outside, black-white. This unsuspected penetration, of the other into the self, the unclean into the clean, the black into the white, is abject and it exposes the myth of the undifferentiated whole white body. The unassimilable idea of her own miscegenation generates the confusion of longing and terror that marks her psychological dissolution.

Earlier, Anna presumed her ability to penetrate the white mask into the psyche of the black woman. From her initial position as a white viewer behind the jealousies, Anna psychologically crosses the barrier and aligns herself with the black masqueraders: '*I knew why the masks were laughing*' she declares (*VD*, p. 157; italics in original). Anna claims an imaginary identification and kinship in becoming '*we*' with the dancers, assuming to adopt their perspective and seeing herself from their point of view.

However, the reality of a black kinship, of the black body inhabiting white skin, of black blood flowing in her veins, is shown to be an indescribably abject source of horror. The alternating scenes of abortion and carnival masking comment

on each other as the meaning of each scene is expressed in the other. The abortion is the abjection of blackness, the expulsion of the monstrous progeny of a mulatto body, the splitting of 'black skin' from 'white mask' in the dis-possession of the white body. The image of black women in white masks reconstitutes this splitting in a reversal that brings the black body to life in the white body.

For all the covert symptoms of a desire for blackness scattered through the text, the final realized image of the black body inhabiting white skin is an abjection that inspires desire and dread at once. If the white appropriation of the black body is empowering to the Creole subject, the converse possession of the white body by the black is horrifying. It exposes the white Creole's appropriation of the black mask and evacuates its fragile constitution of the self. Phantoms of racist fear, hate and desire and figments of unconscious fantasies stalk the text, and have been appropriated in the abjection of blackness for the constitution of the Creole self. The black woman's possession of the white body is the fulfillment of the text's desire for blackness that accordingly becomes dissipated upon realization. The divisions and splittings that have configured the text climax here as the abject is materialized in the horror of 'black skin, white masks'.

In the original version of *Voyage in the Dark*, before Rhys's publishers forced her to alter the ending, the novel concludes with the line, 'and there was the ray of light along the floor like the last thrust of remembering before everything is blotted out and blackness comes . . . . .'.<sup>117</sup> A comparison with the revised version reveals that the final phrase, 'and blackness comes', has been erased. The prohibited 'blackness' has typically been read as the onset of Anna's death, which Rhys's publishers deemed to be too dark and tragic. Blackness, however, is an

overdetermined term in Rhys's usage and in her ambiguous relation to black people. Hence, its racial signification cannot be overlooked. On one hand, blackness signifies at once both death and birth, indicative of the desire to return to the primal unity with the maternal. But the other scene of Creoleness, witness to the forbidden desire for black blood and the horror of black possession, returns in the concluding lines to ensnare the Creole subject in the vortex of abjection.

Rhys's fraught attempt at formulating Creole identity through a racialized abjection is also manifested in her other novels. In *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* (1930), Julia Martin identifies with the female nude of a 'rum picture':

This picture is of a woman lying on a couch, a woman with a lovely, lovely body. [. . .] A sort of proud body, like an utterly lovely proud animal. And a face like a mask, a long, dark face, and very big eyes. The eyes were blank, like a mask, but when you had looked at it a bit it was as if you were looking at a real woman, a live woman.<sup>118</sup>

This painting is Modigliani's well-known *Reclining Nude* (1917), which is a product of his study of African sculpture.<sup>119</sup> Rhys's repeated references to the 'long, dark face' as a 'mask' point to the primitivist aesthetics that dehumanize the woman and underwrite the depiction of her as a racialized sexual object. Julia identifies with this primitive painted figure, who states, 'I *am* you. I'm all that matters of you' (*ALM*, p. 41; italics in original). This internalization of the black woman gives her 'a beastly feeling, a foul feeling, like looking over the edge of the world. It was more frightening than I can ever tell you. It made me feel sick in my stomach' (*ALM*, p. 41). The white body reacts with nausea and revulsion at the assimilation of blackness as primitive sexuality and animalism. It is the 'sick revolt' of abjection that embraces the blackness which threatens the boundaries of the self.

*Voyage in the Dark* charts the formulation of Creole subjectivity through the racialized abjection of black identification. Creoleness for Rhys is an abjection, a nauseating embrace of the black other in the form of the Hottentot, mulatto ghost and souciant, that breaks down the boundaries of subjectivity and remakes Creoleness in the patterns of textual convulsions. Ultimately, the black identity Rhys attempts to claim for herself must also be a simultaneous recognition of an unbridgeable difference. Even as she claims to be seeing her self as other, she is simultaneously seeing the other that defines the self by its separation from it. As a result, Rhys's work lays bare a female Creoleness painfully formulated in the throes of unspeakable desire, self-loathing, sickness and sadomasochism. This stands in contrast to the celebratory, polemical and distinctively masculine theory of Creoleness expounded by Patrick Chamoiseau.

## *Chapter Two*

### **The Djobbers, Zombie-Slave and Jablesse: Conjuring Muses of History in Patrick Chamoiseau's *Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows***

The Caribbean Muse has always been  
both deliver[er] and devourer.  
-- Michael Gilkes<sup>1</sup>

Creole identity for the Martinican Patrick Chamoiseau is a divided identity founded upon relations of erasure, assimilation, mimicry and appropriation. To be French-Caribbean is to belong to two distinct nations, one of which has stamped its identity in departmentalized Martinique upon the erasure or ghosting of the other. These next three chapters will examine Chamoiseau's representation of the dispossession and reformulation of Creole identity, through the varying facets of the zombie. The zombie becomes a symbol of the Caribbean colonial experience, as its body-soul dialectic both inscribes and encrypts the ruptures and pluralities inherent in the constitution of Martinican identity.

In *Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows* (1986; English trans. 1999), Chamoiseau resurrects the djobbers<sup>2</sup> of the markets of Fort-de-France, Martinique, to enable them to remember and give voice to a suppressed and forsaken history, and restore it to collective memory. The djobbers' wheelbarrow functions as an archaeological 'trace' that is excavated to recount buried 'histories'. The art of the djobbers, in straddling in-between spaces and manoeuvring around obstacles, weaves a historical narrative that de-materializes colonial history and the written word in order to posit a creolized historiography of 'trace-memories' that finds expression

in 'Dream-Words' and 'Words behind writing'. In remembering, the Caribbean 'muse of history' is materialized as zombies, in the figures of Afoukal, the male zombie-slave of the *soul without a body*, and in the jablesse, the female zombie of the *body without a soul*. Both figures of Caribbean mythology, the zombies characterize different forms of haunting. The zombie of the soul exemplifies memory as possession while the jablesse embodies the consumerism of capitalism that stems from the perverted master-slave relations of the colonial economy. Each signifies the ambivalence of history in its power to deliver or devour, cure or poison.

### **Dis-possessed and Dis-embodied Zombies**

The zombie originates in West African voodoo and was transported to the Caribbean by the transatlantic slave trade. The zombie can take two distinct forms: dis-possessed, *soulless bodies* and dis-embodied, *bodiless souls*. In Wade Davis's research into the ethnobiological causes of zombification, he classifies two kinds of zombies: a 'material' zombie of the body without a soul and the more obscure 'immaterial' zombie of the soul without a body.<sup>3</sup> These findings are substantiated by Hans-W. Ackermann and Jeanine Gauthier who trace the dual concept of the zombie phonetically to its origins in Africa.<sup>4</sup>

In the plethora of research on the zombified body without a soul, writers agree that the soulless corpse is characteristically devoid of memory, feeling and consciousness of its dehumanized condition, and is recognizable by its absent air, dull, glazed eyes, lack of facial expression, and nasal voice.<sup>5</sup> As Davis affirms, to be robbed of one's soul is to lose one's individuality, identity and humanity.<sup>6</sup> In

her travels to Haiti and Jamaica in the 1930s, the African American writer, Zora Neale Hurston gives an account of the horrific reduction of a human to 'an unthinking, unknowing beast'.<sup>7</sup> The dehumanization associated with zombification is reinforced by the Haitian Penal Code, which treats zombification as murder.<sup>8</sup> In determining the cause of zombification, Hurston contends that zombies are created when a drug 'destroys that part of the brain which governs speech and will-power' and the victim can no longer 'formulate thought'.<sup>9</sup> For French anthropologist Alfred Métraux, the zombie is a 'person from whom a sorcerer has extracted the soul and whom he has thus reduced to slavery'.<sup>10</sup>

Certainly, slavery is viewed as the predominant motive for zombification, as in most cases the soul is stolen for the purpose of harnessing the body's labour. David Macey states that it is the slave societies of the Caribbean that gave birth to the myth of the zombie or soulless corpse revived by witchcraft and set to work in the cane fields.<sup>11</sup> The zombie is a symbol of the docile and passive slave tamed by the whip of the colonial master to form a quiescent and cheap labour force. Accordingly, the salt that is believed to restore the zombie to self-awareness is equated with the self-consciousness brought about by abolition and liberation.

As part of the larger cult of voodoo, the zombie was initially a component of the religious tradition in the Dahomey tribe of Africa.<sup>12</sup> In the Caribbean, voodoo acquired added political and cultural significance. In Haiti, voodoo became an instrument of resistance to the colonial regime. Michel S. Laguerre notes the pivotal role of voodoo priests and the secret societies that congregated around them in the rebellions of the Haitians who fought with a ferocity that suggested an altered state of mind.<sup>13</sup> Voodoo, according to Maximilien Laroche, became 'a kind

of ideological, emotional, and spiritual armour for the people of Haiti'.<sup>14</sup> It is widely agreed that voodoo played a vital role in the Haitian revolution, which led to the early independence of the colony in 1804.

The political component of voodoo extends to ideologically motivated cultural representations of the zombie. In an instructive survey of western representations of the zombie, Markman Ellis finds that historians used the zombie as a trope of fear in gothicized narratives of slave rebellion in order to portray the slave as a 'morally degraded' and threatening figure of aggression, the purpose of which was to 'establish the moral superiority of civilised colonial authority over the barbarous slaves'.<sup>15</sup> The zombie trope was, in fact, used to justify paranoid fears of the racial other and the violence necessary for the suppression of slaves.<sup>16</sup> The popular image of zombies as the 'walking dead' was implanted in western minds following the 1915 occupation of Haiti by the United States and has since proliferated in popular culture.<sup>17</sup> These depictions demonstrate how the zombie has been appropriated as a rhetorical tool to justify the enslavement of the racial other.

The zombie is also gendered in anxieties over interracial sex, as fears and desires about the interaction of whites and blacks, masters and slaves are projected onto the gendered figure of the zombie. In Lizbeth Paravisini-Gebert's analysis of the zombification of white women found in a range of texts from Haitian lore to the Hollywood B-grade movie, she determines that the virginal white woman is made to be the marker of an insurmountable racial and class difference that the black man seeks to transcend.<sup>18</sup> The enduring impact of these tropes, argues Paravisini-Gebert, reinforces the image of the Caribbean native as barbaric and 'ultimately expendable'.<sup>19</sup> The tropes also reveal a covert fear of black and white



intermingling and contamination, whereby the potential violation of the white woman stands for the threat to the motherland and the purity of the white race, posed by the stereotype of the 'phallic' black man.<sup>20</sup> Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* has been read as an illustration of the zombification of Antoinette, wherein the female zombie is a trope for forms of colonial and sexual domination.<sup>21</sup> The representation of the zombie in these instances is tied to the threat of losing one's soul.

The other lesser known form of the zombie is that of the soul without a body. The bodiless zombie may be the soul of a dead or living person and the soul is predominantly dispatched as a messenger, although it can also be sent to kill, inflict diseases or destroy harvests. The captured soul is stored in a bottle and can be sold.<sup>22</sup> The causes of spirit zombification are numerous and include premature deaths by accident or suicide as well as virgin deaths.<sup>23</sup> It is in Martinique that the immaterial zombie of the soul makes its presence most fully felt. In his research into West Indian mythology, Jack Corzani discovers that the zombie in Martinique is often invisible, and in contrast to the passivity and dullness sometimes attributed to the physical zombie slaves, is 'a violent creature from which people need to protect themselves'.<sup>24</sup>

In his two years resident in Martinique, the travel writer, Lafcadio Hearn found an archive of customs and beliefs concerning zombies and ghosts in the West Indies, and he expands the definition of the zombie with no soul to include the 'guiabliesse' (also spelt as 'jabliesse' in Creole).<sup>25</sup> The jabliesse is the plantation seductress of Martinican folklore who mesmerizes men by her enigmatic desirability, only to reveal the cloven hooves of her demonic and murderous

form.<sup>26</sup> In Hearn's story, 'La Guiablesse', the zombie is understood as '*one who comes back*'.<sup>27</sup> The return of the zombie is an uncanny event, resurrecting that which was familiar but has been buried.

In its various manifestations, the zombie is marked by an ambivalence as it constitutes the liminal space between dualities. The term 'zombie' was first used in English in 1819, in Robert Southey's *History of Brazil* as the title name for the elected chief of the maroon republic of Palmares.<sup>28</sup> Southey traces the zombie's roots to 'Nzambi', meaning 'Deity', as well as to a Portuguese understanding of zombie as 'Devil'.<sup>29</sup> Encapsulating a body of contradictions, the title 'zombie', here signifies an unstable and ambivalent duality caught between the binary oppositions of deity and devil, chief and slave, rebellion and subservience. In Edna Aizenberg's examination of modern representations of the zombie, she concludes that the zombie is a hybrid construct, a multi-layered symbolic space in which conflicting cultural and political discourses cross.<sup>30</sup> Embodying a density of historical, political, cultural, racial, and sexual signification, the zombie is an evocative symbol of the Caribbean colonial experience, becoming the body upon which the ruptures, plurality and contradictions inherent in the historical and cultural elements that make up the unique quality of Martinican heritage are encrypted.

## **Martinique's 'Happy Zombie'**

The lasting crippling effect of colonialism is nowhere more telling than in the amnesia of a people deprived of its history and collective memory. The official history of Martinique is a chronology shadowing developments in European history. Starting from Martinique's alleged discovery by Christopher Columbus in 1502 and its colonization by France, followed by the period of enslavement, and its subsequent conversion to a French 'Department' in 1946, this predominantly Francocentric account remains silent on the distinctive national culture and identity of Martinique. This bears testament to the cultural invisibility of its people. Martinique's earliest inhabitants of Arawaks and migrant Caribs were not only forcibly enslaved but had their customs, artefacts and very existence effaced from the annals of European, and accordingly, Martinican history. Physical and discursive violence ensured the erasure of historical consciousness. As the Martinican writer, Édouard Glissant, explains:

The French Caribbean is the site of a history characterized by ruptures and that began with a brutal dislocation, the slave trade. Our historical consciousness [. . .] came together in the context of shock, contraction, painful negation, and explosive forces. This dislocation of the continuum, and the inability of the collective consciousness to absorb it all, characterize what I call a nonhistory.<sup>31</sup>

Martinique lacks the sense of a historically evolved consciousness and this forms the basis of the amnesia afflicting its people. The Martinicans were further historically dispossessed as they were made to denigrate Creole culture and adopt French history as their own, generating a false memory that has, nonetheless, defined the Martinican sense of identity. Sharing the view that the West Indies possesses a nonhistory, V. S. Naipaul remarks that '[h]istory is built around achievement and creation and nothing was created in the West Indies'.<sup>32</sup> Naipaul's

comment, although deprecating, carries echoes of the nothingness that haunt the West Indian sense of history, culture and identity. Responding to the nineteenth-century British historian, James Anthony Froude's contemptuous remark that in Martinique, 'There are no people there in the true sense of the word with a character and purpose of their own', Randolph Hezekiah acknowledges that the 'stigma of being without a history' makes one a 'non-person'.<sup>33</sup> Martinicans are perceived as lacking a recognizable history, culture, language, and identity to call their own.

The perennial absence of history bears directly on the zombification of the island's people. As Glissant sardonically observes, 'The Martinican seems to be simply passing through his world, a happy zombie' (*CD*, p. 59). The unmistakable irony of Glissant's depiction underscores the oblivion of a people who have not experienced political autonomy since their colonization by the French Empire and have seemingly grown accustomed to their condition of dispossession. Amidst the post-colonial independence of the Caribbean territories, the anomaly of Martinique is its status as an 'Overseas Department' of France.<sup>34</sup> The assimilation policy of French colonization turned Martinique into a double of France, and afflicted its people with the socio-psychological malaise of mimicry and an identification with whiteness. Initially proposed as a form of decolonization, departmentalization insidiously renders invisible the lines of power and exploitation, and grants the 'happy' illusion of benevolent paternity. Consequently, Martinicans are derided as 'mimic men' of 'Little France' or 'Oedipal' sons of France. In their Creolist manifesto, 'In Praise of Creoleness' (1989; English trans. 1990), Chamoiseau, Jean Bernabé and Raphaël Confiant define zombies as those who have been 'deported

out' of themselves and succumbed to the 'quasi-complete acquisition of another identity'.<sup>35</sup> The Martinican experience of French assimilation forms the basis of their claim. Their antecedent, Glissant, has pointed to the 'absurdity' of the policy of assimilation, because 'what the French Caribbean claims to be assimilating – the French experience – is nothing but a deformed version of this experience, a cultureless, futureless zombie. Which in turn zombifies the *assimilé*' (CD, pp. 261-62; italics in original). That which is historical to the French is an alienating imposition to the Martinicans. The Martinican, dispossessed of history, memory, culture and identity, is reduced to a zombie of the body without a soul.

Departmentalization has also led to the eradication of local modes of production and continued economic dependency, cultural eradication and political impotence for Martinique.<sup>36</sup> Chamoiseau speaks of the 'catastrophe' of departmentalization and its 'creation of an artificial consumer society that lives from hand-outs'.<sup>37</sup> In his novels, he attempts to capture the fading forms of livelihood in Martinique. *Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows* revives the local markets as a site where various threads of local life converge. *Seven Dreams of Elmira: A Tale of Martinique* (1998; English trans. 1999) portrays the fading lives of the workers of the Saint-Etienne distillery, whose sustaining production of rum dates back to the age of slavery. *Solibo Magnificent* (1988; English trans. 1999) is about the looming death of the oral storytelling tradition in Martinique. From the fatalities of slavery to present day eradications, it is loss and the threat of extinction that are the driving forces in Chamoiseau's novels.

## Ghostly Djobbers Wheeling ‘Trace-Memories’

The need to reclaim Martinique’s ‘histories’ from the footnotes of official history and restore them to collective memory has been expressed by the Creolists:

Our history (or more precisely our histories) is shipwrecked in colonial history. Collective memory is the first thing on our agenda. [. . .] Between the currents of the history of France, between the great dates of the governor’s arrivals and departure, between the beautiful white pages of the chronicle (where the bursts of our rebellions appear only as small spots), there was the obstinate progress of ourselves. [. . .] Our chronicle is behind the dates, behind the known facts: *we are Words behind writing*. (‘IPC’, p. 896; italics in original)

The suppressed and silenced realities of Martinican ‘histories’ lie ‘between’ and ‘behind’ the recorded hallmarks of French history. It is in the gaps, cracks, slippages, shadows and hidden spaces within the established skeleton of French history that Martinican history needs to be uncovered.

In the face of the colonial erasure of memory, Chamoiseau posits the retrieval of ‘trace-memories’:

The Trace is the concrete mark: drum, tree, boat [. . .]. Memories radiate out from the Trace, they dwell in it with an immaterial presence open to affectivity. Their associations, Trace-Memories, are not monuments and do not crystallize into a single memory; they are the play of different interwoven memories. [. . .] Their meanings remain in evolution, not fixed and unequivocal like those of a monument.<sup>38</sup>

With a past that has been unrecorded and buried, only objects remain to bear the weight of an untold history. Objects become traces, archaeological artefacts bearing the inscriptions of people’s lives, histories and cultures. As relics of the past, they suggest an immediacy and authenticity in contrast to the artificiality of monuments and the distortions of the written word. Memories are embedded in traces that need to be excavated. As the Creolists affirm, what constitutes ‘our histories’ is ‘this sand-memory fluttering about the scenery, the land, in the

fragments of old black people's heads, made of emotional richness, or sensations, of intuitions' ('IPC', p. 896). In opposition to the singular monumental history imposed by metropolitan France, the Creolists posit 'histories' to convey the pluralities corresponding to Martinican reality as well as the variability of that knowledge. From the markets of Fort-de-France, trace-memories emanate from the wheelbarrow, which bears the marks of the djobbers' encounters and the precarious journey they must tread in the liminal spaces of society, signifying their struggle to straddle borders and find an equilibrium in the face of change.<sup>39</sup> The djobbers' wheelbarrow functions as a 'trace' saturated with memories.

To 'trace' is also to mark a pathway. *Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows* mentions 'La Trace', which is the name of the road paving a way through a dense rainforest in Martinique (CSS, p. 221, n. 18). Chamoiseau points out that 'tracée' evokes 'both the path of the runaway slave and the Creole act of crossing'.<sup>40</sup> The path of the runaway slave was one of twists and turns, carving out unpredictable new traces in errantry and in the bid to avoid detection. The runaway slave recalls the popular West Indian figure of the maroon, the one who escaped from the plantation to set up an alternative commune, and critics have pointed to the djobbers' affiliation with marronage. In an astute reading that shows how the djobbers oppose the system from within rather than by means of outright resistance, Richard Burton aligns the djobbers' with '*la petite*' maroon who 'absents himself partially and temporarily [. . .] from the plantation and continues to live in ambivalent symbiosis with it'.<sup>41</sup> Elsewhere, Chamoiseau refers to the djobbers as 'nègres-marrons de l'en-ville', or the maroon in an urban context.<sup>42</sup> Just as the '*la petite*' maroons survived in the border between the 'mornes' (hills)

and plantations, the djobbers as urban maroons create alternate traces in the interstitial spaces of society. Djobbing involves adjusting to the unexpected, straddling borders, dodging obstacles, manoeuvring round bends, weaving between people, and in general, devising alternative routes of 'swerves and detours' (CSS, p. 61). Although the djobber does not produce goods or barter, he makes the exchange possible by mediating between the rural producer, the market vendors and the consumers. The djobbers are the connective threads of society, weaving the market and its surrounding streets into a single complex network of exchange and communication.

The djobbers' wheeling is a metaphor for Chamoiseau's narrative manoeuvring amidst the cemented history of colonial France. The colonial chronicle charts a linear, totalising and exclusionary history. In contrast, the djobbers' narrative carves out 'la trace' in the interstitial spaces between fact and memory, reality and folklore, records and rumour. Their narrative constantly shifts in time and place, wandering in twists and turns from one memory to another, in this way replicating 'the normal workings of memory, which never functions in a linear fashion but constantly shifts time and place and mood and manner' (CSS, p. 183). The djobbers' tale is also dominated by gaps, fissures and the pervasive force of forgetting, in a way that structurally replicates the workings of memory. While the novel's opening flirts with the notion of genealogy and its implication of chronology, the reader is cast into a diffuse narrative which branches from the lineage of Pipi, the protagonist, to trace the family ties of Clarine, Chinotte and Anastase, among many others. Their stories collide and supplant each other in a



disjointed narrative that replicates the meandering, circularity and unpredictability of memory.

The narrative weaves together figures of history, folklore and fantasy to create an eclectic and unverifiable chronicle that undermines colonial history. On one hand, the vegetable market of Fort-de-France is witness to and participant in the transformations of Martinican society from before World War Two, through the three years of domination by the Vichy regime (1940-43), to departmentalization in 1946 and the subsequent disintegration of indigenous modes of production resulting from the mass importation of French products. It is a historical site peopled by recognizable figures of the past like Admiral George Robert (High Commissioner of the French Antilles during World War Two), Aimé Césaire, the paramilitary police (CRS) and psychiatrists from the mental asylum in Colson. As figures of authority, they all represent power and the ministering of the irrefutable factuality of official history. However, in the novel, their paths cross with those of the ghosts of the three *chabine* peddlers and the *dorlis* (incubus of Martinican folklore), Antole-Antole. History is turned into an interstitial space between fact and fantasy, presence and absence. Documented history is supplemented by the spectral in a way that draws attention to the marginalized, silenced and unrecognized voices of Martinique. In this way, the *djobbers'* chronicle itself functions as a form of 'la petite' marronage, undermining the veracity and authority of official history.

Extra-textually, the novel works in a similar way to blur the boundaries between the natural and supernatural. The novel begins with maps of Martinique and Fort-de-France and ends with a newspaper article from *France-Antilles* on the

reconstruction of the central market of Fort-de-France. To this apparent veracity, Chamoiseau gives validity to the supernaturalism of the 'seven sorrows' who narrate the story. The Appendix to the novel includes sections on 'Djobbers' Cries' and 'Djobbers' Voices' which reinforce their existence. However, the narrative reveals that they are also ghosts. The djobbers expose their non-existence at the end of their tale: 'Now no one sees us anymore, or looks for us, although it would take only a memory' (CSS, p. 173). The state of their existence remains an enigma. The ending effectively becomes a non-ending. The retelling of their tale then becomes, for the reader, an unsettling journey into a ghostly past. The use of the supernatural to gain access to an inadequately known past points to the inherent intangibility of historical memory and implicitly questions the ability of conventional historiography to capture reality. By placing the narration into the hands of the ghostly djobbers, Chamoiseau makes the implicit statement that there is no normalizing truth or stable certitudes, but only the irresolution of trace-memories as history. The use of the supernatural and the mythic also expresses a deep unease about confronting the 'muse of history'.

### **Conjuring the Zombie of the Soul: 'Muses' and 'Specters' of History**

In his essay, 'The Muse of History' (1974), St. Lucian playwright and poet, Derek Walcott sees in history the power to petrify as well as to renew. He characterizes history as a 'Medusa of the New World', 'servitude' to which produces a literature of 'recrimination and despair', 'revenge' or 'remorse'.<sup>43</sup> This is a product of imperial historiography which stresses linearity and causality, or what Walcott calls, 'the progress from motive to event'.<sup>44</sup> This historical determinism must be

rejected for 'its original concept as myth, the partial recall of the race', which will witness an 'Adamic' renewal where '[f]act evaporates into myth' and amnesia becomes a 'new nothing'.<sup>45</sup> Elsewhere, Walcott describes the 'deep, amnesiac blow' that has 'cleft the brain'.<sup>46</sup> Walcott calls for the imaginative creation out of the 'nothingness' or 'amnesia' inflicted upon the zombified Caribbean man denied history, memory and identity. Walcott develops the idea of looking past history, of transcending its imprisoning colonial conception as linearity, causality, factuality and endless recrimination.

Michael Gilkes draws upon Walcott's view of history to describe the Caribbean Muse as a 'Janus-image': 'The Caribbean Muse wears the face of the Region's history; a past that has been shaped in a complex contradictory womb. It is a history born of noble aspirations and violent plunder. [. . .] Each is a goddess and demon, womb and tomb, deliverer and devourer'.<sup>47</sup> Gilkes cites Walcott's poem, 'Bronze', to personify the Caribbean Muse and its conception out of the violence of Caribbean history:

Arawak or Carib, but nakedness unsurprised  
by armoured men dividing jungle leaves [. . .]  
[. . .] the high-boned ridges of the drowsing cheek  
Are Amerindian by West African,  
And is there any Egypt in that head?  
[. . .] out of such savage, tangled roots was born  
this monolithic unforgiving face  
Wrought in a furious kiln, in which each race  
Expects its hundredth dawn.<sup>48</sup>

The Caribbean Muse is born of a repeatedly usurped and occupied past, and embodies the nightmare of rape and pillage. Bearing traits of different races and ethnicities, it personifies what Walcott has described as the 'assimilation of the features of every ancestor'.<sup>49</sup> In Gilkes's reading, the conflicting nature of

Caribbean history, as paradise and nightmare, inspiration and threat, is reflected in the contradictory Janus-faced image of its muse.

Chamoiseau uses the zombie in its disparate manifestations to express the potential for liberation or destruction arising from the confrontation with this volatile history. The two 'muses of history' whom he personifies in the dis-embodied and dis-possessed zombies, variously embody and disavow the multifarious anxieties and contradictions of the larger Martinican body politic.

Caribbean folklore tells of French colonial masters killing their slaves on the site of their buried treasure in order for the slaves to safeguard their treasure for eternity.<sup>50</sup> In *Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows*, Chamoiseau resurrects the undead guardian slave, Afoukal, in the form of the zombie of the soul without a body. Afoukal's skull was cloven open by his white French master's cutlass to protect a jar of treasure. From that time, rumour has told of a ferocious zombie-slave who reduces potential robbers to a stack of bones.

The slashing of Afoukal's skull by his French master forcefully symbolizes the 'deep amnesiac blow' inflicted upon Martinican man and the erasure of his history. Afoukal's zombification goes beyond individual travesty as his grave represents a communal and scriptural entombment. Committed as a crime that left no witness and no testimony, the slave's story is buried together with the end of France's slave rule in 1848. The memories of a people enslaved, together with their voices, cultural practices and beliefs, are erased, entombed in the untold annals of history or subsumed under the convenient historical headings of 'African slave trade' and 'Abolition'. The cleaving of Afoukal's skull represents the ancient wound inflicted upon the Martinicans in the brutal dislocation of their history and

the dismemberment of their collective identity. It marks the erasure of historical consciousness and the perpetration of a collective amnesia that has intensified with the assimilation of French history. It is a wound that needs to be re-membered. Significantly, Afoukal's fiercely guarded treasure is revealed to be, not gold, but the more precious memory of slave history. As he divulges, 'they forget that not all riches are gold: there is memory . . .' (CSS, p. 171). Previously condemned to an eternity of silent enslavement, Afoukal becomes both the guardian and voice of history. Afoukal represents the immaterial presence of memories encrypted in the material 'trace' of the jar. The 'Dream-Words' that he imparts to Pipi sound the collective voice of memories that have been buried by the suppression of the colonists and the subsequent forgetfulness of the Martinicans themselves.

The attribution of memory to the disembodied zombie of the soul is significant because the zombie of the soul embodies, in its immateriality, a spatial and temporal ambiguity that exemplifies the 'hauntological spectrality' of 'trace-memories'. Being neither dead nor alive, absent nor present, the zombie eludes ontology. Instead, it illuminates the hauntological, which in Jacques Derrida's definition, is 'neither substance, nor essence, nor existence, *is never present as such*' and yet 'disjoins the living present', 'secretly unhinges it' and exposes the '*non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present*'.<sup>51</sup> The immaterial zombie serves as a double metaphor for historical invisibility and historical continuity, absence and presence. Historical consciousness, in the form of the disembodied zombie-slave, is appropriately spectral because of its temporality. As Derrida explains, 'a specter is always a *revenant* [. . .] because it *begins by coming back*'.<sup>52</sup> The specter's return is 'repetition *and* first time, but also repetition *and* last time,

since the singularity of any first time makes of it also a *last time*. Each time it is the event itself, a first time is a last time. Altogether other. Staging for the end of history. Let us call it a *hauntology*'.<sup>53</sup> The discourse of hauntology looks beyond narratives of origination and teleology, and as such, reconfigures history.

In *Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows*, the people of Martinique are unknowingly haunted by the specters of slave history in a way that speaks of traumatic memory.<sup>54</sup> Cathy Caruth defines trauma as a psychic wound that appears belatedly, indicating the unassimilated nature of the original event.<sup>55</sup> The traumatized, according to Caruth, 'carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptoms of a history that they cannot entirely possess'.<sup>56</sup> Afoukal's entrapment in a buried jar is a sign of the repression and dispossession of the historical memory of slavery, symbolizing what Caruth calls 'unclaimed experience'. The ancestral spirit of Afoukal is always already present, buried in the collective unconscious of Martinique. As traumatic memory cannot be assimilated into the psyche, it becomes encoded symptomatically in the body, through mechanical, nonverbal enactments of the original event. In the novel, traumatic memories emerge as revenants of the past that make themselves felt in the present through such bodily enactments. The traumatized denizens of Martinique describe an unfathomable and unrecognisable rage that drives them to violence. For the djobbers, this unaccountable rage is targeted at the wild dogs that roam the markets:

An ancient hatred flung us  
against the dogs we'd corner  
and beat with iron bars [. . .]  
whipped on by something inexplicable  
our distress revered forgotten memories  
and only the leafless taste  
of charred trees  
followed the remains. (CSS, pp. 193-94)

Traumatized by the repressed and unreconciled history of their slave past, the djobbers find themselves uncontrollably beating the wild dogs that, in the past, hunted down runaway slaves and maroons, exacting an inexplicable revenge on them, and burning trees upon which their ancestors hung to be whipped, burnt and murdered. This is a pastness that is inaccessible to their collective consciousness but which, nevertheless, makes itself felt through the repetitive automatism of their unconscious re-enactments. Repressed traumatic memories manifest themselves in the body, in what the novel terms as an 'ancient memory of the flesh' (CSS, p. 121). Glissant asks the pertinent question of Martinique: 'Would it be ridiculous to consider our lived history as a steadily advancing neurosis?' (CD, p. 65). The idea of history as neurosis finds expression in the traumatized who are unable to reconcile their bodily reactions with 'forgotten memories', and so remain tormented by an unrecognizable anteriority. As Glissant notes, 'The past, to which we were subjected, which has not yet emerged as history for us, is, however, obsessively present' (CD, p. 63). These are the specters that 'disjoin' and 'secretly unhinge' the present, exposing its inability to know and come to terms with a traumatic past that has yet to emerge as history. In this way, the Martinicans who live with a neurotic history of collective amnesia and traumatic automatism, are themselves caught between a state of presence and absence, between the living and the dead.

The atemporality of specters points to Afoukal's appearance to Pipi as already a return and a repetition. In the hauntology of history, there is no place for linearity and for beginnings and endings. Instead of the teleology of the colonial chronicle, Chamoiseau depicts spectral memory as a dialogue between the past and present that unhinges the linearity of history. In the cursed clearing where Pipi and Afoukal converse, Afoukal leaves his memories in Pipi's mind while Pipi tells Afoukal about 'our life and times', with the result that a 'peculiar complicity was thus established between the living and the dead' (CSS, p. 124). In this exchange, the past and present are inevitably altered by each other. This justifies the Creolists' claim that 'ancestors are born everyday and are not fixed in an immemorial past' ('IPC', p. 896). Afoukal's appearance is simultaneously a return and a rebirth, and he makes of Pipi an ancestor to the future.

The surfacing of history takes the form of the dream narrative of 'condensation'. In Sigmund Freud's definition, 'condensation' is carried out by the 'dream work' whereby disparate 'traces' or impressions are condensed or compressed into a composite image that becomes 'overdetermined'.<sup>57</sup> Afoukal's 'eighteen Dream-Words' are expressed as disjointed fragments of the past. Their initial expression is a seemingly unintelligible list of impressions and disjointed memories about Africa and cane mills. This apparent incoherence is gradually clarified through juxtaposition and repetition until it draws together a complex of ideas about slave history. The 'composite picture' comes together like a 'rebus' that undermines the imperialist historiography of linearity and causality. Afoukal's words find meaning not in themselves, but in the connective spaces between words and in the juxtaposed spaces behind words. In this way, Afoukal's 'Dream-Words'



function as '*Words behind writing*'. Each 'Dream-Word' is a trace memory that cannot be restored as pure presence. Rather, it is the unspoken breaches between traces that hold the key to recovering memory.

Chamoiseau also invokes creative imagination as a means of recovering and reinventing lost histories. Walcott has identified the Medusan effect of being in 'awe' of 'historical truth' and the 'stasis' in replicating the 'language of the master'.<sup>58</sup> By drawing upon the Caribbean imagination that is his inheritance, Chamoiseau's use of the spirit zombie, Afoukal, enables a buried voice to be heard and his forgotten tale of slavery to be retold in 'Adamic' invention. As Afoukal's listener, Pipi discovers how imaginative historiography enables one to be a creator and not a victim of history:

After exhausting what he'd learned from Afoukal, Pipi had begun making up tales of fanciful prowess featuring [. . .] a real person in his imaginary barracoon. [. . .] This way of telling about the past was proving more effective than the grim historical facts he'd previously related. Enriching reality with myths had a lasting effect on the children, who could identify more readily with the rebellious slaves in their games of war and derring-do. (CSS, pp. 138-39)

The imaginative rewriting of history opens it up to mythic renewal, offering modes of identification and the visualization of a range and depth of experiences previously closed. Such a re-writing of the past, while still validating the sufferings and sacrifices endured in historical events, moves beyond them so that histories are made to offer new paths of knowledge and identification.

The dualities of the Caribbean Muse are further explicated by the conjuring of memory as 'pharmakon'. In 'Plato's Pharmacy', Derrida recalls the Greek term, 'pharmakon', as ambiguously inhabited by both the curative and the poisonous. The 'pharmakon' is 'medicine and / or poison' and it acts as both 'remedy and

poison', being 'alternatively or simultaneously – beneficent or maleficent'.<sup>59</sup> The 'pharmakon' is marked by an unresolvable indeterminacy as it disrupts the oppositions between the curative and the poisonous, and its associative oppositions of life and death, present and past. Derrida writes of the 'occult virtues' of the 'pharmakon', 'already paving the way for alchemy'.<sup>60</sup> In the occult of zombification, it is salt that functions as a 'pharmakon'. Salt is believed to awaken the zombie to consciousness, after which it will seek its grave or kill its master in vengeance before returning to its burial place.<sup>61</sup> Paradoxically, salt restores life and takes it away.

In *Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows*, memory is the salt that reawakens consciousness and cures the Martinicans from their amnesia and neurosis. After Pipi seeks out Afoukal and unearths his account of a forgotten history, Pipi regains the 'healthy gaze of those who, for the first time, possess a memory' (CSS, p. 120). The process is one of de-zombification where memory functions as the curative salt, restoring Pipi to historical consciousness. Consequently, 'Pipi launched into his own nightmarish tale. He spoke of chains. Of sunless prisons [. . .]. Pipi spoke of them all, and beat his forehead as he cursed our forgetting' (CSS, p. 120). The listener becomes the story-teller, and the amnesiac turns into the voice of history. The traumatic splitting of historical memory from the psyche is re-membered, restoring the subject to consciousness. It is also through Afoukal's 'Dream-Words' that traumatic memory becomes integrated into the present as historical memory. Afoukal gives meaning to the automatism of the djobbers' fury at the wild dogs, by reviving the memory of their 'ancestral maroons' fighting off the 'packs of wild dogs' that hunted them (CSS, p. 117). In this way, the 'ancient memory of the

flesh' becomes reconciled with consciousness, and the continuum of history and unity of self are restored. It is the recovery of 'true memory', according to Chamoiseau et al., that will 'restore us to duration, to the continuum of time and space; only then will it be moved by its past and become historical' ('IPC', p. 897). It is this restoration that is depicted in the novel through the 'Dream-Words' of Afoukal the zombie-slave, as memory is shown to be the cure for the ancient wounds of collective amnesia and traumatic memory alike.

The curative work of memory further confronts Martinican man with its own zombified state of alienation. In Afoukal's 'eighteen Dream-Words' recurs the questioning of parallels between the past and the present. Each horrific episode recounted by Afoukal is frequently followed by questions along the lines of, 'Has that died out?' 'Does that still happen?' 'Zat changed?' 'Is it still like that?' 'Can you imagine?' (CSS, pp. 110-19). As each question probes the continuation of an enslaved mentality in Departmentalized Martinique, Afoukal's 'Dream-Words' culminate in a disquieting disclosure of the hopeless dependency of a slave upon his master. Afoukal concedes, 'I had learned to love the master. [. . .] I was so bound to the master that I could not envisage life without him. [. . .] Can you understand that dead image I had of my life if it had to go on without the master? Does that still happen today?' (CSS, pp. 118 and 119). The affirmative answer is found in Martinique's continued dependence on France not only in the areas of economy and politics, but in the veneration of French culture, all of which manifests itself in an anxious quest for paternity. As Afoukal demonstrates, the oppressed can come to identify with the oppressor, finding in him a father-figure. This cycle is re-enacted by generations of Martinicans who have acknowledged

paternity with Marshall Pétain as ‘Papa of us all who must be obeyed’, ‘Papa-de-Gaulle’ and ‘Papa Césaire’ (CSS, pp. 35, 36 and 143). The master is still internalized as a loving and civilizing father before whom the self is forever grateful and dependent. By way of such contrast, Afoukal awakens the present-day Martinicans to their continued enslavement and charts the onset of their disalienation.

Conversely, Afoukal the zombie-slave also draws attention to the underlying menace of memory as ‘pharmakon’, as the muse of history rears its Medusan head. As the djobbers’ recall, Pipi’s accounts of Afoukal’s ‘Dream-Words’ ‘gathered up our dreams and *poisoned* them’ (CSS, p. 120; italics added). The Creolists emphasize the ‘return’ to history, ‘to integrate it, and *go beyond it*’ (‘IPC’, p. 896; italics added). The muse of history needs to be ‘conjured’; to be summoned, assimilated and then subjected to a necessary exorcism. To ‘conjure’, as Derrida explains, ‘means also to exorcise: to attempt both to destroy and to disavow a malignant, demonised, diabolical force’.<sup>62</sup> The hauntological, according to Derrida, must look ‘beyond present life or its actual being-there, its empirical or ontological actuality: not toward death but toward a *living-on*, namely, a trace of which life and death would themselves be but traces and traces of traces, a survival whose possibility in advance comes to disjoin or dis-adjust the identity to itself of the living present as well as of any effectivity’.<sup>63</sup> Origins and endings have no place in the hauntological, which alone presses us to consider what persists beyond the end, after death, and what was never alive enough to die, never present enough to be absent. It is this hauntology that accounts for the spirit zombie’s embodiment of ‘trace-memories’. To recall ‘trace-memories’ is not to recover pure presence but

to reconnect a broken chain of signification that is continually evolving and traversing other threads of memories. 'Trace-memories' signal the absence of origination as each trace presupposes previous ones. The 'concrete mark' of the 'trace' may suggest a specificity in the chain of remembrance but it is not grounded upon a point of origination. Memory is always already mediated by the unassimilable otherness of the lost past and the present. History is never fully containable; it exists rather as a non-totalizable 'trace-memory' that is irreducible to pure presence.

The poison of memory arises from the mistaking of traces for origins, and process for presence. History becomes petrifying when memory is locked on origins and is unable to look beyond. Pipi's attachment to Afoukal takes a malevolent turn that highlights the Medusan aspect of memory. As Afoukal recounts his memory of Africa, Pipi becomes poisoned by an obsession to retrieve Afoukal's memory. This serves as Chamoiseau's implicit critique of the essentialist discourse of Négritude, which he has termed as a 'violent and paradoxical therapy' ('IPC', p. 888). Developed by Aimé Césaire and Leopold Sedar Senghor in the 1920s and 1930s, it affirmed an essentialist black African nature and history. While Négritude enabled a revaluation of Africa and blackness, and established a necessary continuity to a lost past, it failed as an ideological alternative because its Afrocentrism remained trapped in the logocentric and oppositional logic of Western metaphysics. The Creolists compare 'Africanness' to 'Europeanness' as 'two incumbent monsters [. . .] two forms of exteriority which proceed from two opposed logics – one monopolizing the minds submitted to its torture, the other living in our flesh ridden by its scars, each inscribing in us after

its own way' ('IPC', p. 888). To be exclusively determined by one's colour and race is to be imprisoned in the structures of colonization. For the Martinican to claim Africanness as the single overriding source of identity is to deny other strands of identity, such as those founded upon interactions with the Caribs, Arawaks, Caribbeans and Europeans. In this way, essence and its correlative notion of origin is revealed as complicit with the coercive universalism of the colonial West. The desire for Africa contains an essentiality that the specter cannot furnish.<sup>64</sup>

Pipi's decline reflects the 'poisonous' effects of latching onto a single memory. His physical appearance is transformed to mirror his psychical degeneration. His desire for rootedness is manifested in his bodily devolution. Pipi's form 'grew monstrous' as an 'osmosis' took place 'between his luminous body and the beaten earth that faithfully reproduced the topography of his reptations' and his skin is gradually covered by 'scales' and 'crusts', before being finally converted into an 'indescribable hide' (CSS, pp. 126-28). His diet also changes to consist of grass curd, moths and rain water. Pipi's deteriorating 'return to nature' serves as a parody of an essentialist vision of identity and its ideal of recapturing a natural essence and rootedness with the native homeland. His body becomes the monstrous body of memory.

The dehumanisation depicted by Pipi's reversion to nature may also be read as a dangerous incorporation of the dead, signalling a failure of memory to organize history and render it usable. In his nostalgic return to the past, Pipi refuses to look beyond it to return to the present. History becomes a possession whereby the incorporated dead cannot be relinquished or exorcised. Pipi becomes so closely



identified with the zombie-slave that he seeks to follow the deceased into the realm of the dead, himself becoming dehumanised by an incorporation of the dead that he cannot relinquish. The conjured dead need to be exorcised. Otherwise, history becomes a Medusa for the writer imprisoned in the fixed relations of the colonizer's imposed linearity or hermeneutics of presence.

### **Jableses: Memory and Markets as Deathly Consumption**

In *Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows*, the jablesse exists as a textual trace, appearing only briefly at the close of the novel. As a trace, it is, nonetheless, a voluptuous repository of memories and meanings. The trace-memories emanating from the jablesse do not find their meaning in chronology or linearity but in a scattered simultaneity or fractured composite. Tracing these threads of meaning reveals a metonymic chain linking the economies of slavery and capitalism, the commodities of slave bodies and consumer society, and the desires perverted in master-slave relations with those generated by commodity fetishism. The multifaceted and ambivalent figure of the jablesse portrays the enslavement latent in confronting both the legacy of colonialism and the onslaught of modern capitalism.

The jablesse is the feared she-devil condemned to walk the earth for dying a virgin, and she seduces men only to devour them. One might be inclined to read the jablesse in *Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows* as the manifestation of the Freudian *vagina dentata*, the primal symbol of the male fear of the castrated and castrating mother,<sup>65</sup> or as the projection of male desires and fears in her appearance as virgin turned devourer. However, it is by placing the jablesse in the specific context of her conception in Caribbean myth, voodoo and colonial history, that she reveals

her manifold significance as a 'muse of history', bearing the inscriptions of the multifarious desires, perversions and anxieties of the wider Martinican body politic.

Chamoiseau's jablesse is a Janus-faced and hybrid figure clearly depicted in the same vein as Walcott's 'muse of history' in 'Bronze'. The jablesse 'had the thick hair of carefree *câpresses*. She had the supple body of *coulies* and jungle vines, along with the voluptuous curves of *chabines*' (CSS, p. 164; italics in original). According to the 'Notes', the *chabine* is 'someone of mixed race with "high yellow" colouring: light skin; sometimes green, blue, or gray eyes; and often wavy or curly reddish or blond hair', the *câpresse* is the 'daughter of a mulatto and a black person', and the *coulie* is 'a person of black and East Indian parentage' (CSS, nos. 17, 30, 39, pp. 220-23). The multiple lines of ancestry wrought by a history of dislocation and invasion by different colonizers are inscribed on the body of the jablesse. In *The Seven Dreams of Elmira*, the jablesse is a similarly hybrid construct: 'She was a kind of high yellow, but also quadroon, but also mulatress, but also *koulie*, but also Caribbean, but also Negress, vaguely Chinese and Syrian, a variable beauty, fluid like the ocean. [. . .] She was woman, mama, matador, saint, haughty, marvellous, a tabernacle of hungry lives'.<sup>66</sup> The jablesse is a hybrid construct, who like Walcott's 'muse', bears the traces of the interpenetrations of different cultures and races. The jablesse is representative of a complex and collective history.

The jablesse in *Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows* is a historical product of the syncretism of voodoo with Christianity. She is associated with Ezili, the loa or goddess of love in Caribbean voodoo, who also appears at night in the form of a



pale virgin. As noted in the previous chapter, the Ezili is an ambivalent figure, taking on opposing forms as the good 'Ezili Freda' or the evil 'Ezilie-je-wouj', the beautiful coquette 'Mistress Ezili' or the shrivelled 'Ezili-kokobe'.<sup>67</sup> As a loa, she can generously confer wealth to her devotees or be jealous, vengeful and cruel.<sup>68</sup> The Ezili Freda, the pale lady of luxury and love, is identified with the Virgin Mary, represented in Catholic chromolithographs as a girl wearing necklaces of gold and pearls, her heart pierced with a golden sword.<sup>69</sup>

According to Joan Dayan, the contradictory figure of the Ezili was born in Haiti.<sup>70</sup> Dayan makes the argument that the Ezili developed out of the female slave's observations and interactions in the master's house.<sup>71</sup> The female slave was often seduced by gifts of lace, linen and jewellery from her white master, and faced the wrath of her white mistress. In the context of the colonial home where slaves lived in intimacy with their owners – nursing their babies and providing sexual gratification – the concept of love became distorted into a perverted blend of intimacy and violation, lust and loathing, seduction and torture, loyalty and bondage, civility and depravity. In each instance, 'adoration, like abuse, animated and sustained servility'.<sup>72</sup> Hence, the Ezili as the loa of love who is alternately generous and voracious, loving and savage, according to Dayan, 'recalls the violent yoking of decorum and lust' stemming from master-slave relations.<sup>73</sup> In ceremony, the Ezili possesses or 'rides' her devotee, and together they 're-create and reinterpret a history of mastery and servitude'.<sup>74</sup> The Ezili is also 'keenly materialist' and 'encouraged embellishment and a veneration of luxury' as her devotees served her with 'accoutrements of libertinage – lace, perfumes, jewels, and sweets'.<sup>75</sup> She compels an exuberance of devotion that plays itself out in a

surfeit of material goods. As Dayan notes, the 'subversive erotics' of the ambivalent Ezili repeats, perpetuates and subverts the colonial relation between master and slave. Significantly, each characteristic of the Ezili is a projection of the slave's experience of love as a complex of seduction, betrayal and sadomasochism. Underlying each encounter is the economics of slavery, of the body as property, material possession and commodity.

The multifarious faces of the Ezili reveal her function as fetish. Freud defines the fetish as a substitute for the desired sexual object that is unattainable because it is predicated on castratory lack.<sup>76</sup> A result is the fetishistic reverence for substitute objects. Chamoiseau's depiction of the jablesse in *The Seven Dreams of Elmira* reveals that she is a projection of each individual's need, appearing to compensate each lack: 'The brown Negroes took her for a force of Africa coming to claim them; the American Indians made her into an aquatic grace, guardian of abundance' (*SDE*, p. 26). The jablesse testifies to an economy of fetishism, rooted in the primeval lack brought about by slave dislocation. Thus, the fetishistic reverence for the Ezili and the excess of devotion aroused links a cultural-religious practice to the psychological perversions grounded in the economy of slavery. As a fetish, the Ezili flits along a chain of desire that can never be fulfilled. In the same way, the jablesse of Caribbean folklore is romanticized as a symbol of unattainable desire or longed-for treasures.

Apart from outlining the materialist erotics of the Ezili, Dayan gives an account of the politics of the jablesse. Dayan records the popular belief that the political rallying cry declared by Frère Joseph, the lieutenant and chaplain to the peasant rebel leader, Acaau, during the turbulent years 1843 to 1846, was the

words of the jablesse who had possessed Joseph. Possessed by the zombie virgin, Joseph had stated, 'A rich negro who knows how to read and write is a mulatto; a poor mulatto who does not know how to read and write is a Negro'.<sup>77</sup> This statement brings together the conflict of colour and class and also places language into the equation. It is further notably complicated by the mediation of female possession and the materialism implied by the jablesse's differentiation of the 'rich' and 'poor' among the ranks of blackness. Like the Ezili, the jablesse is intensely materialistic in her desire for material wealth.

In *Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows*, the jablesse's interest in and demand for gold echo the exactions of the goddess Ezili as well as the demands of the advancing consumerism threatening to overwhelm Martinique, as detailed in the novel. The djobbers explicitly compare Pipi's devourment by the jablesse with their own demise: 'As for us, [. . .] we're being devoured by another sort of *jablesse*' (CSS, p. 172; italics in original), namely, the voracious French capitalist market. In the novel, it is at the moment of Martinique's departmentalization, signalled by the break between 'Inspiration' and 'Expiration', that the onslaught of consumer society is most vividly depicted in the shipment of 'exotic' French imports and the escalation in the number of 'self-service grocery stores, supermarkets, and megamarkets' selling packaged French produce (CSS, p. 97) that eat away at local modes of production and ways of life. The abundant and fresh local food is rejected in favour of 'unfamiliar produce in cans, in vacuum pouches' (CSS, p. 97). As Celia Britton notes, assimilation – central to French departmentalization – is also a digestive metaphor.<sup>78</sup> The Martinicans are consuming the artificial commodity of French identity. Significantly, the spectral

quality of the commodity of capitalist production has been extensively theorized by Karl Marx as well as by Derrida in *Specters of Marx*. The commodity is spectral because it a fetish, it represents a 'surplus value' or excess that partly substitutes for a desire that can never be met. This is the driving force of a consumerist society.

The jablesse releases a chain of trace-memories that forms a metonymic link between slavery and the rapacious capitalist market. As French commodities are being shipped to the Caribbean island, the journey has been foreshadowed by another trans-atlantic crossing wherein vessels also carried in bulk a shipment of 'exotic' and alien products: African slaves. Like these French commodities, the slave cargo was cheap, compacted into small spaces, and emptied of its native identity. The underlying link between slavery and consumerism is also established in the warped psychology of love and desire brought about by the perverted master-slave relation, as well as the economy of slavery that reduces man to commodity. In this way, Chamoiseau portrays the dynamics of consumerism in Martinique as harking back to the psychological and economic distortions established in slavery, re-enacting the psychological structures of mastery and submission, exploitation and sacrifice. Accordingly, the jablesse represents an 'uncanny' return of that which was familiar but repressed. The jablesse in the novel speaks the crucial words, 'you know who I am' (CSS, p. 172). Her spectral appearance is a return that articulates an unspeakable past. In this way, Chamoiseau implicates the present economy in the past to reveal a people still enslaved by the psychological structures of slavery.

The jablesse as 'muse of history' causes Pipi's betrayal of the other 'muse of history', Afoukal. The jablesse similarly reveals her dual nature as both 'goddess and demon, womb and tomb, deliverer and devourer'. She 'delivers' Pipi from his degeneration into a state of nature as he leaves the clearing where Afoukal is buried to chase the jablesse. However, in a petrifying ending, she reveals her Medusan face, 'radiating the savagery of a pack of mad dogs. [. . .] When she came rushing at him, he glimpsed the ghastly hooves below her ankles. When she seized him, he saw the pupils of fire and the thousand-year-old wrinkles, the fright wig of yellow string, the gleaming fangs and the sickening drool' (CSS, p. 172). Her monstrosity is revealed and she devours Pipi. In Pipi's betrayal of Afoukal for the sake of unearthing gold for the jablesse, Chamoiseau depicts the betrayal of historical memory by the seductions of consumerism. As Walcott laments, 'The pulse of New World history is the racing pulse beat of fear, the tiring cycles of stupidity and greed'.<sup>79</sup> The people of Martinique as 'happy zombies' have forsaken the past for a seemingly alluring materialist society that, in fact, consumes and continues to enslave them.

Chamoiseau's portrayal of the 'muses of history' as zombies has shown the betrayal of memory by both essentialism and materialism. The essentialist view of history perceives it as an authentic, infinitely recoverable presence, while the materialist view of history reveals it as an infinitely irretrievable absence. In each instance, an enabling memory becomes a destructive one. The 'muse of history' is deliverer and devourer, signifying a haunting that can restore or consume, cure or poison. A comparison of the zombie-slave and the jablesse shows two different forms of haunting: haunting as deathly possession and as deathly consumption.

While Pipi 'feeds on' the words of Afoukal, he is consumed by the cannibal zombie of the jablesse. One is in danger of being swallowed up by the very past he attempts to recover. Trying to possess a past that he refuses to exorcise, Pipi becomes possessed by the ghosts of the past; the eater becomes the eaten instead. The ambivalence attached to the zombie who might liberate or consume speaks of a continued unease about confronting the muse of history and restoring collective memory.

Chamoiseau's gendering of the zombies perpetuates a discriminating divide that needs to be addressed. Afoukal, the zombie of the soul without the body associates the male with the mind while the jablesse, the zombie of the body without the soul links the female with the body. The binarisms of mind-body, depth-surface, reality-appearance, psychology-physiology are accompanied by the gendered opposition of male-female.<sup>80</sup> These terms of difference perpetuate long-standing gender stereotypes. This points to a reversion to the binarisms seemingly at odds with the ideals of Creoleness and also cues us to the charges of sexism levelled at the Creolists, both of which will be examined in Chapter Four. Chapter Three continues to examine the zombification of Martinican man through the medium of language and the institution of education.

## Chapter Three

### Dis-possessed Zombies and the Opaque 'Zone of Nonbeing' in *School Days*

I will say that the black is not a man.

There is a zone of nonbeing, an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an utterly naked declivity where an authentic upheaval can be born.

- Frantz Fanon

It was all a bit schizophrenic. I had two personalities: a superego that was very French, and another part that was freer, more secret, more underground.

- Patrick Chamoiseau<sup>1</sup>

*School Days* (1994; English trans. 1997) is Patrick Chamoiseau's account of his childhood education in Departmentalized Martinique. Beyond its autobiographical premise, the novel portrays the overwhelming dispossession of the Martinican subject through the medium of language, in a portrait of the zombification of individual and collective identity. *School Days* plays out the dialectic between an overwhelmingly assimilating French discourse and a craftily subversive Creole counterpoetics, looking beyond the Manichean dichotomies of Creole and French, private and public, oral and written, to bring into play an 'occulting' of the colonizing French order by a Creole 'counterculture'.<sup>2</sup> It engages with the idea of 'opacity' as theorized by Édouard Glissant to introduce an 'occult instability' into the 'zone of nonbeing' characterizing Frantz Fanon's Manichean world. The collective Creole unconscious becomes the means through which the Martinican Creole is restored a sense of identity.

## **The ‘Occult Instability’ of the ‘Zone of Nonbeing’: Disalienating Fanon**

The zombified Antillean, according to the Creolists, is ‘fundamentally stricken with exteriority’ and ‘perceive[s] one’s interior architecture, one’s world, the instants of one’s days, one’s own values’ through the filter of a ‘French vision’.<sup>3</sup> It is a self-estrangement wrought by the interpellation of the ‘eyes of the Other’ (‘IPC’, p. 887). Chamoiseau’s zombified Martinican is a descendant of the alienated black man described by Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952; English trans. 1967). Fanon’s socio-psychological theories elucidate the deformation of identity inflicted on the psyche of the black subject upon his encounter with a colonizing white man. In a colonial order, the ‘black’, according to Fanon, is ‘not a man’ as he descends into ‘a zone of nonbeing’ (*BSWM*, p. 8). Fanon uncovers the entrenched socio-psychological mechanisms that seek to deny the black man ‘every ontology’ (*BSWM*, p. 109) and demolish his subjectivity. In a lengthy footnote reference, Fanon adapts Jacques Lacan’s concept of the ‘mirror stage’ to the colonial context in order to unveil the racial bias underlying the interpellatory role and the Self-Other dynamic in subject formation.

According to Lacan, during the ‘mirror stage’, a child views its bodily form and identifies with the image that appears whole and autonomous, deriving narcissistic pleasure from the process.<sup>4</sup> This is a ‘misrecognition’ and identity is ‘imaginary’ because it is constructed relationally in the imitation of and opposition to the image. It is upon learning language that the child enters the symbolic order, which consists of the signifying systems of a society, including its laws, culture and norms. In this instance, colonization can be understood in Lacanian terms as



the violent destruction and forcible replacement of one symbolic system by another. The colonial order is predicated upon the destruction of the native symbolic, in the manifest demolition of its political and economic structures as well as in the covert degradation of its culture and history. As Fanon affirms, the black man's 'customs and the sources [. . .] were wiped out' by the colonizers (*BSWM*, p. 110). Denounced as barbaric and uncultured, the very existence of a native symbolic was often denied in order to justify the supposedly civilizing imposition of imperial masters.

Although Lacan never explicitly refers to race, racial difference makes up the system of linguistic differences that circulates in the symbolic and determines one's subjectivity. In Lacan's psycholinguistic schema, subjectivity is constituted linguistically by differentiation, whereby the 'I' speaks in distinction to the 'you' and the identity of the Self is constructed in opposition to the Other. Consequently, identity is wholly dependent upon the Other as a sense of identity is composed of different relational subject positions. Accordingly, subjectivity is constituted discursively over a range of cultural, racial, gendered and class subject positions.

Fanon breaks away from Lacan's universalised model of the psyche to argue for a difference in subject formation drawn along the lines of colour. As he states:

When one has grasped the mechanism described by Lacan, one can have no further doubt that the real Other for the white man is and will continue to be the black man. And conversely. Only for the white man The Other is perceived on the level of the body image, absolutely as the not-self – that is, the unidentifiable, the unassimilable. For the black man [. . .] historical and economic realities come into the picture. (*BSWM*, p. 161, n. 25)

For the white subject, the black is the 'not-self' against which it establishes its identity. In contrast, for the alienated black man, the white man is 'not only the

Other but also the master, whether real or imaginary' (*BSWM*, p. 138, n. 24).

Colonialism ensured that while the white man represented all that was desirable for identification and assimilation, the black race was deemed intrinsically evil, filthy, depraved, embodying all the disparaged qualities against which whiteness was elevated as pure and enlightened. Hence, while the white self is secured through its black 'Other', the black man is denied the otherness that underwrites subjectivity. As Diana Fuss observes, the white man's 'colonization of subjectivity' is a form of 'psychical violence' inflicted upon the black man.<sup>5</sup> Fanon proves that presiding over the supposedly universal relation between the Self and Other is the transcendental third term -- whiteness -- that effects a social rather than a psychological definition of the subject, designed to fortify white colonizing definitions of selfhood.

Accordingly, there is no black subject in this psychological model; the black is effectively a 'nonbeing'. Denied the otherness necessary for self-formation, Fanon finds himself becoming neither an 'I' nor a 'non-I' but sealed into a 'crushing objecthood':

I came into the world imbued with the *will* to find a meaning in things, my *spirit* filled with the *desire* to attain to the source of the world, and then I found that I was an *object* in the midst of other objects. [. . .]  
[M]y *body* suddenly abraded into *nonbeing*. (*BSWM*, p. 109; italics added)

Fanon's description underscores a severance of 'spirit' and 'body' that initiates the process of zombification. The annihilation of an essential 'spirit' charged with 'will' and 'desire' leaves a hollowed 'body', dehumanized as 'object' and 'nonbeing'.<sup>6</sup> The harmony between mind and body is broken and the body is dispossessed of the 'spirit' that defines it as a subject. As Fanon further concedes, 'I took myself far off from my own presence, [. . .] and made myself an object'

(*BSWM*, p. 112). The act of self-deportation and objectification for the black man is not a matter of choice or agency, but a strategy of survival. The incursion of a colonizing white symbolic forces the black man back to an imaginary scene in which the Self is unmade and denied recourse to the symbolic. As Fanon exclaims, 'I burst apart. Now the fragments have been put together again by another self'; 'My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recolored, clad in mourning' (*BSWM*, pp. 109 and 113). The process depicted is of a violent psychological death followed by an aborted rebirth into another kind of death. The reconstituted body is the empty shell of the zombie without a soul.

The gaze of the white man sets up a 'racial epidermal schema' that initiates the alienation of the black man's consciousness. Encapsulated in the repeated phrase, 'Look, a Negro!' (*BSWM*, pp. 111-12) is the black man's internalization of the white man's gaze. As Fanon explains, 'one can observe in the young Antillean the formation and crystallization of an attitude and a way of thinking and seeing that are essentially white' (*BSWM*, pp. 148). The black man conforms to the white colonizing gaze with a self-loathing as he begins to 'distrust what is black in [him], that is, the whole of [his] being' (*BSWM*, p. 191). Fanon's compelling image of 'black skin, white masks' captures the splitting of spirit and body and the fracturing of the mind that overwhelmingly afflict the black man.

Fanon's theory of the zombification of the black man extends beyond the individual to include the whole of black Antillean society:

The Martinican is a man crucified. The environment that has shaped him (but that he has not shaped) has horribly drawn and quartered him; and he feeds this cultural environment with his blood and his essences. (*BSWM*, p. 216)

The vampiric figuration of Martinique points to the wider cultural zombification of a society that makes of its members, objects. According to Fanon, 'Antillean society is a neurotic society, a society of 'comparison' (*BSWM*, p. 213). In this society, the black man turns another black man into an 'object', 'denied in terms of individuality and liberty' and serving only as an 'instrument' to 'enable [him] to realize [his] subjective security' (*BSWM*, p. 212). The black man, having internalized the white gaze, makes of the other black man an object enabling the constitution of his own subjectivity. This relentless draining of the other testifies to a wider cultural zombification and neurotic society driven by the desire to vampirize the other in order to feed the self. Where Martinican society is vampiric in its voracious appetite, Martinican man himself remains its powerless victim. For Fanon, the black men of Martinique remain a race of zombies.

In Fanon's Manichean view, the black man has no recourse to resistance, and it is here that Fanon's theory is open to interrogation. Fanon argues that '[s]ince the racial drama is played out in the open, the black man has no time to "make it unconscious"' and hence, unlike the white man, his feelings of superiority, inferiority or equality are '*conscious*' (*BSWM*, p. 150; italics in original). If the interpellation of the white gaze creates a racialized response that constitutes a '*conscious*' racial identity, the question then arises as to what becomes rendered unconscious. Fanon stops short of expounding on what becomes of the collective and individual unconscious of the colonized black man. The reason can be located in Fanon's contentious claim that Martinique's 'collective unconscious makes it a European country' (*BSWM*, p. 191). Although Fanon has questioned the validity of psychoanalysis as a universal account of the unconscious

and is opposed to its ethnocentric neglect of socio-economic factors, he nonetheless posits a totalizing theory of cultural assimilation. Fanon defines the 'collective unconscious' as 'the sum of prejudices, myths, collective attitudes of a given group' and argues that it is 'acquired' through the assimilation of culture (*BSWM*, p. 188). The Antillean exposed to the colonizing force of European culture internalizes its collective unconscious and subsequently becomes, in Fanon's terms, a 'slave of this cultural imposition' (*BSWM*, p.192). It is symptomatic of a universalist stance that despite his effort to remedy the ethnocentric basis of Western psychology, Fanon's own claim assumes a totalizing reality. The proposition of a European collective unconscious translating smoothly into a Martinican collective unconscious negates the historicities and specificities of pre-colonial Martinique. More importantly, it ignores the strategies of resistance, adaptation and modification that have characterized the response of the Martinicans. Although Fanon uncovers the racial bias underlying the Self-Other dynamic, his Manichean view ultimately traps the black man in the realm of the imaginary without recourse to the symbolic. Rather than thinking the Self-Other relation in dynamic terms, Fanon posits a point of stasis. Apart from 'white', there is no third term that mediates subjectivity. In Fanon's Manichean view, there can be no compromise. Conversely, in the context of departmentalized Martinique, there can only be compromise. This explains, in part, Fanon's disenchantment with the path of departmentalization chosen for Martinique and his forsaking of the non-violent resistance of his homeland for the militant and terroristic insurrections of the Algerian war of independence.<sup>7</sup>

The concept of 'opacity' introduces an 'occult instability' into the 'zone of nonbeing' of Fanon's Manichean world, by opening up a destabilizing and mediating space. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961; English trans. 1967), Fanon gives an account of the 'occult sphere' of 'terrifying myths', 'maleficent spirits', 'symbolic killings', and 'séances of possession and exorcism' in which the colonized natives engage.<sup>8</sup> Fanon adopts a pragmatic view of occult beliefs and practices as 'emotional outlets' through which feelings of aggression and the proclivity for violence are variously 'canalised, transformed and conjured away' (*TWE*, pp. 44 and 45). In Fanon's militant struggle for decolonization, native energy is to be harnessed for a violent confrontation. In this case, native cultural beliefs and traditions are mere escapism and futile 'fancies' (*TWE*, p. 45) that not only leave colonial structures intact and unchallenged but bolster the domination of colonial power by the uneventful dissipation of native resentment and resistance. For this reason, the occult fails as an avenue for the 'authentic upheaval' for which Fanon calls.<sup>9</sup> However, as any 'upheaval' begins with consciousness, the repossession of identity, however temporary, is significant. A source of resistance and self-assertion can be found in Fanon's brief contemplation of the effect of the occult:

The atmosphere of myth and magic frightens me and so takes on an undoubted reality. By terrifying me, it integrates me in the traditions and the history of my district or of my tribe, and at the same time it reassures me, it gives me status, as it were an *identification paper*. (*TWE*, p. 43; italics added)

The effect of the occult is directly linked to the restoration of a sense of identity. As Fuss theorises, 'Identification is the psychical mechanism that produces self-recognition. [. . .] It operates as a mark of self-difference, opening up a space for

the self to relate to itself, a self that is perpetually other'.<sup>10</sup> The occult provides an otherness that enables the relational constitution of the self. It enables the 'descending in ourselves, but without the Other, without the alienating logic of his prism' for which the Creolists call ('IPC', p. 898).

In the creation of a collective culture, Fanon calls on the native artist to inhabit the 'zone of occult instability where the people dwell', that 'fluctuating movement' where 'our souls are crystallized' (*TWE*, p. 183). In Chamoiseau's writing, the 'zone of occult instability' lies in a collective Creole unconscious.

### **'Engrave the Body Politic': The Language of Slavery**

But the night of the sword and the bullet was followed by the morning of the chalk and the blackboard. The physical violence of the battlefield was followed by the psychological violence of the classroom.<sup>11</sup>

In Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's portrait of colonization, the classroom is the battleground for the possession of minds. Education is an insidious, effective and indispensable means of colonizing minds and generating colonial subjects and its weapon is language.<sup>12</sup> *School Days* is Chamoiseau's autobiographical depiction of this battle in which the war over the mind is fought with language and manifested in the body. The psychical and physical are shown to be inextricably bound up in one another, as zombification is experienced as a corporeal ordeal. The school is a microcosm of Fanon's 'neurotic' society, encapsulating and intensifying the alienating effects of a wider colonized society. As Fanon observes, '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' (*BSWM*, p. 152; italics added). Fanon's insights into the role of '*schools and their texts*' as part of the colonizing arsenal, are taken up by Chamoiseau in *School Days*. Chamoiseau establishes a chain of complicity between the school, language and the native elite, in his depiction of education in departmentalized Martinique as a neo-colonial institution of slavery. In the artillery of colonization, language becomes the basic weapon in the dispossession of history, culture and identity and the interpellation of a colonized subjectivity.

In Lacanian theory, language is a carrier of history, culture and the law, and the subject is constructed according to its rules as it enters the symbolic order. In 'The Negro and Language', Fanon stresses that 'to speak' 'means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization' and he specifies that the black man becomes 'proportionately whiter – that is, he will come closer to being a real human being – in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language' (*BSWM*, pp. 17-18). The acquirement of the white man's language becomes a means of entry into the colonizing symbolic order where a semblance of subjectivity may be gained.

*School Days* establishes a hierarchical system of differences between French and Creole, in the oppositions between white and black, history and oblivion, civilized and barbaric, public and private. Creole, according to the school Teacher, is rooted in the 'age old barbarity of the cane-fields . . . the poverty of the shacks . . . the dark night of Creole niggerdom'.<sup>13</sup> It is his duty to guard the children against 'the contamination of this cane-fields pidgin', 'the ball and chain that would keep the children prisoners of ignorance' (*SD*, p. 64). Creole customs are dismissed as 'ol'-nigger ways', demonstrative of 'the hopeless perdition of that



barbarous people' (*SD*, pp. 79 and 83). French, on the other hand, is 'the language of wisdom, wit, and intelligence' (*SD*, p. 64).<sup>14</sup> It signifies a civilized, enlightened, and most importantly, white identity.

The incongruity and quarrelling of tongues initiates a splitting of the self and the dissociation of sensibility which Fanon identifies as the mark of colonial alienation. For the little black boy, the Creole tongue is his native language, and this 'chatty lil' voice in his head used a different language, his home-language, his Mama-language, the language he had not learned but rather absorbed with ease as he eagerly explored his world. [. . .] [T]o say something, give vent to an emotion, express yourself, think things over, talk for any length of time – required the Mama tongue' (*SD*, p. 48). Creole language is his mode of conception and means of expression. The little black boy is traumatized to find his familiar Creole tongue and culture degraded and denied, and an alienating otherness imposed upon him by a totalizing Francocentric order. With the imposition of French, '[y]ou had to listen closely to the lil'-mama-tongue wagging in your thoughts, translate everything into French, and prevent your natural pronunciation from spoiling these new sounds' (*SD*, pp. 62-63). The process of splitting the psyche is primarily a discursive one.

Language also holds the collective memory of a people's history. In *School Days*, Creole is equated with a nonhistory. As the children learn in their school texts, 'Our islands had been veiled in a fog of non-existence, crossed by phantom Caribs and Arawaks themselves lost in the obscurity of a cannibal nonhistory. And then, when the colonists arrived, there was light. Civilization. History' (*SD*, p. 121). It is the colonizing French that confer 'light' to darkness, 'civilization' to barbarism, and 'History' to the nothingness of the Caribbean past.

The deliberate depreciation of native Creole culture and the elevation of the language of the colonizer work to eradicate the children's belief in their language, culture, environment and names. It functions to estrange them from their surrounding Creole world and make them identify with that which is furthest removed, which is Petit-Pierre's alien world of virgin snow, windmills and vineyards. The little black boy's 'mind [. . .] began to roam this universe that was becoming his true life. He drew in it. Dreamed in it. Thought in it. As for his body, that was drifting around in his frayed, shoddy, useless Creole world' (*SD*, p. 119). In this misrecognition, the unity of mind and body is fractured and the Creole world becomes an irreconcilable source of self-loathing.

The psychical dispossession of zombification is manifested in the ensuing process of bodily dematerialization. Self-awareness and consciousness are linked to the presence of an active, sensory and vocal body. With alienation, the body becomes confined, silent and vacant. Dispossession manifests itself in the deadening of the body. When 'subjected to the Franco-Universal beatitude of the Teacher', the children would 'go out like a cemetery candle: lacklustre eyes, droopy face, slumped shoulders', and appear 'undernourished' (*SD*, p. 107). The symptoms of zombification – dull eyes, blank expressions, pallid skin – are clearly recognizable in the children. The physical lifelessness is a manifestation of their deadening consciousness. Their condition is compared to a state of 'asphyxia' (*SD*, p. 46), as they are psychologically suffocated by the impositions of a colonizing order. The school uniform becomes an instrument of torture. 'The shirt is a corset. The shoes and socks become agonizing pincers' (*SD*, p. 51). The entire context of the school involves the 'abnormal immobilization of [the] body' (*SD*, p. 75).

The novel sets up a dichotomy between the immobile body, which is the necessary condition for writing, and the active body that is verbal and the expression of orality. In writing, according to Glissant, 'the body does not move with the flow of what is said. [. . .] To move from the oral to the written is to immobilize the body, to take control (to possess it)'.<sup>15</sup> In *School Days*, Creole is associated with orality as a natural extension of the body. Creole is the language of the playground where there is physical contact and movement. Also, the little black boy's Creole scribbles 'inspired sounds, feelings, sensations that he expressed however he pleased but always differently: their interpretation depended on his mood and the ambiance of the moment' (*SD*, p. 20). Creole is presented as a sensory language that is cognisant of the sensations of the body and attuned to the environment. In its flexibility, Creole orality interacts with the subject rather than imposing upon it the regulation and regimentation of the written French word. The unnaturalness of the French tongue is reflected in the way the children struggle to speak it in stammers and stutters that choke them. The bearing, posture and regulations necessary for writing in the classroom are used to suppress the natural rhythms of the body. The little black boy's daydream of stumbling into his inkwell and drowning in its inky waters captures his mounting sense of loss to the overwhelming constraints of written French. With the growing familiarity of the inkwells, he recalls that 'with each passing day we would leave a trace of ourselves behind in them' (*SD*, p. 58). The dissolution of identity is achieved through the medium of the written French word.

Consequently, the written French word imposes a muteness on the body associated with what Glissant has termed the 'mutism' of slavery. According to

Glissant, the 'implacably silent world of slavery' was a 'struggle with no witnesses' (*CD*, p. 161). The loss of voice is inextricably linked to the loss of identity. From aboard the slave ships that first brought Africans to the Caribbean, slaves were separated from those who shared a common tongue with the intent of breaking down communication and preventing the solidarity that might provide a source of identification or lead to insurrection. The aim was to eradicate all African sources of culture and identity and leave a devastated non-identity that could be harnessed for slavery. The muteness imposed on the slaves is tied to the dispossession of their language and identity. As Glissant explains, 'the alienated body of the slave, in the time of slavery, is in fact deprived, in an attempt at complete dispossession, of speech. Self-expression is not only forbidden, but impossible to envisage' (*CD*, pp. 122). It is with the similar intent of dispossession that the Martinican child is inculcated into a French system of education. Self-expression gives way to muteness, in a reflection of the dissolution of a sense of self. For the little black boy, pictures which he 'could have turned into a thousand words' now 'reduced him to a silence that only deepened', and he grew 'mouse-quiet' as his 'tongue soon seemed heavy to him, his speech too slurred, his accent hateful. His little inner voice grew ashamed' (*SD*, p. 65). In his internalization of white attitudes and perspectives, he comes to loathe everything associated with the Creole tongue: his language, culture, history, way of life, and himself. In this way, French functions as a language of muteness and paralysis.

The loss of language is linked to an emasculating logic. Chamoiseau has expressed the 'castration' effected by the language suppression: 'The ancient act of domination was built on silence, no voices, no words: in every mutilated mouth,

the tongue is castrated. And the lips were often just open scars'.<sup>16</sup> Lorna Milne points out that the image is one of castration as feminization, as the powerful phallic 'tongue' is castrated to leave the impotent lips remaining as a disempowered and feminized open wound.<sup>17</sup> The castration of the tongue is a silencing of language, which in Lacanian psychology is an expulsion from the symbolic and an accompanying dissolution of identity. The next Chapter will explore the impact of the castrated tongue on the role of the 'Word Scratcher' or male writer that Chamoiseau himself plays in his novels.

As paralysis and muteness are linked to an emasculating logic, any sign of psychological resistance is figured in physical movement. Big Bellybutton, as his name signifies, is associated with the bodily. He responds to the imprisoning conditions of the classroom with constant fidgeting. His fiddling, flipping, scratching and twisting are portrayed as bodily symptoms of his psychological struggle against the mental suffocation imposed on him. The immobile body represents a withdrawal from an increasingly alien world, and the deadening of the subject. This is the reason Big Bellybutton's 'constrained body required a swarm of tactile sensations to participate in the world' (*SD*, p. 76). As the body is forbidden its natural defences to psychological torment, he is reduced to fidgeting as he resists the zombification that has afflicted the other boys. By further refusing to recognize his presence and knowledge, the Teacher 'imposed on Big Bellybutton a silence that drove the child to a frenetic display of mute wriggling' (*SD*, p. 78). In this case, the enforced silence is another instance of bodily confinement.

Without the recognition of the other's gaze, the black man has no sustainable ontological resistance against the subjugating white order.

Unsurprisingly, by the end of the novel, Big Bellybutton's resistance is quelled. He becomes 'absent: absent from class, absent from himself. [. . .] His body drifted around [. . .] like a zombie-yawl' (*SD*, p. 138). As his consciousness is fragmented and finally dispelled, the zombification of the colonized subject is complete. The body that is forced to internalize a colonialist subjectivity adopts a zombified language of muteness and immobility.

Chamoiseau attacks the French educational system of Martinique for its eradication of all things Creole, indicting it as a neo-colonial parallel to slavery. As the Creolists pronounce, 'School teachers of the great period of French assimilation were the slave traders of our artistic impulse' ('IPC', p. 899). In *School Days*, Chamoiseau shows how the institution of education reproduces the conditions of slavery. The Teacher is the 'captain of his ship by divine right' (*SD*, p. 41). Even the threat of violent reprisal remains in the form of the whip hanging over the blackboard which 'prey[s] on everyone's mind' (*SD*, p. 65). The episode of the little black boy's whipping by Monsieur le Directeur, the Director of the school, is depicted to echo the punishment and torture of slaves. The little black boy is left like a 'limp rag', 'broken beyond repair, banished from the world of the living' and 'overcome by stinging pain, shame, and misery' (*SD*, p. 73). The beating and humiliation he endures dehumanize him into a 'zombie, fresh from the grave' (*SD*, p. 74). The text makes clear that Monsieur le Directeur's inhumane treatment of the boys is made possible only by the denial of his own historical and racial identity:

Monsieur le Directeur, I speak of your silences [. . .]. Nigger, you fled from yourself and, with stubborn determination, held your head up high – above the cane fields, the sugar, the watermelon grins, the békés [. . .]. You loom large over a host of memories, a tutelary figure. (*SD*, p. 72)

The authorial ‘I’ here discloses the past that Monsieur le Directeur is so determined to ‘silence’, for it positions him as a descendent of slaves. The beating that he executes is underlined by the disconcerting irony of one ‘Nigger’ whipping another. The alienation of the black man is absolute and extends through the passing generations.

Fanon’s portrayal of colonial alienation persists in departmentalized Martinique. The striking difference in *School Days* is that colonization is no longer a battle for power between colonizer and colonized, white and black. Instead, it is fought amongst colonized black men. There are no white men in *School Days*, only black men with white masks. The school-children learn to prey on each other, waiting to pounce on the use of a forbidden Creole word, deride a creolized mispronunciation, and laugh at each other’s mistakes: ‘The slightest taint of Creole set off a merciless festival of mockery’ (*SD*, p. 65). Each child vampirically feeds off the other, trying to bolster a fading sense of self. In an unbroken cycle, they perpetuate a microcosm of the ‘vampiric’ and ‘neurotic’ Martinican society that feeds off them, and become yet another generation of zombies.

## **The Uncanny and the Opacity of Creole Counterculture**

Into Fanon's Manichean 'zone of nonbeing', Chamoiseau reinserts the 'occult sphere' of the Creole collective unconscious. Where Fanon posits a European collective unconscious, Chamoiseau shows that it is the repressed Creole culture and language that now constitutes the collective unconscious of the French symbolic order. Creole maintains subterranean links with what Stuart Hall has called, 'the other Caribbean', the Caribbean that could not speak, that had no official records, that was not recognized.<sup>18</sup> The Creolists themselves identify Creole as 'the initial means of communication of our deep self, or our collective unconscious. [. . .] In it we resist and accept ourselves' ('IPC', p. 899). Crucially, Creole serves as an expression of the collective unconscious, as a resisting counterculture, and a means to self-acceptance. Creole is not structured into a conscious and collective refusal of the French symbolic; rather, it remains illicit. Chamoiseau himself admits to the 'schizophrenia' of possessing a French superego and a hidden Creole self. However, Chamoiseau's configuration of the irrevocably split Martinican personality, unlike Fanon's, identifies a third source for self-determination and resistance that lies in the Creole unconscious.

The strategies of Creole storytelling hold the key to understanding the nature of Creole counterculture. As Chamoiseau explains:

The Creole tale reveals that overt force guarantees eventual defeat and punishment, and that through cunning, patience, nerve, and resourcefulness (which is never a sin), the weak may vanquish the strong. [. . .] What we have here is [. . .] a system of counter-values, or a counterculture, that reveals itself as both powerless to achieve complete freedom and fiercely determined to strive for it nonetheless.<sup>19</sup>

Creole counterculture does not overtly challenge dominant ideology but works by the subterfuge of opacity. Opacity, in Glissant's conception, describes the



‘irreducible density of the other’ or that which resists attempts to be objectified and known’ (CD, p. 133). In this sense, opacity is a means of resistance against the ‘alienating notion of transparency’ and a way to ‘deny the Other’s total and corrosive hold’ (CD, pp. 155 and 59). Opacity first developed in the slave plantations to counter the surveillance and exhibitionism of the master. As Glissant explains, because of the ‘transcendental presence of the Other, of his Visibility – colonizer or administrator – of his transparency fatally proposed as a model [. . .] we have acquired a taste for obscurity’ (CD, 161). The colonizer’s power depends on surveillance and visibility. The master’s gaze objectifies the colonized subject in a way that fixes his identity in hierarchical relation to the master’s. Opacity is a resistance to this imposed model of transparent visibility.

Opacity offers a means of ontological resistance for the subject. Opacity can adopt the mask of mimicry as a form of camouflage in order to obscure and enable difference. Opacity also offers a density to the self in the recognition that there are subjective depths that need to be confronted and parts that remain obscure and inexplicable even to the individual. In this way, opacity prevents a transparent unity to the self and an emptying out of the self that characterizes the discourse of zombification. As a result, opacity offers a means of ‘ontological resistance’ in the form of the very self-assertion and self-determination that Fanon claims is impossible for the black man.<sup>20</sup> As Celia Britton succinctly explains, opacity ‘transforms the status of the colonized subject’s visibility from a source of vulnerability [. . .] to the active production of a visible but *unreadable* image’.<sup>21</sup> Opacity goes beyond the Manichean structures of seen and unseen and brings a third term into the colonizer’s self-other dynamic.

In relation to Martinique, opacity cannot be reduced to simple invisibility or concealment. The absence of a hinterland in Martinique made it difficult for slaves to escape and for maroon communities to form and survive, in contrast to countries like Haiti or Jamaica. There was literally no place for the slave to hide. Similarly in departmentalized Martinique, although power is now geographically removed, the lines of power still exist and have merely been rendered invisible by deparmentalization. Opacity therefore has to be produced as an unintelligible presence within visible presence.

In *School Days*, the Creole collective unconscious manifests itself in voodoo beliefs and practices and in traces of Creole orature. The return to the occult is not a regression to unchanged belief systems or a reintegration of religious customs, nor is it about the efficacy of voodoo magic. Rather, it is about the attempted eradication and irrepressible endurance of voodoo as a signification system. Chamoiseau depicts voodoo as an uncanny manifestation of the Creole collective unconscious. Voodoo is a 'return' of that which was once familiar but has been repressed; a mark of the 'uncanny' as defined by Freud. In Freud's theory, 'the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar'.<sup>22</sup> The uncanny arises when that which is 'secretly familiar' undergoes 'repression' and then 'returns', signalling a troubling undecidability between the familiar and unfamiliar brought about because the former is 'concealed and kept out of sight'.<sup>23</sup> Thus, that which appears alien is revealed to be the most familiar, and threatening for this reason. Freud gives the example of uncanniness arising from the beliefs of our 'primitive forefathers' in 'secret injurious powers', 'prompt fulfilment of wishes', and the 'return of the

dead'.<sup>24</sup> Freud points to a similar ambiguity attached to the English 'canny', which 'may mean not only "cosy" but also "endowed with occult or magical powers"'.<sup>25</sup> These instances of uncanny dread and horror associated with the occult and primitive beliefs shed light on the function of the Creole occult in *School Days*.

The Creole collective unconscious causes an ontological insurgence in the 'zone of nonbeing' on two fronts. First, it unmasks the misrecognition of white identification. Secondly, it initiates a re-membering of the mind and body split asunder by the incursions of the French language.

We have established how the French language functions, for the black man, as the means to becoming white. In *School Days*, it is the Teacher who betrays this verbal dimension of the mimetic drive to be white. His words – '*Our prresent difficulties notwithstanding, allow me, gentlemen, to extend a grracious welcome to you without furrther ado . . .*' (SD, p. 35; italics in original) – instantly identify him as the product of the 'myth of the R-eating man from Martinique' which Fanon first derides.<sup>26</sup> His speech is indicative of an acute alienation arising from his attempts to internalize and reproduce white French cultural values. The overcompensatory nature of his speech is symptomatic of a fundamental lack or loss of self.

In suppressing and supplanting the Creole language, the French symbolic order relegates it to the unspeakable but irrepressible realm of the unconscious. The Teacher, in moments of frustration or fatigue, would inadvertently let slip a Creole phrase or revert to a forbidden Creole word. These cracks in the 'white mask' point to the precariousness of the facade and to the existence of a buried force whose emergence, however fleeting, threatens the apparent wholeness of

identity. Predictably, the Teacher responds to its unsuspected surfacing with more severe vigilance and repression: 'His flickering language would grow even more painstaking, guarded, distrustful of itself, threading its way among sounds while anticipating hazardous pitfalls where the dreaded Creole lurked near at hand' (*SD*, p. 63). Such lapses suggest that the excessively mannered and elaborate veneer of language is not as stable as it pretends to be. The repressed Creole unconscious emerges to expose the fallibility of the French superego. It shows itself to be indestructible in both the individual and collective unconscious, in both the assimilated elite and the native.

The Creole unconscious disrupts the French symbolic order by its uncanny recurrences. The unspeakable Creole unconscious finds its most potent symbol in the voodoo artefact of the snake's head that Big Bellybutton brings to school. The snakehead is overdetermined, in the sense that its threat is in excess to its apparent material effects. It recalls all the terrifying threats of 'secret injurious powers', 'prompt fulfilment of wishes' and the 'return of the dead', that Freud associates with the uncanny. Here, the threat of the uncanny takes the culturally specific form of voodoo magic, curses, zombification, and *quimboiseurs*, the voodoo practitioners of Creole culture, signalling the return of a once familiar but now forbidden and forbidding world of the Creole occult. The snakehead petrifies the children, particularly the school bully, leaving them 'frozen with horror' (*SD*, p. 83). Covering the snake head brings relief for everyone: 'As though released from a spell, everyone looked around with the startled air of a sleeper awakening from a nightmare' (*SD*, p. 83). Significantly, the 'nightmare' is the manifestation of that which is suppressed and concealed in the waking world. The subjugation of the

threat of voodoo is painfully dramatized in the whipping of Big Bellybutton, the intensity of which reflects the need to stifle the disconcerting Creole menace. Nevertheless, the uncanniness of this episode demonstrates that the danger that is external is interminably always already at the core.

The repressed Creole imaginary is a perpetual source of potential disruption haunting the French social order. Its lingering presence is represented in the episode of the importation of French milk. The artificially produced powdered milk from France is thought to be a ‘lifesaving’ supplement to rid the ‘Creole crust that encumbered our minds’, providing the opportunity of ‘sucking civilization from the teat of progress’ (*SD*, p. 107). In this manner, French milk is being regarded, in Fanon’s terms, as a ‘serum for “denegrification”’ (*BSWM*, p. 111). It recalls the process of ‘lactification’, used by Fanon to designate the black’s alienated desire for the whitening of his race (*BSWM*, p. 47). Significantly, the Creole imaginary disrupts the symbolic whitening of the race as the children begin to glimpse a host of ‘Creole horrors: *molocoye* tortoise sweat, bamboo hairs like ground glass’ in their milk. Soon, ‘the infinite profusion of maleficent materials used for sorcery by *quimboiseurs* was now suspected by the children of lurking in their diet supplement’, and the milk left them feeling ‘depressed, liverish, with a living weight on their stomachs, as though they were possessed’ (*SD*, p. 108; italics in original).<sup>27</sup> The ‘Creole horrors’ suppressed in the classroom make their presence felt in the symbolic milk of maternal France. The final image of the children furtively pouring away the milk is representative of a rejection of France and of assimilation.

The Creole culture of voodoo also provides a psychological means of disalienation that is manifested in the re-memberment of mind and body.

Voodoo culture offers an 'identification paper' in the Fanonian sense of providing a revitalizing link to history and community that reinforces a sense of identity. The little black boy identifies with the *quimboiseurs*, claiming an otherness otherwise denied and restoring his subjectivity. The ritual for casting a spell on the Teacher is closely tied to the body, with specific postures, hand gestures, and the gripping of arms, each of which reanimates the imprisoned body to a conscious purpose. Voodoo culture brings about a re-memberment of the body and mind, whose splitting was caused by the assault of the French language.

The identification with the voodoo practitioners further offers a sense of 'opacity' to the self. As the little black boy states, 'in our triumph we turned upon the rest of the school the venerable, hooded gaze of magicians and *quimboiseurs*' (*SD*, p. 126; italics in original). Identification with the voodoo other of a forbidden culture confers a sense of density to the self, which now becomes partially inscrutable. By affording a source of untapped knowledge and an unlimited sense of power to the self, it creates an empowering opacity.

By producing an unintelligible presence behind appearances, opacity also offers a means of ontological resistance for the little black boy. The imprisoning materiality of the body, rooted in his black skin, becomes an enabling form of camouflage. This is a strategy comparable to the 'Quashie phenomenon' termed by Orlando Patterson to describe the practice of the slave who voluntarily behaves as the smiling, fawning dullard that the white master believes him to be, adroitly turning the stereotype of the black slave against the white man and preserving an

inner freedom beneath a mask of compliance.<sup>28</sup> By behaving as the aspiring French boy, the little black boy outwardly conforms to expectations but inwardly maintains an alternative subjectivity. In this way, Chamoiseau reclaims the body as a means of opacity for the reconstitution of consciousness. Fanon's irredeemable separation of mind and body is reversed.

A crucial dimension to the Creole counterculture is language. The opacity of the Creole language was developed by the storytellers on the slave plantations as a means to camouflage the subversive context of their tales and elude the master's comprehension. The Creole tale uses diversionary and deceptive tactics to obscure meaning. The storyteller's aim, according to Chamoiseau, is '*to obscure as he reveals*' (*SW*, p. xiii; italics in original). As Glissant affirms, 'Creole is originally a kind of conspiracy that concealed itself by its public and open expression'. It can take the 'form of nonsense that could conceal and reveal at the same time a *hidden* meaning' (*CD*, pp. 124-25; italics in original). The ruses of the Creole language centre on creating an opacity that prevents the transparency of meaning. They can take the form of Creole metaphors and proverbs, some of which draw upon voodoo mythology,<sup>29</sup> seemingly nonsensical words, pidgin Creole, detours and digressions. Chamoiseau incorporates the rhythms, images and structures of Creole orality into the written French language, introducing pervasive ambiguities in the text that simultaneously express and disguise meaning, in this way maintaining an unknowable density that resists assimilation into the French language.

According to the Creolists, 'Creole orality, even repressed in its aesthetic expression, contains a whole system of countervalues, a counterculture', that is 'buried in our collective unconscious' ('IPC', p. 895). In *School Days*, Chamoiseau

explains how Creole becomes an ‘underground language’ endowed with ‘latent strength’ and ‘combustive power’ (*SD*, pp. 128-29): ‘the resentments that had built up beneath the French veneer had charged our native tongue with awesome hidden powers. [. . .] The suppression of Creole had revealed a virile efficiency in these illicit areas’ (*SD*, pp. 91-92). Creole language was suppressed in the ‘mutism’ of slavery, and Glissant states that ‘When the body is freed [. . .] it follows the explosive scream’ (*CD*, pp. 123). Glissant underlines the inextricable bonds between orality and corporeality, psychic and physical liberation. The Creole language is this ‘explosive scream’, reacting to the petrified silences of the past. In the novel, it is characterized by onomatopoeic words, erratic rhythms that break up the flow of language and mimic orality, exclamations that echo verbal banter, and modes of expression rooted in the bodily, as evidenced in the array of Creole curses and name-calling in the text. The narrative voice itself incorporates sudden outbursts of Creole in name-calling, swearing and terms of derision. This is the reason why, despite its English translation, Creole language remains palpable on every page of *School Days*.

Chamoiseau also draws on traditions of Creole storytelling to provide a counternarrative to the dominant autobiographical tracing of alienation. The autobiographical mode is the singular narrative of a private voice. The text deliberately and consciously enacts a proliferation of narrative perspectives, both as a means of rejecting the alienating singularity imposed by the French order and of reflecting the intrinsically pluralistic nature of Creole identity. The Répondeurs whom Chamoiseau incorporates into the narrative were traditionally audience members who were invited to participate in a call and response, and talk back to



the storyteller. The Répondeurs draw from different genres associated with the oral tradition, including songs, riddles, name-calling and Creole chants and rhymes, to interrupt the predominantly French narrative. Their irreverent Creole responses undermine the uniform, monotheistic voice, which is the legacy of colonialist assimilation. Importantly, they represent the incorporation of those very voices from the past that are being banished from the classrooms. Chamoiseau's strategy is to include them in a way that mocks and undermines the dominant narrative that has sought to suppress their mass of experience and modes of expression. Within the tale of alienation, there is a resurgence of the repressed pluralities of the Creole collective unconscious, effectively creating a counternarrative.

The narrative also enacts a destabilization of the narrative voice by the incorporation of the 'Translator' and the 'Omniscient One'. The narrative sets up a dialogue between these competing voices that variously support and taunt each other, resulting in a multiplication of perspective. By its pluralizing of subject positions, the narrative provides a multiplication of otherness against which the self can define itself. It also reflects the intrinsically pluralistic nature of Martinican identity. This fluidity of identity is represented linguistically in the switching of codes between and within paragraphs and sentences, and the playing of one language against another.<sup>30</sup>

The inclusions of the Creole tongue and their accompanying traces of history and memory passed down orally as myth and legend, obscure meaning for the reader who does not read Creole. In this way, the text makes itself opaque to the reader; refusing to be objectified and rendered wholly transparent to the appropriation of foreign readers.

Ultimately, the uncanny and the opacity of the Creole collective unconscious are a means of turning an inevitable schizophrenic condition into a source of empowerment. It is not the 'authentic upheaval' Fanon calls for. As historians who have surveyed West Indian slavery have found, the comparatively fewer number of slave uprisings does not account for the various forms of 'non-violent', 'psychological', 'inward' or 'cultural' resistance that took place among the slaves.<sup>31</sup> Creole counterpoetics is a form of compromised and limited resistance. Working from within the shadows into which it is consigned, the Creole unconscious reveals the tears and breaks in the colonizing discourse and the precariousness and illusory state of white identification. It does not challenge the structures of domination in direct confrontation but asserts, in a concealed and opaque way, the counterpoetics of Creole. It also allows for the alternative body politic of opacity which re-members the mind and body of the zombified Martinican man.

## Chapter Four

### Creoleness ‘Impaled on Hyphens’: Ventriloquism in Writing the Erotics of *Texaco*

And out of that kind of drama, no one  
can make a profession. Oiseau de  
Cham, are you a writer?

Patrick Chamoiseau

The silence of the hyphen does not  
pacify or appease anything, not a  
single torment, not a single torture.

Jacques Derrida<sup>1</sup>

*Texaco* (1992; English trans. 1997) is the most well known of Chamoiseau's novels, cementing his international reputation since winning France's Prix Goncourt in 1992. Subheaded 'The Sermon of Marie-Sophie Laborieux', the novel is presented as her subaltern testimony, recounting both her father's and her own struggle from slavery to emancipation and the establishment of the Texaco Quarter on the margins of Fort de France. Her unrelenting efforts to establish the Texaco Quarter and its fluid and changeable structure are symbolic of the constitution of Creole identity and its diverse, mosaic nature. Marie-Sophie's tale is a pseudo-autobiographical account that is related, firstly, to the Urban Planner who is persuaded by her testimony to prevent the demolition of the Texaco Quarter, thus earning him the title of 'The Christ'. Afterwards, it is recounted to the 'Word Scratcher', the writer, Oiseau de Cham who puts her words into writing and whose presence shadows the text. Marie-Sophie's own tale is articulated through an interplay of different voices and shifting points of view, interspersed with fragments from notebooks, and interrupted by musings and digressions.

The bulk of criticism on *Texaco* focuses on Marie-Sophie's narrative and the construction of the Texaco Quarter as an exemplary expression of the Creolists' theory of Creoleness. Marie-Sophie's narrative, however, needs to be examined within its embedment in the structural frames of the novel. Here, *Texaco* will be read against the grain of its self-representation and the Creolists' theoretical formulations. Probing beyond the novel's overtly politicized narrative will uncover a subtext that simultaneously reveals and represses a different aspect of Creole identity that can only be explained as the colonial remnants of the castrated and masked male identity described by Frantz Fanon. While the Creolists specify 'artistic knowledge' as the sole means of discursively constituting Creole identity and place the writer indispensably at the helm of the project, they remain silent on the fundamental role of gender. This contradiction will be examined in *Texaco* by using the zombie trope of ventriloquism to address Chamoiseau's application of subaltern testimony and the fissures in the text caused by the distinctive gendering of bodies.

### **Creoleness 'Impaled on Hyphens'**

The Créolité movement proposes a revaluation of Creole identity – cultural and individual – and a corresponding poetics. Creoleness, as Chamoiseau, Raphaël Confiant and Jean Bernabé proclaim, defines a 'new dimension of man whose prefigured shadow we are'.<sup>2</sup> It is a 'dimension' premised on the 'annihilation of false universality, of monolingualism, and of purity' for the affirmation of a 'mosaic identity' ('IPC', pp. 892 and 903). The Creolists' claim to being the precursors of this evolved subject is grounded in the Caribbean historical

experience of violent dislocation, confrontation of disparate cultures and evolution of hybrid identities. Creole identity is opposed to claims of essentialism and singularity, proposing instead, 'the *interactional or transactional* aggregate' of various national and cultural elements ('IPC', p. 892; italics in original). These different cultures have had to 'reinvent' and 'recompose' themselves into a 'kaleidoscopic totality' that is in a state of 'constant dynamics' ('IPC', pp. 892 and 902). These diverse and pluralistic experiences form the ingredients for the generation of a Creole identity. Thus, the Creolists call for 'diversality', which involves the 'double move' of recognising the evolving multiplicity of the world while being conscious of one's unique 'cultural complexity' ('IPC', pp. 902-03). The Creolists privilege the artistic and literary fields as a means to access and express Creoleness. As they affirm, 'only poetic knowledge, fictional knowledge, literary knowledge, in short, artistic knowledge can discover us, understand us and bring us, evanescent, back to the resuscitation of consciousness' ('IPC', p. 896). Creoleness is, therefore, a discursive strategy for the constitution of a Creole identity.

The Creolist manifesto has attracted much critical attention as it represents a major development in French-Caribbean postcolonial theory. Françoise Lionnet champions Creoleness as a 'syncretic category that transcends the binarisms of colonialism'.<sup>3</sup> In Lise Morel's view, Creoleness succeeds in challenging perceptions of the Caribbean and highlighting possibilities that serve as a prelude to deeper change.<sup>4</sup>

As Chamoiseau's artistic endeavour, *Texaco*, according to the majority of critics, effectively demonstrates the manifesto of 'In Praise of Creoleness'. It is

famously celebrated by Derek Walcott as a ‘vast epiphany’ of the Créolité manifesto, in its ‘mythic’ representation of histories and its exemplification of ‘oralité’.<sup>5</sup> *Texaco* is also seen to exemplify Creoleness in its physical setting and narrative textuality. Creole culture, according to Lorna Milne, is expressed in the Texaco Quarter’s ‘architecture, its location and its social structure’, as its seemingly chaotic layout and its construction from random materials ingeniously adapted by its inhabitants ‘express the hybridity, flexibility and adaptability of the Creole subjects’.<sup>6</sup> Creoleness is also expressed through the ‘language of landscape’, as notably defined by Édouard Glissant.<sup>7</sup> Prompted by the novel’s own references to Texaco as ‘*an urban mangrove swamp*’, hosting an ‘anxiety of roots’ and belonging to ‘neither City nor country’ (*T*, p. 263; italics in original), Françoise duRivage explains how the mangrove swamp works as a metaphor for the hybridity of Creole society, in which opposing cultural elements encounter each other to produce a new system of equilibrium.<sup>8</sup> Christine Chivallon systematically establishes the importance of the ‘rhizome’ as a metaphor for Creole identity in its multi-rootedness and diversity.<sup>9</sup> According to Nick Monk, it is the ‘entangled profusion’ of the forest that symbolizes the ‘rambling, patchwork edifice’ of *Texaco*’s narrative structure, enabling Chamoiseau to challenge the teleological progression of Eurocentric history.<sup>10</sup> Examining *Texaco*’s narrative structure, Véronique Maisier points to the multiple voices at the origins of Creole ‘oraliture’ and highlights the confusion over the narratorial ‘I’ as a reflection of the fragmented nature of Martinican history.<sup>11</sup> Maeve McCusker shows how Linda Hutcheon’s model of ‘historiographic metafiction’ echoes the reflections contained in both the manifesto and *Texaco*, in a wider assertion of how the Creolists

anticipate the observation of postmodern thinkers.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, *Texaco* is a compelling expression of Creoleness to the extent that it re-writes imperial historiography in a metonymic interweaving of space and writing that reinforces the mosaic characteristics of Creole identity. It turns assumptions of geopolitical marginalization into generative possibilities for cultural transformation and identity in a way that achieves the discursive constitution of Creole identity set up in the Creolist manifesto.

In line with their polemics, the literary work of the Creolists depicts traces of Martinican life and landscape that are replete with vivid evocations of native voices and colours. While critics like Catriona Cunningham celebrate Chamoiseau's treatment of the local landscape, specifically the liminal space of the beach, as a mode of resistance to the globalising and neo-colonial force of tourism,<sup>13</sup> others have accused the Creolists of generating 'a postmodern pastiche of Creole culture, a vision of the Antilles riddled with alienated exoticism, designed to pander to the *doudouesque* desires of foreigners'.<sup>14</sup> Illustrating this line of attack, Richard and Sally Price suggest that the literary works of the Creolists are 'complicitous with the celebration of a museumified Martinique [. . .] that promotes a "feel-good" nostalgia'.<sup>15</sup> This viewpoint suggests that the Creolists are backward-looking in their fixation upon a pre-departmentalized Martinique. Richard Watts takes issue with the attack on Creoleness as a retrograde and reactionary attachment to a fixed, mythologized Creole identity, and reclaims Chamoiseau's use of the local in connection with Glissant's concept of 'relation'.<sup>16</sup>

However, Glissant, of whom the Creolists consider themselves disciples, has sought to distance himself from their position, objecting to what he views as its

imprisonment within a foundationalist politics of identity grounded in claims of authenticity. This has led to Glissant's castigation of Créolité as 'a prison', comparable to the essentialism of Negritude.<sup>17</sup> In the same vein, Richard Burton, who has elsewhere positively reviewed Chamoiseau's novels, suggests that the Creolists fall prey to the trap of universalism and essentialism.<sup>18</sup> In this way, the Creolists' advocacy of a diversity of cross-cultural relations is seen to mask a cultural homogenization that amounts to a renunciation of real difference.

The most scathing critique of the Creolists has been launched by Annie Le Brun, who argues that despite their rhetoric of hybridity and inclusiveness, they have in practice been very dogmatic and exclusionary in the prescription and defence of their views. In particular, she cites their dismissal of her critique on the grounds of her being a French, white woman, as a mark of 'Stalinist' intolerance and a sign of the racism and sexism underlying their claims to multiculturalism.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, a review of the Creolists' scathing personal attacks on their critics provides ample evidence supporting charges of 'racism', 'sexism', 'homophobia' and 'intellectual terrorism'.<sup>20</sup> The Guadeloupean writer, Maryse Condé diagnoses a gendered 'malaise' affecting Créolité that stems from the age-old connection between masculinist rhetoric and the imperative to represent the collectivity, resulting in a 'restrictive' order that 'leaves very little freedom for creativity'.<sup>21</sup> In a reading of the exchanges between Chamoiseau and Maryse Condé, Jeannie Suk argues that the Creolists' use of the mangrove, while valorizing diversity, also figures an 'open-ended and indeterminate boundarilessness' that is gendered as distinctively feminine in its threatening unknowability.<sup>22</sup> In his focus on gender, A. James Arnold reaches the conclusion that there exists in the French Antilles, two



literary groups divided along gender lines: a theoretically driven and linguistically constrained group of male writers of the Creolist movement, and women writers – not regarded as true Creolists by the male writers – who nevertheless better express créolité's ideals of openness and freedom.<sup>23</sup> Chris Bongie has carried out a judicious analysis of the criticisms made of the Creolists, including Le Brun's, and of the ensuing debates sparked by the Creolists' response, reaching a conclusion that the Creolists' regressive recourse to a language of authenticity, foundations, and an exclusionary identity politics, ultimately falls short of a truly creolized perspective.<sup>24</sup> More importantly, Bongie reads this as being symptomatic of a deeper contradiction at work in the creolization process.

The complexity of the creolization process, according to Bongie, lies in the fact that the question of identity cannot be completely disengaged from the question of the identical. Drawing upon Glissant's concept of 'identité-relation' or relational identity,<sup>25</sup> Bongie engages with Glissant's original phrase, 'identity, hyphen, relation', to draw attention to the space of the hyphen that has been lost in translation. The hyphenated space, Bongie states, 'both interstitially joins together the old world of a necessarily circumscribed local identity and the new world of increasingly chaotic and globalized cross-cultural relations and indicates the space of a neither / nor (neither identity nor relation) – a space that not only renders inevitable but puts into question the imperative of the both / and'. It is this space – bounded at each end by the (unattainable) poles of a fully rooted identity and a truly migrant relationality – that defines the 'Creole continuum of post / colonial identity politics'.<sup>26</sup> This hyphenated space of the Creole continuum is, thus, always implicated in the binarisms of its constitution, without which it would not exist.

Subject positions are taken up in the Creole continuum across a range of discourses that include race, class, gender, language and vocation. They cannot be subsumed under the generalized and all-encompassing terms of ‘cultural aggregate’, ‘mosaic’ and ‘diversity’ which the Creolists deploy, because they continue to hold hidden hierarchies, lingering partialities and power structures. As Mary Gallagher points out, the Creolists’ use of the term *Créolité* ‘is freighted with undeclared and short-circuited meanings, which are often contradictory and usually historically as well as culturally and geographically specific’, and its lack of clarity seems to be constituent of its very meaning.<sup>27</sup> The exploration of identity indubitably invokes what Stuart Hall has termed ‘a politics of identity, a politics of position’, as ‘the unstable points of identification or suture’ are made ‘within the discourse of history and culture’.<sup>28</sup> Cultural identity is constituted discursively across a range of politically invested discourses.

The ‘politics’ of ‘identity’ and ‘position’ is fundamental to Gayatri Spivak’s study of the subaltern. In her influential essay, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’, Spivak identifies the defining of the subject and the ‘positionality’ of the investigating subject as two primary sites of complicity.<sup>29</sup> In a related article, Spivak points to these two sites as volatile sources of ‘repetition in rupture’, whereby challenges to definitions of the sovereign subject end up reinscribing the dominant ideology.<sup>30</sup> The subaltern is a term derived from the Marxist, Antonio Gramsci’s designation of non-elite or subordinate social groups denied access to power by the ruling class. Spivak criticizes attempts to restore the subaltern’s voice in isolation from colonial discourses and practices which have constructed the subject-position of the subaltern as a social category in the first place. Positing a

subaltern consciousness is a form of 'epistemic violence' that alternatively constitutes or effaces a subject that is obliged to 'cathect (occupy in response to a desire) the space of the imperialists' self-consolidating other'.<sup>31</sup> In this way, the humanist model of subaltern agency replicates the discursive regimes that underpinned colonialism itself, thus effecting a 'repetition in rupture'.

Spivak argues that the subject is a discursive formation engendered by 'strands' of power, whereby the different knottings and configurations of these strands produce the effect of an operating subject. The subaltern is an 'effect' of a 'network of strands' and must be understood as being discursively constituted rather than as a 'sovereign and determining' subject of 'will' and 'presence'.<sup>32</sup> Spivak goes a step further to point out that although a theory of pluralized 'subject-effects' can expose the contrivance of more positivist models of the subject, it also 'gives the illusion of undermining subjective sovereignty while often providing a cover for this subject of knowledge', thus resulting in the validation of a Subject in the process.<sup>33</sup> Spivak points out the 'verbal slippage' in the conflation of the meanings of representation as 'speaking for' and re-presentation as portraying.<sup>34</sup> The investigating subject speaks for and speaks about his object and subject of investigation respectively, while also performing a self-representation. The conjunction of meanings assumes that there is no sign-structure or self-interest mediating the 'realities' of the nation being expressed. In this case, the subject is reconstituted on two levels: 'the unnamed Subject' as 'an irreducible methodological presupposition' and the 'self-proximate, if not self-identical, subject of the oppressed', and the result is that the investigators or intellectuals

‘who are neither of these S / subjects, become transparent’.<sup>35</sup> In this way, Spivak brings to the forefront the complicities of the subject-position of the investigator.

In order to uncover what is suppressed or ignored to allow for the functioning of an apparently coherent and authoritative narrative, Spivak suggests tracing the ‘itinerary of the silencing’ of the subject.<sup>36</sup> This involves charting the subject-positions and their effects in order to recognize positions of complicity and compromise. In her approach to literary texts, Spivak engages in the ‘negative science’ of reading, whereby the ‘tangents’ of the text, such as minor characters, sub-plots and seemingly marginal motifs, are examined for the ways in which they interrupt and contradict their thematic propositions, creating ruptures that reveal the unspoken assumptions of conceptual frameworks.<sup>37</sup> The politics of subject-positions theorized by Spivak offers an alternative ‘negative science’ to reading Chamoiseau’s *Texaco*.

### **Ventriloquism: The Erotics of Writing the Subaltern**

In contrast to the predominant focus on the subaltern testimony of its protagonist, this reading of *Texaco* traces the ‘itinerary of the silencing’ of the subaltern through the embedded narrative structure, back to the ‘strands’ of power wielded by the investigating subject. It implicates Chamoiseau’s own compromised subject-position in crafting a novel wherein the subaltern is made to cathect the space of a ventriloquized zombie in the ‘erotics of colonialism’ governing the novel.

Arnold posits a model of the ‘erotics of colonialism’ governing patterns of Black Antillean masculinity. As the ‘position of the real (productive) man is

already occupied by the white Other of colonial domination', Arnold argues that there are only two positions available to the West Indian male: that of the 'passive homosexual' or the 'super-male'.<sup>38</sup> In the first instance, the Black man is 'feminized' by the colonial experience.<sup>39</sup> One might recall Chamoiseau's association of the loss of language with the emasculating logic of castration that effectively feminizes the Black man. The anxiety of castration is made explicit in the creolist manifesto when Chamoiseau *et al.* declaim: 'the tragedy lived by many of our writers comes from the castration which, linguistically, they were victims of during their childhood' ('IPC', p. 899). The deprecation of the Creole language is a 'cultural amputation' ('IPC', p. 899) that is a betrayal of the phallus. In an attempt to compensate for this emasculating logic, West Indian literature popularizes the opposite model of the 'supermale', who is 'more masculine than the Other'. The archetypal figure Arnold suggests is that of the maroon who appears in mythified form as an agonistic supermale, more virile than the dominant Other.<sup>40</sup> Fanon's advocacy of the freedom fighter can be seen in some ways as an extension of this celebration of the maroon, in the refusal to remain within a colonizing system and recursion to violent revolution.

The Creolists have identified the founder of their own literary lineage – the *Conteur* or Creole storyteller – as the means to reconstituting Creole identity. As previously mentioned, the Creolists insist that it is only 'poetic / fictional / literary / artistic knowledge' that can access and express the 'complexity' that is Creoleness. For this reason, the storyteller or, more specifically, the Word Scratcher becomes paramount to the constitution of Creole identity. The term, 'Word Scratcher' or 'marquer de paroles' in Martinican French, is a neologism meaning 'writer' or

‘novelist’, but Chamoiseau makes clear that to him, the term means someone who ‘seeks out and attempts to pass along the rich oral traditions of Créolité’.<sup>41</sup> In Arnold’s reading, the storyteller of the plantation is, in contrast to the maroon, a ‘castrated’ male, because his ‘language remains obscure, muffled or screamed’ and ‘turned away from the direct production of meaning’.<sup>42</sup> In his judgement, the Creolists are identifying with an icon of impotence. On the other hand, Milne, in a nuanced reading of Arnold and Chamoiseau, argues that the storyteller can be read as ‘an icon of potent masculinity’ because of his ‘generative powers’ in literary creativity.<sup>43</sup> The Word Scratcher, in Milne’s view, presents a ‘new, more balanced masculinity’ that ‘transcends, on the one hand, culpable predation, and on the other, emasculation’.<sup>44</sup> However, Milne also points out that because women are still denied the role of creators of history, the Creolist writer is still ‘bound to a masculine aesthetics which necessarily casts his literary “forefather” – the *Conteur* – and all his descendants as male’.<sup>45</sup> To trace the expressions of Martinican identity along the Creole continuum would be to uncover a lineage of Black Antillean masculinity. In her examination of Caribbean fiction, Ileana Rodriguez concludes that the construction of the Caribbean nation is ‘a series of male acts’.<sup>46</sup>

In *Texaco*, Chamoiseau’s presentation of Marie-Sophie’s narrative and notebook musings appears to break the exclusivity of this literary lineage by giving voice to women. Furthermore, Chamoiseau’s appropriation of the position of a subaltern woman is central to his counter-hegemonic account of the development of Martinique. As Chamoiseau *et al.* state, it is part of the Creolist project that those ‘*impenetrable areas of silence where screams were lost*’ are reinvested with voices from the margins, ‘not so much because we want to be the voice of those

who have no voice, but because we want to perfect the collective voice which [. . .] roars in our being [. . .] and listen to it until the inevitable crystallization of a common consciousness' ('IPC', p. 897; italics in original). In their anticipation of a 'common consciousness', the Creolists suggest a parallel between the 'collective voice' within themselves and the 'voices from the margins'. There is a presumption of semblance between the silenced 'screams' in 'impenetrable areas' and the 'roar' that resounds in them. Although there is an element of shared history, there are manifold strands of difference which are conflated in this easy equation. This is evidenced in Chamoiseau's portrayal of the *femme matador* as subaltern testimony in *Texaco*.

The *femme matador* derives from the West Indian *matadora*, who is defined as 'one who triumphs' and is 'a strong, respected, authoritative woman'.<sup>47</sup> According to Beverley Ormerod, the Creole term *matadò* is frequently invoked by novelists to describe the West Indian woman who boldly confronts life's trials.<sup>48</sup> Ormerod celebrates Chamoiseau's depiction of the *femme matador* in *Texaco* as an 'image of resistance' whose search for personal identity may be treated as a symbol of the national quest for identity.<sup>49</sup> The underlying masculinity of the *femme matador*, according to Ormerod, harks back to the slave era when women 'needed physical endurance and an unflinching, even aggressive spirit in order to survive'.<sup>50</sup> In a similar claim to veracity, Chamoiseau himself professes:

My novels are about Creole women, *matadoras* – women who come from matrifocal families and have always had to fight, to develop strategies of survival and resistance. [. . .] I portray Creole women who've grown up in a system of extreme violence, which gives rise to personality types that might seem to be virile and masculine. But that's simply how Creole women are.

[. . .] Those who [. . .] presume that literature is an intellectual discourse about a culture [. . .] forget that it's also a way of bearing witness to that culture, a form of testimony. [. . .] We're bearing witness to the Antillean imaginary, in which the figure of the *matadora* looms large. ('CB', p. 154; italics in original)

Chamoiseau justifies his characterization of the *matadora* by recourse to historical fact and personal knowledge of how women 'simply [. . .] are', as opposed to acknowledging their 'intellectual' or ideological constructedness.

As a means of 'bearing witness', *Texaco* stages the conventions of subaltern testimony in ascribing a discursive female subjectivity and establishing an intratextual reality. In the 'Author's Acknowledgements', Chamoiseau expresses his gratitude to the sources of his tale: 'To all the residents of the Texaco Quarter who endeavored to satisfy my impossible curiosities: Mrs. Sicot Mathilde Georges [. . .]' (*T*, p. 390). In an interview, Chamoiseau explicitly states that 'Madame Sicot . . . was a model for Marie-Sophie Laborieux, the main character in *Texaco*'.<sup>51</sup> Marie-Sophie is, thus, established as a figure 'bearing witness' to the unspoken realities of Martinican history.

To a certain extent, Chamoiseau's novels do depict the 'virility' and resourcefulness of women in the violent context of Martinican society. Anastase surmounts her helplessness to murder her sexual abuser, the philandering Zozor Alcide-Victor with a kitchen knife (*CSS*, pp. 156-58). Pipi's mother, Mam Elo, on realizing she has been raped by the *dorlis*, Anatole-Anatole, uses a spell and succeeds in turning half his face white and half his head bald (*CSS*, pp. 20-21). On learning that Dartagnan, the father to her six children, is to marry a rich old widow,



Péloponèse steals her wedding gown and later tries to set them both aflame. In each of these instances, the hypersexual 'supermale' is severely punished by his female victims, testifying to the indomitable resilience among the women and their refusal to be victimized. The punishment meted out to sexually predatory men frequently takes on the form of castration. Anastase's knife embodies the emasculatory threat. Anatole-Anatole is found castrated and bleached white after his encounter with a female zombie (*CSS*, p. 168). Significantly, the 'lactification' process of acquiring white skin is linked to castration. The association of acquired whiteness with castration is repeated when Marie-Sophie punishes her rapist, Monsieur Alcibiade by squeezing his testicles till they turned 'white' (*T*, p. 255). Chamoiseau's novels do depict women as forceful and resistant subjects within the double colonization of racial and patriarchal oppression in a colonial and sexually predatory male society.

In addition, one can observe that aggressive male sexuality is tied to a castration anxiety, which is further linked to the emasculating logic of the 'erotics of colonialism'. The hypersexual male is an upshot of the castration and feminization of colonialism. As Afoukal expresses plainly: 'Each humping reinforced our own existence, straightened our backs a little, and like true dogs, we'd leave them in the infinite anguish of a fruitful womb. [. . .] Do you think they have forgiven us?' (*CSS*, p. 115). It is evident from this passage that aggressive male promiscuity is a dysfunctional, compensatory behaviour resulting from the disturbances of identity produced in subordinated males. There exists a split in the male ego, between the libidinous urges of the unconscious and the moral monitoring of the superego which manifests itself in the guilty need for

forgiveness. Chamoiseau's male characterizations show that the 'erotics of colonialism', which tie castration, psychic division, and predatory sexuality together in a chain of causality, continues to be the pervasive framework determining sexual relations.

It is in this erotic economy that Chamoiseau's claim to be presenting a subaltern testimony in *Texaco* needs to be read. Against Chamoiseau's claim to be 'bearing witness' to Creole culture is Spivak's emphasis on the intermediary and interfering positionality of the investigating subject. While Marie-Sophie's tale alone might be the subaltern testimony of a *femme matador*, it is in the embedding of her tale within a complex structure of narrative frames that *Texaco* reveals its underlying subtext of male castration anxiety. By tracing the 'itinerary of the silencing' of the female subject in *Texaco*, the position of the authorial self surfaces to reveal that first, against the ostensible set-up of the text, the focus of *Texaco* is not the creation of a collective Creole subject represented by the female subaltern who speaks, but the disembodied Word Scratcher, heir to the Creole storyteller, who *pretends not to speak*. Secondly, the emergence of the authorial self reveals a subjectivity that disconcertingly harks back to Fanon's divided and masked man of colonized Martinique. As outlined earlier, the black man's donning of the 'white mask' marks his identification with white subjectivity, and this results in self-estrangement and psychical splitting. This splitting and masking of the authorial self will be shown in relation to its appropriation of the female body.

In *Texaco*, the female body that is set up as a figure of rebellion and resistance, is, in fact, a ventriloquized body. The ventriloquized body can be viewed as a derivation of the zombie without a soul. The disembodied zombie is

bereft of its consciousness and agency and remains as an empty shell manipulated to serve its master. In the same way, the ventriloquized body is utilized solely as a body without interiority, as the fact that it does not make a difference if it is animate or inanimate, human or object, proves. Also, in the process of colonial zombification, the eradication of one's language is inextricably tied to the loss of history, culture and ultimately, identity. In this way, the castration of the tongue makes one a zombie. The ventriloquized body, likewise, does not speak. It only appears to, while deflecting attention from the speaker. Hence, to ventriloquize is to speak for another body while pretending that it is that body which speaks for itself, effectively disguising one's own verbal communication. This is an act of 'epistemic violence' that pretends to constitute subjectivity but actually effaces the subject which is forced to serve as the speaker's 'self-consolidating other'.

In *Texaco*, Marie-Sophie is appropriated as a female subaltern to serve as a ventriloquized body. The titling of the novel as 'The Sermon of Marie-Sophie Laborieux (not on the mount, but over some dark rum)' not only situates Marie-Sophie as narrator of the text, but the intertextual pun equates her with Christ (who preached The Sermon on the Mount). However, as *Texaco* unfolds, it reveals the increasing submergence and erasure of Marie-Sophie's voice by male voices. Within her narrative, it is her father, Esternome's voice that repeatedly takes over. In 'The Noutéka of the Hills', Esternome speaks in the first-person 'we' (*T*, pp. 123-132). As Marie-Sophie tries to reclaim her narrative, his voice interrupts again to speak in an escalating appropriation of the narrative that is signified by the increasing use of 'I'. 'Esternome was wallowing in his "I". I this. I that. I built the hutch, [. . .] I used West Indian cashew, [. . .] What do you know of these woods,

Marie-So? [. . .] I know. I. I. I. [. . .] I. I. I.' (*T*, pp. 133-35). Where the extract begins in Marie-Sophie's voice, it is quickly overtaken by Esternome's as he moves out of her mediating reported speech to speak directly in the first-person 'I'. It is, furthermore, his modes of expression that come through. Arnold sees Marie-Sophie as a 'ventriloquized body', through which the masculine voice of her father speaks.<sup>52</sup> It is not, however, solely her father who speaks through her. Her writing is heavily edited by Ti-Cirique, the authority on French. She describes how he carried out the task of 'correcting my horrors, giving sense to my sentences, He brought me his vocabulary, awakening in me a taste for the precise words I never mastered' (*T*, p. 325). Caught between trying to capture Esternome's 'Creole spinning' on one hand and Ti-Cirique's French precision on the other, Marie-Sophie's voice is subjugated and submerged by the very voices she is trying to communicate.

In tracing the 'itinerary of silencing', Marie-Sophie's tale is also increasingly embedded within the narrative structures of male texts. Her story is told to the Word Scratcher, who is aptly named Oiseau de Cham in a narcissistic play on Chamoiseau's own name. Initially appearing in brief references and footnotes, it is Oiseau de Cham who gradually emerges not only as the listener to Marie-Sophie's tale, but as the final editor of her texts – both oral and written. Oiseau de Cham eventually takes over the narrative 'I' in the final chapter, 'Resurrection'. In this definitive act of appropriation, he reduces Marie-Sophie to 'the Source' of *his* historical narrative. As it is revealed that the Word Scratcher is the one that ultimately speaks, the female body is effectively ventriloquized. It only appears that Marie-Sophie has been speaking throughout the narrative when,

in fact, her body masks the presence of the actual storyteller. In addition, this text is further embedded within the preambles of the author's timeline, 'Milestones in Our Attempts to Conquer the City' and the postscript of the 'Author's Acknowledgement' (*T*, pp. 3-6, 391). Therefore, the final 'resurrection' of *Texaco* is of the authorial 'I' in the figure of the Word Scratcher. It is he who speaks in the disembodied voice of the ventriloquist hiding behind the figure of Marie-Sophie, who is reduced to a zombie of the body, a powerless shell manipulated to serve his purpose.

This embedment of voices can also be seen as a distortion of the Creole strategy of 'opacity', discussed earlier in relation to *School Days* as an enabling strategy. In this case, the apparent density of the narrative serves to hide the overriding presence of the authorial 'I', in a reversal of functions. Where the disempowered made himself opaque to maintain a shred of self, the empowered here makes himself opaque to appear selfless.

The workings of the authorial 'I' reveal traces of the psychic division that plagued the colonized black man. The shadowy figures of the Word Scratcher and the Urban Planner are the split expressions of a narcissistic, divided and deceptive authorial identity that is doubled and redoubled in the text. The Word Scratcher and Urban Planner mirror each other and exist as doubles of the Chamoisean authorial 'I'. They are both similarly positioned as outsiders who become immediate listeners to Marie-Sophie's oral tale, and they both carry out the task of putting her words into writing. The initial difference in their roles as architect and writer, scientist and artist, is gradually diminished as the Urban Planner begins to mirror the Word Scratcher. In his notes, he writes, '[t]he urban planner no longer

chooses between order and disorder, between beauty and ugliness; from now on he is an artist' (T, p. 184). 'The Creole urban planner must from now on restart new trails [. . .]. That's why the architect must become a musician, sculptor, painter . . . – and the urban planner a poet' (T, p. 361). The conversion of architect to artist, urban planner to poet points to the mirroring of identities. In the final chapter, the rebirth associated with the Biblical account sees the resurrection of the Word Scratcher rather than the Urban Planner who is named, 'The Christ', in a further indication of the repeated substitution of roles.

Finally, the Urban Planner shows himself to be a projection of Chamoiseau's own voice. In his notes, the Urban Planner writes:

Here the well-learned, domineering, geometrical grid of an urban grammar; over there the crown of a *mosaic* culture to be unveiled. [. . .] The Creole city returns to the urban planner [. . .] the *roots of a new identity: multilingual, multiracial, multihistorical, open, sensible to the world's diversity*. (T, p. 220; italics added)

This is an example of the many instances when the language of the Urban Planner bears a distinct similarity to those of the Creolists found in their manifesto. It carries the same intellectual discourse of the semiotic analysis of space and the definition of Creole identity as multirooted. The defining terms refer uncannily to a 'mosaic' and 'diversity', as commonly repeated in the theoretical polemic.

Alongside the subaltern tale is a critical commentary voiced by the hidden presence of the authorial 'I'. The splitting of himself as both narrator and listener, inside and outside the text, points to a psyche of division and disjuncture that looks back to the colonial onslaught on male identity described by Fanon.

This subplot of male anxiety and desire is also divulged in the margins of *Texaco*, disrupting the manifest narrative of subaltern testimony. In the novel's

opening epigraph, Chamoiseau employs his first tactic of deception by citing

Hector Bianciotti:

What will the scribe recall, who through herself already tells of the stern destiny of all these women forever condemned to pregnancies [. . .]; these women who, while fighting – as much as men – to survive, made what is known as a fatherland, and whom calendars reduce to a few noisy holidays, to a vainglory after which streets are named?

Framing itself within such an apparent female subaltern discourse, the narrative

creates a framework for recovering these lost female voices and stories. The

Prologue that follows covertly reveals the narrative's underlying subterfuge:

TI-CIRIQUE'S EPISTLE TO THE SHAMEFACED WORD SCRATCHER: 'At the task of writing, more than a few might have seen my noble pencil pointing to the Olympus of feeling with many an elegant line, as suits a worthy gentleman; many might have seen me, *Universal Man*, rise above the oxygen of the horizons, exalting [. . .] in a French more French than that of the French, but not at all like you do it, you small pea lost in the pod of the monkeying of your Creolity or in Texaco's decrepit asbestos walls. Forgive me, Oiseau de Cham, but you lack Humanism – and especially grandeur.'  
REPLY OF THE PITIFUL ONE: Dear master, literature in a place that breathes is to be taken in alive . . . . (T, p. 9; italics in original)

This seemingly self-effacing quotation is a sleight of hand that covertly establishes

the Word Scratcher, Oiseau de Cham, or Chamoiseau, alongside the privileged

latter term on a chain of binary oppositions that include French versus Creole,

universality versus diversity, humanism versus living humanity, exterior versus

interior vision. It dissimulates its agenda by its ostensible self-remonstrations and

the self-depreciating terms of 'shamefaced' and 'pitiful'. Elsewhere, the Word

Scratcher refers to his own 'shameful anxiety' (T, p. 383). This marks a strategy of

pretence that seeks to disguise its political position. It gives the illusion of

undermining subjective sovereignty while providing a cover for the constitution of

itself as the subject. Furthermore, by effecting a self-criticism, the novel adopts a

doubled and split perspective – writer and critic, subaltern and intellect – that

points to a psyche of disjuncture. This self-conscious doubling manifests a desire to be dual and hybrid. There is a marked tension in the novel between the subaltern testimony and the self-conscious and self-directed gaze of the author. What emerges from the repeated musings about the Word Scratcher's abilities and marginality, is a sense of anxiety over his own positionality. *Texaco* reveals itself to be a male-centred narrative that masks its narcissistic literary performance under the guise of subaltern testimony, effectively ventriloquizing the female subaltern.

In another instance of the appropriation of women's bodies, Chamoiseau inscribes the chain of sexual relationships Marie-Sophie experiences as allegories of the developments of Martinique.<sup>53</sup> Chamoiseau depicts Monsieur Alcibiade as a black supporter of colonization and assimilation with France. His oedipal obsession with France causes him to deny all African ties and despise the black man. He is particularly mortified by the Negritude polemic advocated by Aimé Césaire. His rape of Marie-Sophie on the day of Aimé Césaire's election to the Fort-de-France Town Council is portrayed as his punishment of Marie-Sophie for her support of Césaire, and his vengeance upon the black body. Marie-Sophie's impregnation and subsequent infertility resulting from her abortion, represent the interminable reality of assimilation and the sterility it proceeded to impose on Martinique. Although Monsieur Alcibiade is subsequently punished by Marie-Sophie's beatings and the madness that consumes him, there remains something troubling about Chamoiseau's portrayal of rape:

It was no longer Monsieur Alcibiade sitting before me, but someone that I did not know, stemming in him with a deadly – fascinating – strength. [. . .] His invincible body shattered me with much striving, quartered me, boned me, ran me through. He grunted with vengeful joy (*T*, p. 254).<sup>54</sup>



The depiction of the rapist as possessing a 'deadly' yet 'fascinating' virility disconcertingly replicates the figure of the Antillean 'supermale'. By using sexuality allegorically to tell the story of Martinique, Chamoiseau appropriates and dehumanizes the female body in a way that suggests a latent misogyny. Even as the history of Martinique is violently inscribed onto the female body, it remains centred on Black Antillean masculinity which is now insidiously perpetuated under the guise of a *matadora*'s testimony.<sup>55</sup>

The concluding chapter of *Texaco*, 'Resurrection', is fittingly subtitled, '(not in Easter's splendour but in the shameful anxiety of the Word Scratcher who tries to write life)' (T, p. 383). The final 'resurrection' of the novel is not of the Creole space of the Texaco Quarter, the subaltern Creole subject, or the collective voice of the marginalized, but of the Chamoisean figure of the Word Scratcher. The inscriptions of a discursive subaltern subjectivity give way, in an act of epistemic violence, to a 'silencing' of the female subject. Her story, voice and body are appropriated for the ventriloquism of the male authorial 'I'. Upon her zombification, *Texaco* plays out the 'shameful anxieties' of the Martinican storyteller who continues to be defined by the emasculation, psychic division and predatory sexuality of the 'erotics of colonialism'.

If the Creolists continue to privilege the male storyteller as the voice of Creoleness, its mosaic properties cannot be fully generated and Martinican Creole identity will inevitably remain narcissistic, divided and male-centered. In the hyphenated space of the Creole continuum, Creole identity here remains ensnared by hierarchies and binarisms that hinder the creolization of identity and its dynamic constitution of diverse and pluralistic elements. The next chapter will

continue to explore the hyphenated space of Creole identity as its evolving cross-cultural and multinational relations shape the work of David Dabydeen.

## Chapter Five

### **Erecting Migrant Identity in a ‘Library of Graves’: Abjection and Entombment in David Dabydeen’s *The Intended***

I’m, if you like, a three of four-footed  
creature, a kind of latter day Anancy  
as many West Indians are.

David Dabydeen<sup>1</sup>

Migrancy traverses national, cultural and racial boundaries, creating hyphenated identities characterized by conflicts, contradictions and collaborations. The allegiances and disavowals engendered by David Dabydeen’s Indo-Caribbean and English affiliations will be explored in these next three chapters, particularly as they are played out in the figure of the trickster. As Dabydeen’s self-identified double, the trickster, guardian of crossroads and inhabitant of thresholds, in its multifaceted manifestations as the African spider, *Anancy*, the African god, *Esu*, the Afro-American *Signifying Monkey* and the postmodern bricoleur, serves as the nexus of inquiry into the hybridities of the Creole migrant.

In the semi-autobiographical *The Intended* (1991), Dabydeen charts the Guyanese migrant’s experience in postcolonial Britain, as the unnamed narrator aspires to gain access into the symbolic order of British society through the mastery of its literary codes and possession of the white female body. Postcolonial migrant identity here is formulated from the affiliations and disavowals of both a familial descent and a literary lineage, an ‘abjected’ Caribbean inheritance and a constructed British ‘family romance’. The text harnesses the surrogacies of

postcolonialism in order to erect a migrant 'I' from manoeuvring in the space of divided identifications between native and surrogate, inside and outside, black and white, slave and master, son and father. Harold Bloom's theory of the anxiety of influence sheds light on the rivalrous hatred and admiration underlying the patrilineal tie, even as its silence on racial difference serves as a platform from which to address the corruption of national and racial lineage wrought by colonialism.

Dabydeen is part of the Caribbean diaspora of Indian indentured workers to Guyana and subsequently England.<sup>2</sup> Sent to England from Guyana in 1969, Dabydeen explains his own cultural expatriation:

The modern condition is one of migrancy. We are here to stay but we are also here to move on if necessary. [. . .] Many of us are still immigrants. Intellectually or imaginatively we have not yet settled in the country.<sup>3</sup>

Migrancy is an 'unsettled' state of constant negotiation between the urge 'to stay' and 'to move on', between home and host. As Paul Gilroy explains, the 'black Atlantic' is about the relationship of identity to 'roots', which entails the 'restrictive bonds of ethnicity, national identification, and sometimes even "race" itself', as well as to 'routes', which involves 'a process of movement and mediation'.<sup>4</sup> Drawn in opposing directions, the migrant has to navigate the bonds of rootedness mentioned by Gilroy, the inevitable modification of those ties in the diasporic journey, and the sense of displacement and homelessness subsequently engendered.

According to his doubly displaced history, Dabydeen's Indo-Caribbean and English identity is constituted of multiple strands with conflicting national, racial

and cultural affiliations. Dabydeen stresses the pain and pleasure of negotiating these various strands:

One of the old themes in West Indian literature is the crisis of identity. I have a multiple identity. There is no crisis. There is a kind of delight as well as a kind of anguish in jumping from one identity to the next.<sup>5</sup>

This somewhat defensive insistence upon a 'multiple identity' without 'crisis' seeks to claim a plurality that is regenerative. However, the accompanying admission of 'delight' and 'anguish' expresses an ambivalence about the constant shifts in identity that betrays the bravado of the claim.

Dabydeen further claims and defines his multiple affiliative links as an empowering source founded on the African spider-trickster, Anancy:<sup>6</sup>

Writers are absolutely privileged to have this kind of plural, complex, contradictory, background and to be nourished by paradox. So in terms of self-definition I am glad I'm, if you like, a three of four-footed creature, a kind of latter day Anancy as many West Indians are, a spider figure with certainly one foot planted in Africa [. . .] one foot planted in India [. . .] one foot is planted in Europe [. . .] and then we have a foot planted in our own society, Guyana, and Guyana has its own foot planted in South America. So it is potentially an endless series of poetic feet.<sup>7</sup>

Dabydeen's identification with the Anancy of African folklore is significant because its multiple footings in diverse cultures and its fluidity of movement make it a fitting symbol of migrancy.

In Wilson Harris's exposition of the 'limbo-anancy syndrome', describing how the limbo dance originated on the slave ships of the Middle Passage in which space was so cramped that slaves contorted themselves into 'human spiders', he makes the connection between migration and the Anancy.<sup>8</sup> The 'waves of migration' to the Caribbean, which began with the exportation of slaves from Africa and continued with refugees and indentured workers, have, according to Harris, 'possessed the stamp of the spider metamorphosis'.<sup>9</sup> The Anancy invokes,

in part, the 'dismemberment of tribes' and their 'curious psychic re-assembly',<sup>10</sup> in a way that reflects the migrant experience. Dabydeen, as a migrant writer, lays claim to the manifold ancestral ties represented by the Anancy, as they offer him a myriad of identifications, constituting identities that can be fragmented, reassembled, continually reinvented and changed. The migrant also undergoes a metamorphosis when he is strung into a new web of interconnections. According to Houston J. Baker, '[a] web is a place and space of hybridity that creates, by its very presence in the world (which is often invisible, unseen, a gossamer of the margins) new combinations and juxtapositions'.<sup>11</sup> The migrant negotiates old and new ties which are themselves creolized, in a web of generative possibilities.

Dabydeen's claim to multiple lines of descent, however, also raises issues of parentage, surrogacy and the anxiety of influence. Lee M. Jenkins makes the pertinent observation that Dabydeen's oeuvre is thematically stricken with 'absent parents', namely his actual parents, his parent country of Guyana and the Caribbean parent language of Creole.<sup>12</sup> The perennial erasure of Dabydeen's Guyanese ancestry is compounded by his repeated avowal of surrogate parents. Most infamously, David Dabydeen has declared, '[T. S.] Eliot is the *parent* of Caribbean poetry. Isn't that peculiar? A racist, conservative, anglo-loving [person] like him, right!'<sup>13</sup> Dabydeen explains that this is because 'Eliot is fragmentation', 'the disembodied consciousness', and the 'great escape artist' of Anancy, 'in the way that he escapes from Victorian verse, from meaning or from epistemologies'.<sup>14</sup> Dabydeen's attribution of these traits to Eliot, particularly in configuring Eliot as the epitome of the Anancy, speaks of a disavowal of his Caribbean heritage.<sup>15</sup> In a similar denial of native affiliation, he explains that his use of Creole in *Slave Song*

‘was influenced not by living in a village in Guyana, but by being in a library in Cambridge where I was reading medieval alliterative verse [. . .] and the medieval secular literature which was immersed in all kinds of obscenities and mischiefs’.<sup>16</sup> The displacement of Creole from postcolonial Guyana to medieval Britain may bear testament to the creolizations resulting from the cross-cultural affiliations of migration, but Dabydeen’s deliberate renunciation of native life for the foreign text speaks of a deeper anxiety of influence.

In *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973), Bloom applies Freud’s account of the Oedipal conflict to the literary scene, to argue that all literary activity is, in effect, the scene of a struggle between an ‘ephebe’ or ‘beginning poet’ and the crippling influence of powerful literary forefathers.<sup>17</sup> The Oedipus complex describes the rivalrous hatred and incestuous love the child feels towards their parent ideals. Likewise, the ephebe’s attitude towards his father-poet is ambivalently compounded by admiration and hatred, envy and fear of the father’s pre-emption of his imaginative space. The ephebe circumvents the anxiety of influence or ‘spectral blocking agent’ through a deliberate and creative misreading or misprision of his literary predecessors.<sup>18</sup> The ephebe strives to anticipate his forerunner and be original or self-born and autonomous.

The patrilineal premise of Bloom’s influential theory has been faulted for its exclusion of female precursors and ephebes, in its description of heroic battles between literary fathers and sons.<sup>19</sup> After all, its theoretical premise is founded upon Freud’s equally phallogentric Oedipal complex.

In the colonial context, the probing of Bloom’s theory necessarily extends to its silence on the matter of racial difference. Does the patrilineal anxiety of

influence apply, unhampered, to the colonial father and colonized son, as national and racial lines of ancestry and affiliation are intermixed? For the postcolonial ephebe, the battle is not just against a forefather's reading but against a *colonial* forefather's reading. Furthermore, it is a battle against the colonial father's reading of him as a colonized subject. In addition, bonds of patrilineal affiliation have also been irrevocably altered by the inter-national and cross-cultural identifications brought about by colonialism.

Dabydeen's semi-autobiography does not simply recount the process of replacing a Guyanese parentage with British surrogates. Rather, it engages in a discriminating process of avowals and disavowals that is caught between a Caribbean inheritance and a British 'family romance', and between a familial and literary ancestry. According to Freud, the 'family romance' is the imagined family ideal. It can result in a child fantasizing about 'getting free from the parents of whom he now has a low opinion and of replacing them by others, who, as a rule, are of higher social standing'.<sup>20</sup> This can 'serve as the fulfilment of wishes and as a correction of actual life' or may be motivated by 'revenge and retaliation' against one's parents.<sup>21</sup> In such cases, the child desires to 'rob those born before him of their prerogatives' through 'imaginative stories'.<sup>22</sup> The significance of imaginative story-telling to Freud's theory is not lost on Bloom, who, in his examination of the poet's rivalry with his predecessors, has located the origins of 'the anxiety of influence' in the 'family romance'.<sup>23</sup> The imagined 'family romance' is akin to the ephebe's misprision of literary fathers.

Colonialism has undoubtedly had an impact on the 'family romance' of the black subject. From families being torn asunder by the dislocations of the diaspora



to the separation of families and the miscegenation of family lines spawned by slavery, family lines were irrevocably shattered by colonialism. The devaluation of blackness and the black colony in colonial discourse also resulted in the disavowal of the native homeland and familial ties for the black man. For Dabydeen, the idea of family is further complicated by the fact that he was given up by his parents and placed into social care. It is a situation of being rejected rather than rejecting, disowned rather than disowning.

### **Black Blood, Black Words: Abjection in an Anglo-Guyanese 'Family Romance'**

*The Intended* enacts the conflict of a migrant Anglo-Guyanese identity, negotiating its allegiance to and disaffiliation from a Caribbean inheritance and an acquired English script. Critical debate has focused on determining the affiliations of the narrative voice. Margery Fee finds the narrator's desire for assimilation into white culture 'undercut mainly by irony and structural disjunctions in a way that problematizes this desire by revealing it as the construct of racist discourse and racist institutions'. Thus, despite the 'constantly uncertain and shifting loyalties of the young narrator', Fee reaches the conclusion that the author's final 'allegiance' is to a 'Guyanese and West Indian black identity'.<sup>24</sup> Examining the triple perspective offered in the narrative as a reflection of Dabydeen's own 'psychic divisions', Mario Relich shows how *The Intended* is ultimately 'subversive about British culture'.<sup>25</sup> In contrast, Benita Parry's reading of the novel's linguistic registers concludes that because the narrative fails to 'rupture received fictional form', the narrator remains a 'product' of the text, and his aspiration to 'The English Heritage' is not 'displaced'.<sup>26</sup> The divisive nature of the narrator's

perceived allegiance highlights the conflicting strands of affiliation in the text. It is necessary to look beyond the shifting loyalties in the narrative to examine the ambivalent identifications underlying those allegiances, in order to unravel the constitution of migrant identity.

In *The Intended*, the 'family romance' of migrant identity that situates its symbolic parentage in the literary, is predicated on the abjection of the Indo-Guyanese affiliation. The narrator's sketch of his homeland reveals his Indo-Guyanese ties and identity to be a source of abjection. As noted in Chapter One, Julia Kristeva defines 'abjection' as the process through which 'I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which "I" claim to establish *myself*'.<sup>27</sup> Abjection is a dialectical process that describes the dissolution and reconstitution of the self by the expulsion of what is perceived as alien or unacceptable to the self. Kristeva elaborates upon the bodily symptoms of this expulsion: 'Loathing an item of food, a piece of filth, waste, or dung. The spasms and vomiting that protect me. The repugnance, the retching that thrusts me to the side and turns me away from defilement, sewage, and muck'.<sup>28</sup> The bodily reactions function to expel that which threatens to defile the self and to allow the 'I' to be reconstituted. Abjection expresses the desire to 'become an other', in order to believe that 'I become, I give birth to myself'.<sup>29</sup> The birthing of oneself suggests the usurpation of a paternal function. Kristeva further identifies abjection in the child 'who has swallowed up his parents too soon', such that there is 'a failure to recognize its kin'.<sup>30</sup> The imaginary consumption of one's parents and accompanying self-birth, echo Bloom's assumption of the ephebe's desire for self-origination and imaginative autonomy.

In *The Intended*, the narrator's account of the Guyanese village of Albion is fixated upon its filth, poverty, incivility and its drunken, aimless inhabitants, in a way that reveals it to be a site of abject anxiety, self-loathing, shame and guilt. Anxieties over an irreversible conditioning in native culture and its irremediable defiling of the self are displaced onto the recurring motif of animal disembowelment. The narrator's memory of the farewell feast thrown to mark his journey to England includes a vivid description of a slaughtered lamb. In sickening detail, he recounts the screaming, disembowelling and skinning of the lamb, emphasizing the splattering blood which flooded the narrator's feet and paralysed him.<sup>31</sup> The overflowing blood and 'stench of raw flesh' (*TI*, p. 35) that mark this episode permeate each flashback memory of the village. The ensuing accounts of Albion are punctuated with nauseating images of animal killings and dismembering, like the disembowelled fishes with their eyes gouged out and black ants swarming round their eyes and gut, making the narrator's 'stomach turn' with the 'unbearable' stench (*TI*, pp. 57-58); the disfigured cock with the red rag protruding from its anus plunged into boiling water as a sacrifice to the goddess Kali (*TI*, pp. 125-26); the scalded mouse (*TI*, p. 154); the squashed louse that falls from Sita's head, leaving a 'horrible red mark' that makes the narrator faint (*TI*, p. 192); and the skull of the decapitated cow attached to a pole in the vegetable garden (*TI*, pp. 228-29). The animals, variously dismembered, killed or decaying, convey a sense of the perceived foulness of the village. The repeated references to staining blood, lingering smells, swarming flies, and the 'black dung everywhere which oozed between my toes', the stench of which could not be washed away (*TI*,

p. 227), all attest to an otherwise unspoken fear and dread of the defiling nature of the native environment, a 'black blood' that needs to be abjected.

In an intertextual allusion to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), the narrator points out that '[a]nimal images as a general rule betokened moral ugliness, indecency and the like' (*TI*, pp. 94-95). To apply the narrator's reading of Conrad's animal imagery to his own use of animals to sketch his past, would, by the logic of his own argument, reveal 'the horror' at the 'heart' of his village. It is the 'horror' of abjection that is manifested here, as the disgust and nausea evoked serve to expel the deeper dread of the homeland. By expelling the native affiliation that is perceived to defile the self, the subject is thus remade.

The 'horror' that the village holds for him is further revealed in a description of his mother:

Not only was she dark-skinned, she was *ignorant* as well. I looked at the cow's skull, ugly and broken and scarred by the weather and time, its jaws set in *silence*, its eyes *empty* of feeling, suddenly knowing that it resembled Ma. I longed to see the [white] doll again. (*TI*, p. 229; italics added)

In this metaphoric chain, the black mother or motherland is associated with 'ignorance', 'silence', and 'emptiness' of feeling, all of which signify a void that leads to death. She represents the lack of knowledge, language and power, which confer access to symbolic authority. The decapitated and denuded skull is a symbol of the perceived backwardness and barrenness of the native homeland. It also conveys a sense of the narrator's dread of being engulfed within the void. It is a lack of progress that he fears the most, an inability to rid himself of the native traits of ignorance and emptiness. As the narrator asks, 'Ma, is true all black people ignorant?' (*TI*, p. 238).

Progress, in the text, is achievable by two modes, namely words and the 'white doll', which also serve as the narrator's tools in his reconstruction of his 'family romance'. First, the narrator's Guyanese affiliation, his 'black blood', is specifically realigned to establish linguistic roots. The dread of silence, as a symptom of ignorance, is conquered by the power of words. As the narrator says, 'To me "black words" meant the language of Albion Village' (*TI*, p.148). 'Black words' refer to the vivid curses of Uncle Richilo and the myth-making story-telling of the villages. As the narrator divulges:

I hated the nastiness of the whole village. I hated my grandmother. Richilo was right to curse her [. . .]. I hid under the bed-sheet, trembling with fear yet aroused by his power of speech. I wished I could describe things like Richilo. [. . .] I was confident that when I grew up I would be as clever as Richilo in seeing things and using words. (*TI*, pp. 227-28)

In this telling passage, there is an underlying separation of the 'nastiness' of the village from a world shaped by words. The 'hatred' and abhorrence of the village is once again directed at the maternal figure, who represents the lack of language, and hence, power. In contrast, Uncle Richilo's ability to curse evokes and exercises the power of language, and is read as a sign of insight and ingenuity. Richilo is acknowledged as the inspiring source of the writer's recognition of the 'power of speech', and becomes the impetus for the narrator's drive to harness that power. In this way, the narrator's subsequent study of language and literature in Britain is directly rooted in his native influence. The image of the narrator's 'arousal' by the power of speech sets up a distinct link between the acquisition of language and the erection of a masculine identity. In another case, Peter's father becomes the village's centre of attention, through the fabrications of story-telling and imaginative reconstructions. As an 'insignificant peasant', he 'took on legendary

proportions' with the proliferation of stories and rumours, and was hence 'transformed into hero and villain' (*TI*, p. 56). In this instance, 'black words' stemming from the West Indian village have the power to transform the mundane into myth, endowing the 'insignificant peasant' with epic proportion.

As might be expected, the narrator's utmost disdain is reserved for those unable to master speech, and this contempt is manifested in his cruel treatment of Peter, the stammering playmate of his childhood. 'Peter was an idiot who [. . .] was stunted in growth of body and of mind. [. . .] He stammered too' (*TI*, p. 40). Peter's stammering is contrasted with the narrator's spelling proficiency and eloquence, and it represents all that the narrator is contemptuous of, but also anxious about. The inability to articulate and use words is a sign of ignorance, insignificance, and powerlessness that the narrator disavows. Thus, when Peter reveals his fear of the hideously disfigured Juncha, thought to eat boys who are unable to spell, the narrator punishes him not only for his weakness but for his illiteracy also: 'It was the most natural thing in the world to hurt him. [. . .] "You're a fat, stupid, ugly, country coolie," I cursed, and picked up a stick to lash his head' (*TI*, p. 154). The cruel treatment of Peter stems from the narrator's disavowal of what Peter represents. His stammering embodies his ineptitude in stepping onto the ladder of progress and power that is literacy.

Ultimately, the narrator's Guyanese affiliation is fraught with ambivalence. The identification with 'black words' is a 'family romance' that disclaims the 'ignorant' mother and claims a literary lineage. The disowning of one's kin results in an abjection that 'expels' itself in the nauseating images of death and disembowelment. At the same time, in the process of abjection, the self is

reconstituted; it 'becomes an other' through its own 'birth', rewriting its ancestral ties.

The Guyanese affiliation, as an abject identification, continues to threaten the redrawn boundaries of the self. As Kristeva explains, abjection 'does not respect borders, positions, rules,' and when it returns, it 'disturbs identity, system, order'.<sup>32</sup> The narrator's abject identification with his homeland is expressed by the refrains that haunt him. Aunty Clarice's reminder, 'you is we', and his mother's warning that 'Albion ghosts go follow you all the way to Englan' (*TI*, pp. 40 and 70; misspelling in original), both speak of a disturbance to the boundaries of identification he has drawn in the constitution of his identity. The refrains stress the haunting of the communal 'we' in the formation of the 'I'. As the words of maternal figures, they further destabilise the narrator's attempted relegation of the female to the voids of silence and ignorance.

The narrator's ambivalent avowals and disavowals in the construction of an Anglo-Guyanese 'family romance' are intensified upon his arrival in postcolonial London. In the imperial motherland, he is forced to confront the racist white gaze, his Caribbean affiliations and the anxiety of influence in the rewriting of a literary paternity.

## Entombments and Epitaphs: Intertextuality and Identification in a 'Library of Graves'

The conflict of black and white affiliation in *The Intended* is further complicated by its 'parabiographical' nature. This section will examine how the Creole migrant ephebe variously entombs and resurrects his ancestral predecessors – inherited and adopted, familial and literary – according to the desires and anxieties of his subject formation.

The vivid accounts of displacement and discrimination together with the earned insights into racial difference from a retrospective perspective, appear to point to *The Intended* as Dabydeen's autobiographical *bildungsroman*. The child narrator's journey from Guyana to London, placement in social care by his divorced father, literary endeavours, and academic success signalled by entry into the elite circle of Oxford / Cambridge University, mirror Dabydeen's own migratory route and experience.<sup>33</sup> Despite these evident parallels, Dabydeen asserts that *The Intended* is a version of V. S. Naipaul's, rather than his own, literary progress into Englishness.<sup>34</sup> Also, the title of *The Intended* is clearly a reference to Kurtz's fiancée in *Heart of Darkness*, which is a novel variously studied, debated, filmed, parodied and interpreted in Dabydeen's story. Undoubtedly, Dabydeen has positioned his text within the lineage of canonical writing. This necessarily raises questions about a life-story that is composed out of the texts of others, as it indicates a pre-scripted textual self that has been determined from without.

The composition of identity in relation to the writings of predecessors is termed, 'parabiography'. As defined by Tobias Döring, 'parabiography' is 'life-writing' that is placed '*next to and opposed to* what has been written before' and so 'counters and continues the canonical achievements of a literary father'.<sup>35</sup>



‘Parabiography’ simultaneously maintains and disrupts its ties to its literary forefathers, rewriting that which it repeats, resisting that which it recuperates. In Döring’s reading of *The Intended*, the narrator’s attempt to master the literary codes that he believes hold the key to cultural access, is aimed at undermining Naipaul’s quest for ‘self-formation’ through literature and writing.<sup>36</sup> Döring reaches the conclusion that, ‘[b]y commemorating and obliterating their exemplary significance’, Dabydeen’s texts are written with ‘avowed intentions to entomb both Conrad and Naipaul’.<sup>37</sup> Karen McIntyre identifies a similar strategy of ‘literary decolonization’ in the novel, manifested in the way it ‘undertakes a thorough examination of the very creative and critical principles out of which it is itself constructed’.<sup>38</sup> Both Döring and McIntyre pinpoint *The Intended*’s premise of locating its own narrative within a framework of literary traditions and references that it proceeds to deconstruct.

It is, however, the psychodynamics of identification that needs to be examined in *The Intended*’s formulation of a migrant ‘I’ through parabiography. In Jacques Lacan’s early theory of subject formation, the child first experiences itself as a fragmented body of disjointed limbs in the ‘imaginary’ phase. Upon entry into the ‘mirror stage’, the child identifies itself with the mirror image of wholeness and experiences a sense of mastery and autonomy. Being constructed in language, it variously equates with, or differentiates itself from, ‘phantoms’ or others in the relational constitution of identity. This ‘Ideal I’ that forms the self is a ‘méconnaissance’ or ‘misconstruction’, for it only offers an illusory sense of mastery that will continually elude the subject and confront it with self-alienation.<sup>39</sup> In *The Intended*, the narrative’s formation of migrant identity in the

reconstructed 'family romance' can be likened to the erection of an 'Ideal I'. The assumption of an English literary pedigree imparts an illusory sense of autonomy to the Guyanese migrant who must then confront the anxieties of influence and the racist white gaze, and be haunted by the phantoms of his native disaffiliations.

The black man's self-image, according to Frantz Fanon's model of colonial subjectivity, is fragmented because he must internalize the self-as-other. In Homi K. Bhabha's reading of Fanon, identity is situated in the ambivalent place between the Self and Other:

[T]he very place of identification, caught in the tension of demand and desire, is a place of splitting. The fantasy of the native is precisely to occupy the master's place while keeping his place in the slave's *avenging* anger. 'Black skin, white masks' is not a neat division; it is a doubling, dissembling image of being in at least two places at once that makes it impossible for the devalued, insatiable *évolué* [. . .] to accept the colonizer's invitation to identity: 'You're a doctor, a writer, a student, you're *different*, you're one of *us*.' It is precisely in that ambivalent use of 'different' – to be different from those that are different makes you the same – that the Unconscious speaks of the form of otherness, the tethered shadow of deferral and displacement. It is not the colonialist Self or the colonized Other, but the disturbing distance in-between that constitutes the figure of colonial otherness – the white man's artifice inscribed on the black man's body.<sup>40</sup>

The colonial subject is constituted in the 'in-between' space between colonizer and colonized and this is predicated upon the fantasy of being simultaneously identified with two opposing positions. Bhabha's depiction also highlights the fact that the postcolonial subject is susceptible to an 'anxiety of acceptance', which is the fear of being closed off from the colonizing circle and rejected by the colonizer. The colonizer's invitation to identity not only holds the threat of exclusion for the *évolué*, but the interpellative power of relegation to otherness as well, regardless of inclusion.

Significantly, the *évolué* described is uncannily reminiscent of Dabydeen's own background as student, writer and doctor (of philosophy). Himself a migrant, Bhabha's description of the psychic splitting undergone by the *évolué* sheds particular light on the 'doubling' undergone by subjects living in the 'borders' of society, such as migrants, where the experience of being 'different' and 'the same' is acutely felt. Bhabha stops short of expounding upon the psychodynamics of 'colonial otherness'. His conception of ambivalence in identification obscures what Benita Parry, quoting Fanon, characterizes as the 'murderous and decisive struggle between two protagonists'.<sup>41</sup> The implacable opponents of Fanon's Manichean battle may not be able to resolve their antagonism, but how specifically are they reconciled in the identifications of the *évolué*?

The key to unravelling migrant identity lies in the psychical dynamics of identification. According to Diana Fuss, identification is 'the play of difference and similitude in self-other relations,' and it 'sets into motion the complicated dynamic of recognition and misrecognition that brings a sense of identity into being,' while 'also immediately call[ing] that identity into question'.<sup>42</sup> Fuss's understanding of identification draws attention to its volatile and contradictory nature. Based on Freud's account of cannibal-parricide in *Totem and Taboo*, Fuss establishes the ambivalence of identification, as it holds the possibility of the contradictory feelings of love and hate. Identification operates as a process of violent negation and possession, as 'the Other is murdered and orally incorporated before being *entombed* inside the subject'.<sup>43</sup> Entombment is an incorporation of the Other that seeks to assimilate and annihilate that which is incorporated.

The idea of entombment may also be derived from *The Intended's* references to tombstones and graveyards. When Mr Ali's sister from Pakistan dies, the narrator is asked to write her epitaph. The writing of the epitaph marks the commencement of his literary ambition to gain entry into the white symbolic circle. He imagines that his name 'chiselled in stone' will bestow upon him a permanent individuality that he terms, 'your only-ness' (*TI*, p. 245). As he admits, 'I fancied that my own immortality was secured by the verse on her tombstone' (*TI*, p. 141). In his composition of the epitaph, the narrator resorts to what Shaz calls, 'old-fashioned white-people expression' (*TI*, p. 146), because it is intended to mark his own fluency in British cultural codes. The epitaph bears scarcely any trace of the life of Mr Ali's sister, for the writer is the subject of his own work. Entombment here is not merely a burial, but a textual mediation, an act of authorship that empties out the ancestral body upon which it writes.

The concept of entombment is further illuminated in Dabydeen's poem, 'Coolie Odyssey' (1995). Here, the descendant poet returns from England to his native Albion village to attend a funeral, and finds a 'library of graves':

There are no headstones, epitaphs, dates.  
 The ancestors curl and dry to scrolls of parchment.  
 They lie like texts  
 Waiting to be written by the children  
 For whom they hacked and ploughed and saved  
 To send to faraway schools. [. . .]  
 Still we persist before the grave.  
 Seeking fables.  
 We plunder for the maps of El Dorado  
 To make bountiful our minds in an England  
 Starved of gold.<sup>44</sup>

The scene that is set is of an unmarked graveyard with unidentifiable ancestral bodies. Their dead bodies are likened to 'texts' in a 'library of graves', but they are

‘texts’ that have yet to be written. Ancestral bodies are, in fact, figured as blank ‘scrolls of parchment’ awaiting the inscriptions of their migrant children.

Ancestors are destined to be lost in anonymous history otherwise. Their reinsertion into historical narrative lies in the hands of their children, who can restore to them the individuality of ‘headstones, epitaphs, dates’. It is perhaps fitting that the poet has missed the funeral, for funerals are commemorations of the departed. In the poem, the descendants ‘plunder’ ancestral graves in order to profit their own ‘minds’. Entombment describes this process of turning ancestors into blank slates upon which descendants may write their own scripts.

In *The Intended*, the narrator’s desire for his epitaph to serve as a sign of his cultural arrival remains unrealized. Upon searching for his inscribed tombstone in the graveyard, he finds that the tombstone bearing his poem is indistinguishable amidst the ‘thousands’, and his poem is lost in ‘a jungle of competing slabs’ (*TI*, p. 232). This image makes clear that the anxiety over anonymity and the fear of dissolution belong, not to the ancestor, but to the descendant. The ‘jungle’ imagery invokes *Heart of Darkness* once again, except the jungle has metamorphosed into a metropolitan maze of tombstones and texts.

The analogies between graveyard and library, bodies and texts, center on the epitaph as the epitome of writing. The recurring motif of burial grounds in Dabydeen’s writing speaks of a disquiet about authorship. It hints at the anxious desire and fear tormenting the ephebe who plunders the grave of his ancestors repeatedly to conjure and entomb their ghost in an effort to re-write his own identity. Entombment is a version of Freud’s tale of cannibal-parricide. Writing as entombment points to the ‘totem feast’. According to Freud, the ‘totem feast’ is ‘a

repetition and a commemoration' of the original act of parricide, except the 'father' is never departed but more powerful in death than in life.<sup>45</sup> Eliot makes a similar point in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1919) about the artist who is always valued and judged in 'relation to the dead poets and artists' in any act of creation.<sup>46</sup>

Entombments engender phantom hauntings which result in an intensification of the anxieties of influence in the writer. Consider Dabydeen's remarks made in an interview:

Sometimes I feel though that I am an allusion to an allusion to an allusion. I'm like one of Eliot's footnotes. I'm just a footnote to an Eliot poem which is in turn a footnote to other writings by other peoples. That's part of the idea of *disappearing* – there is no fixity, there is no structure; in my head are just echoes of everything.<sup>47</sup>

Dabydeen's comments belie a fear of '*disappearance*'. As an 'allusion' is a reference, or the trace of another trace, becoming 'an allusion to an allusion' moves one further and further away from the original source. One threatens to get lost and expire in the receding chain of allusions. The 'footnote' is not only marginalized but excluded from the main body of the text. It signals non-entry into the central work. Dabydeen's admission here echoes the similar anxiety of anonymity and dissolution expressed by the narrator of *The Intended*. The narrator's wish to have his name 'chiselled in stone' and to possess an 'only-ness' or unique existence and identity, reveal Dabydeen's implicit fear of being reduced to a mere allusion, footnote or echo. The literary lineage claimed confers a sense of identity that it also threatens to dissipate.

*The Intended* works on one hand to claim affiliation with literary fathers, and on the other to entomb them in order to privilege the priority of the self. In an act of misprision, the narrator revisits the genre of Naipaulian autobiography in

order to claim and disclaim Naipaul's veneration of the 'English book'.<sup>48</sup>

Dabydeen's engagement with Naipaul and Conrad is an attempt to negotiate a textual space and migrant identity between allegiance to and disaffiliation from an acquired English script.

In disclaiming the canon, the text realigns its identification with the representative figure of blackness in the novel, Joseph. A Rastafarian of African descent who is illiterate, Joseph functions in the text on different levels. Joseph is a stereotypical figuration of one of Conrad's African natives, for 'in his dirt, shabbiness and torn clothing, he did look the very picture of a primitive mixing colours from crushed bone and blood to decorate his cave' (*TI*, p. 193). Shaz says he is 'just like one of those savages chewing bones on the riverbank and scooting off whenever the white man blows the steamer-horn' (*TI*, p. 106). In a separate line of descent, Joseph is also a representative of the narrator's Guyanese village; one of the 'Albion ghosts' whom the narrator's Ma warned him would follow him to England. He is viewed as a substitute for the Albion villagers in the narrator's chain of association. He is there to expiate the narrator's guilt, as he serves as the displaced vessel for the narrator to 'make up' for his cruel treatment of his childhood companions (*TI*, p. 240). The narrative sets up a metonymic chain that links Joseph to the narrator's grandfather, whose walking stick navigating in the mud reappears as Joseph's 'stick gouging letters in the mud' (*TI*, p. 196). As a ghost from his past, Joseph is the narrator's 'dark shadow' who, he concedes, is 'drawing me back to my dark self' (*TI*, p. 96). The narrator finally acknowledges that Joseph, who is 'doomed to be a coon', is 'my dark self' (*TI*, p. 196).

Joseph is also mentioned as an intertextual reference in Daybdeen's other novels, *Disappearance* (1993) and *The Counting House* (1996), in which the inscription, '*Ex Libris Joseph Countryman*' is found in an old book in the former, and 'The Last Will and Testament of Joseph Countryman, 1812', is discovered in the old plantation estate mentioned in the latter.<sup>49</sup> In these oblique intertextual allusions, Joseph Countryman is established as an owner of an early 'English book' and an author of 'English writing'. Tied to this ancestor by name, Joseph can claim both ownership and inheritance of English literature.

On a textual level, Joseph's interpretation of texts is placed in sharp contrast to the narrator's scholarly expositions as the 'professor'. Using Roland Barthes's terms, Joseph's readings have been variously interpreted as an 'intuitive understanding' of words, of their 'connotative as opposed to denotative function',<sup>50</sup> or as a mockery of the narrator's "'readerly" interpretations of English literature, safe meanings conforming to a strict set of rules', by means of 'open[ing] a new space in the text with his "writerly" intuition of what literature is all about'.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, in contrast to the narrator's attempt to convey the 'universal', Joseph reveals his understanding of the relativity of interpretation: 'A film is like mirror, [. . .] everybody who watch it see something different but it not necessarily what they want to see' (*TI*, p. 157). The narrator's 'standard trick' of deciphering 'the theme of appearance and reality' is seen by Joseph to be encaging the free expression of a work (*TI*, p. 95). His transformation of the word, 'cocoon', into a mode of self-identification provides a counterpoint to the narrator's attempted metamorphosis through literature. Joseph represents a different epistemological framework that stems from his experiences. The contrast is made by the narrator himself. In his



inability to convey his feelings to Janet, he admits that he was 'always trying to structure the expression of my desire for her so as to make it impersonal, philosophic, universal, but always failing, my plain needs leaking through the cracks in words' (*TI*, p. 243; italics added). In an allusion to Eliot's *Four Quartets* (1944), the 'cracks in words' undermine the surety of the philosophic and literary tradition.<sup>52</sup> These gaps in language highlight that which is unexpressed or inexpressible. Fittingly, it is Joseph's alternative language that speaks in these verbal fissures, as exemplified by his quest to convey the 'nothingness, colourlessness, the sightlessness of air, wind, the pure space between' (*TI*, p. 133).

The narrator's idealization of education as a key to gaining entry into whiteness is shattered by the haunting figure of Joseph. In the Oxford University library, within whose 'guarded walls [. . .] entry is strictly forbidden to all but a select few', he declares, 'I am no longer an immigrant here, for I can decipher the texts' (*TI*, p. 195). However, at that very moment, he is haunted by the memory of Joseph, who penetrates his refuge. The narrative's debunking of the myth of achieving whiteness through language and literature is an entombment of Naipaul. *The Intended* demystifies the myth of England even as it holds it up for emulation. As the narrator comes to realize, London is just as predisposed to 'this dirt and shame called Balham, this coon condition, this ignorance' (*TI*, p. 230). The abject filth and 'ignorance' of the Guyanese affiliation he disavows return to haunt him in England.

To fend off the native ghosts, Joseph's suicide represents a final attempt to entomb the narrative's black affiliation. Joseph is unable to survive in a society that continues to venerate the 'English book' and deny entry to those who do not

conform to its codes. His death testifies to the power of the system and the entrenched rules. Joseph's death removes the obstacle to the narrator's literary and cultural quest. In the same way, the death of Mr Ali's sister and the narrator's abjection of his village all work to entomb his black native affiliation, paving the way for the erection of a literary migrant subject in a reconstituted 'family romance'.

Ultimately, the narratorial persona is neither exclusively nor permanently identified with either position of white or black affiliation. Further de-individualized by the white gaze as an 'Asian' (*TI*, p. 15), the narrator is trapped in the 'place of splitting' in-between black and white, Indo-Guyanese and Asian, West Indian and English. Even as he seeks to deny his Asian affiliation, he is forced to acknowledge that they were 'yet my kin' (*TI*, p. 15). His recognition of his communal Asian identity effects a division of his identification that is demonstrated when Nasim is involved in an accident while escaping from a racially-driven attack. The narrator is overcome by a hatred of Nasim that reveals itself to be a self-loathing:

I hated him. A strange desire to hurt him, to kick him, overcame me. [. . .] He was a little, brown-skinned, beaten animal. His wounds were meant for all of us, he had suffered them for all of us, but he had no right to. It was Nasim's impotence which was so maddening, the shameful of it. (*TI*, p. 14)

The narrator's psyche is split in the simultaneous recognition and disavowal of Asian kinship and identification with the violent white attackers. It is a division that 'occupies the master's place while keeping his place in the slave's *avenging* anger'. In another incident of encountering a group of black youths aboard a bus, the narrator again experiences a splitting of identification:

I wished they would behave, act respectfully, keep quiet, read a book [. . .]. No wonder they're treated like animals, I heard myself thinking, distancing myself from all this noisy West Indian-ness, and feeling sympathy for the outnumbered whites. They should send them back home. All they do is dance and breed. Not one 'O' level between a bus-load of them [. . .]. I'm dark-skinned like them, but I'm different, and I hope the whites can see that and separate me from the lot. [. . .] I respect good manners, books, art, philosophy. I'm like the whites, we both have civilisation. (*TI*, pp. 177-78)

The narrator clearly identifies himself with the whites based on the racist assumption that aligns whiteness with education, culture and civilisation, and blackness with the ignorance that fills him with disparagement. However, the narrative forbids any stable identifications, for in the next instance, he is offered a cigarette and he confesses to the confusion of 'sudden hate and sudden companionship' (*TI*, p. 179). This underscores the fact that his affiliations are neither exclusively with Blacks or Whites, Asians or English.

*The Intended* claims the uncategorizable border identity of the permanently detached outsider, connected with but ultimately peripheral to all claims of culture, ethnicity, race and nation. The price it pays for this fluid and indeterminate sense of self is one of instability and constant movement. As the narrator confesses, 'I wanted to stop moving. [. . .] I didn't want to be born time and again. I didn't want to be an eternal, indefinite immigrant. I wanted to get off' (*TI*, p. 243). The constant shifts of identification are figured in the image of the permanent journey.

*The Intended*, Dabydeen reminds us, is 'set on buses and trains, [. . .] which represent the constant affliction as well as the creative potential of migration and diaspora'.<sup>53</sup> The sense of 'affliction' is one of rootlessness and homelessness that is experienced by the migrant. This permanent sense of exile is conceptualized by David Punter as the 'ghosting of the immigrant', which is the 'uncanny enactment of the plight of exile,' resulting from 'the internalisation of alienation [and]

foreignness,' which becomes 'the only but ambivalent ground on which a sense of self [. . .] can be painfully constructed'.<sup>54</sup> The 'ideal I' of the Creole migrant is 'ghosted' by a sense of internal exile, an estrangement from both his native Indo-Caribbean family and the surrogate British 'family romance'. It is a precarious identity that is haunted by the ancestors it entombs in attempting to author a new self, as well as by the threat of disappearance.

### **Erecting 'Intended' Entombments: Inscribing Female Bodies**

In the liminal space of identification, national and racial affiliations are inevitably crossed with those of gender. *The Intended* is a phallogentric text that erects its migrant 'I' and displaces its ambivalent identifications onto the entombed bodies of women.

The body of Janet shifts in the course of the narrative from being a means to fulfilling the narrator's desire for Englishness, to becoming the sign of Englishness itself. In *Heart of Darkness*, Kurtz's 'Intended' represents all the illusions about civilization in the face of the brute reality of Africa. Here, Janet serves a similar function as a signifier of the idea of Englishness to which the narrator desires to belong, even as he becomes increasingly aware that it is a constructed fantasy:

'But you are fragrant, you are everything I *intended*,' I blurted out [. . .]. In one accidental sentence I had finally confessed all the dreams I had stuttered out to her in a year of meetings. (*TI*, p. 243; italics added)

Janet is the scented signifier of the narrator's desire for assimilation and acceptance into Englishness. The female body serves as a gendered but desexualized sign of Englishness. The female becomes identified with the idealized

motherland, which brings about an obsession with purity and cleanliness, in line with the preoccupation with racial purity. Janet's 'fragrance' elevates and opposes her to the natural and material body of woman as well as to the narrator's motherland of Guyana. However, as Shaz tries to tell the narrator, 'She's not fragrant you know. [. . .] They bleed you know, they smell' (*TI*, p. 170). The reference to blood and odours harks back to his abjection of his native affiliation. Janet is the sign of Englishness in a way that Monica is not. Monica is depicted as a sexualized white female body, which explains why the narrator is able to have sex with Monica but fails with Janet. Janet cannot remain a material body, but must be abstracted into a signifier of the narrator's desires. This is why, despite his urge to 'smear [. . .] blackness over all that genteel Englishness' and leave her 'bruised and bitten and impregnated', he admits that '[d]eep down I preferred to believe in her photographs, I wished I belonged to her family and the village she came from with all its protections and confident virtues' (*TI*, p. 169). In this choice of affiliation between black and white, *avenging* slave and master, he identifies with the white master. Significantly, the shift in the configuration of Janet from sexualized body to symbol of Englishness occurs as a result of the narrator's inability to have sex with her. His sexual impotence is replaced by his power with the pen, the phallic substitute in his scheme of erecting identity through literature and language.

Consequently, the narrator figures the female body as a series of punctuation marks. He says of Janet, 'I imagined her curled under the blanket like a comma, or, [. . .] she straightened like an exclamation mark and her nipples confronted me like a colon daring me to conclude what I had timidly begun or to

explain it away' (*TI*, p. 145). Janet is literally figured as a part of the linguistic structure that the male writer utilizes. Tellingly, she is figured as punctuation marks rather than as an alphabet, because in the text's focus on male subjectivity, language is the reserve of men. The female body merely serves as punctuation in the scripting of male desire. In an allusion to his earlier impotence with Janet, the narrator reveals that this 'literary fantasy' of Janet's body as a page of punctuation marks leaves him with 'a real feeling of incompetence' (*TI*, p. 145). It reveals the anxiety of erecting identity and gaining access into the white cultural order. It is a phallocentrism that plays out its desires and anxieties upon the bodies of women.

The narrator's depiction of Janet also reinforces his disavowal of the native motherland and adoption of white surrogate parents. Of Janet, the narrator says, 'I will be her dark secret, her illicit pregnancy, her undeveloped child' (*TI*, p.245). The parent-child metaphor significantly places him within a white lineage. The sexual and racial lines of influence come together in the image of the slave auction. As the narrator tries on a white shirt before Janet, he says: 'I felt like one of Shaz's whores, or a slave on an auction block. "It suits you perfectly," she said, with the authority of a mother' (*TI*, p. 243). The image of the feminized black slave at the hands of the commanding white colonizer merges with the image of child and mother. The historical lines of racial and sexual exploitation cross with those of affiliation and parentage.

The bodies of women also become markers of the narrator's racialized discourse. Janet is an embodiment of the white doll that fascinated him in his childhood. The white doll, in contrast to his Ma, who is 'dark and hairy and withered', 'bushy and nasty-looking like a malabunta nest,' has creamy white skin,

blue eyes and golden curls. Upon stripping the doll, he is 'paralysed' by her 'beautifully white and smooth, hairless' body (*TI*, p. 227):

[H]ow ragged I was compared to her rich dress; how dark-skinned and ugly [. . .]. The scent of her dress and her body made me feel unclean. [. . .] I wished Ma would send her back to England where she belonged, instead of trapping her here with all the coolie and nigger people, [. . .] so crude and ignorant were they. (*TI*, pp. 226-27)

The contrast here clearly privileges the whiteness of the doll above the darkness of his Ma who is representative of uncleanness, crudeness and ignorance. It establishes the disavowal of the native maternal in its desire for whiteness.

The Creole migrant in *The Intended* is ultimately erected on the entombed bodies of both inherited and adopted, blood and literary parents and the bodies of women. The sense of mastery and autonomy created by his self-fashioned 'family romance' of literary paternity proves to be illusory as he is haunted by phantoms of his native affiliation and the precursor texts of his literary forefathers. The Creole migrant who tries to bolster his sense of self by straddling the border between the inside and outside, centre and periphery, colonizer and colonized, white and black, may be doubly informed but is also doubly haunted by the entombed. In formulating a self out of the 'library of graves', Creole identity remains haunted by the appropriation of ancestral bodies, the anxieties of influence and the fear of disappearance. Even as Dabydeen claims the variability of the multi-legged Anancy as a symbol of a West Indian migrant identity, the variously affiliated migrant remains an outsider on the borders of those cultures and races which he claims to have a foot in.

## Chapter Six

### The 'Phantom Limb': Hybrid Frames of Influence and Identification in *Turner*

You are trying to escape from landscape,  
body, history, by having a kind of unborn  
foetus in the sea as a way of just disappearing  
from concepts.

David Dabydeen<sup>1</sup>

In the foreground of J. M. W. Turner's renowned 1840 painting, 'Slavers throwing overboard the dead and dying – Typhoon coming on' (commonly known as 'Slave Ship'), there lies the shackled limb of a drowning African slave amidst the overshadowing vibrancy of a stormy sea.<sup>2</sup> David Dabydeen resurrects this drowned figure in his poem, *Turner* (1995), so that the previously silenced and faceless slave can now give voice to what was unspeakable for and unsaid by its original creator. The conversing with forebears or ancestral ghosts and the anxiety of influence both giving rise to and arising from this encounter form the impetus to *Turner*'s strategically politicized hybridizations as well as to the ambivalent identifications and disavowals of the text. As a counter-narrative born out of visual and verbal interactions, *Turner* not only challenges the original paternal painting, but also interrogates the aesthetic and discursive frames within which questions of identity and history were institutionally constituted. It achieves this by invoking Wilson Harris's concept of the 'limbo gateway' wherein structures of time, space and identity are traversed in fluid crossings, and by effecting the partializing and proliferating processes of hybridity as theorized by Homi K. Bhabha. Beyond an overtly politicized investigation of *Turner*, which is in many ways shaped by



Dabydeen's extra-textual frames, this chapter will unhinge Dabydeen's own framework in order to explore the traces of a subtext which symptomatically testify to a postcolonial anxiety of influence and the complicities of Dabydeen's own identifications.

*Turner* is a picture poem, taking the form of 'ekphrasis', which seeks to give a written account of the silenced or marginalized figures in visual representations.<sup>3</sup> Dabydeen's oeuvre is marked by an interest in visual-verbal representations, from his debut poetry collection, *Slave Song* (1984), which juxtaposes images of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century engravings of slaves with their composed poetic 'songs' to evoke verbal-aural responses to their mute enslavement in visual form, to his novel, *A Harlot's Progress* (1999), named after William Hogarth's prints and relating the tale of the black servant boy to Moll Hackabout.<sup>4</sup>

The ekphrastic form is viewed as an effective strategy for postcolonial rewritings because of its subversive rendering of the original artwork from the point of view of the marginalized or colonized. In a reading of Dabydeen's 'Dependence, or the Ballad of the Little Black Boy' (1985), a poem voiced by the black boy from Francis Wheatley's famous 'Family Group in a Landscape' (circa 1775), Werner Senn posits an identification between Dabydeen and the marginalized black boy, wherein the latter is made the 'mouthpiece' of the former in an 'act of defiance' that 'de-centres the painterly vision'.<sup>5</sup> The dynamics of identification in *Turner* are more complex than the equation suggested by Senn. Focusing on *Turner* as a linguistic re-presentation, William Fiennes locates its strength in the way it simultaneously parades and ridicules the inheritance of

colonial literature and language.<sup>6</sup> Karen McIntyre lauds *Turner* as the ‘embodiment of postcolonial creative decolonisation’ in its continual and processional, rather than static and hegemonic, overcoming of authority and priority in negotiating history and identity.<sup>7</sup> Reading *Turner* within a wider Caribbean tradition of manifesting the sublime in rewriting epic poetry centered on the historical fact of transportation, Aleid Fokkema compares the ‘loss of self’ brought about by migration with the ‘heightened sensation’ produced by the sublime aesthetic to conclude that *Turner* engages with a Caribbean sublime that is committed to politics and literature alike.<sup>8</sup>

In John Ruskin’s well-known exaltation of Turner’s ‘Slave Ship’, he famously celebrated Turner’s artistic achievement and evocation of the sublime,<sup>9</sup> while relegating the subject of Turner’s painting – the drowning of African slaves for profit – to a brief footnote on the ‘guilty ship’: ‘She is a slaver, throwing her slaves overboard. The near sea is encumbered with corpses’.<sup>10</sup> Ruskin’s acclamation proves, for Dabydeen, how the horror of slavery ‘reads like an afterthought, something tossed overboard’.<sup>11</sup> Ruskin’s ekphrasis demonstrates how the history of slavery is rendered secondary, not only to artistic creation and aesthetic consumption, but, according to Tobias Döring, to the critic’s ‘power of description’, which itself becomes a form of ‘verbal sublime’, ‘a standard to mark and measure the intensity of emotional grandeur’.<sup>12</sup> Döring shows how Dabydeen’s postcolonial ekphrasis ‘presumes power to represent, reframe and counter the aesthetic manifestations of the colonial gaze’.<sup>13</sup> *Turner* is extolled as a subversive and revisionary ekphrasis. None of the above critiques considers the anxiety of

influence arising from an ekphrastic rewriting or explores the implicit motivations of misprision.

Ekphrasis, as an engagement with the unmaking of semiotic power in a precursor text, with the word seeking to rival and replace the image, bears out Harold Bloom's hypothesis of misprision and the anxiety of influence. As defined in the previous chapter, the ephebe, who is 'in expectation of *being flooded*', and yet feels a compelling need to be autonomous and original, circumvents the anxiety of influence through the misprision of his literary predecessors.<sup>14</sup> The belated postcolonial poet safeguards his own sense of autonomy and priority by the distortion of the parent poem, but he cannot avoid embodying the deformed parental text in his own account.

Dabydeen's postcolonial ekphrasis works by effecting the partializing and proliferating processes of hybridity. Homi K. Bhabha determines that hybridity discloses the trace of the other in representations of the selfsame and resituates monolithic categories of race, class and gender in terms of interstices and in-between spaces. According to Bhabha:

[Hybridity] unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but reimplicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power. [. . .] Hybridity represents that ambivalent 'turn' of the discriminated subject into the terrifying, exorbitant object of paranoid classification – a disturbing questioning of the images and presences of authority.<sup>15</sup>

Hybridity is the 'repetition of *partial presence*', that articulates those disturbances of cultural and racial difference that 'menace' the narcissistic demands of colonial authority.<sup>16</sup> It exposes the gap between the normative colonial sign and its distorted colonial signification. It is in this gap, the 'in-between' spaces where 'the overlap and displacement of domains of difference' occurs, that 'cultural difference' can be

negotiated.<sup>17</sup> Bhabha terms this interstitial zone the 'Third Space of enunciation', in which 'meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity' and 'the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew'.<sup>18</sup> In this indeterminate hybrid space, homogenized and binary notions of history, culture and identity can be contested and recreated.

In a rare instance of historicizing his theoretical concepts, Bhabha credits the Guyanese writer, Wilson Harris for 'reveal[ing] the cultural and historical dimension of that Third Space of enunciations'.<sup>19</sup> Citing Harris's call to 'descend into that void' 'attending every assimilation of contraries', Bhabha sees this confrontation as the precondition for the articulation of culture's hybridity.<sup>20</sup> Although Bhabha's mention of Harris is fleeting, Harris has, in fact, theorized a form of hybridity that is specific to the Caribbean, in the form of 'limbo' and its related concepts of the 'limbo gateway' and 'phantom limb'. Harris reclaims the 'void' of the Middle Passage as a 'limbo gateway' epitomizing myths of dismembering and re-membering. The dehumanizing constrictions of the Middle Passage may have primarily brought about death and destruction, but they also prompted cultural regeneration. The 'limbo gateway' bears the 'assimilation of contraries' as it is a physical and psychical threshold between the old and new world, the past and the future. It is a liminal space of fluid displacement, creation and reconfiguration. The connection to both the old and new worlds is exemplified by limbo dance, which, according to Harris, is 'a novel re-assembly out of the stigmata of the Middle Passage', being affiliated with Haitian voodoo, itself derived from African myths, as well as with the phantom limb, which 'bears archetypal resonances that embrace Egyptian Osiris, the resurrected Christ and the

many-armed deity of India'.<sup>21</sup> The limbo dance reassembles the multi-faceted 'muse' of the Caribbean people. As Harris explains, the limbo dance, with 'the high stilted legs of some of the performers and the spider-anancy masks of others running close to the ground' 'seeks to re-play a dismemberment of tribes' and 'to invoke at the same time a curious psychic re-assembly of the parts of the dead god or gods'.<sup>22</sup> In Geneviève Fabre's study of the limbo dance, she sees in its re-enactment of 'dismemberment and dislocation', the staging of 'the possibility of transformation through recollection, reassembly and movement', which expresses a 'desire to be born again' and the creation of 'new bonds and solidarity'.<sup>23</sup> In this way, the limbo dance emerges in the in-between space marking the severance from traditions and the experience of collective loss, as well as the rehistoricizing of historical and cultural symbols in order to generate new cultural meanings in a 'Third Space of enunciations'. It opens up a 'limbo gateway' in which episodes of disjuncture and dispossession are transformed into generative possibilities of inter-cultural hybridity.

Harris uses the 'phantom limb' to symbolize the concurrent loss and presence, destruction and creation of history. The 'phantom limb' conventionally refers to the lingering sensation of an amputated bodily part. It is a psychical memory of a physical dismemberment. The physical and psychical amputation of the black man was executed as he was wrenched from his homeland, cut off from his history, culture and community, and reduced to the dehumanized state of a slave. Harris identifies the creative potential buried in the 'phantom limb' that needs to be re-membered in order to reconstitute Caribbean identity. Harris calls for 'an activation of subconscious and sleeping resources in the phantom limb of

dismembered slave and god' in order to bring about a 'new poetic synthesis' and the 'renaissance of a new corpus of sensibility that could translate and accommodate African and other legacies within a new architecture of culture'.<sup>24</sup> Buried and forgotten cultural and historical resources need to be re-membered, re-synthesized and re-historicized to generate a hybridized culture.

In Dabydeen's *Turner*, the 'phantom limb' drowned in the sea of Turner's painting is revived as a slave ghost. As it can 'only partially recall the sources of its life, so it invents a body, a biography, and peoples an imagined landscape' ('Preface', *Turner*, p. 7). The slave's tale of recollections and inventions will be examined for the way it initiates a hybridizing of culture, along with the framing of his tale, which reveals the anxious complicities of its author.

### **'To Write the Absence of the Body': Turn(er)s of Hybridity**

The postcolonial body is hybridized as a slave ghost and an equally evanescent 'part-born' child in *Turner*. Responding to an interview question on writing the colonial experience via the body, Dabydeen expounds upon his recourse to spectral bodies:

I like the idea of disappearance. The absolute absence of bodies [. . .] emerges from a recognition that for black people, or for people from the colonies, your physique was yourself. [. . .] So therefore, what you really want to do now is [. . .] to write the absence of the body. That is why one creates ghostly figures, figures that want to disappear, figures that aren't actually born. Now you place them in the sea, so you don't need to give them a land. You are trying to escape from landscape, body, history, by having a kind of unborn foetus in the sea as a way of just disappearing from concepts. ('AH', p. 40)

The longing to disappear that Dabydeen expresses stems from a desire to escape from what Frantz Fanon describes as the 'fact of blackness'. Fanon identifies the

paradigmatic moment when the white man's comment, 'Look, a Negro!' results in the black man's interpellation by the white man's gaze and the shattering of his subjectivity.<sup>25</sup> This is compounded by the weight of '*historicity*', for as Fanon explains, 'I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. [. . .] I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, *slave-ships* [. . .]'.<sup>26</sup> The black man's exteriority becomes the mark of his inhumanity and the justification for the erasure of his interiority. The paradox of imprisoning the black man in the materiality of his skin colour while condemning him to cultural erasure has been painstakingly detailed by Fanon. The crippling colonial legacy of the white gaze continues to plague the postcolonial subject. Dabydeen's consciousness of the gaze of the other and his resentment over having to be 'always a spokesman for the tribe' ('AH', p. 42), carry Fanonian echoes of outrage at having to bear the oppressive weight of colonial ascriptions of blackness. Thus, 'to write the absence of the body' in 'ghostly figures' that resist materiality and fixity, functions first and foremost as a means to disengage with the power of the colonizing gaze and to escape from the 'fact of blackness'.

In *Turner*, Dabydeen's spectral figures are not merely a means of escape, for as they materialize in the 'limbo gateway' of the Middle Passage, they turn it into a site of haunting, transforming the discursive conditions of dispossession and dominance into grounds of intervention and the renegotiation of identities. The 'unborn foetus' thrown into the sea is a monstrous hybrid. Robert J. C. Young's rearticulation of Bhabha's 'third term' as a 'monstrous inversion, a miscreated perversion of its progenitors',<sup>27</sup> is materialized in the grotesque figure of the

stillborn in *Turner*. The 'part-born' inhabits a liminal 'in-between' space, hovering between death and life. As a baby, it heralds the future, but as the 'unconscious' ('Preface', *Turner*, p. 8), it harks back to a repressed past. Having been conceived on board the slave ship, it is likely to be a mulatto and a progeny of slave and master. In this case, it threatens the boundaries of white and black, self and other, inside and outside, revealing the trace of the other in the self, and undermining these dualisms by its amorphousness. Its hybridity also exposes the fear and desire underlying the colonial sign of the undifferentiated whole white body. In addition, the stillborn is part-human and part-animal, for '[t]hough human from the shape of its head', it is born on a 'strangled neck / Issuing like an eel from its chest' (*Turner*, XI, p. 21 and XVIII, p. 31). It is rendered grotesque and monstrous in its irreconcilable hybridity. Its description recalls colonial narratives of the primitives of the new world, but by its articulation of these disturbances of racial, cultural and historical difference, schematic structures, including those of the colonial script, are dissolved into instability.

The retrieval of the 'phantom limb' in the writing of the 'absence of bodies' also provides the platform for Dabydeen to engage with the 'secret art of invisibleness'. Bhabha theorizes the 'secret art of invisibleness' as a subversive strategy that challenges the 'I' occupying the place of presence and the position of mastery, with the 'eye' that counters the white gaze from a place of 'invisibility'.<sup>28</sup> The 'invisibility' of the 'eye' precipitates a 'temporality whereby the subject cannot be apprehended without the absence or invisibility that constitutes it'.<sup>29</sup> It is a 'supplement', in the Derridean sense of being 'the anterior default of a presence', a 'subaltern instance' and a 'substitute' whose 'place is assigned in the structure by



the mark of an emptiness'.<sup>30</sup> Based on Derrida's concept, Bhabha argues that the supplement 'not only substitutes a part for a whole (an eye for an I)', but that in the place of invisibility, it is 'the disembodied evil eye, the subaltern instance, that wreaks its revenge by circulating *without being seen*. It cuts across boundaries of master and slave; it opens up a space *in-between*'.<sup>31</sup> The eye, like the phantom limb, elides the self-presence of the 'I' and by its partial presence, marks the variability of identity, of presence through absence. Its circulation not only frustrates the fixity of difference but also opens up borders in between those binaries, in which reconfigured notions of identity can be formulated.

The logic of the supplement in the 'disembodied evil eye' is played out in *Turner's* proliferating chains of signification and identity and its fluid traversal of time, space and identity. The dissolution of the 'I' is effected by the multiplications and slippages functioning metonymically along the signifying chain of 'Turner' itself. First, Dabydeen's poem resurrects its forebear, the painter, Turner, as the captain of the slave ship. By naming the captain of the ship Turner, Dabydeen implicates the painter, Turner, in the depravities of the captain as well as the atrocities of slavery. Both the painter and captain of 'Slave Ship' are portrayed as being similarly economically and sexually motivated traders of slaves; each bearing the stigmas of being imperialists, mercenaries and paedophiles. Dabydeen's prefatory insinuation of 'Turner's well-chronicled love of children' and 'his extreme prudence with money' ('Preface', *Turner*, p. 8) may be ambiguous in its specific reference, but is clear in its attack. Both the captain and the painter are presented as complicit in the drowning of slaves for economic profit; the former in the transport, trading and insurance claims of slaves and the

latter in the aestheticizing of the horrors of slavery. Dabydeen makes the painter's complicity clear in his suggestion that '[t]he intensity of Turner's painting is such that I believe the artist in private must have savoured the sadism he publicly denounced' ('Preface', *Turner*, p. 8). Dabydeen's attack on the painter's private life is reiterated in an interview, in which he goes as far as to link Turner's painting with the neo-Gothic novel at the turn of the eighteenth century: 'all that horror and Neo-Gothicism partly fed on the descriptions of slavery, the shark, the broken nigger, the blood' ('AH', p. 43). The vicarious terrors excited by the Gothic novel, particularly as it exploited slavery for sensationalism, are likened to Turner's alleged 'sado-masochism' and his 'voyeuristic' and 'vulgar' treatment of 'the black body in pain' ('AH', p. 43).

It needs to be noted that Dabydeen's scathing view of Turner is not grounded in historical record but instead, suggests a form of Bloomian misprision. Marcus Wood notes that Turner left no substantial record of his views on slavery. From its initial reviews, 'Slave Ship' has, in Wood's survey, divided opinion, evoking responses which variously see it as sublime, absurd or politically effective.<sup>32</sup> It has even been aligned with the abolitionist cause, although this has been queried by some commentators.<sup>33</sup> Offering a different perspective to Dabydeen's, Paul Gilroy argues that the 'morality of the traffic in slaves offered a striking and appropriate symbol' for Turner's own 'elemental despair'.<sup>34</sup> As an indisputably complex work, Turner's painting provokes differing responses. Dabydeen's pointed defamation of Turner speaks of a misreading calculated to challenge the eminence of a forefather and his creation.

In addition to indicting the painter, Dabydeen extends 'Turner' into a symbol of racial and national complicity. The slave narrator identifies 'Turner' as 'All the fair men', 'the ones / With golden hair' (*Turner*, IV, pp. 14, 13). The relationship between the slave and captain Turner is a metaphor for the relation between the 'child-colony and father-country'.<sup>35</sup> The colony is violated under the guise of a civilizing mission to satisfy the avarice and sadism of the colonial 'father'. In the proliferation and elision of 'Turner' as an 'I', the text erases the self-presence of the 'I' and creates a crisis in the representation of the subject. By establishing a chain of signification, it highlights the impossibility of claiming an origin for the self.

'Turner' is also made the name of Dabydeen's poem, implicating both the colonizing violence of language and the aesthetic nature of colonialism. As established in the previous chapter, language is a weapon in the colonization of minds. In *Turner*, Dabydeen correlates the linguistic violation of tongues with the sexual abuse of bodies:

Aboard ship he gave selflessly the nipple  
 Of his tongue until we learnt to say profitably  
 In his own language, *we desire you, we love*  
*You, we forgive you.* He whispered eloquently  
 Into our ears even as we wriggled beneath him,  
 Breathless with pain, wanting to remove his hook  
 Implanted in our flesh. [. . .]  
 And we repeated in a trance the words  
 That shuddered from him: *blessed, angelic,*  
*Sublime;* words that seemed to flow endlessly  
 From him. (*Turner*, XXIV, p. 40; italics in original)

The inculcation of culture through the imposition of language is portrayed as an act of rape by the colonizer as an aberrant androgynous being. The 'nipple', suckled upon to acquire a foreign tongue, establishes the colonizer as a demonic maternal

being, at once nurturing and yet murderous in its gradual eradication and replacement of one's native language and identity. The 'hook / Implanted in our flesh', however, figures the insemination of language as a phallic violation. The colonizing force of language is thus figured as the work of an ambiguously androgynous fiend, at once maternal and phallic, nurturing and deadly, able to inflict pleasure and pain.

The reconstitution of Turner's painting in language is not guiltless. Dabydeen's use of the imagery of torture recalls Ruskin's description of Turner's ocean, 'after the torture of the storm'.<sup>36</sup> Dabydeen writes of language as 'a thicket / Of strokes, and dots like pits that trap' (*Turner*, XVII, pp. 29-30). The native tongue has been irredeemably corrupted by colonization. This explains why the slave narrator's Adamic desire 'to begin anew in the sea' and 'fashion new descriptions / Of things, new colours' (*Turner*, XXV, p. 41) is thwarted.

The slave's attempt to create an Edenic world is unattainable because of the corruption of language, art and nature. In the series of Turner's paintings reproduced in the pages of *Turner*, 'Chevening Park' and 'Sketch of a Pheasant' provide quintessential images of nature. They are strategically placed to suggest that they rest on Captain Turner's walls:

But we lay freely in his bed, gazed at  
Pictures on his wall. He held a lamp  
Up to his country, which I never saw  
In spite of his promises, but in images  
Of hedgerows that stalked the edge of fields,  
Briars, vines, gouts of wild flowers: England's  
Robe unfurled, prodigal of ornament,  
Victorious in spectacle, like the oaks  
That stride across the land, gnarled in battle. (*Turner*, XVI, p. 27)

Turner's paintings are depicted as a part of the colonial arsenal in the seduction of the native. Art and language legitimized and even aestheticized the horrors of slavery. In this way, *Turner* not only interrogates the painting, 'Slave Ship', but also implicates the aesthetic and discursive frames within which questions of identity were strategically and institutionally constituted. The paintings represent the myth of idyllic Britain but nature itself has been contaminated by the materialism and violence of the colonial enterprise. Its 'wild flowers' are coated with the artifice of ornamentation and its 'oaks' are twisted and deformed as if from battle. England's natural scene has acquired the profligacy, flaunting and aggression of its colonizing inhabitants.

By its proliferation of 'Turners', the poem creates a chain of complicity. Meaning resides in the 'in-between' spaces of the signifier, 'Turner'. The subversive circulation and transgression of barriers effects the work of the 'disembodied evil eye', wrecking revenge on its invisibility by displacing the presence of the 'I'. The 'secret art of invisibleness' works in the borderland of the unsaid and unseen. The text opens up a 'limbo gateway' where cultural and historical symbols are recontextualized and their meanings reconfigured in fluid negotiations.

The poem's sinuous temporal and spatial crossings also create a 'limbo gateway' in which different cultural traditions intermingle. The unanticipated oscillations between the present and the past fracture the path of the progressive linear narrative. For instance, the stillborn infant thrown from the slave ship lands in the backyard pond of the narrator's imagined childhood home, while the flicking of the farm cow's tail amidst childish play is unexpectedly transformed into the

lashing of whips in an ambush by the English colonizers who rape, plunder and burn. The poem shifts between old and new worlds, merging memories of Africa and India with those of colonization and the Middle Passage into a 'new poetic synthesis' of inter-cultural hybridity. These spatio-temporal and cultural crossings are replicated in the metaphoric turns of language. For example, ants craving after childhood sweets, 'marched with tongues hanging out, like a gang of slavers' (*Turner*, III, p. 12). In this simile, boundaries are dissolved. The poem's spatial and temporal crossings create a 'limbo gateway' between past and present, home country and foreign land, colonized and colonizer, in which different cultures intermix to generate alternative conceptions of meaning and identity.

### **Framing the 'Sea's Craft': Turns of 'Creative Amnesia' and 'Creative Anxiety'**

Dabydeen's attempt to 'write the absence of the body' is also tied to the idea of 'creative amnesia'. Dabydeen's unfulfilled desire to forget and exorcise the past and creatively to rewrite history need to be re-examined. On one level, we have shown how Dabydeen's 'misprision' of preceding texts has decentred and displaced their arbitrary structures of authority and difference. On an unspoken textual level, *Turner* reveals ambivalent patterns of identification and disavowal that testify to an unresolved 'creative anxiety'.

In the 'Preface' to *Turner*, Dabydeen equates 'creative amnesia' with 'the desire for transfiguration or newness' (*Turner*, p. 7). 'Creative amnesia', according to Dabydeen, stems from 'the desire to forget history' ('AH', p. 42). However, Dabydeen further stresses, 'it goes beyond that. It is a sense of restlessness in yourself, of knowing that you never know what you are at any one stage. Therefore

it is best to just envelope yourself in a kind of total forgetfulness out of which something might emerge' ('AH', p. 42). 'Amnesia', in this case, is not a vacuum but a 'forgetfulness', which is predicated on the existence of things remembered. We might further infer that the sense of 'restlessness' is the result of the multiplication and circulation of recollections that conflict with each other, bearing the possibility of generating change and 'newness'.

In Bloom's reading of Freud, 'creative anxiety' is a struggle to pre-empt the past through acts of creative misprision, whereby the ephebe strives to anticipate his forerunner and be original or self-born. The ephebe's 'creativity', Bloom stresses, is 'always a mode of representation *and* memory' and 'the will's revenge against time and against time's statement of: "It was".'<sup>37</sup> 'Creativity', in this sense, is a 'memory' and a 'representation' or rewriting of that memory. Hence, 'creativity' is always belated and tied to the anxiety of not only being self-born, but of being continually re-born anew in the present. 'Creative anxiety' is a desire to transform 'It was' into 'I am' and to restore self-presence. Bloom's theory of 'creative anxiety' provides the framework for detecting and disentangling the ambivalence of identification in *Turner*.

In the scene of postcolonial writing, Dabydeen's identification is with literary forefathers. Dabydeen is the ephebe who writes in the language and tradition of the colonizer. *Turner* is a thoroughly intertextual poem, from its conception in visual-verbal interaction, to its multi-textual narrative. *Turner* not only engages with Turner's paintings and Ruskin's reading, it also alludes to other texts of the Western canon, like William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and (via Ruskin) *Macbeth*,<sup>38</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'

and especially the work of Eliot, the alleged '*parent* of Caribbean poetry'.<sup>39</sup> In some instances, the narrative quotes directly from the works of its literary parent. Significantly, Manu, the magician and soothsayer from the slave's native Africa, who is also the legendary giver of Brahminical patriarchal laws in ancient India,<sup>40</sup> speaks in the voice of Eliot, epitome of Western high modernism and conservatism: 'time future was neither time past / Nor time present' (*Turner*, XXI, p. 36). Perhaps Manu merely represents one of many manu-scripts in the sea of Dabydeen's intertextual poem.

Identification in *Turner* is foremost with the literary fathers who simultaneously hold the key to acceptance into a desired literary elitism, as well as the textual and linguistic means to obtaining the key. *Turner* demonstrates a splitting in this place of identification, where according to Bhabha's reading of Frantz Fanon, the postcolonial ephebe's fantasy is to occupy both the 'master's place' as well as to retain his place in the 'slave's *avenging* anger' by writing from the perspective of the slave and displacing the centre of colonial discourse.<sup>41</sup> The slave voice also engages with a creative misprision of paternal texts, as shown by the narrative's dissemination of 'Turner' along a chain of complicity.

Within this framework, the true obstacle to 'creative amnesia' lies in the anxiety of influence. As 'creativity' is necessarily a 'memory' and 'representation' seeking to achieve a priority status, 'creative amnesia' is a contradiction in terms and hence impossible to achieve. In the light of Bloom's theory of 'creative anxiety', Dabydeen's concept of 'creative amnesia' is revealed as a desire to be originating and autonomous.



As the obstacle to creative invention in 'Turner', the stillborn child acquires the significant figuration of the malformed parent. Herein lies the significance of the child's naming as Turner. Instead of Dabydeen's overt postulation that the child represents, for the slave, 'his unconscious and his origin' ('Preface', *Turner*, p. 8), the child, in fact, also functions as a projection of the literary forefathers who threaten to 'flood' the ephebe by obstructing his creativity and occupying his imaginative space. It is the stillborn child as white literary father rather than black unconsciousness who, 'confirmed its breed' and cried, "'Nigger!'", '[r]ecognising me below my skin long since washed clean of the colour of sin' (*Turner*, XI, p. 21). It is the haunting legacy of the white gaze that fixes the black body in the denigrated 'fact of blackness'. Significantly, it is the stillborn child as literary custodian who labels and names the slave, for as the slave exclaims, it was 'naming me from some hoard / Of superior knowledge, its tongue a viper's nest / Guarding a lore buried by priests, philosophers' (*Turner*, XVIII, p. 31). The 'nest' or 'lore' is one of white Western texts, guarded by the white literary father in the form of the stillborn child. It is a nightmarish realization of the ephebe's repressed 'creative anxiety' that his tormented desire to usurp the place of the white literary father is materialized in the form of a scathing and contemptuous stillborn that denies him access to texts, language and, ultimately, rebirth. The slave's expressed desire to 'begin new' in 'creative amnesia' ('Preface', *Turner*, p. 7) is ultimately thwarted because Dabydeen's sea is not bereft of cultural inscriptions, whether those of Turner's brush or Ruskin's pen. What the African slave reads as a space of emptiness and loss, in fact, harbours a 'lore' of Western and imperial literary history.

Identification in *Turner* also operates on another level as an endless process of violent negation; of killing off the other in fantasy in order to usurp its place. The psychodynamics of identification and disavowal manifests itself in the implicit gendering of the narrative. This ambivalence centres on the metonym of maternity. Bloom has posited that the 'anxiety of influence' is both 'a kind of separation anxiety from the mother' which is also 'an anxiety of exclusion' and 'the beginning of a compulsion neurosis'.<sup>42</sup> The separation from the mother results in a primordial lack that the subject compulsively tries to gratify, as well as a disquiet about being excluded that drives the poet's desire to take the place of the father.

The narrative's ambivalent feelings towards mothering are glimpsed in the poem's opening conflation of the bodies of mother and ship:

First a woman sobs  
Above the creak of timbers and the cleaving  
Of the sea, sobs from the depths of true  
Hurt and grief, as you will never hear  
But from woman giving birth, belly  
Blown and flapping loose and torn like sails,  
Rough sailors' hands jerking and tugging  
At ropes of veins, to no avail. Blood vessels  
Burst asunder, all below-deck are drowned. (*Turner*, I, p. 9)

The 'blood vessels' point to both the slave ship and metonymically to the mother's veins. The amniotic life-sustaining fluids of the womb flow into the life-threatening water of the Middle Passage. As the mother's birthing of a child is linked to the drowning of all below-deck on the slave ship, mothering becomes the harbinger of death. The mother's birth, however, appears to be an unnatural Caesarean birth, with her procreating belly 'torn' by 'Rough sailors' hands jerking and tugging'. The violence of the image is indicative of the poet's ambivalence towards motherhood. Birthing is an act of 'creativity', and specifically an activity

that eludes him. The ephebe whose anxiety of influence permits him only to 'remember' and 'represent' the paternal text transfers his envy and anger onto the birthing female body. The Caesarean birth allows the poet to wrench the power of creating new life away from the mother and place it into male hands.

The need to disavow the maternal body is further enacted metonymically in textual violence. In the poem, the 'mother' is metonymically transferred onto the figure of the moon. The moon is first feminized as a 'bride' who 'hides behind a veil' (*Turner*, XII, p. 22), and after marriage, produces the stillborn who 'slipped from the belly of moon' (*Turner*, XVI, p. 27). As the narrator 'forgot / The face of [his] mother', 'Only the moon remains, watchful and loving' (*Turner*, XII, p. 23). The mother who is forgotten is replaced by the 'loving' and attentive moon-as-mother. In this vein, the violent attack upon the moon becomes symbolic of an aggression towards the maternal. The narrator variously describes a moon that 'sulks', 'cries' and 'scorn[s]' and is the object of his violent abuse:

Sometimes her cheeks are puffed,  
Her face lopsided, and I think I must have  
Blasted her in some lover's rage; my hand,  
Two centuries and more lifeless, clenched in quick  
Hate, reached endlessly to bruise her face.  
[. . .] she might be dead,  
I might never subject her again. (*Turner*, XIII, p. 24)

In this act of brutal disavowal, the enraged paralysis or 'lifeless[ness]' engendered by colonial oppression as well as anxieties over self-transfiguration wrought by the usurpation of literary forefathers, are crossed with those of sexual difference, as violent anger and frustration are displaced onto the figure of the mother.

Accordingly, the slave's desire to mother the stillborn infant can be seen as an attempt to usurp the maternal function. He expresses this clearly when he says,

‘My breasts a woman’s which I surrender / To my child-mouth [. . .] This creature kicks alive in my stomach / Such dreams of family’ (*Turner*, XI, p. 16). The ephebe’s need to be self-born or to give birth to the self is manifested in the disavowal of the maternal. Ultimately, the effort ‘to be’ the mother must fail because the overriding desire of the narrative subject is ‘to be for’ the symbolic father.

The changeable series of overlapping and displacing identifications, disavowals and political positionings in *Turner* is symptomatic of what Dabydeen has characterised as a ‘restlessness in yourself’ (‘AH’, p. 42). Cross-identifications occur in instances when the categories of master and slave, and of colonizer and colonized are revealed to be mirror images of one another. For example, Turner’s ‘hook’ that fixes sadistically in the flesh of the child in his bid to make it speak his language, becomes ‘the hook / Of my desire’ for the slave, who fixes it upon the body of the stillborn, in his bid to persuade it to his own ‘body of lies’ (*Turner*, XXIV, p. 38 and XXV, p. 39). In a perverse replication, the slave acquires the colonizing ‘hook’ and assumes the master’s role. In another instance, the slave describes himself at one point as ‘a mere unborn’ like the part-born infant (*Turner*, XIII, p. 20). These signs of overlapping and warring identifications point to the ‘restlessness’ underlying *Turner*’s narrative. The conflicting identifications in the text function as instances of temporary mastery and dispossession.

Finally, it is *Turner*’s prefatory frame that needs to be unhinged in order to reveal its limitations and underlying desires. Dabydeen’s ‘Preface’ may elude the ‘eye’ of analysis, but it remains the final decisive frame to be examined. For a text that claims to decenter and displace identity, the ‘Preface’, in fact, locates a point

of presence – originary and transcendental – in the text. It instructs, explains and delineates how the poem is to be read. It informs us that even though ‘the sea has transformed [the slave] – bleached him of colour and complicated his sense of gender’, he still recognises himself as ‘nigger’, partly because of the stillborn child who is ‘his unconscious and his origin’ (*Turner*, p. x). In his specificity, Dabydeen consciously alludes to theories of race and gender, postcolonialism, feminism, and psychoanalysis. There is a knowing and suggestive use of terms such as ‘colour’, ‘gender’, ‘unconscious’ that point to critical discourse and reveal intellectual anxieties. For all Dabydeen’s assertions of ‘disappearing from concepts’ (‘AH’, p. 40), the prefatory remarks establish *Turner* as a conceptually laden work. His comments may reveal the position of the ‘slave’ and his ‘*avenging* anger’, but they also mask the desire to occupy the ‘master’s place’ and to possess the power to redefine concepts. Any diversity of interpretation is somewhat foreclosed by Dabydeen’s limiting frame, which intrudes upon and forcibly mediates the reading of *Turner*. Ultimately, the ‘Preface’ is testament to Dadydeen’s anxiety of influence for it attempts to pre-empt our reading of his text, to achieve a sense of priority and ensure a certain autonomy. The ‘imaginative space’ of *Turner* is pre-determined and controlled by authorial anxieties.

As such, *Turner* engages the ‘limbo gateway’ of its own creation. The potential for generating hybridized meanings from the connections between the old and new worlds, historical memory and imagination is constrained by the restricting frame Dabydeen places on the text. The ‘phantom limb’ of submerged slave history does not, ultimately, belong to the subaltern slave of Turner’s painting. In fact, the slave’s subjectivity has been appropriated in order to play out

the anxieties of a postcolonial ephebe, the intellectual migrant who is ‘one of *us*’, and yet irredeemably ‘*different*’.<sup>43</sup> Dabydeen’s ekphrasis of Turner’s ‘Slave Ship’ is a misprision that remains haunted by precursor texts. The slave narrator proclaims, ‘I have become the sea’s craft’ (*Turner*, XVIII, p. 31), in a textual turn that dialogizes its meaning as slave ship and as artistry, simultaneously evoking death and creation. *Turner* is, in fact, Dabydeen’s ‘craft’ in a sea of texts haunted by powerful literary fathers. Dabydeen’s ekphrasis of another literary forefather will be the focus of the next chapter, in which Dabydeen’s trickster aesthetic takes the form of a postmodern rewriting of the autobiographical slave narrative.

## Chapter Seven

### ***A Harlot's Progress:* A Postmodern Trickster Slave Tale**

I attempt to use the black as a key to  
unlocking Hogarth's narrative puzzles.  
David Dabydeen<sup>1</sup>

Dabydeen's novel, *A Harlot's Progress* (1999), recreates the slave narratives of the eighteenth-century abolition years. It finds its title and its protagonist in William Hogarth's well-known 1732 series of six prints depicting the decline of Moll Hackabout into harlotry, disease and death. The black boy, depicted as Moll's slave in Hogarth's third print, becomes the principal narrator in Dabydeen's text. Although he is compelled to sell his story to the Secretary of the Abolition Committee, Mr Pringle, in exchange for provisions, he refuses to submit to the voyeuristic consumption of the English reader. Instead, he is crafted as a 'trickster' who destabilizes the master-slave dialectic in the various forms of enslavement engendered by the structures of economic, racial and sexual power. By crafting a 'trickster' aesthetic, marked by half-truths, circumlocutions, fantasies and conflicting accounts, the narrator tempts and teases the reader as deftly as a harlot her client. Disrupting his 'trickster' narratorial gaming, however, are a host of tribal ghosts, who variously torment, taunt and bribe him to relate their own stories. *A Harlot's Progress* weaves its web of tricksterism along two intersecting threads. On one level, it is a metafiction absorbed with undoing narrative constructs and revelling in the ostensible arbitrariness and multiplicity of signs.

The 'trickster' scheme it engages in destabilizes meaning and decenters the subject. As a scrupulously self-conscious and self-reflexive text, it undertakes a postmodernist rewriting of the slave narrative. On another level, the novel situates itself within a larger political project of 'emancipation', no longer of the victims of the slave trade, but rather of the disempowered blacks and women who remain enslaved in textual anonymity or framed in marginalized silence, their histories untold or distorted for the consumption of white audiences. These suppressed figures and their ghosts provide the haunting impetus to *A Harlot's Progress*. Their voices unfurl concomitantly with the release of slave narratives from the conventions of realist testimony, and of language from referentiality and fixed meaning. It is in the intersection of the novel's emancipatory aims and metafictional preoccupation that the ghosts of colonial otherness reemerge to question the politics of Dabydeen's tricksterism in the formulation of Creole identity.

The trickster figure *Esu* is the divine trickster of West African mythology. The story most frequently related about *Esu* tells of him wearing a cap of different colours on each side and walking between two friends, so that they end up quarrelling about the colour of his cap.<sup>2</sup> In this myth of *Esu's* Cap, *Esu's* defining qualities of doubleness, indeterminacy and disorder are demonstrated. It also establishes *Esu* as an inhabitant of thresholds and crossroads, where multiple perspectives collide, none of which can take precedence over another. As a trickster, *Esu* is both a force disruptive of traditions as well as a creative impetus for change. *Esu's* 'fundamentally ambiguous and anomalous' nature is noted by



William J. Hynes, who finds that the trickster is a 'deceiver / trick-player', 'shape-shifter', 'situation inverter', and 'sacred / lewd bricoleur'.<sup>3</sup>

The trickster also functions as an aesthetic principle of language that multiplies and relativizes meaning. In his influential work, *The Signifying Monkey* (1988), Henry Louis Gates, Jr. finds that *Esu* 'serves as a figure for the nature and function of interpretation and double-voiced utterance'.<sup>4</sup> As *Esu*, the god of indeterminacy, rules the interpretative process, he becomes a 'metaphor for the uncertainties of explication, for the open-endedness of every literary text' and the 'multiplicity' of disclosure.<sup>5</sup> This is the reason why *Esu* is sometimes depicted with two mouths. José Piedra also views *Esu* as a 'double deity' belonging to the 'two-sided myths of signification'.<sup>6</sup> In Gates's study of the Afro-American vernacular language or 'Signifyin(g)', its origins are located in *Esu*, whose Afro-American descendant, the Signifying Monkey, 'is not only a master of technique,' but 'is technique, or style, or the literariness of literary language; he is the great Signifier,' who 'wreaks havoc upon the Signified'.<sup>7</sup> The Signifying Monkey denotes a 'black difference' in repetition, as marked by the absent (g) in Signifyin(g), which constitutes its 'double-voiced' nature and ability to repeat and reverse in one deft discursive act.<sup>8</sup> Gerald Vizenor similarly translates the Native American trickster's characteristics into 'trickster discourse', in which the trickster is 'disembodied in a narrative' as a mode of 'communal signification'.<sup>9</sup> Like the Signifying Monkey, trickster discourse embodies shared codes of meaning. Jeanne Rosier Smith likewise converts the trickster to a rhetorical principle characterized by breaks, disruptions, loose ends, and multiple voices.<sup>10</sup> A trickster aesthetic is duplicitous

and indeterminate, working to multiply perspective and proliferate meaning, and is representative of communal signification.

This rhetorical disembodiment of the trickster figure does not separate the trickster from the extra-textual world. For Gates, Vizenor and Smith, the trickster's linguistic operations have ideological implications. Gates explains that the Signifying Monkey's 'double-voiced' discourse is a 'political offensive' mounted against the (white) power structures embedded in language.<sup>11</sup> Vizenor connects the trickster's linguistic operations to a politically grounded version of postmodernism, in his attempt to free Native American literatures from the 'tragic monologue' of cultural anthropology and the modernist view of the individualistic 'savage'.<sup>12</sup> The trickster's relevance to postmodernism is also noted by other critics. Hynes points out that 'the logic of order and convergence, that is logos-centricism, or logocentrism, is challenged by another path, the random and divergent trail taken by that profane metaplayer, the trickster'.<sup>13</sup> Smith suggests that the trickster, who embodies 'a divided, fluid, shifting identity' analogous to postmodern critiques of essentialism and affirmations of multiplicity and difference, might serve as 'a mythic trope for the postmodern'.<sup>14</sup> In Smith's reading of American ethnic literature, she shows how the trickster aesthetic is appropriated by feminist theory to challenge ethnocentric and phallocentric traditions.<sup>15</sup> To Smith, the trickster is androgynous because, by definition, it blurs the boundaries between self and other, male and female.<sup>16</sup> Yoruba myth also records that *Esu* is of dual gender or genderless.<sup>17</sup> However, tricksters are more commonly male and trickster tales frequently recount their inveterate sexual feats, as well as their phallic proportions, which have been depicted in some of *Esu*'s graphic representations.

## **‘Your Name is Legion’: Trickster Slave in Trickster Tale**

In *A Harlot's Progress*, the trickster is both the author and embodiment of a polyphonic, deconstructionist and indeterminate narrative. As a premise, the novel sets up the master-slave and white-black power structures in the relation of the abolitionist writer, Mr Pringle, to the former slave, Mungo. Confined in a dark cell and garret in eighteenth-century London, Mungo is malnourished and held ransom to the Abolition Committee's demand for his story, as he declares that Mr Pringle holds a pen 'as if waiting to sign a warrant for my arrest, or my sale'.<sup>18</sup> The novel quickly debunks the expectation of a conventional slave narrative by revealing the trickster characteristics of its narrator and narrative. In fact, Mr Pringle's first markings of 'a series of ears, some drooping and mutilated' (*HP*, p. 2), prefigure the distortion of reader expectations. The trickster aesthetic subverts the power structures by textual self-reflexivity and play, as well as by inversions of sexual, racial and class structures.

First, the novel exposes the artificiality and constructedness of the slave narrative. The figure of Mr Pringle is an intertextual reference to the 1831 slave narrative, *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave, Related by Herself*, which was edited by Thomas Pringle for the Anti-Slavery Society. A presumption of the slave testimonies was their autonomy and authenticity. This was validated by their white transcribers and editors, who paradoxically interrupted their stories to affirm the legitimacy of their accounts and the realism of their voices. Narrative conventions sought to establish the veracity of the slave's self-authorship.<sup>19</sup> In *A Harlot's Progress*, Dabydeen creates a self-conscious *mise-en-abyme* of the writing of slave testimony in order to expose the dominating influence of the white

editor. Conventions of the slave narrative that were taken to be evidence of autonomy and authenticity are presented as constructs. The narrative presents the process of Mr Pringle's invention and revision of chapter headings. He has already formulated an 'epic' framework for his tale, and is merely awaiting 'the droolings of a decrepit nigger' (*HP*, pp. 6-7):

Mr Pringle, realizing that Mungo is a *ruined archive*, resolves to colour and people a landscape out of *his own imagination*, thereby endowing Mungo with the gift of mind and eloquence. For the book Mr Pringle intends to write will be Mungo's portrait in the first-person narrative. A book purporting to be a record of the Negro's *own words* (understandably corrected in terms of grammar, the erasure of indelicate or infelicitous expression, and so forth). (*HP*, p. 3; italics added)

Viewed as a '*ruined archive*', Mungo becomes an artifact and object requiring the explicatory and humanizing work of the white man. The narrative's claim to being an expression of the slave's '*own words*' is reminiscent of the declarations of historic slave testimonies, together with the editorial justifications of legitimacy, despite corrections and omissions. By juxtaposing such narrative conventions with the disclosed intentions of the editor, Dabydeen reveals the gap between the slave and 'his' story, voice and script, subjectivity and textuality.

*A Harlot's Progress* creolizes the slave narrative proposed by Mr Pringle, by creating a multivocal and multigeneric text. The voices rendered in the first person include those of Mungo, Mr Pringle, a third-person narrator, and a host of tribal ghosts, causing unheralded movements from one consciousness to another, and constant movements between different modes of language and voice. The Prologue alone delivers an unmistakable polyvocality to the narrative. In it, a myriad of different languages and genres are evoked, by direct voice, reference, or allusion, which include 'nigger talk' 'like dis and dat', ancient Latin, the street

ballad, the classics, the King James Bible, the imaginary language of the 'Barambondodo' African tribe, and colloquialisms like 'Bah!' and 'Pish!' The novel weaves a tale from the multiple threads of history, Greek mythology, African mythology, legend, anthropology and Christianity, creating an irrepressible polyvalence in a creolized narrative.

Mungo himself is presented as a trickster figure like *Esu*. His apparent confinement to the garret and bed, as well as his infirmity, are a trickster's mask worn to fool Mr Pringle. In fact, he is 'master of the situation' (*HP*, p. 1). As he reveals, 'I can change memory, like I can change my posture, fling the blanket away, spring out of bed, dance a step or two of a cotillion, and babble into his blank pages the most lively of syllables' (*HP*, p. 2). As the deceptive narrator, he tells a changeable tale with multiple and indeterminate meanings that challenges the singularity of history, under the mask of subservience. He is conscious of the stereotypical portrayals of slaves and the expectations of the white reader. As he self-consciously implores, 'If you wish, dear reader, I can invent familiar perils and comforting ideologies. I can make of myself an exemplary and heroic Negro' (*HP*, p. 248). Mungo is a shape-shifter and role-player who can adorn himself with different masks and play the part of a variety of personas. In terms of language, he can choose to 'munch and crunch the English, [as] nigger does jape and jackass with the language', write in the mannerisms of the King James Bible, or give a 'sober testimony' (*HP*, p. 5). By flaunting his awareness of the stereotypical constructs of the black slave and the slave narrative, he exposes their falsities and undermines their claims to legitimacy.

In place of the singular version of events passing as objective observation, we are presented with an array of conflicting accounts and explanations, as signalled by the crossroads. The trickster aesthetic of Signifyin(g), with its inscription of discursive doubleness and open-endedness, serves to disrupt the conventions and ideologies of the historic slave tale. Taking the scar on Mungo's forehead as an example, Mungo first explains that it is the symbol of *peia*, 'an obvious corruption of the Greek, *pi*' (*HP*, p. 31). It is a birthmark signalling his supposed Greek ancestry. As the legendary Greeks were said to have destroyed their village, Mungo also says that the sign of *peia* is an omen, a 'harbinger of a new darkness, a new sterility' (*HP*, p. 33). It foretells his betrayal of the village to Captain Thistlewood. In a different strand, the scar becomes a 'sign of evil' branded on his forehead by the village Headman for venturing into the katran bush. As his intrusion expelled the tribal ancestors, the branding of his forehead is made so that 'knowledge may be restored to our tribe' (*HP*, p. 21). In this version, the 'sign of evil' is also branded onto the palms of village women who are widowed and sterile, before their wrists are broken and they are banished to be a 'propitiative sacrifice to the demons of sterility' (*HP*, p. 30). The scar takes on another meaning as the possible branding of 'TT', the initials of the slave master, Thomas Thistlewood, to mark his property. Again, this version is presented as an acute recollection of unbearable pain and 'the smell of my own burnt flesh' (*HP*, pp. 66-67). According to Thistlewood, they are two crucifixes engraved to erase Mungo's memory of his 'heathen past' (*HP*, p. 75). Or are they, in fact, 'upside-down crosses' that are marks of Mungo's 'devilry' (*HP*, p. 245)? Mungo's varying accounts of the origins of his scar defy the ascription of a singular truth and the

validity of any of the versions. There can be no overriding Signified. Ultimately, the sign, *peia*, serves as a figuration of the crossroads, the place where the trickster, *Esu*, resides, signalling multiple meanings and countless possibilities, none of which presides over another.

Mungo's name itself is indeterminate. He is Mungo, as Betty first addresses him, Noah, as stated in the advertisement for his sale, and Perseus, as christened by Lady Montague. Fittingly, the ghost Ellar proclaims, 'Your name is Legion, you are many deaths in one living body' (*HP*, p. 251). The Biblical Legion who is 'many' in 'one' aptly describes Mungo who is, in a sense, possessed by the different characters – dead and alive – whose stories he recounts. As a result, the mark of trickster multiplicity and indeterminacy destabilizes notions of a singular historical truth and essentializing notions of origin, and it dismantles totalizing definitions. In this way, the narrative creates a worldview that incorporates contradiction and multiple perspectives. It is a vision of history assembled at the crossroads where different routes convene and worldviews intersect. As the Biblical Devil is also the 'father of lies',<sup>20</sup> Mungo's trickster tale spins deceptions and ruses that invalidate any claims to truth. As Mungo blatantly proclaims, 'My book lies' (*HP*, p. 257). He is depicted like *Esu* with two mouths, neither of which can be determined as voicing a truth or lie. In the trickster tale, the question is no longer one of epistemology. As Andrew Wiget explains, the 'Trickster functions not so much to call cultural categories into question as to demonstrate the artificiality of culture itself. Thus he makes available for discussion the very basis of social order, individual and communal identity'.<sup>21</sup>

Dabydeen lays bare the economic motivations underlying the telling of the slave tale. Rather than for the political purposes of emancipation or the self-assertion of identity, Dabydeen presents the basest economic needs as the driving force of literacy. For Mungo, 'The last thing on [his] mind is the emancipation of his brethren' (*HP*, p. 256). As he confesses, 'I am in need of [Pringle's] charity, so I must create characters, [. . .] and sow dialogue between us to make luxuriant plots of the pages of his notebook' (*HP*, p. 67). The currency of creation is figured in the image of Mr Pringle himself, with one hand 'poised over the inkwell whilst the other is deep in his trouser pocket, fingering the coins' (*HP*, p. 7). Writing and commerce are inextricably linked. Mungo recognizes his worth lies in his status as a commodified textual construct. 'As a collection of newspaper items, I am a false parcel and counterfeit story but I will pass hands as easily as a forged banknote in the City's markets' (*HP*, p. 243). In this case, the slave is no longer a historical individual or even a narrativized subject, but a decidedly fabricated product of narratives. This is necessitated by the fact that truth itself has become a commodity:

No longer was there a simple and straightforward account of events. Now, each version was calculated to inflate or depress the value of shares. Truth itself was hostage to the designs of stockjobbers, another commodity changing hands at a price. (*HP*, p. 199)

In this self-reflexive act, the narrative disqualifies the truth-value of all narratives. The novel is self-reflexive and self-conscious about writing a book for a white readership. In Mungo's decisions on the content of his tale, he chooses not to include Ellar's revelations of her violations by the white man, because 'he will not repel his readers by calling them necrophiles' (*HP*, pp. 257). He opts not to convey her outrage, 'for fear of alienating his readers'. He realizes, 'They can refuse to



buy my book, and I'll starve' (*HP*, p. 256). In this way, Dabydeen lays bare the economic principle as a powerful determinant of narrativizing conventions, authorship, and truth itself. However, the economic drive is tempered by the tribal ghosts who haunt the narrator, bringing to light the subjects and their motivations which have been suppressed by the economic exploitation of their bodies and stories alike.

The tribal ghosts that haunt the pages of *A Harlot's Progress* play a pivotal role in the multidimensional and multivocal aspect of the novel. As liminal beings at the threshold between life and death, present and past, known and inchoate, they embody the nature of the trickster. Their freedom from social laws and the confines of social structures further aligns them with the decentering role of the trickster. In the novel, the ghostly incarnations of the trickster extend to the creation of a communal narrative voice that speaks of the ramifications arising from the silencing and recapturing of slave history. To assume an unmediated originary slave story is to impose an unwarranted essentialism upon the narrating subject and to deny the representative nature of the slave tale. As Robert Stepto notes, 'in their most elementary form, slave narratives are full of other voices, which are frequently just as responsible for articulating a narrative's tale and strategy'.<sup>22</sup> In Dabydeen's contemporary version of the slave tale, he materializes the multi-vocality of the slave narrative in the legion of apparitions that haunt the narrator.

By embodying a myriad of voices, the trickster effectively becomes a communal figure. Alan Velie reminds us that the trickster is 'a figure created by the tribe as a whole, not an individual author'.<sup>23</sup> Trickster discourse is constituted

of a community of social voices. In her study of the 'narrative of community', Sandra Zagarell emphasizes that communities 'take form through negotiation among diverse, often recalcitrant components'.<sup>24</sup> It is the writing trickster, according to Robert D. Pelton, who 'transforms social boundaries into modes of intercourse'.<sup>25</sup> Different social voices interact in a communal narrative to challenge the hegemony of a single unitary utterance. It is in the clash and contest of voices that 'modes of intercourse' are opened up to generate multivocality.

The garrulous ghosts tormenting the narrator in *A Harlot's Progress* materialize the communal voice. The ghosts create a cacophony of voices that not only challenge the narrator's authority but redefine narrative as a multivocal mode of interaction and exchange. As the narrator engages in a dialogue with the tribal ghosts that shadow him, he is forced to modify his story according to their demands. A narrative emerges out of negotiations between diverse and recalcitrant components, and together with the narrative voice, it represents the communal voice of the novel. The chorus of voices transforms an already indeterminately diverse account into a multivocal site of contention and also connection. As they are voices of the past, they suggest a link between cultural preservation and cultural creation. The exchanges between Mungo and the ghosts hark back to the black oral storytelling traditions of audience participation, like 'call and response', where the audience influenced the outcome of the story told. The final tale is thus a polyphonic one of dissonant voices and manifold perspectives.

Despite Mungo's betrayal of his community, his tale now restores a communal narrative to his vanquished native homeland. His destruction of community establishes him as the trickster figure of his society, because tricksters

are 'outlaws and survivors, whose actions can 'preserve or destroy community'.<sup>26</sup> The trickster disrupts but also recreates traditions and community. Mungo claims his legacy when he records the omen that although his birth 'would bring destruction to the tribe, it would also loose them into a necessary future. I would be the *ruined archive* of our tribe but also its *resurrected expression*, writing the discovery of the New World of Whitemen' (*HP*, p. 36; italics added). By transforming his status as '*ruined archive*' to one of '*resurrected expression*', Mungo places himself in the tradition of tricksters who rupture conventions to open new paths of change. His tale rewrites the colonial narrative of the 'Whitemen' from the perspectives of the murdered natives that now haunt him.

The ghosts themselves display archetypal trickster traits that undermine the conventional historical narrative. Kaka, for instance, 'could be trusted to convert truths into lies and lies into deeper lies which bore the appearance of truth' (*HP*, p. 81). His speech blurs the boundaries between truth and lie, appearance and reality. The ghosts give voice to a chorus of ribaldry, profanity, obscenities, curses and 'vulgar and chaotic interruptions' that are characteristic of marginalized discourses. Furthermore, the ghosts, speaking in their own native dialect, incorporate different social voices into the narrative. Just as the ghosts exist outside social inhibitions, their language takes the form of marginalized discourses that contest the narrator's attempts to write in a singular unitary voice.

The entreaties of the ghosts are a reflection of the complexity of emotions and desires surrounding the narration of history. The call for an honest portrayal ('Remember us as we are, not as the whiteman will make you' [*HP*, p. 62]) is in contrast to the drive for vengeance ('you should curse them outright as white

devils' [*HP*, p. 256]). In addition, Dabydeen brings to light the insecurity and vanity that call for reinvention and imaginative recreation ('Tell the strangers that I was fabled throughout the land for my comeliness. [. . .] Make them love me' [*HP*, p. 60]). There is also a nostalgia for the lost past, as Mungo writes of them 'tormenting [him] with either descriptions of a devastated past or else with prospects of return to the innocence which was [his] village' (*HP*, p. 176). Furthermore, Dabydeen raises the psychological motivations of 'self-defences and self-denials', 'self-hatred, and rebellion against their bodies' that impel the ghosts variously to demand and plead with him to remember, modify and fabricate their stories (*HP*, pp. 138 and 139). In their varying motivations, the ghosts work to preserve and define a communal identity, while constantly violating and renewing its confines.

The ghostly apparitions also represent historical voices that cannot be suppressed, as they serve to expose the deceptions, subterfuges and repressions of the narrator. By disclosing secrets concealed by the narrator, they represent the unsaid and unsayable in history. In the narrator's indistinct recollection of his mother's death, it is the ghosts who give the most horrific account of her cannibalized and limbless torso on board the slave ship. They tell the stories that the narrator withholds. In their accusations, 'You have betrayed us', 'You have become the whiteman's wife', 'You have robbed us of land' (*HP*, p. 59), the ghosts also become projections of the narrator's own shame, guilt and need to be forgiven.

In the end, the ghostly accounts become as ephemeral and insubstantial as Mungo's own. Through their voices, the novel recognizes what it terms the

‘secret ambition[s]’ – of vanity, vengeance, shame, guilt, self-defense – that go into the creation of a communal narrative voice. Such ‘ambitions’ are connected by the wish ‘to live otherwise on the page, differently from the way [they] died on the soiled plank of a whiteman’s lap’ (*HP*, p. 257) in the brutalities and violations of colonialism.

Finally, as a trickster tale, *A Harlot’s Progress* enacts a series of reversals that undermines the structures of sexual, racial and class difference. In his depiction of the white servant, Betty, Mungo inverts the binary structures of black and white, slave and master, ignorance and knowledge. Compared to his superior intelligence which Betty ‘had no means of comprehending’, her ignorance leads Mungo to ask, ‘Are whitefolk so ignorant?’ (*HP*, p. 115). It is the black slave who now assumes superiority and authority over the white woman. Whereas Betty first prepared and bathed Mungo for sale, Mungo describes how he eventually took care of her distress, ‘as if she were the newly bathed slave’ (*HP*, p. 118). He assumes the position of power and, in this reconfigured dynamic, ‘She has become like Captain Thistlewood, once stiff with authority, now servile before him’ (*HP*, p. 156). Furthermore, Mungo assumes the role of the slave buyer who can ‘bid for her with Christian care’, and he informs the reader that ‘having purchased her I free her into your care’ (*HP*, p. 169). The master-slave and white-black oppositions are reversed in Mungo’s assumption of power.

In a similar way, he subverts the superiority and nobility of the Montagues. Of Lord Montague he says, ‘O how I grieve for him when I watch him labour and sweat like a Negro’ (*HP*, p. 245). As his wife’s favours become reserved for Mungo, Lord Montague takes on the role of the labouring slave. In the case of

Lady Montague, the narrative engages in what Mikhail Bahktin has defined as the 'debasement' of the 'material bodily lower stratum', where the 'sacred and exalted' are degraded by their combination with the scatological functions of the body.<sup>27</sup> The depiction of Lady Montague's descent into physical and psychological debility focuses on her bodily excretions and orifices. Mungo describes how 'she vent and puke and squirt from every available hole like the legion of demons cast out by Our Lord' (*HP*, p. 238). The focus on the scatological works to debase the symbol of white propriety and class power. The juxtaposition of religious doctrine with the scatological, the high and the low, reiterates the levelling of the hierarchies instituted by race and class privilege.

In the trickster aesthetic of the novel, Dabydeen also engages with the language of the discovery of the 'new world' to enact a debunking of stereotypes. In a strategic reversal of role, Mungo describes London as 'a jungle of poor white beasts with savage looks who will eat me' (*HP*, p. 239). London is a place where 'people are chewing and swallowing and belching as if recovering from a famine'. Mungo imagines the sale of 'stewed Negro, freshly caught Negro, tender and mild' (*HP*, p. 159). The narrative reverses the roles of colonial discourse that depicted the blacks as cannibal savages and the colony as a jungle of primitive and uncivilized inhabitants. In his portrayal of Moll, Mungo describes how, 'the inhabitants of this cannibal region called London trapped her in a cage. [. . .] When she was plundered and vandalized beyond remembrance of her origin, they let her go. Having converted her into a beast they released her to move among them, as one of their own tribe' (*HP*, p. 266). The supposedly civilizing mission claimed by imperial Britain is here distinctively reversed, as Moll is ravaged like the colony,

her memory erased, and ‘converted’ into a ‘beast’ to become like the colonizing whites, now themselves a savage brutalizing tribe.

The trickster aesthetic of Dabydeen’s slave narrative debunks the conventions of slave writing, exposing its artifice and its underlying motivations – economic, political and psychological. By creating a multivocal and multigeneric text that generates varying accounts, notions of historical truth and origin as well as binary oppositions are dismantled to incorporate multiple perspectives and indeterminate meanings.

### **The Craft and Consumption of Aesthetic Harlotry**

Another form of tricksterism which Dabydeen engages with in *A Harlot’s Progress* is that of narrative harlotry. By depicting storytelling as a performance of seduction and manipulation, Dabydeen demonstrates how colonization is an act of textual violence implicated with the psychopolitics of sexuality, and one that renders the reader complicit in the aesthetics and commerce of slavery.

In Mungo’s relation to Mr Pringle, the binary structures of black and white, slave and master, feminine and masculine are inverted in a destabilization of power structures. In the beginning, Mungo concedes that in response to Mr Pringle’s ‘intimidatory growl’ and the ‘unexpected passion’ of his demand for ‘a beginning’, ‘I yield to him immediately’ (*HP*, p. 8). The description is suggestive of a sexual encounter marked by aggression and submission. It reiterates colonial discourse that figured imperialism as a masculine endeavour to penetrate, possess and tame the feminized colony, but it is an ironic repetition. The narrative translates the dynamics between the listener and storyteller into sexual terms with the purpose of

unveiling the underlying psychological drives of desire. In Mungo's description of his verbal intercourse with Mr Pringle, he tells how the latter:

draws his breath nervously like a virgin waiting to be laid bare and rested on white sheets. He takes up pen with unsteady hand, but has to blot a drop of ink that drips involuntarily from the nib [. . .]. I don't wait for him, but speed ahead, tempting him to catch up with my words, like a painted nymph sporting with her swain [. . .], running from his embrace and hiding in a thicket, so as to make his efforts worthy of her capture. (*HP*, p. 177)

The gender roles erected here are displaced and fluid. Mr Pringle, who is initially rendered as a 'virgin', becomes the ejaculating male who 'drips' prematurely in the excitement of Mungo's unveiling of words. Mungo compares himself to the 'painted nymph' who coyly taunts her suitor. In another instance, Mr Pringle is feminized in response to Mungo's questioning: 'He lowered his head, and his hair hung tenderly over his face, like a woman's. [. . .] He twirled his forefinger in his hair in a feminine motion. [. . .] withdrew like a flower curling upon itself when touched unbearably' (*HP*, pp. 68-69).<sup>28</sup> The fluid interchanges of gender lead to a destabilization of power structures.

Storytelling is compared to a form of harlotry wherein language is a tool of seduction. As Mungo explains:

I have learnt Moll's craft too well to be deceived by his purpose. Moll's hands were deft as she made knots and stays with silken cords, until her client was decorously trussed. She was as skilled with thongs as any grammarian is with language. (*HP*, p. 55)

Storytelling is a craft of seduction, of tempting disclosures and taunting denials, aimed at satisfying the listener's desires. Like a harlot, Mungo uses language to toy with and manipulate Mr Pringle. When Mr Pringle is 'dissatisfied' with his revelations, Mungo says, 'He makes me feel like a strumpet whose performance is



undeserving of his coin' (*HP*, p. 178). The power struggle is ambivalently shifted from teller to listener, harlot to client.

In the harlotry of writing, the pen becomes a phallic symbol of power. Mungo connects his rape by Captain Thistlewood to the verbal intrusions and assaults by Mr Pringle. Mungo describes how, '*my legs are spread and spread and eels are born from me like ink that drops from Mr Pringle's pen and stains a trail through his pages*' (*HP*, p. 56; italics in original). The conflation of penis and pen, semen and ink emphasizes the phallic power and violation of writing. Correspondingly, Captain Thistlewood and Mr Pringle are equated as progenitors of the colonizing act of sexual-textual violence. Textual and sexual violence are united in the narrativizing of the slave tale. The ascription of language is compared to the violation of rape, with both possessing the power to subjugate and strip away a person's sense of identity.

Mungo's textual harlotry extends to implicate the reader in the perverse desires of the text. In a flagrantly self-conscious move, the narrative addresses the reader:

I will not move you to customary guilt, *gentle reader*, even though you may crave that I hold up a mirror to the sins of your race. You will reward me with laurels and fat purses for *flagellating* you thus, especially should I, with impoverished imagination, evoke for you the horror of the slaveship's hold, the chained Negroes, their slobbering, their suffocation, their *sentimental* condition. (*HP*, p. 70; italics added)

The narrative suggests a readership simultaneously desiring to be sadistic voyeurs of the scenes of unimaginable cruelty and suffering, and masochistic penitents who can absolve a measure of their guilt by being shown the complicities of their race. Narrative is depicted as a form of flagellation serving the sadomasochistic needs of a white reader. The narrator alludes to the '*sentimental*' novel, popular in the late

eighteenth century, which sought to induce an excess of emotional response to the plight of the virtuous. The sentimental novel was popular among women and the 'gentle reader' whom the narrator addresses here is epitomized in the figure of Lady Montague. Lady Montague makes the intratextual reference to Captain Thomas Thistlewood (who is himself a central figure in Mungo's life) and his alleged drowning of slaves. Her obsession with the story belies the fact that, 'within the terror is a nerve of pleasure' and '[h]er imagination, so bounded by her surroundings, found sudden release in the descriptions of sharks feasting on men's flesh', to the extent that she herself was 'like the sharks [. . .] scenting blood' (*HP*, p. 222). The allure of this slave tale for the white reader bespeaks a perverse blend of terror and pleasure, fear and desire.

The reader's complicity in slavery is made plain in the novel. Describing Thistlewood's deepest 'sorrow' and 'measureless grief' at the suffering and loss of his cargo of slaves, the narrative places him as a double of the English reader. Just as Thistlewood was 'moved as fiercely as any decent English man', the narrator says:

You, English, inhabitants of a country distinguished for its adoration of pets and charity to the lesser breed, will know the tempest of emotions that overcame my Captain. You have the nightmare of Mr Hogarth's genius, in his series of prints, *Scenes of Cruelty*, to stir your patriotic rage. (*HP*, p. 50; italics in original)

The narrator suggests an emotional understanding between the reader and Thistlewood, one that is grounded in self-delusion and hypocrisy. The reference to Hogarth's prints of animal cruelty points to the white man's assumption of black inhumanity and his displaced sense of injustice. Hogarth's print series, 'A Harlot's

Progress', is referred to in the novel as an example of commercial marketability and the privileging of sensationalism over authenticity.

Dabydeen is cognisant of the complicitous role of art in the consumption of slavery. In the aestheticizing of subjects in works of art and literature, bodies are construed as aesthetic objects or blank canvases. The branding and whipping of black bodies in slavery mark the origins of the white inscription on the black body. The slave's body tells the tale of the master's laws and bears the signature of the master's authorship.

On a parallel level, Dabydeen shows how the aestheticizing of slave bodies implicates the role of art in the commerce of slavery:

[Captain Thistlewood] was deeply affected by the loss of his creatures, and could barely bring himself to countenance the bodies warped with fever; warped canvases slipped from their frames; fevers having melted their surfaces and depths so that the deck swam in the blue oil of a ruptured liver, the vermilion of a ruptured spleen. (*HP*, p. 50)

Like Thistlewood's dehumanizing view of slaves as 'creatures', the description of slave bodies as 'canvases' implicates the complicity of art in the commerce of slavery. The bodies of the slaves are dissolved into a palate of colour, as 'ruptured' body parts become figured as 'blues' and 'vermilions', and the slave becomes a mere configuration of 'surfaces and depths'. This merging of blood and oil, body and canvas, points to the enslavement perpetuated by art. Similarly, Kaka's head, having been battered by Captain Thistlewood, becomes 'a palette of colours', with 'small pockets bearing unfamiliar liquids – raven-black, the pink of coral, rouge of crab-back – bubbling up through hidden spaces. Rubies of congealed blood hang from his ears. Here and there, glimpses of clean white bone exposed by the Captain's cuff subdue the viewer's eye, necessary foil to the decorative richness'

(*HP*, p. 97). The slave is transformed from a suffering body into a sensationalized piece of art. Blood and bone exist solely as colours embellishing the artwork. Attention is focused on the detailing of colour at the expense of the human figure.<sup>29</sup>

In another example of the commodification of bodies, Dabydeen shows how the bodies of women are aestheticized. In describing the band of diseased women cared for by the Jew, he gives an account of their desires:

They wear their sickness like desired ornaments. They dare him to transform their suffering into raiments denied to them in life: the whiteness of pus becoming rolls of silk; sores sequins; abscesses, beads of pearls. They want to be gorgeously arrayed, and challenged him to resurrection in colours and textures denied to them in life. (*HP*, p. 255)

The women long to have their diseased bodies transformed into objects of beauty, and their wounds and blemishes into material adornments. Sickness and suffering can be transformed into aesthetic commodities in the commerce of art.

The women's entreaties for their suffering bodies to be transformed into commodities for consumption serve as a self-reflexive comment on the novel's own exploitation of Moll Hackabout's story as detailed in Hogarth's prints. This in turn raises questions about the commodification and exchange of bodies as they are transformed from historical referents into dehistoricized signs in the postmodernist play of *A Harlot's Progress*.

## Postmodern Tricks(ter)

As indicated at the start of the chapter, *A Harlot's Progress* works on interconnected levels as a project of historical emancipation and rewriting on one hand, and as a metafiction absorbed with the arbitrariness and multiplicity of signs on the other. The novel sets itself up as a postmodern 'historiographic metafiction' committed to the self-consciously parodic engagement of genres and archetypes. However, with the tenuous line demarcating subversion from reinforcement, critique from complicity, Dabydeen's postmodern slave narrative is plagued by the ghosts of colonial otherness it attempts to parody. This final section will examine how the kaleidoscope of intertextuality and multivocality that characterizes the novel functions to disguise the reinscription of otherness that emerges in the subterfuges of the narrative web, and show how Dabydeen's postmodern tricksterism obscures its apolitical nature and hegemonic prejudices.

Postmodernism's 'incredulity toward metanarratives'<sup>30</sup> and attendant play of signification has brought differing responses. Metanarratives have traditionally abstracted meanings into the terms of a monologic master code that become normative and absolute. As a parallel movement to poststructuralism, postmodernism is seen to interrogate the foundations of language and expose its ideological basis and relations of power, rendering its meanings provisional. In this respect, it is easy to see why postmodernism is amenable to postcolonial or feminist writings which have sought to deconstruct the logocentric discourses of race and gender.

As a periodizing concept, postmodernism is linked to the depthless world of images described by Fredric Jameson. In this multimedia world of images,

history is effaced by 'historicism' which is the 'random cannibalization of all the styles of the past, the play of random stylistic allusion'.<sup>31</sup> This is the play of 'pastiche', which Jameson defines as a kind of 'blank irony' or parody that has been 'amputated of satirical impulse', remaining merely as the 'imitation of dead styles'.<sup>32</sup> As 'the past as "referent" finds itself gradually bracketed, and then effaced altogether, leaving us with nothing but texts', Jameson points to the obsolescence of "'oral history'" for the resurrection of the dead of anonymous and silenced generations'.<sup>33</sup> The historically dead are irrevocably lost and unknowable except by the simulation of texts.

On the literary front, the play of signification has culminated in novels of extreme narrative experimentation. Robert Scholes has popularized 'metafiction' as the general term for novels of narrative invention which experiment with novelistic form.<sup>34</sup> The subject matter of metafiction is often narrative itself. A characteristic of metafiction is its self-consciousness. The 'self-conscious novel', according to Robert Alter, 'systematically flaunts its own condition of artifice'.<sup>35</sup> An instance of this is the involuted or self-referential novel that incorporates an account of its own genesis and development, a literary mise-en-abyme. Taken to an extreme, such mannerist writing has a tendency to regress to a self-indulgent and esoteric textual play devoid of political purpose.

The two strains of postmodernism come precariously together in the dialectical concept of what Linda Hutcheon has termed 'historiographic metafiction', whose 'historical and socio-political grounding sit uneasily alongside its self-reflexivity'.<sup>36</sup> Historiographic metafiction lays claim to historical events and persons while being aware of history as a construct and itself as a part of the

reconstruction. A trait of historiographic metafiction is the use of parody, which Hutcheon defines as a ‘doubly coded’ discourse that ‘both legitimizes and subverts that which it parodies’ in ‘a kind of contesting revision or rereading of the past that both confirms and subverts the power of the representation of history’.<sup>37</sup> Postmodern parody, according to Hutcheon, is ‘fundamentally ironic and critical’, foregrounding the politics and history of representation.<sup>38</sup> Parody is a ‘double-voiced’ discourse comparable to the trickster aesthetic of Signifyin(g). In a similar vein to Jameson and Hutcheon, Gates differentiates between ‘parody’, which is ‘motivated Signifyin(g)’ containing a critique of other texts, and ‘pastiche’, which is ‘unmotivated Signifyin(g)’ marked by the ‘absence of a negative critique’ or ‘futility in the face of a seemingly indomitable mode of representation’.<sup>39</sup>

*A Harlot’s Progress* sets itself up as a ‘historiographic metafiction’, committed to voicing the stories of the disempowered figures silenced in Hogarth’s prints as well as flaunting the artifice of narrative conventions in order to expose their underlying ideologies. Dabydeen’s primary trickster strategy in *A Harlot’s Progress* is to parody the many genres and stereotypes he draws upon to construct his tale, and his parodic engagement is predominantly self-conscious and ironic. A distinct genre he engages with in his ekphrastic response to Hogarth’s prints is the pornographic representation of women and blacks. Hogarth’s prints, according to Mungo, have spawned imitations that ‘appealed directly to the pornographic eye’ (*HP*, p. 275). Elsewhere, Dabydeen states, ‘The British Empire, as the Thistlewood Diaries show, was as much a pornographic project as an economic project’.<sup>40</sup> Dabydeen’s statement emphasizes the sexual pathology engendered by colonialism. In his earlier collection of poems, *Slave Song*, he wrote of ‘the

perverse eroticism of black labour and the fantasy of domination, bondage and sadomasochism';<sup>41</sup> the 'starkly pornographic experiences' that Wilson Harris has termed, 'the pornography of empire'.<sup>42</sup> Explaining his depiction of the pornographic, Dabydeen has said, 'I hope that I dealt with them with a kind of detached comedy or a kind of wit that converted the seriousness of pornographic intent into the mischief of the human spirit'.<sup>43</sup> This is a theory of postmodern parody that assumes that the ironizing undertones of parody can subvert the imbued meanings of discourse.

In *A Harlot's Progress*, the depiction of the village women during Mungo's initiation draws upon the modes of primitivism and pornography in the depiction of the native women:

[T]onight only women, naked, painting each other's breast and bellies with the resemblances of animals, and howling in mirth [. . .]. A jungle of breasts is offered me, for tonight, only tonight, my father dead, all the women are my wives, by antique custom. I can choose to hunt the young gazelle or the red-lipped snake. [. . .] They offer me a knife to skin them, to rip from their bellies my patrimony. [. . .] [H]ow beautiful it was, the chorus and the exhibition of shameless painted women. I am brought to manhood – even as an extreme child – by the play of their nipples. (*HP*, p. 15)

The depiction recalls the pseudo-anthropological exploitation of the primitivism of African tribal practices and the sexual depravity of the natives, particularly of the women. Typical of such misrepresentations designed for the titillation of Western readers is William Seabrook's *The Magic Island* (1929), which contains numerous sensationalized depictions, including a description of a Haitian voodoo ceremony attended by 'writhing black bodies, blood-maddened [and] sex-maddened, [. . .] heads thrown weirdly back as if their necks were broken, white teeth and eyeballs gleaming'.<sup>44</sup> Dabydeen works to parody the discourse of native primitivism and its



attribution of an insatiable sexuality and bestiality to black native women. The scene is pornographic in its objectifying of women into fragments of 'breast' and 'bellies' in an indistinguishable 'jungle of breasts'. Colonial discourse combined primitivism and pornography to perpetuate colonial stereotypes of savagery, cannibalism, incest and perversion, branding the black woman as other.

By flirting with the discourses of Empire, Dabydeen ends up reinscribing its ideologies upon the bodies of those he seeks to emancipate – the racial and sexual other. An explicit racism and equally blatant sexism collude to insulate each other to a certain degree from the charges of imperialism and phallocentrism respectively. The primitive setting licenses Dabydeen's parody of an overtly patriarchal society while the feminist slant, in turn, deflects the focus away from his exploitation of racial stereotypes of indigenous natives as innately perverse and barbaric. The fabrication of the racial other is further concealed beneath the overcodings of Oedipal taboos, the pseudo-anthropological premise and its self-conscious tone. A pastiche of styles and references is created to deflect from the actual reinscription of racial and sexual otherness.

It is apparent that Dabydeen attempts to create a 'double-voiced' discourse by placing ironic distance between Mungo's pornographic gaze and his own awareness and parody of that gaze. However, this is predicated on the unsatisfactory assumption that the self-parodic use of stereotypical discourse in itself constitutes a critique of the stereotype. In addition, the distance between the authorial voice and narratorial presence is founded upon a state of movement and oscillation. Even if Dabydeen seeks to expose the inadequacies of Mungo's views here, the two voices merge at other times in the novel. The problem for the reader

lies, then, in the inconsistent differentiation between the narrative voice and Dabydeen's own ironic point of view. In fact, Mungo serves as an internal buffer for Dabydeen's own indulgent play of imperialist pornographic discourse, in which case, as a former slave, Mungo continues to be forced to inhabit positions assigned by Dabydeen's colonizing master discourse.

In *Hogarth's Blacks*, Dabydeen makes the revealing statement, 'I attempt to use the black as a key to unlocking Hogarth's narrative puzzles, a tactic which I hope will cast new light [. . .]'.<sup>45</sup> This statement becomes a preemption of Dabydeen's 'tactic' in *A Harlot's Progress*, where 'the black' is also used as 'a key', but merely as a means of access to a historical storehouse of texts. The slave and the slave tale are not, in the words of Jameson, historical 'referents' with a story to be told, nor the 'dead of anonymous and silenced generations', but mere texts to be endlessly parodied. The historical figure of the slave is hollowed out.

Consequently, slavery in *A Harlot's Progress* becomes an all-encompassing term for any condition of servitude. Mungo describes how he made a 'slave' of Saba, his childhood playmate, 'in one clean stroke' (*HP*, p. 14). Leaving the Montague household to work with the Jew, Mungo declares, 'I will become his slave' (*HP*, p. 251). The village women are also called slaves: "Not wives," Rima had said. "Slaves. The men were masters. [. . .] The rest of us were slaves to the whim of man, though we were appointed individual masters'" (*HP*, p. 28). In the narrative's reversal of roles, Captain Thistlewood and Betty variously acquire the status of 'slaves' to Mungo as well. The treatment of 'woman' in the novel is similarly sweeping. The women of his tribe as well as the outcast group of

‘sluts, fens, malkins, diseased posture-molls’ that includes Moll, are similarly equated: ‘all of them my mothers’ (*HP*, p. 254).

The novel’s turn away from historical referentiality results in a hollowing out of both slave and woman. Freed from referentiality, they become indistinguishable signifiers engaged in an infinite play of meaning that descends into meaninglessness. History is replaced by the empty play of images of a postmodern ‘historicism’.

It is further worth noting that Dabydeen’s motivation is not to restore black subjectivity, but to use it for ‘unlocking Hogarth’s narrative puzzles’. Dabydeen’s focus is explicitly disclosed to be the Western work of art, and more specifically, the narratorial gaming of Western texts. The past that Dabydeen appropriates is not a referential history but archetypal images of that history. The past is thus exploited for its parodic rather than historical value, demonstrating how Western discourse accomplishes its project of endlessly replicating itself through historicism.

Amidst the pastiche of genres, voices and texts, Dabydeen’s postmodern novel remains plagued by a decidedly sexist strain manifested in the novel’s depiction of women. Betty is described as a ‘fat and ugly thing’ (*HP*, p. 117). Mungo expresses how ‘he is unaccustomed to the lower breed. From her ruddy complexion, unbecoming fat and smell of swine, he can tell she is of an inferior order’ (*HP*, p. 107). In comparison, Jane was ‘a wafer of flesh, thin as the soup of the poor, for she is full of worms’ and ‘singularly ugly’ with ‘a toothless hiss’ (*HP*, pp. 207 and 210). The contrasting depictions of the two white servants bear the similar strain of reducing woman to the bodily, before disparaging the swine-like

fatness of one and the worm-induced thinness of the other. Rima, the black slave who is surrogate mother to Mungo and emblematic of mother Africa is depicted in the mold of the castrating mother:

My first and only memory of Africa is of being cradled in her arms, possibly tenderly, most likely with such fierceness she appeared a beast intent on eating me. It seems that I spent all my life in that distant time and place lying in her arms, fearful of her teeth [. . .]. I recollect nothing precise but her ferocious and salivating visage. (*HP*, p. 40)

Here, the stereotypical depiction of darkest Africa as a voracious and castrating female is perpetuated. Although Mungo ponders the possibility that ‘she is a figure that I have absorbed from books’ or ‘encountered [. . .] in a cheaply coloured picture or balladeer’s scroll’ (*HP*, pp. 33 and 34), in an acknowledgement of the textual construction and circulation of stereotypes, the text fails effectively to parody the racist and sexist discourse it uses.

Ultimately, Dabydeen’s postmodern slave tale ends up reinscribing images of racial and sexual otherness. Dabydeen as trickster perpetuates a decidedly phallic *Esu* tradition that fails to disrupt inequitable gender conventions. His trickster aesthetic obscures its hegemonic prejudices by its postmodernist tricks of parody, self-reflexivity and the heterogeneous mix of genres and voices, in a seemingly creolized and egalitarian discourse of multivocality and multiple meanings. Dabydeen’s techniques for ekphrastic revision – generic mixes, semantic plurality and multiple subjectivities – prove to be the very instruments of a postmodernist design in which textual play masquerades as postcolonial rewriting.

## *Conclusion*

### **‘A Devil in the Garden’**

The Caribbean Creole’s endeavour to formulate a sense of identity through textuality and the cultural myths of the Caribbean is imbued with dualities that manifest themselves in multiple sites and strategies of dislocation, doubling and difference.

In Jean Rhys, Creole identity is painfully formulated in the untenable position ‘between two sentences’. It stems from being rejected on both sides of the ‘Wide Sargasso Sea’; a sullied, ‘horrid colonial’ on one side and a ‘white nigger’ on the other.<sup>1</sup> Creole subjectivity is shaped in this nauseating in-between space that crosses the cultural, racial and national divide. In the racialized abjection of black and white identifications, Rhys’s Creole subjectivity is formulated in the violent unmaking of the self and its horrific becoming in the embrace of the black female other, in the figure of the Hottentot, mulatto slave ghost, souciant and the Marinet Bois sèche, each bearing the historical inscription of sexual and racial difference. Rhys’s work lays bear a volatile female Creoleness fraught with the horror of racial crossings, possession by Caribbean ghosts and goddesses, self-loathing, sickness and sadomasochism.

The mutability of racial categories in the time of decolonization and the power differentials inherent in racial and sexual differences all come under Rhys’s ambivalent scrutiny. She disrupts and disarticulates identity formations of the empire, anticipating the formulations of Creole identity as a border category. While Rhys’s identifications transgress boundaries, bearing testament to her rebellion

against the social norms that attempt to imprison her in categories of sexual, racial and national identity, they are also implicated in forbidden fantasies and unspeakable fears and desires.

The constitution of Creole identity for Patrick Chamoiseau, on the other hand, begins with the remembering and revaluation of a denigrated, denied and forgotten history, culture and language. His work focuses on the zombification of Martinican man and his disalienation. From the djobbers of the Fort-de-France marketplace to the uncanny realm of the voodoo occult, Chamoiseau turns to Creole counterculture to wrench away the assimilated mask of white identification and offer alternative models of identity, such as the Creole mask of opacity.

The tenets of Créolité theory expounded by Chamoiseau and his fellow Creolists are central to his exposition on Creoleness as an empowering means of construing identity. Creoleness aims to transcend binarisms and essentialism and go beyond 'just expressing a crossing or any other unicity' to affirm '*the nontotalitarian consciousness of a preserved diversity*'.<sup>2</sup> Creole identity is heralded as an egalitarian mosaic of multiple identifications.

By placing Chamoiseau's self-possessed polemics against Rhys's self-destructive pathology, the thesis reveals the gaps and contradictions within Créolité theory. Rhys inflects the optimism of Chamoiseau's approach to creolization with a recognition of the loss and contradiction inherent in identity formation. Her work delves into the experience of border 'crossing' not just as an affirmation of change or the generation of a new entity, but also as a painful separation from the maternal influences which are at once vital and threatening to the subject. Rhys's work is marked by both self-inflicted and externally directed violence, as well as by the

experiences of exclusion and rejection, showing that identity construction is as much a function of boundaries and limits as it is of creative transformation. By ascertaining Creole identity as an unstable border entity founded upon loss and affliction, and interminably haunted by colonial specters, Rhys draws attention to the anxieties and insecurities underlying Chamoiseau's postulations.

Indeed, the reading of *Texaco* reveals Creole identity to be a site of psychic division and disjuncture rooted in the colonial emasculation of male identity. Trapped in the erotics of colonialism that denies Martinican man a means to identity, the Chamoisean *Conteur*, the Creole storyteller, effects the epistemic violence of ventriloquizing the female subaltern who is made to cathect the space of the Creole's self-consolidating other. Upon the zombification of the female subaltern, *Texaco* plays out the anxieties of the male *Conteur* who continues to be defined by the castration, psychic division and predatory sexuality of the erotics of colonialism. Furthermore, the privileging of the male storyteller establishes him as the '*totalitarian consciousness*' disclaimed by the Creolists. In the hyphenated space of the Creole continuum, Creole identity remains ensnared by hierarchies and binarisms that hinder the creolization of identity and its dynamic constitution of diverse and pluralistic elements. The differing strands that constitute the multiplicity of Creole identity remain implicated in configurations of power that need to be redressed; otherwise, Martinican Creole identity remains narcissistic, schizophrenic and male-centered.

David Dabydeen's formation of Creole identity is likewise shown to be fraught with anxieties. The migrant Creole is connected to but ultimately detached from any stabilizing source of ethnicity, race and nation. Both Dabydeen and Rhys

are plagued by the psychological disenfranchisement of the itinerant immigrant, the estranged outsider afflicted with a sense of internal exile and rootlessness. The migrant Creole – black and white – is trapped in the bind of being the ‘same’ but irredeemably ‘different’.<sup>3</sup> The Creole psyche is marked by deep divisions as it is split between the desire to occupy the place of both white and black, master and slave, insider and outsider, colonizer and colonized.

Unlike Rhys, however, Dabydeen is able to recreate a surrogate British family romance.<sup>4</sup> He shows that the ascription to Englishness is attainable through the mastery of ascribed behavioral and cultural codes, most notably those obtained through education. In attempting to author a self, Dabydeen also demonstrates how the migrant claim to English identity is precariously constituted upon signs of Englishness that are themselves tenuous and disappearing. In this way, he challenges notions of racial determinism and the equations of colour, race and class. In his rewriting of the ‘English’ book and his repeated attempts to voice the stories of silenced black figures confined in white texts, he recreates himself as the postcolonial ephebe, usurping the place of the colonial father. In plundering ancestral texts, he is haunted by fears of anonymity and dissolution; of being composed by pre-scripted narratives. Perhaps anticipating Dabydeen’s ekphrasis is Rhys’s obsessive rewriting of the other ‘English’ book, *Jane Eyre*, whose romance of quintessential English womanhood is predicated upon the othering of the Creole woman. Both Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Dabydeen’s *The Intended* interweave individual, literary and historical narratives in order to relate their personal experience to the wider disjunctions of Creole history. Dabydeen’s entombment of his native affiliations also results in their abjection. His denigration of and disgust



at blackness contrasts with Rhys's envy and fear of blacks, and her abject identification with them. The need to repel black identification is, ultimately, testament to the pervading influence of colonial history and its attendant system of difference based on perceptions of race, colour and sex.

In Dabydeen's work, the principles of a resistant postcolonial ekphrasis become confused and, at times, reversed. Like the Chamoisean *Conteur*, the male Creole erects his identity upon the bodies of women. The diversity of voices and genres, multiple perspectives, self-conscious textuality and parody employed in the attempt to create a historiographic metafiction become, instead, a kaleidoscopic narrative web woven with threads of sexual and racial otherness. The ambivalent fear and desire at the core of colonial inscriptions continue to inflect upon their rewriting.

The Caribbean Creole occupies plural positions, some of which remain steeped in the colonial dynamics of exploitation. Rhys, Chamoiseau and Dabydeen are 'devil[s] in the garden'<sup>5</sup> of colonial history, suspended in the in-between space between white and black, colonizer and colonized, and tormented by the menacing anxiety of being neither / nor. It is precisely in the multiplicities of their placements and perspectives, together with their shifting identifications, that an unlocalizable Creole subjectivity is able to shape the implicit absence that undergirds the logic of colonialism, as well as to generate Creole identity as an ineluctable interstitiality, a perpetual process of creolization and metamorphosis.

Furthermore, by drawing upon the religious beliefs and practices of the Caribbean, these writers engage with the devilry of the spectral and mythic in their critical representation and interrogation of the lingering effects of colonial violence

and resistance. While Caribbean myths and magic bear witness to the cultural rifts that necessitate their existence, they also serve as a means for the Creole to reclaim those fissures. The hauntological not only illuminates the shadowy aspects of Creole identity, it recovers a partially erased cultural history, and also reveals the dynamics of social and literary creolization in response to the cross-cultural encounters initiated by colonization.

## NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

<sup>1</sup> Excilia Saldaña, *Kele Kele* (Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1988), trans. Margarite Fernández Olmos, cited in *Sacred Possessions: Vodou, Santería, Obeah, and the Caribbean*, ed. Margarite Fernández Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert (New Brunswick, NJ, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2000), p. x.

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), pp. xviii and xix (italics in original).

<sup>3</sup> Derrida, p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> Derrida, p. 177, n. 2.

<sup>5</sup> See James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 173. Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert begin their exploration of African-based religious systems in the Caribbean by defining the Caribbean as 'the site of the world's first multicultural experiment, the locus of diversity, the cradle of ethnic and cultural syncretism'. Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Edward Kamau Brathwaite outlines two distinct cultural processes of colonization: '*ac/culturation*, which is the yoking (by force and example, deriving from power / prestige) of one culture to another (in this case the slave / African to the European); and *inter/culturation*, which is an unplanned, unstructured but osmotic relationship proceeding from this yoke'. Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *Contradictory Omens: Cultural Diversity and Integration in the Caribbean* (Mona, Jamaica: Savacou Publications, 1974), p. 6 (italics in original).

<sup>7</sup> For a tracing of the etymology and changing definitions of the term, see Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. xiv-xv; Chris Bongie, *Islands and Exiles: The Creole Identities of Post / Colonial Literature* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 1-24 and 126-33; Judith L. Raiskin, *Snow on the Cane Fields: Women's Writing and Creole Subjectivity* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 1-14; and H. Adlai Murdoch, 'Rhys's Pieces: Unhomeliness as Arbiter of Caribbean Creolization', *Callaloo*, 26: 1 (2003), pp. 252-72 (pp. 252-55).

<sup>8</sup> Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> Murdoch, p. 252.

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<sup>10</sup> Raphaël Confiand, *Aimé Césaire: Une traverse paradoxale du siècle* (Paris: Editions Stock, 1993), p. 266, cited in Bongie, p. 137. Antonio Benítez-Rojo theorizes creolization from a postmodern perspective in his influential work, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, trans. James E. Maraniss (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996).

<sup>11</sup> Patrick Chamoiseau, Jean Bernabé and Raphaël Confiand, 'In Praise of Creoleness', trans. Mohamed B. Taleb Khyar, *Callaloo*, 13 (1990), pp. 886-909 (p. 892; italics in original). Further references to this work – abbreviated as 'IPC' – are given parenthetically after quotations in the text.

<sup>12</sup> This view of creolization as a dynamic process of contention between different cultures is shared by Nigel Bolland, 'Creolisation and Creole Societies: A Cultural Nationalist View of Caribbean Social History', in *Intellectuals in the Twentieth-Century Caribbean*, 2 vols, ed. Alistair Hennessy (London: Macmillan, 1992), vol. I, pp. 50-79.

<sup>13</sup> See Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 1-28.

<sup>14</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 114 and 116.

<sup>15</sup> Robin Cohen and Paul Kennedy, *Global Sociology* (London: Macmillan, 2000), p. 377.

<sup>16</sup> Steven G. Yao, 'Taxonomizing Hybridity', *Textual Practice*, 17: 2 (2003), pp. 357-78 (p. 363).

<sup>17</sup> Bhabha, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> Bhabha, p. 38 (italics in original).

<sup>19</sup> Diana Fuss, *Identification Papers* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Fuss, pp. 1-2.

<sup>21</sup> Bhabha, p. 116 (italics in original).

<sup>22</sup> Derek Walcott, 'Jean Rhys', in *Derek Walcott: Collected Poems 1948-1984* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), p. 428.

<sup>23</sup> Raitskin, pp. 98-99.

<sup>24</sup> David Dabydeen, 'On Not Being Milton: Nigger Talk in England Today (1990)', in *The Routledge Language and Cultural Theory Reader*, ed. Lucy Burke, Tony Crowley and Alan Girvin (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 302-09.

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<sup>25</sup> Dabydeen, p. 302.

<sup>26</sup> Dabydeen, p. 302.

<sup>27</sup> Dabydeen, p. 303.

<sup>28</sup> Raikin, p. 14.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

<sup>1</sup> The epigraphs to this chapter are taken, respectively, from Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 1 and the unpublished manuscript of Jean Rhys's *Black Exercise Books* (Jean Rhys Collection, McFarlin Library, University of Tulsa, fols. 14-15), cited in Teresa F. O'Connor, *Jean Rhys: The West Indian Novels* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1986), p. 36. Further references to *Powers of Horror* – abbreviated as *PH* – will be made parenthetically after quotations in the text.

<sup>2</sup> Jean Rhys, *Smile Please: An Unfinished Autobiography* (London: André Deutsch, 1979), p. 124. Further references to this work – abbreviated as *SP* – will be made parenthetically after quotations in the text.

<sup>3</sup> Helen Tiffin, 'Mirror and Mask: Colonial Motifs in the Novels of Jean Rhys', *World Literature Written in English*, 17 (1978), pp. 328-41 (p. 328).

<sup>4</sup> Judith Kegan Gardiner, *Rhys, Stead, Lessing, and the Politics of Empathy* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 22.

<sup>5</sup> Other critics attribute Rhys's life-long alienation to the failure of her first love affair (Francis Wyndham, 'Introduction', *Jean Rhys: Letters 1931-66*, ed. Francis Wyndham and Diana Melly [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984], pp. 9-12 [p. 11]), and her rejection by her mother (Deborah Kelly Kloepper, *The Unspeakable Mother: Forbidden Discourse in Jean Rhys and H. D.* [Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989]; and O'Connor, pp. 1-40). Further references to *Jean Rhys: Letters* – abbreviated as *L* – will be made parenthetically after quotations in the text.

<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Nunez-Harrell, 'The Paradoxes of Belonging: The White West Indian Woman in Fiction', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 31 (1985), pp. 281-93 (pp. 281-82).

<sup>7</sup> O'Connor, p. 31. The notion of Rhys's admiration for black culture is shared by Thomas F. Staley, who cites a longing for 'a racial heritage which seemed in natural harmony with life'. (Thomas Staley, *Jean Rhys: A Critical Study* [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979], p. 62.)

<sup>8</sup> Lucy Wilson, "'Women Must Have Spunks': Jean Rhys's West Indian Outcasts", in *Critical Perspectives on Jean Rhys*, ed. Pierrette Frickey (Washington D. C.: Three Continents Press, 1990), pp. 67-74.

<sup>9</sup> Maria Olaussen, 'Jean Rhys's Construction of Blackness as Escape from White Femininity in "Wide Sargasso Sea"', *ARIEL*, 24: 2 (1993), pp. 65-82 (p. 68).

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<sup>10</sup> Sue Thomas, *The Worlding of Jean Rhys* (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 1999), p. 101; Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990), p. 18, cited in Thomas, p. 101.

<sup>11</sup> Compare Thomas De Quincey's claim that 'Southern Asia is, and has been for thousands of years, the part of the earth most swarming with human life; the great *officina gentium*. Man is a weed in those regions.' Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater, and Other Writings*, ed. Grevel Lindop (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 73 (italics in original).

<sup>12</sup> Hazel Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 23.

<sup>13</sup> Sander L. Gilman, 'Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature', in "Race", *Writing and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 223-61.

<sup>14</sup> Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica. Or, General Survey of the Antient and Modern State of that Island; with Reflections on its Situation, Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Commerce, Laws, and Government*, 3 vols. (London: T. Lowndes, 1774), vol. II, p. 336.

<sup>15</sup> Veronica Marie Gregg, *Jean Rhys's Historical Imagination: Reading and Writing the Creole* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), pp. 37 and 43. This is similar to the charge made by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak against Rhys for her depiction of Christophine in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, as a sacrifice of the native female in the cause of the 'subject-constitution of the European female individualist'. See Spivak, 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism', in Gates, pp. 262-80.

<sup>16</sup> Gregg, p. 38.

<sup>17</sup> Leah Rosenberg, "'The rope, of course, being covered with flowers': Metropolitan Discourses and the Construction of Creole Identity in Jean Rhys's 'Black Exercise Book'", *Jean Rhys Review*, 11: 1 (1999), pp. 5-33 (pp. 5, 22 and 29n).

<sup>18</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Magcibbon & Kee, 1965), p. 29, cited in Kenneth Ramchand, 'Terrified Consciousness', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 7 (1969), pp. 8-19 (p. 9; italics by Ramchand).

<sup>19</sup> Ramchand, p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> Ramchand, p. 11.

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<sup>21</sup> Ramchand, p. 15.

<sup>22</sup> Ramchand, pp. 15-16.

<sup>23</sup> Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (London: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 41 (italics added). Further references to this work – abbreviated as *WSS* – will be made parenthetically after quotations in the text.

<sup>24</sup> Ramchand, p. 15.

<sup>25</sup> Gilman, p. 256.

<sup>26</sup> Kristeva conceptualizes the maternal phase as the ‘semiotic’. Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller, in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 89-136.

<sup>27</sup> Moi, p. 238 (italics in original).

<sup>28</sup> Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols* (New York: Pantheon, 1970), p. 70.

<sup>29</sup> Kristeva, *About Chinese Women*, trans. Seán Hand, in Moi, pp. 138-59.

<sup>30</sup> Kristeva, *About Chinese Women*, p. 150.

<sup>31</sup> Kristeva, *About Chinese Women*, p. 148.

<sup>32</sup> Kristeva, *About Chinese Women*, p. 144.

<sup>33</sup> Kristeva, *About Chinese Women*, p. 143.

<sup>34</sup> Jean Walton, ‘Re-Placing Race in (White) Psychoanalytic Discourse: Founding Narratives of Feminism’, in *Female Subjects in Black and White: Race, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*, ed. Elizabeth Abel, Barbara Christian and Helene Moglen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 223-51.

<sup>35</sup> Walton, p. 225 (italics in original).

<sup>36</sup> Walton, p. 232.

<sup>37</sup> Kelly Hurley, *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 10. Clive Bloom shares the view that Kristeva’s theory of abjection is ‘tied to evolutionist and biologist presuppositions’. See Bloom, ‘Introduction: Death’s Own Backyard: The Nature of Gothic and Horror Fiction’, in *Gothic Horror: A Guide for Students and Readers* (second edition), ed. Clive Bloom (Palgrave: Macmillan, 2007), pp. 1-24 (p. 16).



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<sup>38</sup> Hurley, pp. 3-5.

<sup>39</sup> Daniel Pick engages with the theorists of degeneration, including Benedict Augustine Morel and Cesare Lombroso, and examines the inflection of degenerationism across different disciplines. See Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c. 1848-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>40</sup> Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1895).

<sup>41</sup> Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1991), pp. 4-5.

<sup>42</sup> Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>43</sup> H. L. Malchow, *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 39 (*italics in original*).

<sup>44</sup> Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, ed. David Daiches (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965), p. 77 and Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, ed. Q. D. Leavis (London: Penguin Classics, 1966), p. 313.

<sup>45</sup> Malchow, p. 148.

<sup>46</sup> Rhys specifies that she is twenty when she writes in the black exercise books: 'I filled three exercise books and half another, then I wrote: "Oh, God, I'm only twenty and I'll have to go on living and living and living"' (*SP*, p. 130). Accordingly, the *Black Exercise Books* would have been written between 1910 and 1911, contrary to both Mary Lou Emery's record of them being written in '1911-1913(?)' (Emery, *Jean Rhys at "World's End"* [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990], p. xv) and Rosenberg's record of them being written in 1938 (Rosenberg, p. 12).

<sup>47</sup> Rhys, *Black Exercise Books*, fols. 14-15, cited in O'Connor, p. 36 (*italics added*).

<sup>48</sup> *Two Tunes* is the original title of *Voyage in the Dark* (Rhys, *L*, p. 235).

<sup>49</sup> Long, vol. II, p. 327, cited in Young, p. 175.

<sup>50</sup> O'Connor, p. 21.

<sup>51</sup> Frank W. Sweet, 'Features of Today's One-Drop Rule', in 'Essays on the Color Line and the One-Drop Rule', *Backintyme Essays: History of the U.S. Color Line*, (March 1, 2005), available at: <<http://backintyme.com/essays/>> [accessed 12 September 2007].

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<sup>52</sup> See Young, pp. 177-78.

<sup>53</sup> Walton, p. 231.

<sup>54</sup> Rosenberg, p. 10.

<sup>55</sup> Ford Madox Ford, *When the Wicked Man* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1932), p. 171. For a reading of Ford's racialized depiction of Rhys, see Martien Kappers-den Hollander, 'Measure for Measure: *Quartet* and *When the Wicked Man*', *Jean Rhys Review*, 2: 1 (1988), pp. 2-17.

<sup>56</sup> Ford, pp. 154, 207 and 245.

<sup>57</sup> Ford, p. 115.

<sup>58</sup> Ford, p. 262.

<sup>59</sup> Carol Angier, *Jean Rhys: Life and Work*, rev. ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), p. 656.

<sup>60</sup> Angier, p. 656.

<sup>61</sup> Sue Thomas, 'Adulterous Liaisons: Jean Rhys, Stella Bowen and feminist reading', *Australian Humanities Review*, 22 (2001), available at: <[www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-June-2w001/Thomas.html](http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-June-2w001/Thomas.html)> [accessed 8 January 2008].

<sup>62</sup> Helen Carr, "'Intemperate and Unchaste': Jean Rhys and Caribbean Creole Identity', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 14: 1 (2003), pp. 38-62.

<sup>63</sup> O'Connor, p. 83.

<sup>64</sup> Rhys, *Voyage in the Dark* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 2000), p. 7 (*italics in original*). Further references to this work – abbreviated as *VD* – will be made parenthetically after quotations in the text.

<sup>65</sup> Angier, 'Introduction', in *Voyage in the Dark*, pp. v-xiv (p. ix).

<sup>66</sup> This symptomatic reading is opposed to a mimetic approach which views the narrative as an expression of the characters' psychology. For an example of such a mimetic reading, see Maren Linett, "'New Words, New Everything": Fragmentation and Trauma in Jean Rhys', *Twentieth-Century Literature*, 51: 4 (2005), pp. 437-66.

<sup>67</sup> Gilman, pp. 223-61.

<sup>68</sup> Gilman, p. 231.

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<sup>69</sup> The figure of Nana first appears in Zola's novel *L'Assommoir* and Manet's portrait of her reflects her sexual encounters portrayed in the novel. See Gilman, p. 253.

<sup>70</sup> Gilman, p. 251.

<sup>71</sup> Gilman, p. 254.

<sup>72</sup> Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), p. 214.

<sup>73</sup> Nordau, p. 41.

<sup>74</sup> Gregg, pp. 118-119.

<sup>75</sup> Joseph Clarke, 'Caribbean Modernism and the Postcolonial Social Contract in *Voyage in the Dark*', *Journal of Caribbean Literatures*, 3: 3 (1997), pp. 1-16 (p. 6; italics in original).

<sup>76</sup> Hazel Carby, "'On the Threshold of Women's Era': Lynching, Empire, and Sexuality in Black Feminist Theory', in Gates, pp. 301-16 (p. 313).

<sup>77</sup> Vivan Nun Halloran reads Antoinette's identification with Tia as an 'embodiment of the racial abject', whereby the 'racial abject' is used, without reference to Kristeva, to designate 'the visual spectacle of humiliation and shame occasioned by a person's skin color as it functions to signify both race and poverty'. See Vivan Nun Halloran, 'Race, Creole, and National Identities in Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Phillips's *Cambridge*', *Small Axe*, 21 (2006), pp. 87-104 (pp. 92 and 89).

<sup>78</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 26.

<sup>79</sup> Long, vol. II, p. 279.

<sup>80</sup> Gregg notes that Hester's discourse 'parodies the construction of the English gentlewoman who visited or lived in the West Indies' (Gregg, pp. 123-24).

<sup>81</sup> O'Connor, p. 107.

<sup>82</sup> For an analysis of the wider significance of the reference to *The Iron Shroud*, see O'Connor, pp. 104-07, 132-40.

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<sup>83</sup> For a reading of Rhys's depiction of landscape in the novel, see Kerry Johnson, 'Mapping the Sea Change: Postcolonialism, Modernism and Landscape in Jean Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark*', *Journal of Caribbean Literature*, 3: 3 (1997), pp. 47-62. In 'Temps Perdi', Rhys describes England as hell:

Listen: '... to conduct the transposition of the souls of the dead to the White Island, in the manner just described. The White Island is occasionally also called Brea, or Britannia. [...] It would be a very humorous idea if England was designated as the land of the dead ... as hell. In such a form, in truth, England has appeared to many a stranger.

Jean Rhys, *Tales of the Wide Caribbean: A New Collection of Short Stories*, selected and intro. Kenneth Ramchand (Oxford: Heinemann, 1985), p. 145.

<sup>84</sup> The common English spelling is *soucouyant*, but Rhys's spelling will be adhered to throughout.

<sup>85</sup> Rhys makes a similar observation about *soucriants* in *Smile Please*, p. 30.

<sup>86</sup> For a summary definition of the *soucriant*, see Giselle Lisa Anatol, 'A Feminist Reading of *Soucouyants* in Nalo Hopkinson's *Brown Girl in the Ring* and *Skin Folk*', *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, 37: 3 (2004), available at:

<<http://www.redorbit.com/modules/news/tools.php?tool=print&id=96299>>

[accessed 2 November 2007]. See also *Monstropedia*, available at:

<[http://www.monstropedia.org/index.php?title= Soucouyant](http://www.monstropedia.org/index.php?title=Soucouyant)> [accessed 4

September 2007]; and 'Trinidad and Tobago's Folklore and Legends: The Mayaro *Soucouyant*', *Triniview*, available at:

<<http://www.triniview.com/TnT/Soucouyant.htm>> [accessed 3 December 2007].

Patrick Chamoiseau defines the '*soucounan*' as a '[c]reature capable of shedding its human skin at night, flying batlike, and emitting light' or a 'sorcerer who sheds his skin to work evil on his victims'. Patrick Chamoiseau, *Childhood*, trans. Carol Volk (London: Granta Books, 1999), p. 118.

<sup>87</sup> 'Soucriant', Wikipedia, available at <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soucriant>> [accessed 4 September 2007].

<sup>88</sup> Margarite Fernández Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, *Creole Religions of the Caribbean: An Introduction from Voodoo and Santería to Obeah and Espiritismo* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2003), p. 151.

Hans-W. Ackermann and Jeanine Gauthier list '*soucliants*' as zombies of the soul without a body which appear in the French Antilles. Hans-W. Ackermann and Jeanine Gauthier, 'The Ways and Nature of the Zombi', *Journal of American Folklore*, 104 (1991), pp. 466-94 (p. 484).

<sup>89</sup> Anatol, para. 10.

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<sup>90</sup> Anatol, para. 29.

<sup>91</sup> Anatol, para. 10.

<sup>92</sup> Nalo Hopkinson, *Skin Folk* (New York: Warner, 2001), p. 178, cited in Anatol, para. 3.

<sup>93</sup> Hopkinson, p. 1.

<sup>94</sup> Anatol, para. 34.

<sup>95</sup> Malchow, p. 168.

<sup>96</sup> Malchow, p. 173.

<sup>97</sup> For readings on the troping of sexually promiscuous women as vampires, see Thomas, *The Worlding of Jean Rhys*, pp. 67-93; Showalter, pp. 179-84; Sian Macfie, "'They Suck Us Dry': A Study of Late Nineteenth-Century Projections of Vampiric Women", in *Subjectivity and Literature from the Romantics to the Present Day*, ed. Philip Shaw and Peter Stockwell (New York: Pinter, 1991), pp. 58-67; and Lucy Bland, "'Guardians of the Race," or "Vampires upon the Nation's Health"? Female Sexuality and Its Regulation in Early Twentieth-Century Britain', in *The Changing Experience of Women*, ed. Elizabeth Whitelegg, et al. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell and the Open University, 1982), pp. 373-88.

<sup>98</sup> Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 70.

<sup>99</sup> Creed, pp. 69-70.

<sup>100</sup> Hopkinson, p. 173.

<sup>101</sup> Janette Martin reads Anna's claim to soucricancy as a comment on the clients sucking the vitality from her. This interpretation overlooks Rhys's emphasis that 'soucricants were always women' (*SP*, p. 30). Janette Martin, 'Jableses, Soucricants, Loups-garous: Obeah as an Alternative Epistemology in the Writing of Jean Rhys and Jamaica Kincaid', *World Literature Written in English*, 36: 1 (1997), pp. 3-29 (pp. 14-15).

<sup>102</sup> Holly W. Fils-Aimé, 'Coulibri and Libellule: Tradition Empowering Women in Novels by Jean Rhys and Simone Schwarz-Bart', *Journal of Caribbean Studies*, 9: 3 (1993), pp. 164-77 (p. 170).

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<sup>103</sup> Obeah and voodoo are distinct religions, both genealogically and in their cultural practice. As recorded by Alan Richardson, 'Obeah has been traced to Ashanti-Fanti origins (tribes of the Gold coast or modern Ghana region) and is more purely concerned with magic or sorcery than voodoo, a more highly elaborated system of beliefs with origins in the Fon and Yoruba cultures (of the Dahomey or modern Benin region)'. Richardson, 'Romantic Voodoo: Obeah and British Culture, 1797 – 1807', *Studies in Romanticism*, 32 (1993), pp. 3-28 (p. 5). Some critics have misleadingly conflated them, as suggested by Rhys herself in *The Glittering Coronet of Isles*: 'Voodoo as it is called in Haiti – Obeah in some of the islands, another name in South America' (*WSS*, pp. 88-89).

<sup>104</sup> Joan Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: California University Press, 1995), pp. 33-35.

<sup>105</sup> Dayan, p. 35. Luc de Heusch records that the Marinet's colour is red and fire is her element. Luc de Heusch, 'Kongo in Haiti: A New Approach to Religious Syncretism', trans. Noal Mellott, *Man*, 24 (1989), pp. 290-302 (p. 294).

<sup>106</sup> Ivette Romero-Cesareo, 'Sorcerers, She-Devils, and Shipwrecked Women: Writing Religion in French-Caribbean Literature', in Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert, pp. 248-66 (p. 253).

<sup>107</sup> Dayan, p. 106.

<sup>108</sup> 'Erzulie', Wikipedia, available at: <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erzulie>> [accessed 22 February 2008].

<sup>109</sup> Dayan, p. 106 (italics added).

<sup>110</sup> Jean Rhys, *Quartet* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 20.

<sup>111</sup> Cited in Gregg, p. 119.

<sup>112</sup> Thomas, using terms drawn from Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 14, cited in 'Adulterous Liaisons', para. 3.

<sup>113</sup> Charlotte Brontë, p. 131.

<sup>114</sup> Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik read the 'conflation' of the masquerade and abortion as an attempt to draw a 'parallel between the hierarchical and oppressive social system of the West Indies, based in colour and deriving from a slave society, with that of England in the years 1912-1914 in which women are exploited and constrained'. Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik, *Landscapes of Desire: Metaphor in Modern Women's Fiction* (Hertfordshire: Harvester / Wheatsheaf, 1990), p. 160. Sharing the view of Sue Vice whom they cite, Sally Minogue and Andrew Palmer equate Kristeva's concept of the abject with Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the

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denigrated and corrupted grotesque, and, accordingly, their focus is on Rhys's representation of Anna's abortion as a subversion of official culture and its notions of morality. See Sally Minogue and Andrew Palmer, 'Confronting the Abject: Women and Dead Babies in Modern English Fiction', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 29: 3 (2006), pp. 103-125 (p. 106).

<sup>115</sup> Cynthia Davis shows how Rhys's depiction of the jamette, the female carnival street performer, and her use of Afrocentric forms of verbal artistry such as calypso songs, indirectly interrogate colonial and metropolitan power structures through parody and satire. Cynthia Davis, 'Jamette Carnival and Afro-Caribbean Influences on the Work of Jean Rhys', *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal*, 3: 2 (2005), available at: <[http://scholar.library.miami.edu/anthurium/volume\\_3/issue\\_2/davis-jamette.htm](http://scholar.library.miami.edu/anthurium/volume_3/issue_2/davis-jamette.htm)> [accessed 2 May 2007].

<sup>116</sup> Emery, p. 77.

<sup>117</sup> For the original ending, see Jean Rhys Collection, McFarlin Library, University of Tulsa, 1: 11 (p. 20), cited in O'Connor, p. 129. The original ending is reproduced in Bonnie Kime Scott, *The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1990).

<sup>118</sup> Jean Rhys, *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 40. Further references to this work – abbreviated as *ALM* – will be made parenthetically after quotations in the text.

<sup>119</sup> Noted by Genevieve Abravanel, 'Intertextual Identifications: Modigliani, Conrad, and *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie*', in *Journal of Caribbean Literatures*, 3: 3 (1997), pp. 91-98 (p. 92).

## NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

<sup>1</sup> The epigraph to this chapter is taken from Michael Gilkes, 'Creative Schizophrenia: The Caribbean Cultural Challenge', The Walter Rodney Memorial Lecture (University of Warwick: Centre for Caribbean Studies, 1986), pp. 1-16 (p. 4).

<sup>2</sup> The 'djob', as Édouard Glissant explains, is 'a method of cartage or transport, and in a wider sense, an odd job that is free-form and created afresh each day'. It was the 'driving force' of the subsistence economy in pre-departmentalized Martinique but has since died out. See Édouard Glissant, 'A Word Scratcher', in Patrick Chamoiseau, *Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows*, trans. Linda Coverdale (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), pp. vii-ix (p. vii). Further references to *Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows* – abbreviated as CSS – will be made parenthetically after quotations in the text.

<sup>3</sup> Wade Davis, 'The Ethnobiology of the Haitian Zombie', *Caribbean Reviews*, 12 (1984), pp. 18-21 (p. 47). These findings are reiterated again in *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985), p. 186, and *Passage of Darkness: The Ethnobiology of the Haitian Zombie* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), p. 60.

<sup>4</sup> Hans-W. Ackermann and Jeanine Gauthier, 'The Ways and Nature of the Zombi', *Journal of American Folklore*, 104 (1991), pp. 466-94 (pp. 467-69).

<sup>5</sup> Zora Neale Hurston, *Voodoo Gods: An Inquiry into Native Myths and Magic in Jamaica and Haiti* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1939), p. 175; Alfred Métraux, *Voodoo in Haiti*, trans. Hugo Charteris (London: Alfred Deutsch, 1959), pp. 281-85; Harold Courlander, *The Drum and the Hoe: Life and Lore of the Haitian People* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), p. 101; Melville J. Herskovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley* (New York: Octagon Books, 1975), p. 245. For a comprehensive list of the properties of the zombie without a soul, see Ackermann and Gauthier, p. 480.

<sup>6</sup> Davis, *Passage of Darkness*, pp. 190-91.

<sup>7</sup> Zora Neale Hurston, *Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1990), p. 181.

<sup>8</sup> Roland Littlewood, 'The Plight of the Living Dead', *The Times Higher* (November 28, 1997), p. 17.

<sup>9</sup> Hurston, *Tell my Horse*, p. 206.

<sup>10</sup> Métraux, p. 378.

<sup>11</sup> David Macey, *Frantz Fanon: A Life* (London: Granta Books, 2000), p. 41.



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- <sup>12</sup> Derived from the words 'vo' and 'du' which mean 'introspection' and 'into the unknown' respectively, voodoo traditionally sought intimate knowledge of the supernatural realm of gods and spirits. See Milo Rigaud, *Secrets of Voodoo*, trans. Robert Cross (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1985), p. 8.
- <sup>13</sup> Michel S. Laguerre, *Voodoo and Politics in Haiti* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988), pp. 121-28.
- <sup>14</sup> Maximilien Laroche, 'The Myth of the Zombi', in *Exile and Tradition: Studies in African and Caribbean Literature*, ed. Rowland Smith (London: Longman and Dalhousie University Press, 1976), pp. 44-61 (p. 55).
- <sup>15</sup> See Markman Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), pp. 208-18.
- <sup>16</sup> The terror invoked by voodoo in Anglophone writing on Haiti was confirmed by the British diplomat, Sir Spencer Buckingham St John's sensationalized account of cannibalism and child sacrifice in *Hayti: or, The Black Republic* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1884), pp. 182-227.
- <sup>17</sup> See J. Michael Dash, *Haiti and the United States: National Stereotypes and the Literary Imagination* (New York and London: St. Martin's Press, 1997).
- <sup>18</sup> See Lizbeth Paravisini-Gebert, 'Eroticism and Exoticism in the Representation of Woman as Zombie', in *Sacred Possessions: Vodou, Santería, Obeah, and the Caribbean*, ed. Margarite Fernández Olmos and Lizbeth Paravisini-Gebert (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 1997), pp. 37-58.
- <sup>19</sup> Paravisini-Gebert, p. 47.
- <sup>20</sup> As Frantz Fanon states, 'The Negro is the incarnation of a genital potency beyond all moralities and prohibitions'. *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 177.
- <sup>21</sup> See Judie Newman, *The Ballistic Bard: Postcolonial Fictions* (London: Edward Arnold, 1995), pp. 13-28; and Judith L. Raiskin, *Snow on the Canefields: Women's Writing and Creole Subjectivity* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 129-43.
- <sup>22</sup> Maya Deren, *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti* (New York: McPherson & Co, 1983), p. 338; Ackermann and Gauthier, pp. 482-83. For a list of properties of the zombie of the soul without a body, see Ackermann and Gauthier, p. 480.
- <sup>23</sup> Ackermann and Gauthier, p. 482.

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<sup>24</sup> Jack Corzani, 'West Indian Mythology and Its Literary Illustrations', trans. Lionel Dubois, *Research in African Literatures*, 25: 2 (1994), pp. 131-39 (p. 135).

<sup>25</sup> Lafcadio Hearn wrote a series of articles on folklore and popular culture in the West Indies for *Harper's Magazine*, which was compiled in *Two Years in the French West Indies* (London: Harper & Brothers, 1890).

<sup>26</sup> See Ivette Romero-Cesareo, 'Sorcerers, She-Devils, and Shipwrecked Women: Writing Religion in French-Caribbean Literature', in Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert, pp. 245-66 (p. 254); and Ellis, pp. 217-18.

<sup>27</sup> Hearn, pp. 185-90 (italics in original).

<sup>28</sup> Robert Southey, *History of Brazil*, 3 vols. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1810-1819), vol. I, pp. 495-96, cited in Ellis, p. 212.

<sup>29</sup> Southey, vol. III, p. 24n, cited in Ellis, p. 212.

<sup>30</sup> Edna Aizenberg, "'I walked with a Zombie': The Pleasures and Perils of Postcolonial Hybridity", *World Literature Today*, 73: 3 (1999), pp. 461-66.

<sup>31</sup> Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. and intro. J. Michael Dash (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989), pp. 61-62. Further references to this work – abbreviated as *CD* – will be made parenthetically after quotations in the text.

<sup>32</sup> V. S. Naipaul, *The Middle Passage* (London: André Deutsch, 1962), p. 29.

<sup>33</sup> Randolph Hezekiah, 'Martinique and Guadeloupe: Time and Space,' in *A History of Literature in the Caribbean*, vol. I, Hispanic and Francophone Regions, ed. A. James Arnold, Julio Rodriguez-Luis and J. Michael Dash (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1994), pp. 379-88 (p. 383).

<sup>34</sup> Martinique is one of four Overseas Departments of France, which include the other Caribbean island of Guadeloupe, Réunion in the Indian Ocean and Guyane in Latin-America.

<sup>35</sup> Patrick Chamoiseau, Jean Bernabé and Raphaël Confiant, 'In Praise of Creoleness', trans. Mohamed B. Taleb Khyar, *Callaloo*, 13 (1990), pp. 886-909 (p. 887). Further references to this work – abbreviated as 'IPC' – will be made parenthetically after quotations in the text.

<sup>36</sup> For an analysis of the economic dispossession of Martinique, see Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, pp. 37-45.

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<sup>37</sup> James Ferguson, 'Return of the Creole', available at:  
<<http://www.patrickchamoiseau.cwc.net/interview.htm>> [accessed 12 May 2000],  
(p. 5 of 10).

<sup>38</sup> Chamoiseau, *Écrire en pays dominé*, trans. Lorna Milne (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), p. 120.

<sup>39</sup> For a reading on the symbolic function of the djobber's wheelbarrow, see J. Michael Dash, *The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World Context* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1998), pp. 139-43.

<sup>40</sup> Chamoiseau, 'Reflections on Maryse Condé's *Traversés de la mangrove*', *Callaloo*, 14: 2 (1991), pp. 389-95 (p. 390).

<sup>41</sup> See Richard D. E. Burton, 'DEBROUYA PA PECHE, OR IL Y A TOUJOURS MOYEN DE MOYENNER: Patterns of Opposition in the Fiction of Patrick Chamoiseau', *Callaloo*, 16: 2 (1993), pp. 466-81. Dash makes a similar argument in *The Other America*, pp. 141-43.

<sup>42</sup> Chamoiseau, 'Les nègres-marrons de l'en-ville', *Antilla*, 473 (1992), pp. 29-33, cited in Suzanne Crosta, 'Breaking the Silence: Cultural Identities and Narrative Configurations in the French Caribbean Novel', in *An Introduction to Caribbean Francophone Writing: Guadeloupe and Martinique*, ed. Sam Haigh (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1999), pp. 159-76 (p. 168, n. 21).

<sup>43</sup> Derek Walcott, 'The Muse of History', in *What the Twilight Says: Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998), pp. 36-64 (p. 37).

<sup>44</sup> Walcott, 'The Muse of History', p. 37.

<sup>45</sup> Walcott, 'The Muse of History', pp. 37-39.

<sup>46</sup> Walcott, 'Laventille', in *Collected Poems 1948-1984* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1992), pp. 85-88 (p. 88).

<sup>47</sup> Gilkes, pp. 4-5.

<sup>48</sup> Walcott, 'Bronze', in *In a Green Night: Poems 1948-60* (London: Cape, 1962), p. 78, cited in Gilkes, pp. 4-5.

<sup>49</sup> Walcott, 'The Muse of History', p. 36.

<sup>50</sup> Ackermann and Gauthier, p. 488. A variation to this myth tells of the master who buries his gold in the cellar of his *château* or plantation house and then murders a slave and buries him beside the treasure. As a schoolboy, Fanon wrote an essay centred on this story after a school excursion to a *château* in Martinique. See Macey, p.66.

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<sup>51</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), pp. xviii and xix (italics in original).

<sup>52</sup> Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 11 (italics in original).

<sup>53</sup> Derrida, , *Specters of Marx*, p. 10 (italics in original).

<sup>54</sup> In a recent study of memory in the work of Chamoiseau, Maeve McCusker uses trauma theory to explain the marginalization of the slave narrative in *Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows*. See Maeve McCusker, *Patrick Chamoiseau: Recovering Memory* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), pp. 21-46.

<sup>55</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore, MD and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 4.

<sup>56</sup> Cathy Caruth, 'Introduction', in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore, MD and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 3-12 (p. 5).

<sup>57</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'On Dreams', in *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (London: Vintage, 1989), pp. 151-54.

<sup>58</sup> Walcott, 'The Muse of History', pp. 2 and 3. Wilson Harris also writes of the limitations of realist historiography and fervently advocates an imaginative recasting of history, which is reflected in his own novels. See 'History, Fable, and Myth in the Caribbean and Guianas', in *Selected Essays of Wilson Harris: The Unfinished Genesis of the Imagination*, ed. and intro. A. J. M. Bundy (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 152-66. See also Nana Wilson-Tague, *Historical Thought and Literary Representation in West Indian Literature* (Oxford: James Currey, 1998).

<sup>59</sup> Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy', in *Dissemination*, trans., intro. and additional notes by Barbara Johnson (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), p. 70.

<sup>60</sup> Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy', p. 70.

<sup>61</sup> Davis, *Passage of Darkness*, p. 61; Métraux, p. 251; Seabrook, p. 98.

<sup>62</sup> Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 48.

<sup>63</sup> Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. xx (italics in original).

<sup>64</sup> For a reading of the Creolists' critique of Négritude, see Shireen K. Lewis, *Race, Culture, and Identity: Francophone West African and Caribbean Literature and Theory from Négritude to Créolite* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), pp. 89-93.

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<sup>65</sup> Freud in 'Medusa's Head' writes of the castrated female genitalia, the *vagina dentata*, as a sign of the maternal castrator. See Freud, 'Medusa's Head', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. James Strachey et al., 24 vols. (London: Hogarth, 1953-74), vol. XVIII, pp. 273-74.

<sup>66</sup> Chamoiseau, *Seven Dreams of Elmira: A Tale of Martinique*, trans. Mark Polizzotti (Cambridge, MA: Zoland Books, 1999), pp. 21 and 22 (italics in original). Further references to this work – abbreviated as *SDE* – will be made parenthetically after quotations in the text.

<sup>67</sup> Descriptions of the multifaceted Ezili can be found in Joan Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: California University Press, 1995), pp. 54-75; Rigaud, pp. 74-76; and Deren, pp. 137-45.

<sup>68</sup> Dayan, p. 60.

<sup>69</sup> Dayan, p. 59.

<sup>70</sup> Dayan, p. 58.

<sup>71</sup> Dayan, p. 64.

<sup>72</sup> Dayan, p. 64.

<sup>73</sup> Dayan, p. 58.

<sup>74</sup> Dayan, p. 60.

<sup>75</sup> Dayan, p. 58.

<sup>76</sup> Freud, 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality', in Gay, pp. 249-50.

<sup>77</sup> Dayan, p. 53.

<sup>78</sup> Celia Britton, "'Eating Their Words': The Consumption of French Caribbean Literature", *ASCALF Yearbook* 1 (1996), pp. 15-23 (p. 20).

<sup>79</sup> Walcott, 'The Muse of History', p. 4.

<sup>80</sup> Sam Haigh makes a similar point regarding Fanon's association of man with the 'mind' and woman with the 'body'. In Fanon's readings of Mayotte Capécia's *Je suis Martiniquaise*, Haigh observes that Fanon repeatedly conflates the author and narrator, suggesting that while Fanon seems to imagine himself capable of the reasoned and objective representation of Antillean neurosis, a woman such as Capécia can only naively record her own experience of a neurosis because of her embodiment of the lactification complex. See Sam Haigh, "'Voix Femines / Voix

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Feministes''? Women's Writing from the Francophone Caribbean', in *Francophone Voices*, ed. Kamal Salhi (Exeter: Elm Bank Publication, 1999), pp. 141-55 (pp. 142-44).

## NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

<sup>1</sup> The epigraphs to this chapter are taken, respectively, from Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 8; and Lucien Taylor, 'Créolité Bites: A Conversation with Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphaël Confiant, and Jean Bernabé', *Transition: An International Review*, 74: 2 (1998), pp. 124-61 (p. 132). Further references to these works – abbreviated as *BSWM* and 'CB' respectively – will be made parenthetically after quotations in the text.

<sup>2</sup> As an example of a dichotomised reading, Ruth Morse construes Chamoiseau's text as 'his writerly destiny against the lost indigenous maternal (both the mother and the mother-tongue) and the acquired culture, public and masculine'. Ruth Morse, 'The Story of Memory', *Times Literary Supplement* (2 April 1999), p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Patrick Chamoiseau, Jean Bernabé and Raphaël Confiant, 'In Praise of Creoleness', trans. Mohamed B. Taleb Khyar, *Callaloo*, 13 (1990), pp. 886-909 (p. 886). Further references to this work – abbreviated as 'IPC' – will be made parenthetically after quotations in the text.

<sup>4</sup> Jacques Lacan, 'The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience', in *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 1977), pp. 1-7.

<sup>5</sup> Diana Fuss, *Identification Papers* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 141-48.

<sup>6</sup> For the splitting of body and consciousness in Fanon, see Ronald A. T. Judy, 'Fanon's Body of Black Experience', in *Fanon: A Critical Reader*, ed., intro. and trans. Lewis R. Gordon, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting and Renée T. White (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), pp. 53-73.

<sup>7</sup> Françoise Vergès has written of Fanon's disavowal of a society in which the Master is always present and where the enslaved father and the raped mother could not be his parents. See Françoise Vergès, 'Creole Skin, Black Masks: Fanon and Disavowal', *Critical Inquiry*, 23 (1997), pp. 578-95.

<sup>8</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (London: Penguin, 1967), pp. 42-45. Further references to this work – abbreviated as *TWE* – will be made parenthetically after quotations in the text.

<sup>9</sup> In a reading of time and space, Françoise Vergès argues that Fanon's desire for a violent rupture with the past rules out the possibility of a Creole conception of Caribbean history and culture associated with the Creolists. See Françoise Vergès, 'Where to begin? "Le commencement" in *Peau noire, masques blancs* and in creolisation', in *Frantz Fanon's Black Skin, White Masks: New Interdisciplinary Essays*, ed. Max Silverman (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 32-45.

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<sup>10</sup> Fuss, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: James Currey, 1986), p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> On the corrosive effects of colonial education, see Madeleine Cottenet-Hage and Kevin Meehan, "'Our Ancestors the Gauls . . .': Schools and Schooling in Two Caribbean Novels", *Callaloo*, 15: 1 (1992), pp. 75-89. Postcolonial novelists have frequently focused on the colonization function of the school. Another Francophone Caribbean example is Joseph Zobel, *Black Shack Alley*, trans. Keith Q. Warner (Washington DC: Three Continents Press, 1980).

<sup>13</sup> Chamoiseau, *School Days*, trans. Linda Coverdale (London: Granta Books, 1997), p. 118. Further references to this work – abbreviated as *SD* – will be made parenthetically after quotations in the text.

<sup>14</sup> Aimé Césaire famously denigrated Creole language when he said, 'I have spoken of the cultural backwardness in Martinique. Precisely, one aspect of this cultural backwardness is the level of the language, of créolité if you wish, which is extremely low, which has remained at the level of the immediate, incapable of evolving, of expressing abstract thought'. Cited in Shireen K. Lewis, *Race, Culture, and Identity: Francophone West African and Caribbean Literature and Theory from Négritude to Créolité* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), p. 89. Jane Brooks records the findings of sociolinguists who conclude that in the Francophone Caribbean, French is still perceived as the official and prestigious code of formal and public situations while Creole is seen as the language of informal speech, strongly associated with popular culture and the home. See Jane Brooks, 'Challenges to Writing Literature in Creole: The Cases of Martinique and Guadeloupe', in *An Introduction to Caribbean Francophone Writing: Guadeloupe and Martinique*, ed. Sam Haigh (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1999), pp. 119-34.

<sup>15</sup> Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. and intro. J. Michael Dash (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989), pp. 122-23. Further references to this work – abbreviated as *CD* – will be made parenthetically after quotations in the text.

<sup>16</sup> Chamoiseau, *Ecrire en pays dominé*, pp. 252-53, cited in Lorna Milne, 'Sex, Gender and the Right to Write: Patrick Chamoiseau and the Erotics of Colonialism', *Paragraph*, 24: 3 (2001), pp. 59-75 (p. 65).

<sup>17</sup> Milne, p. 65.

<sup>18</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Negotiating Caribbean Identities', in *Postcolonial Discourses: An Anthology*, ed. Gregory Castle (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 281-92 (p. 285).



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<sup>19</sup> Patrick Chamoiseau, *Strange Words*, trans. Linda Coverdale (London: Granta Books, 1994), pp. xii-xiii. Further references to this work – abbreviated as *SW* – will be made parenthetically after quotations in the text.

<sup>20</sup> David Murray highlights the racialized component of opacity, drawing upon the definition found in *Webster's Dictionary* of opacity as 'the quality or state of a body that makes it impervious to the rays of light', to make a case for the refusal of the black body to be scrutinized. See David Murray, *Opacity: Gender, Sexuality, Race, and the 'Problem' of Identity in Martinique* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), p. 16.

<sup>21</sup> Celia Britton, *Édouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory: Strategies of Language and Resistance* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1999), pp. 24-25 (italics in original).

<sup>22</sup> Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. James Strachey et al., 24 vols. (London: Hogarth, 1953-74), vol. XVII, pp. 219-52 (p. 220).

<sup>23</sup> Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', pp. 244-45.

<sup>24</sup> Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', p. 247.

<sup>25</sup> Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', p. 225, n. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Fanon records the antics of the Negro arriving in France who 'react[s] against the myth of the *R*-eating man from Martinique' by 'not only rolling his *R* but embroidering it': 'Waiterrr! Bring me a beeya' (*BSWM*, p. 21; italics in original).

<sup>27</sup> The *molocoye* tortoise is a species living in Martinique.

<sup>28</sup> Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery: An Analysis of the Origins, Development, and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica* (Kingston, Jamaica: Sangster's Book Stores, 1967), pp. 174-81. This is similar to what Carolyn Cooper defines as '(h)ideology' in *Noises in the Blood: Orality, Gender and the 'Vulgar' Body of Jamaican Popular Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1993), p. 141.

<sup>29</sup> See Asselin Charles, 'Voodoo Myths in Haitian Literature', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 17: 4 (1980), pp. 391-98 (p. 394).

<sup>30</sup> For analyses of the linguistic play of Creole and French in Chamoiseau's writing, see Alexie Tcheuyap, 'Creolist Mystification: Oral writing in the works of Patrick Chamoiseau and Simone Schwarz-Bart', *Research in African Literatures*, 32: 4 (2001), pp. 44-60; Hélène Buzelin, 'Creolizing Narratives across Languages: Selvon and Chamoiseau', *Canadian Literature*, 175 (2002), pp. 67-92; Malcolm Offord, Laila Ibulfassi and Nicki Hitchcott, 'Patrick Chamoiseau', in *Francophone*

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*Literatures: A Literary and Linguistic Companion*, ed. Sam Haigh and Rosemary Chapman (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 189-94.

<sup>31</sup> David Patrick Geggus, *Slave Resistance Studies and the Saint Domingue Slave Revolt* (Miami: Florida International University, Latin American and Caribbean Center, 1983), pp. 2-3.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

<sup>1</sup> The epigraphs to this chapter are taken, respectively, from Patrick Chamoiseau, *Texaco*, trans. Rose-Myriam Réjouis and Val Vinokurov (London: Granta Books, 1998), p. 360 and Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other, or the Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 11. Further references to *Texaco* – abbreviated as *T* – will be made parenthetically after quotations in the text.

<sup>2</sup> Patrick Chamoiseau, Jean Bernabé and Raphaël Confiant, 'In Praise of Creoleness', trans. Mohamed B. Taleb Khyar, *Callaloo*, 13 (1990), pp. 886-909 (p. 892). Further references to this work – abbreviated as 'IPC' – will be made parenthetically after quotations in the text.

<sup>3</sup> Françoise Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 102.

<sup>4</sup> Lise Morel, 'In Praise of Creoleness?', in *An Introduction to Caribbean Francophone Writing: Guadeloupe and Martinique*, ed. Sam Haigh (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1999), pp. 149-58 (p. 158).

<sup>5</sup> Derek Walcott, 'A Letter to Chamoiseau', in *What the Twilight Says: Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998), pp. 213-32.

<sup>6</sup> Lorna Milne, 'From Créolité to Diversalité: The Postcolonial Subject in Patrick Chamoiseau's *Texaco*', in *Subject Matters: Subject and Self in French Literature from Descartes to the Present*, ed. Paul Gifford and Johnnie Gratton (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 162-80 (pp. 165 and 170).

<sup>7</sup> Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. and intro. J. Michael Dash (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989), p. 145.

<sup>8</sup> Françoise duRivage, 'Texaco: From the Hills to the Mangrove Swamps', *Thamyris*, 6: 1 (1999), pp. 35-42.

<sup>9</sup> Christine Chivallon, 'Images of Creole Diversity and Spatiality: A Reading of Patrick Chamoiseau's *Texaco*', *Ecumene*, 4: 3 (1997), pp. 318-36.

<sup>10</sup> Nick Monk, 'Texaco: The Aesthetics of Landscape' (1999), available at: <<http://www.patrickchamoiseau.cwc.net/aande.htm>> [accessed 12 May 2000], (para. 9 of 12). See also Edward Hower, 'A Tangled Creole Garden', *The World and I*, 12 (1997), pp. 1-6, available at: <<http://www.elibrary.com/s/encarta1/getd...@urn:bigchalk.com>> [accessed 2 September 2001].

<sup>11</sup> Véronique Maisier, 'Patrick Chamoiseau's novel *Texaco* and the Picaresque Genre', *Dalhousie French Studies*, 57 (2001), pp. 128-36 (pp. 134-35).

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<sup>12</sup> See Maeve McCusker, *Patrick Chamoiseau: Recovering Memory* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), pp. 90-100.

<sup>13</sup> Catriona Cunningham, 'Reclaiming "Paradise Lost" in the Writings of Patrick Chamoiseau and Edouard Glissant', *French Cultural Studies*, 18: 3 (2007), pp. 277-91.

<sup>14</sup> Lucien Taylor, 'Créolité Bites: A Conversation with Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphaël Confiant, and Jean Bernabé', *Transition: An International Review*, 74: 2 (1998), pp. 124-61 (p. 131; italics in original). Further references to this work – abbreviated as 'CB' – will be made parenthetically after quotations in the text.

<sup>15</sup> Richard and Sally Price, 'Shadow-Boxing in the Mangrove', *Cultural Anthropology*, 12: 1 (1997), pp. 3-36 (p. 15).

<sup>16</sup> Richard Watts, 'The "Wounds of Locality": Living and Writing the Local in Patrick Chamoiseau's *Écrire En Pays Dominé*', *French Forum*, 28: 1 (2003), pp. 111-29.

<sup>17</sup> Édouard Glissant, 'Sur la trace d'Édouard Glissant', *Le nouvel observateur* 1517 (December 2-8, 1993), pp. 58-60 (p. 59), cited in Chris Bongie, *Islands and Exiles: The Creole Identities of Post / Colonial Literature* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 65-66. See also Glissant, *Tout-monde* (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), p. 158.

<sup>18</sup> Richard Burton, 'Ki moun nou ye? The Idea of Difference in Contemporary West Indian Thought', *New West Indian Guide*, 67: 1-2 (1993), pp. 5-32 (p. 23).

<sup>19</sup> Annie Le Brun, *Statue cou coupé* (Paris: Place Jean-Michel Editions, 1996), cited in Bongie, pp. 342-47.

<sup>20</sup> See 'CB', pp. 124-60.

<sup>21</sup> See Maryse Condé, 'Order, Disorder, Freedom, and the West Indian Writer', *Yale French Studies*, 83: 2 (1993), pp. 121-35.

<sup>22</sup> See Jeannie Suk, *Postcolonial Paradoxes in French Caribbean Writing: Césaire, Glissant, Condé* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), pp. 149-80.

<sup>23</sup> A. James Arnold, 'The Erotics of Colonialism in Contemporary French West Indian Literary Culture', *New West Indian Guide*, 68: 1-2 (1994), pp. 5-22. For Arnold's critique of the Creolists' exclusionary, sexist and ethnoclass prejudice, see Arnold, 'From the Problematic Maroon to a Woman-Centered Creole Project in the Literature of the French West Indies', in *Slavery in the Caribbean Francophone World: Distant Voices, Forgotten Arts, Forged Identities*, ed. Doris Y. Kadish (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2000), pp. 164-75.

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<sup>24</sup> See Bongie, pp. 63-65 and 341-47.

<sup>25</sup> Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997).

<sup>26</sup> Bongie, pp. 69-70.

<sup>27</sup> Mary Gallagher, 'Whence and Whither the French Caribbean "créolité" movement?', *ASCALF Bulletin*, (1994), pp. 3-18 (p. 14).

<sup>28</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in *Identity: Community, Culture and Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), pp. 220-30 (pp. 225-26).

<sup>29</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (London: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 271-316.

<sup>30</sup> Spivak, 'Subaltern Studies', in *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York and London: Routledge, 1988), p. 202.

<sup>31</sup> Spivak, 'Subaltern Studies', p. 209.

<sup>32</sup> Spivak, 'Subaltern Studies', p. 204.

<sup>33</sup> Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', pp. 271-72.

<sup>34</sup> Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', p. 275.

<sup>35</sup> Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', p. 279.

<sup>36</sup> Spivak, 'The Post-modern Condition: The End of Politics?', in *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed. Sarah Harasym (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 31.

<sup>37</sup> Spivak, 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism', in *"Race," Writing, and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 262-80.

<sup>38</sup> Arnold, 'The Erotics of Colonialism', p. 9.

<sup>39</sup> Arnold, 'The Erotics of Colonialism', pp. 6-8.

<sup>40</sup> Arnold, 'The Erotics of Colonialism', p. 9.

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<sup>41</sup> Chamoiseau, *Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows*, trans. Linda Coverdale (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), p. 219. Further references to *Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows* – abbreviated as CSS – will be made parenthetically after quotations in the text.

<sup>42</sup> Arnold, 'The Erotics of Colonialism', p. 12.

<sup>43</sup> Lorna Milne, 'Sex, Gender and the Right to Write', *Paragraph*, 24: 3 (2001), pp. 59-75 (p. 67).

<sup>44</sup> Milne, 'Sex, Gender and the Right to Write', p. 67.

<sup>45</sup> Milne, 'Sex, Gender and the Right to Write', pp. 68-72 (italics in original).

<sup>46</sup> Ileana Rodriguez, *House / Garden / Nation: Space, Gender, and Ethnicity in Post Colonial Latin American Literatures* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1994), p. 196.

<sup>47</sup> See the translators' definition of the Creole *matadò* in the 'Glossary' (*T*, p. 400).

<sup>48</sup> Beverley Ormerod, 'The Representation of Women in French Caribbean Fiction', in Haigh, pp. 101-18 (p. 101n).

<sup>49</sup> Ormerod, pp. 101 and 111.

<sup>50</sup> Ormerod, p. 114.

<sup>51</sup> Ormerod, p.154.

<sup>52</sup> Arnold, 'Créolité: Cultural Nation-Building or Dependence?', in *(Un)Writing Empire*, ed. Theo D'haen (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1998), pp. 37-47 (p. 42).

<sup>53</sup> For the iconization or allegorization of women's bodies in colonial discourse, see Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text* (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Ania Loomba, *Colonialism / Postcolonialism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 151-72 and 215-31; and Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

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<sup>54</sup> Although there is an element of what Thomas Spear describes as the 'jouissance of laughter' that 'contains a form of derision (self-mockery for males) that ridicules machismo and exaggerated phallocracy', the description of rape is, nevertheless, dismissive of the violence enacted upon women. See Thomas Spear, 'Carnavalesque Jouissance: Representations of Sexuality in the Francophone West Indian Novel', trans. Richard D. Reitsma, *Jouvert*, 2: 1 (1998), available at: <<http://152.1.96.5/jouvert/v2i1/spear.htm>> [accessed 12 May 2000], (para. 22 of 22).

<sup>55</sup> In Chamoiseau's most recent work, *Biblique des derniers gestes* (2002), McCusker notes how the female body is repeatedly figured as wounded, scatological, decomposing and grotesque, with pregnancy, birth and female genitalia consistently described to emphasize the horrific physicality of femininity, as the female body is made to embody the traumatic memory of slavery. McCusker objects to the novel's 'obsessive and voyeuristic gaze on female sexuality' and the depictions of the devastated female body that align woman with 'both victim and monster'. See McCusker, pp. 127-49.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

<sup>1</sup> The epigraph to this chapter is taken from Frank Birbalsingh, 'Interview with David Dabydeen', in *The Art of David Dabydeen*, ed. Kevin Grant (Leeds: Peepal Tree, 1997), pp. 177-98 (p. 188).

<sup>2</sup> For the history of the Caribbean diaspora, see Robin Cohen, 'Cultural Diaspora: The Caribbean Case', in *Caribbean Migration: Globalised Identities*, ed. Mary Chamberlain (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 21-35.

<sup>3</sup> David Dabydeen, 'Interview: David Dabydeen talks to Mark Stein', *Wasafiri*, 29 (1999), pp. 27-29 (p. 28).

<sup>4</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Dabydeen, cited in Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London: UCL Press and Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), p. 195.

<sup>6</sup> Anancy is also spelt as Ananse or Anansi. For an in-depth account of the Anancy figure, see Robert D. Pelton, *The Trickster in West Africa: A Study of Mythic Irony and Sacred Delight* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 25-70; and Pascale De Souza, 'Creolizing Anancy: Signifyin(g) Processes in New World Spider Tales', in *A Pepper-Pot of Cultures: Aspects of Creolization in the Caribbean*, ed. Gordon Collier and Ulrich Fleischmann (Amsterdam and New York: Editions Rodopi, 2003), pp. 339-63.

<sup>7</sup> Birbalsingh, in Grant, pp. 188-89.

<sup>8</sup> Wilson Harris, *The Selected Essays of Wilson Harris: The Unfinished Genesis of the Imagination*, ed. Andrew Bundy (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 157. See also Edward K. Brathwaite, *The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 165-67.

<sup>9</sup> Harris, p. 157.

<sup>10</sup> Harris, p. 159.

<sup>11</sup> Houston J. Baker, 'Foreword', in Joyce Jonas, *Anancy in the Great House: Ways of Reading West Indian Fiction* (Westport CT: Greenwood, 1990), pp. vii-x (p. vii).

<sup>12</sup> Lee M. Jenkins, 'On Not Being Tony Harrison: Tradition and the Individual Talent of David Dabydeen', *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 32: 2 (2001), pp. 69-88 (p. 69).

<sup>13</sup> Kwame Davis, 'Interview with David Dabydeen, 1994', in Grant, pp. 199-221 (p. 211; italics added).



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<sup>14</sup> Davis, p. 211.

<sup>15</sup> Eliot is also commonly seen as a poet who disavows his own influences and rewrites his affiliations. On this point, see Gregory S. Jay, *T. S. Eliot and the Poetics of Literary History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983).

<sup>16</sup> Wolfgang Binder, 'Interview with David Dabydeen, 1989', in Grant, pp. 159-76 (p. 170).

<sup>17</sup> See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, second ed. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>18</sup> Bloom, p. 57.

<sup>19</sup> See Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 46-53.

<sup>20</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'Family Romances', in *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (London: Vintage, 1989), pp. 297-300 (p. 299).

<sup>21</sup> Freud, 'Family Romances', p. 299.

<sup>22</sup> Freud, 'Family Romances', p. 300.

<sup>23</sup> Bloom, pp. 55-56.

<sup>24</sup> Margery Fee, 'Resistance and Complicity in David Dabydeen's *The Intended*', in Grant, pp. 67-88 (p. 69).

<sup>25</sup> See Mario Relich, 'A Labyrinthine Odyssey: Psychic Division in the Writings of David Dabydeen', in Grant, pp. 123-40 (pp. 128-39).

<sup>26</sup> Benita Parry, '*The Intended*', in Grant, pp. 89-97 (pp. 95-97).

<sup>27</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 3 (italics in original).

<sup>28</sup> Kristeva, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> Kristeva, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Kristeva, p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> Dabydeen, *The Intended* (London: Vintage, 2000), pp. 34-35. Further references to this work – abbreviated as *TI* – will be made parenthetically after quotations in the text.

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<sup>32</sup> Kristeva, p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> See Dabydeen, 'From Care to Cambridge', in *Displaced Persons*, ed. Anna Rutherford (Mundelstrup, Denmark: Dangaroo Press, 1988), pp. 137-47; Binder, pp. 159-63; and Birbalsingh, pp. 177-81.

<sup>34</sup> J. Enkemann, 'Interview with David Dabydeen', *Hard Times*, 49 (1993), pp. 4-11 (p. 7).

<sup>35</sup> Tobias Döring, *Caribbean-English Passages: Intertextuality in a Postcolonial Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 134 (italics in original).

<sup>36</sup> Döring, pp. 131-32.

<sup>37</sup> Döring, p. 136. See also Döring, 'The Passage of the Eye / I: David Dabydeen, V. S. Naipaul and the Tombstones of Parabiography', in *Postcolonialism and Autobiography*, ed. Alfred Hornung and Ernspteter Rahe (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1998), pp. 151-66 (p. 163).

<sup>38</sup> Karen McIntyre, "'A Different Kind of Book': Literary Decolonization in David Dabydeen's 'The Intended'", *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 27: 2 (1996), pp. 151-75 (p. 151).

<sup>39</sup> See Jacques Lacan, 'The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience', in *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 1977), pp. 1-7.

<sup>40</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 44-45 (italics in original).

<sup>41</sup> Benita Parry, 'Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse', *Oxford Literary Review*, 9: 1-2 (1987), pp. 27-58 (p. 43).

<sup>42</sup> Diana Fuss, *Identification Papers* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 2.

<sup>43</sup> Fuss, p. 34 (italics added).

<sup>44</sup> Dabydeen, 'Coolie Odyssey', in *Turner: New and Selected Poems* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2002), p. 75.

<sup>45</sup> Freud, 'Totem and Taboo', in Gay, p. 501.

<sup>46</sup> See Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', in *T. S. Eliot: Selected Essays 1917-1932* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1932), pp. 3-11.

<sup>47</sup> Davis, in Grant, pp. 210-11 (italics added).

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<sup>48</sup> Bhabha writes of the 'idea of the English book' that '*inaugurates* a literature of empire'. Significantly, Bhabha argues that Conrad and Naipaul are both indebted to the 'ideal of English civil discourse' endorsed by the 'English book'. See Bhabha, pp. 102-07 (*italics in original*).

<sup>49</sup> Dabydeen, *Disappearance* (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 9 (*italics in original*); and *The Counting House* (London: Vintage, 1997), p. 121, respectively.

<sup>50</sup> Martina Ghosh-Schellhorn, 'Transitional Identity and Its Indentured Emplacement', in Hornung and Rahe, pp. 167-83 (p. 179)

<sup>51</sup> Evelyn O'Callaghan, 'The "Pleasures" of Exile in Selected West Indian Writing Since 1987', in *Caribbean Cultural Identities*, ed. Glyne Griffith (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2001), pp. 73-103 (p. 95).

<sup>52</sup> See Eliot, *Four Quartets* (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), p. 17:

Words strain,  
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,  
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,  
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,  
Will not stay still.

<sup>53</sup> Birbalsingh, in Grant, p. 195.

<sup>54</sup> David Punter, *Postcolonial Imaginings: Fictions of a New World Order* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), pp. 82-83.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

<sup>1</sup> The epigraph to this chapter is taken from Tobias Döring and Heike Härting, 'Amphibian Hermaphrodites: A Dialogue with Marina Warner and David Dabydeen', *Third Text*, (1995), pp. 39-45 (p. 40). Further references to this work – abbreviated as 'AH' – will be made parenthetically after quotations in the text.

<sup>2</sup> Turner's 'Slave Ship' depicts the actual case of the British slave ship, the *Zong*, which in 1783 was so badly affected by an epidemic that Captain Collingwood used the opportunity of an oncoming storm to throw sick slaves into the sea. Financial calculation was the motive as insurance could be claimed for slaves lost at sea but not for those dying of disease. This story is told in Thomas Clarkson's *History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (1808) and is a stock example used in abolitionist campaigns.

<sup>3</sup> See Tobias Döring, *Caribbean-English Passages: Intertextuality in a Postcolonial Tradition* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 151-59.

<sup>4</sup> This also applies to Dabydeen's critical publications, such as *Hogarth's Blacks: Images of Blacks in Eighteenth-Century English Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987).

<sup>5</sup> Werner Senn, 'Speaking the silence: contemporary poems on paintings', *Word & Image*, 5: 2 (1989), pp. 181-97 (p. 189). For Dabydeen's 'Dependence, or the Ballad of the Little Black Boy', see *Wasafiri*, 3 (1985), p. 24.

<sup>6</sup> William Fiennes, 'Freshly inked figures', *Times Literary Supplement*, 4773 (1994), p. 29.

<sup>7</sup> See Karen McIntyre, 'Necrophilia or Stillbirth? David Dabydeen's *Turner* as the Embodiment of Postcolonial Creative Decolonisation', in *The Art of David Dabydeen*, ed. Kevin Grant (Leeds: Peepal Tree, 1997), pp. 141-58.

<sup>8</sup> Aleid Fokkema, 'Caribbean Sublime: Transporting the Slave, Transporting the Spirit', in *No Land, No Mother: Essays on David Dabydeen* (Leeds: Peepal Tree, 2007), ed. Lynne Macedo and Kampta Karan, pp. 17-31.

<sup>9</sup> The sublime, in Immanuel Kant's formative definition, involves an overwhelming feeling of awe or terror, and an ensuing sense of omnipotence stemming from the mind's 'ability to think a totality that cannot be taken in through the senses' and the accompanying 'exultation in its own rational faculties'. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner, 1966), pp. 83 and 91.

<sup>10</sup> John Ruskin, 'Of Water as Painted by Turner', *Modern Painters I: Of General Principles, and of Truth* (London: Elibron Classics, 2005), p. 405.

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<sup>11</sup> Dabydeen, 'Preface', *Turner: New and Selected Poems* (Leeds: Peepal Tree, 2002), p. 7. Further references to this work – abbreviated as *Turner* – will be made parenthetically after quotations in the text.

<sup>12</sup> Döring, p. 156.

<sup>13</sup> Döring, pp. 137-68. These ideas are reiterated in 'Turning the Colonial Gaze: Re-Visions of Terror in Dabydeen's *Turner*', in Macedo and Karran, pp. 32-47.

<sup>14</sup> Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, second ed. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 57 (italics in original).

<sup>15</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 112-13.

<sup>16</sup> Bhabha, p. 88 (italics in original).

<sup>17</sup> Bhabha, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> Bhabha, p. 37.

<sup>19</sup> Bhabha, p. 38. Bhabha has been criticized for the lack of historical grounding and specificity to his theories. See Benita Parry, 'Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse', *Oxford Literary Review*, 9: 1-2 (1987), pp. 27-58 (p. 45); Peter Childs and Patrick Williams, *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory* (London: Prentice Hall, 1997), pp. 143-44; and Neil Lazarus, 'National Consciousness and Intellectualism', in *Colonial Discourse / Postcolonial Theory*, ed. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 197-220 (p. 218).

<sup>20</sup> Wilson Harris, *Tradition, the Writer and Society* (London: New Beacon, 1973), pp. 60-63 (cited in Bhabha, p. 38).

<sup>21</sup> Harris, 'History, Fable and Myth in the Caribbean and Guianas', in *Selected Essays of Wilson Harris: The Unfinished Genesis of the Imagination*, ed. Andrew J. M. Bundy (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 152-66 (pp. 162 and 158).

<sup>22</sup> Harris, 'History, Fable and Myth', p. 159.

<sup>23</sup> See Geneviève Fabre, 'The Slave Ship Dance', in *Black Imagination and the Middle Passage*, ed. Maria Diedrich, Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Carl Pedersen (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 33-46 (p. 43).

<sup>24</sup> Harris, 'History, Fable and Myth', p. 158.

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<sup>25</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 118.

<sup>26</sup> 'Fetishism' is mis-spelled as 'fetichism' in the translation. Fanon, p. 112 (italics added).

<sup>27</sup> Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 23.

<sup>28</sup> The 'secret art of invisibleness' is a phrase Bhabha takes from Meiling Jin, 'Strangers on a Hostile Landscape', in *Watchers and Seekers: Creative Writing by Black Women in Britain*, ed. Rhonda Cobham and Merle Collins (London: The Women's Press, 1989), pp. 126-27 (cited in Bhabha, pp. 45-48).

<sup>29</sup> Bhabha, p. 47.

<sup>30</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), p. 145 (cited in Bhabha, p. 55).

<sup>31</sup> Bhabha, p. 55 (italics in original).

<sup>32</sup> Marcus Wood traces the many ekphrastic responses to Turner's painting in *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780 – 1865* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 41-68.

<sup>33</sup> Noted in Paul Gilroy, *Small Acts: Thoughts on the Politics of Black Cultures* (London and New York: Serpent's Tail, 1993), p. 81.

<sup>34</sup> Paul Gilroy, pp. 81-82.

<sup>35</sup> Dabydeen, 'Out of the Torrid Waters of Colonial Culture: Writer David Dabydeen talks to Maya Jaggi about his new reading of the enigmatic Turner', *The Guardian* (April 23, 1994), p. 28.

<sup>36</sup> Ruskin's personal projections onto 'Slave Ship' have been analyzed in a reading by Wood, pp. 56-68.

<sup>37</sup> Harold Bloom, 'Freud and the Sublime: A Catastrophe Theory of Creativity', in *Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism*, ed. and intro. Maud Ellmann (London and New York: Longman, 1994), pp. 173-95 (p. 180; italics in original).

<sup>38</sup> In describing Turner's painting, Ruskin turns to Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and the tormented King's guilty hallucinations of murder and blood saturating the ocean: 'that fearful hue which signs the sky with horror [. . .] incarnadines the multitudinous sea' (Ruskin, p. 405).

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<sup>39</sup> Kwame Davis, 'Interview with David Dabydeen, 1994', in Grant, pp. 199-221 (p. 211; italics added).

<sup>40</sup> Gautam Premnath, 'Remembering Fanon, Decolonizing Diaspora', in *Postcolonial Theory and Criticism*, ed. Laura Chrisman and Benita Parry (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), pp. 57-73 (p. 70).

<sup>41</sup> See Bhabha, p. 44 (italics in original).

<sup>42</sup> Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, p. 58.

<sup>43</sup> Bhabha, p. 44 (italics in original).

## NOTES TO CHAPTER SEVEN

<sup>1</sup> The epigraph to this chapter is taken from David Dabydeen, *Hogarth's Blacks: Images of Blacks in Eighteenth-Century English Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> See Donald Cosentino, 'Who is that Fellow in the Many-Colored Cap? Transformations of Eshu in Old and New World Mythologies', *Journal of American Folklore*, 100: 397 (1987), pp. 261-75 (pp. 262-63).

<sup>3</sup> William J. Hynes, 'Mapping the Characteristics of Mythic Tricksters: A Heuristic Guide', in *Mythical Trickster Figures: Contours, Contexts, and Criticisms*, ed. William G. Doty and William J. Hynes (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), pp. 33-45 (p. 34).

<sup>4</sup> Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. xxi.

<sup>5</sup> Gates, p. 21.

<sup>6</sup> José Piedra, 'From Monkey Tales to Cuban Songs: On Signification', in *Sacred Possessions: Vodou, Santería, Obeah, and the Caribbean*, eds. Margarite Fernández Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 1997), pp. 122-50 (pp. 129-32).

<sup>7</sup> Gates, pp. 52-54 (italics in original).

<sup>8</sup> Gates, pp. 46 and 52.

<sup>9</sup> Gerald Vizenor, 'Trickster Discourse', in *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures*, ed. Gerald Vizenor (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), pp. 187-211 (pp. 196 and 187).

<sup>10</sup> Jeanne Rosier Smith, *Writing Tricksters: Mythic Gambols in American Ethnic Literature* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1997), p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> Gates, p. 47.

<sup>12</sup> Vizenor, pp. 187 and 193.

<sup>13</sup> William J. Hynes, 'Inconclusive Conclusions: Tricksters – Metaplayers and Revealers' in Doty and Hynes, pp. 202-17 (p. 217).

<sup>14</sup> Smith, p. 16.

<sup>15</sup> Smith, p. 11.



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<sup>16</sup> Smith, p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> See Gates, p. 29; Robert D. Pelton, *The Trickster in West Africa: A Study in Mythic Irony and Sacred Delight* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1989), p. 105.

<sup>18</sup> David Dabydeen, *A Harlot's Progress* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1999), p. 7. Further references to this work – abbreviated as *HP* – will be made parenthetically after quotations in the text.

<sup>19</sup> For slave narrative conventions, see James Olney, “‘I was Born’: Slave Narratives, Their Status as Autobiography and as Literature”, in *The Slave's Narrative*, ed. Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 148-75.

<sup>20</sup> The Bible describes Satan as the ‘father of lies’. See John 8: 44 (New International Version).

<sup>21</sup> Andrew Wiget, ‘His Life in His Tail: The Native American Trickster and the Literature of Possibility’, in *Redefining American Literary History*, ed. A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff and Jerry W. Ward Jr. (New York: MLA, 1990), pp. 83-96 (p. 94).

<sup>22</sup> Robert B. Stepto, *From Behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 256.

<sup>23</sup> Alan Velie, ‘The Trickster Novel’, in Vizenor, pp. 121-39 (p. 131).

<sup>24</sup> Sandra Zagarell, ‘Narrative of Community: The Identification of a Genre’, *Signs*, 13: 3 (1988), pp. 498-527 (p. 520).

<sup>25</sup> Pelton, p. 236.

<sup>26</sup> Smith, p. 126.

<sup>27</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 370.

<sup>28</sup> Dabydeen's depiction bears comparison to Frederick Douglass's description of his master who ‘trembled like a leaf’ upon his resistance. See Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave*, ed. and intro. Deborah E. McDowell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 67.

<sup>29</sup> The attention to the aesthetics of art at the expense of its subject, the slave, is the same charge Dabydeen makes against Ruskin's review of Turner's ‘Slave Ship’. See Dabydeen, ‘Preface’, *Turner: New and Selected Poems* (Leeds: Peepal Tree, 2002), p. 7.

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<sup>30</sup> See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1984), p. xxiv.

<sup>31</sup> Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', in *Postmodernism: A Reader*, ed. and intro. Thomas Docherty (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1995), pp. 62-92 (p. 74).

<sup>32</sup> Jameson, pp. 73-74.

<sup>33</sup> Jameson, pp. 74-75.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Scholes, *Fabulation and Metafiction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979).

<sup>35</sup> Robert Alter, *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p. xi.

<sup>36</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 15.

<sup>37</sup> Hutcheon, pp. 101 and 95.

<sup>38</sup> Hutcheon, p. 98.

<sup>39</sup> Gates, pp. xxvi-xxvii.

<sup>40</sup> David Dabydeen, 'On Not Being Milton: Nigger Talk in England Today (1990)', in *The Routledge Language and Cultural Theory Reader*, ed. Lucy Burke, Tony Crowley and Alan Girvin (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 302-09 (p. 302). For a reading of the pornographic nature of slave representation, see Marcus Wood, *Slavery, Empathy and Pornography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). Wood notes the connection between the dissemination of abolition publicity and the emergence of the European pornographic industry in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. See also Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 21-24 and 132-80.

<sup>41</sup> Dabydeen, 'On Not Being Milton', p. 303.

<sup>42</sup> Wolfgang Binder, 'Interview with David Dabydeen, 1989', in *The Art of David Dabydeen*, ed. Kevin Grant (Leeds: Peepal Tree, 1997), pp. 159-76 (p. 168).

<sup>43</sup> Binder, p. 168.

<sup>44</sup> William Buehler Seabrook, *The Magic Island* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1929), p. 42.

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<sup>45</sup> Dabydeen, *Hogarth's Blacks*, p. 9.

## NOTES TO CONCLUSION

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<sup>1</sup> In 'The Day They Burned the Books', the white Creole is taunted, 'You're not English; you're a horrid colonial', and in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the white Creole is told, 'Old time white people nothing but white nigger now, and black nigger better than white nigger'. See Jean Rhys, *Tales of the Wide Caribbean: A New Collection of Short Stories*, selected and intro. Kenneth Ramchand (Oxford: Heinemann, 1985), p. 46 and *Wide Sargasso Sea* (London: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Patrick Chamoiseau, Jean Bernabé and Raphaël Confiant, 'In Praise of Creoleness', trans. Mohamed B. Taleb Khyar, *Callaloo*, 13 (1990), pp. 886-909 (p. 892; italics in original).

<sup>3</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 44.

<sup>4</sup> Both Coral Ann Howells and Mary Lou Emery suggest that Rhys's characters, because of their conditioning as women and their weakened sense of selfhood as colonial non-Europeans, are unable to enjoy the epiphanic moments of self-revelation offered by the city in urban modernist texts by men. See Coral Ann Howells, *Jean Rhys* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), pp. 26-27; and Mary Lou Emery, *Jean Rhys at "World's End"* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), p. 11. Judith L. Raiskin connects the psychological and economic disenfranchisement of Rhys's West Indian women, arguing that they are casualties of both a masculinist and imperialist economy. See Judith L. Raiskin, *Snow on the Cane Fields: Women's Writing and Creole Subjectivity* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp.144-73.

<sup>5</sup> The phrase is taken from David Dabydeen, *Disappearance* (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 159.

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