

**Translated Modernities:  
Locating the Modern Subject  
in Caribbean Literature**

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the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in  
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I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work.

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My thesis sets out to explore the literary representations of Caribbean modernity in selected fiction by Erna Brodber, V.S. Reid, Simone Schwarz-Bart and Joseph Zobel. Reading their texts in relation to modern Caribbean subjectivity, I employ a historiographical approach to pan-Caribbean theoretical movements and link these with the works. I suggest that in the selected fiction we can begin to map a Caribbean modernist literary tradition that seeks to locate the Caribbean subject through terms that reflect the over-determined history and creolised nature of the region. I read their literary representations of Caribbean modernity through the matrix of the plantation, the ship and the creolised city in an attempt to complicate hegemonic discourses that privileges and imposes Western modernity on the development of Caribbean literary modernity.

In an attempt to re-locate the Caribbean subject, I suggest that these writers inscribe a series of narrative techniques that complicates traditional Caribbean and Western literary canons. Through the use of the creolised language and folk practices that have long been considered 'low culture', they develop a literary discourse that is discomfiting and difficult to access. A central aim of my thesis concerns locating the gendered modern subject, who, I argue, has stood on the margins of Caribbean intellectual thought and literary criticism.

Underpinning my argument and the basis of my theoretical framework are two observations concerning the Caribbean made by CLR James and Stuart Hall respectively. For James, the Caribbean is a product of a peculiar history, while Hall concludes that for the population of the Caribbean and Caribbean diaspora, a process of translation that significantly differs from hybridity occurred at the point of the region's present day formation. This notion of a peculiar origin and the process of translation I assert are central to understanding literary representations of Caribbean modernity.

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## Introduction: Our Americas

The central concern of this thesis is the literary representation of Caribbean modernity in the works of four twentieth century Anglophone and francophone Caribbean writers; Erna Brodber, Vic Reid, Simone Schwarz-Bart and Joseph Zobel. I specifically read their texts in connection with a series of pan-Caribbean creolisation theories that have emerged from the region over the last two hundred years. In doing so I argue that considerations of history, temporality, the plantation, the city and notions of performativity are integral to an understanding of modernity and its representation in the literature of the region.

The relationship between the Caribbean and modernity has always been problematic. Maria Cristina Fumagalli in *Caribbean Perspectives: Returning Medusa's Gaze* (2009), observes that 'the Caribbean has traditionally been equated with the non-modern'<sup>1</sup> whilst simultaneously being at the centre of the development of European modernity and globalisation. The question of when to locate modernity temporally is disputed. French critic Roland Barthes locates modernity in the 1850s<sup>2</sup> while literary critic Frank Kermode places its emergence between the years 1907 and 1925.<sup>3</sup> Geographically, modernity has been the preserve of cities and Malcolm Bradbury writes that it is within the confines of the cultural capitals of Berlin, Vienna, Moscow, St Petersburg, London, Chicago and Paris<sup>4</sup> that the intellectual exchanges that mark literary modernism took place. As Bradbury's remarks highlight, although the discourses on modernity have been global in their concern, non-western cities have existed outside the parameters of the discussions on modernity both in terms of geography and historical temporality. Literary modernity has remained resolutely Eurocentric and North American in outlook and solely the preserve of the Western literary canon.

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<sup>1</sup>Maria Cristina Fumagalli, *Caribbean Perspectives: Returning Medusa's Gaze*, (Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (London: Cape, 1967), 9.

<sup>3</sup>Frank Kermode, 'The Modern', in *Modern Essays*, (London: Fontana, 1990), 39-70.

<sup>4</sup>Malcolm Bradbury, and James McFarlane, eds., *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature, 1890-1930*, (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 96.



In my exploration on Caribbean literary modernity I take as my starting point the claim made by the Franco-Bulgarian philosopher Tzvetan Todorov in *The Conquest of America*<sup>5</sup> that the discovery of the Americas signals the beginning of the modern era. I locate the emergence of Caribbean literary modernity with the arrival of Columbus in the Americas and draw on the work of Fumagalli who argues that ‘modernity is, and always has been, the fruit of negotiation; and what it means to be modern is, and always has been negotiable.’<sup>6</sup> I suggest that in the fiction of Brodber, Reid, Schwarz-Bart and Zobel we can begin to map a Caribbean modernist literary tradition that seeks to articulate and locate the Caribbean subject through languages and terms that reflect the over-determined history and creolised nature of the region.

I posit that the Caribbean’s historical, cultural and political composition is inextricably linked to the plantation system, itself a modern and central force in the construction of industrial capitalism.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore the interdependence between the plantation and Caribbean modernity drives the communities of the Caribbean to develop modern theoretical strategies as a means of articulating their individual and collective experience. In this vein I intend to show that creolisation is central to the development of Caribbean literary modernity. I suggest that the development of Caribbean literary modernity cannot be looked at simply as a series of echoes of European modernity. Rather, readers of Caribbean literature must take into account the region’s position, as indicated above, at the inception and development of modern systems of power, economy and culture, which ultimately creates different modern experiences.

I am aware that Caribbean creolisation models are problematic as, firstly, they are theoretical spaces occupied almost exclusively by male intellectuals. Caribbean women intellectuals have remained either on the

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<sup>5</sup>Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, trans. Richard Howard, (New York: HarperPerennial, 1992).

<sup>6</sup>Fumagalli, *Caribbean Perspectives: Returning Medusa’s Gaze*, 3.

<sup>7</sup>David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 125.

periphery of the development of creolisation theories, and when they have been involved in its development they have subsequently been decentered or ignored by literary historians and critics alike. Secondly, until recently, Caribbean creolisation theories have focused primarily on the African, Amerindian and European matrix, ignoring, for a number of reasons, the post-emancipation creolisation process which takes place with the arrival of indentured labour from the Middle East, South East India and the Far East, after the abolition of the slave trade in 1838. I draw on the work of Caribbean theorist Joan Anim-Addo, who highlights the tensions and complexities involved in the creolisation process, especially in relation to the Caribbean woman.<sup>8</sup>

My thesis is underpinned by two observations concerning the Caribbean made by CLR James and Stuart Hall respectively, and these act as the basis for my theoretical framework. In 1963 Vintage Books reissued CLR James' seminal text *Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*<sup>9</sup>. This second edition included the essay 'From Toussaint L'Ouverture<sup>10</sup> to Fidel Castro'. As indicated by the title, the essay explores the historical and political development of the Caribbean islands, over a hundred and sixty-seven year period. James' theoretical gaze spans not only the Anglophone islands but takes into consideration the francophone and Hispanophone islands, as well as North America and the Latin American countries of Guyana, and Simón Bolívar's Republic of Colombia<sup>11</sup>. James' rationale for grouping the histories of the Americas in this particular way is not related merely to the region's histories of revolution or to geography, but rather as he writes in the following passage, it is a question of a unique and unparalleled creation:

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<sup>8</sup>Joan Anim-Addo, *Touching The Body: History, Language & African-Caribbean Women's Writing*, (London: Mango Publishing, 2007), 210.

<sup>9</sup>C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, (London: Allison & Busby, 1980).

<sup>10</sup> Spellings of L'Ouverture's name vary according to author's spelling. Except within a quotation I will use this version (L'Ouverture) throughout.

<sup>11</sup>The Republic of Colombia included in 1819, modern day Colombia, Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela. For further information see Edwin Williamson, *The Penguin History of Latin America*, (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 221 & 603.

Castro's revolution is of the twentieth century as much as Toussaint's was of the eighteenth. But despite the distance of over a century and a half, both are West Indian. The people who made them, the problems and the attempts to solve them are peculiarly West Indian, the product of a peculiar origin and a peculiar history [...] It is a peculiar pattern, not European, not African not a part of the American main, not native in any conceivable sense of the word, but West Indian, sui generis, with no parallel anywhere else.<sup>12</sup>

The modern 'product' and 'peculiar pattern' that James writes of here is the forced and voluntary movement of millions of diverse peoples from which the plantation societies of the first century of Caribbean colonisation were created. The Jamaican anthropologist David Scott in his text *Conscripts of Modernity* (2004) pushes James' theory further by positing that the Caribbean 'is modern in a fundamentally inaugural way'.<sup>13</sup> I consider how James' idea on 'West Indian sui generis' and Scott's claim of Caribbean modernity being the first in a series of modern global developments can help us to revise our understanding of Caribbean modernity.

Stuart Hall in his work on Caribbean creolisation suggests that we should view this inaugural contact and the subsequent repercussions as a narrative of 'transformations' and 'translations'.<sup>14</sup> Hall argues that it is useful to think of creolised Caribbean societies as a series of 'translated societies'<sup>15</sup> where people, who have been forever dispersed from their homelands, whilst holding on to their original culture, 'are without illusion of a return to the past'.<sup>16</sup> For Hall translation "always bears the traces of the original, but in such a way that the original is impossible to restore." In this theoretical framework the return to a single originary root is always futile. Using Hall's theory on creolisation and translation I argue that Caribbean literary modernity recognises the process of translation and equates Caribbean modernity with what Hall calls the "pr sence am ricaine". While this site is

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<sup>12</sup>CLR James, 392.

<sup>13</sup>Scott, 112.

<sup>14</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Creolite and the Process of Creolization', in Document 11 Platform 3, 2002: Vienna, Austria, (Ostfildern-Ruit; London: Hatje Cantz, 2003), 31-32.

<sup>15</sup> Hall, "Creolite and the Process of Creolization", 31.

<sup>16</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Fundamentalism, Diaspora and Hybridity' in, Stuart Hall, David Held and Tony McGrew, eds., *Modernity and its Futures: Understanding Modern Societies*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 310.

necessarily related to the European and African presence yet, for Hall it is what distinguishes the Caribbean. It is the site of the “primal scene” where violent expropriation, conquest, tabooed desire and the “scandal of “cultural miscegenation” is staged.”<sup>17</sup>

The articulation of this primal scene I argue lies at the heart of Caribbean literary modernity. At the same time, the paradox of Caribbean modernity is that African Caribbean writers are not able to articulate the development of Caribbean modernity until the twentieth century. The absence of the written word, which in turn is linked to the absence of a physical archive, and a reliance on memory are central points of concern in my thesis. I explore how Caribbean writers in their attempts to excavate the meanings of Caribbean modernity and the fallout from the inaugural encounter develop a series of narrative techniques that challenges and moves away from the traditional Caribbean and Western literary canon.

### **Charting the Development of Creolisation Theories**

In this literature review I apply a historiographical framework to a selective number of Caribbean creolisation theories and in doing so I connect a series of pan-Caribbean theoretical movements with the work of Brodber, Reid, Schwarz-Bart and Zobel. My aim here is to demonstrate that in order to understand the representations of Caribbean literary modernity we must include the theoretical considerations of Caribbean intellectuals in the discourses and implications of Caribbean modernity. Until the late twentieth century modernity and the theorising of the modern subjectivity was the preserve of those who inhabited the North Atlantic.<sup>18</sup> Whilst the pluralisation of modernity and its consequences has loosened the parameters of modernity’s temporality and locality, an over-reliance on theories created within the North Atlantic still hold sway.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Hall, ‘Creolite and the Process of Creolization’, 33.

<sup>18</sup>Fumagalli, 11.

<sup>19</sup>Fumagalli notes that in Chris Bayly’s 500 page volume, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780, 1914: Global Connections and Comparison*, 2004, the Haitian Revolution was only afforded ten lines. A familiar absence concerning the Caribbean’s contribution to the

Furthermore a historiographical approach allows me to demonstrate the evolution of a theoretical trajectory that is complicated by a plurality and diversity of interdependent ideas, each vying for supremacy. Hall observes that the 'subterranean' African theoretical voice which until the 1960s went unheard is in a constant sonic battle with the colonising European/American voice 'which everywhere until recently confidently assumed its own ascendancy.'<sup>20</sup> Interestingly Hall notes that neither the African nor the Euro-American voice is pure, each complicated by the process of contact and translation with the other. In this thesis I argue that Caribbean literary modernity reflects the problematic nature of this trajectory and attempts to carve out a vernacular that tries to make sense of the transcultural clamour.

### **Literary and Social Movements: The Haitian Revolution and Pan-Americanism**

The Haitian Revolution which took place during 1791-1804 has had a largely unspoken, though long-lasting effect on the cultural and political development of the Caribbean nations. My intention in this section is to map the position of the Haitian revolution in relation to the development of Caribbean literary modernity and creolisation theories. Using the work of David Patrick Geggus and Scott, I examine the ways in which the Revolution acted as a catalyst for the development of a pan-American discourse amongst the intellectuals of the region. Geggus suggests that the Revolution was 'an event of global significance [...] [e]ighteenth century Saint Domingue represented the apogee of the European colonizing process began three centuries ago.'<sup>21</sup> For the peoples of the Caribbean throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Haiti became a symbol of racial equality and offered hope that political and cultural independence could be realised elsewhere. For writers such as C.L.R James the revolution offered a narrative

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discourses on modernity. See Fumagalli, *Caribbean Perspectives: Returning Medusa's Gaze*, 4.

<sup>20</sup>Hall, 'Creolite and the Process of Creolization', 33.

<sup>21</sup>David Patrick Geggus, "Saint Domingue On The Eve Of Revolution" in David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fielding, eds., *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 3.

that displayed and questioned the complex racial, political and social tensions at the heart of Caribbean modernity.

During the 1780s the French colony of Saint Domingue, now modern day Haiti, was the wealthiest colony in the Caribbean. Its sugar and coffee crops 'generated some two-fifths of France's foreign trade, a proportion rarely equalled in any colonial empire'.<sup>22</sup> Saint Domingue's society reflected the model typical of other Caribbean sugar islands, that of a three tier system comprising of whites, free coloureds (which included 'recently freed black slaves, to rich landowners and tradesmen and women[...] of mixed racial descent'<sup>23</sup>), and slaves. The difference to the Saint Domingue model was its free coloured community, which was 'exceptional both for its size and its wealth.'<sup>24</sup>

For much of the twentieth century the success of the Haitian Revolution was ascribed to the achievements of the maroons; runaway slaves who lived in mountain communities. As has been noted by the cultural theorist Shalini Puri, the Haitian Revolution has been read by writers such as Aimé Césaire 'as an act of marronage', 'an indigenist turning inward that cut off contact with the wider world'.<sup>25</sup> In this reading the Revolution is understood to have occurred outside of the boundaries of creolisation and an emphasis is placed on an African and in turn 'uncontaminated' defiance of colonial rule. Yet according to Geggus, this historical interpretation of the maroon involvement in the revolution is unfounded. Geggus observes, 'the common claim that the leaders of the 1791 uprisings were maroons is, with one exception, demonstrably untrue.'<sup>26</sup> This supports Puri's assessment that the Haitian Revolution 'was in fact driven with a modernizing impulse consistent with that of creolisation.'<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>David Geggus, 'The Haitian Revolution' in Franklin W. Knight and Colin A. Palmer, eds., *The Modern Caribbean*, (Chapel Hill; London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 21.

<sup>23</sup>Geggus, 'The Haitian Revolution', 23.

<sup>24</sup>Geggus, 'The Haitian Revolution', 22.

<sup>25</sup> Shalini Puri, *The Caribbean Postcolonial: Social Equality, Postnationalism and Culture*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 46.

<sup>26</sup> Geggus, 'Saint Domingue on the Eve Of Revolution', 5.

<sup>27</sup> Puri, 46.

In Geggus' analysis of the Haitian Revolution, it is the American Revolution of North America during 1775-1783, rather than the actions of the maroons that plays a significant part in the revolutionary developments in Haiti. The American Revolution struck a chord with a minority of radical white planters in Haiti, who had always desired independence from metropolitan France. It also had a significant impact on Haiti's free coloured community since, as Geggus explains, a regiment of free coloured slaves, which included Henry Christophe <sup>28</sup>, was sent to Georgia to fight alongside the rebel colonists against the British. They returned to Haiti with military knowledge, and a new sense of importance. This experience resulted in the free coloureds secretly drawing 'up a report attacking the caste system and in 1784 [they] sent a representative to France'<sup>29</sup> in the hope of seeking independence. Whilst their requests were ignored, the seeds of self-determination had now been planted.

Geggus' reading of the Haitian Revolution is further developed by Scott who argues that Toussaint and his colleagues were not marooned and living on the periphery of colonial Haitian society. Their decision to engage in the Revolution 'was a choice partly constituted by that modern world and, therefore, a choice partly constructed through its conceptual and ideological apparatuses.'<sup>30</sup> The Haitian revolutionaries used their experiences of the mechanisms of the modern world alongside their knowledge of African cultural and social systems, to navigate the political and military landscape in which they found themselves. Furthermore, Toussaint was a free black who was a creole, and as Geggus informs us, a man comfortable with the task of negotiating the porous hierarchies of the colonial San Domingue.<sup>31</sup>

His role within the revolution was only made possible through his understanding and knowledge of these different communities and his ability to negotiate a complex and cosmopolitan landscape. It is this process of

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<sup>28</sup>In 1807 Henry Christophe becomes president of the newly created state of Haiti in the north of the Island.

<sup>29</sup>Geggus, 'The Haitian Revolution', 25.

<sup>30</sup> Scott, 115.

<sup>31</sup>Geggus, 'The Haitian Revolution', 35.

acculturation which marks the Haitian Revolution as an important point in the development of Caribbean creolisation theories and Caribbean modernity. Significantly Fumagalli argues that modernity is not only a process of negotiation and contact but also one of exchange.<sup>32</sup> Although this process of exchange had been taking place since Columbus' arrival, the Haitian Revolution provided the first glimpse of how contact and negotiation in the region would impact on both Caribbean and European modernity.

The Revolution also had a lasting impact on the literary development of Haiti and the wider Caribbean. In 1801 Haiti became the first independent black nation in the Western Hemisphere and the newly established black 'political elite played a major role throughout the nineteenth century, in establishing a literary scene in Haiti'.<sup>33</sup> The publication of anti-colonial pamphlets, literary journals and poetry<sup>34</sup> caused great concern within the circles of power throughout the rest of the Caribbean region. This unease is well documented in Lady Maria Nugent's *Journal of her Residence in Jamaica 1801-1805*.<sup>35</sup> The American born wife of George Nugent who served as governor of Jamaica in 1801-05, Maria Nugent's journal documents the five year period of her residence on the island. Her close contact with the servants and maids provides her access to the excitement that the vision of the newly independent Haiti was casting over the black population of Jamaica and beyond.

Nugent writes in her journal that a familiar topic of conversation at the dinner tables of Jamaican planters was the 'splendour of the black chiefs in Santo Domingo [and]their superior strength'.<sup>36</sup> She notes that the blackies in attendance seem 'so much interested, that they hardly change a plate, or

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<sup>32</sup>Fumagalli, 15.

<sup>33</sup> Sam Haigh, 'Introduction' *An Introduction to Caribbean Francophone Writing, Guadeloupe and Martinique*, ed. Sam Haigh (Oxford: Berg Pres, 1999), 8. Haigh highlights that the newly established Haitian elite established a literary scene in Haiti and by the early twentieth century the novel began to emerge as an important Haitian genre.

<sup>34</sup>Haigh, 'Introduction', 8.

<sup>35</sup>Maria Nugent, *Lady Nugent's Journal of her Residence in Jamaica from 1801-1805*, P. Wright, ed.,(Kingston: Institute of Jamaica, 1966).

<sup>36</sup>Nugent, 64.



do anything but listen.<sup>37</sup> This fervour did not translate into contemporary political uprisings as had been the fear of France's European neighbours in the Caribbean, but it did fire the imaginations of the region's writers in the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. The movements that I analyse below attest to the influence of the Haitian Revolution. As I will highlight, the spectre of Haiti's Revolution is never far away, and indeed it is a reoccurring influence and catalyst on the works and theories of Caribbean intellectuals.

It is not that the Haitian Revolution was the first uprising by the slave population in the Caribbean region, nor was it the case that Toussaint L'Ouverture was the only inspirational revolutionary figure to have come out of the region.<sup>38</sup> Yet, it would take another century before a pan-Caribbean cultural reality would be realised. What I am suggesting here is that a pan-American perspective played a role in Haiti's cultural and political development, and greatly influenced the outlook of its island and continental neighbours. For the newly independent Haitian intellectuals, and the intellectuals of the wider Caribbean in the nineteenth century, there was a realisation that the Caribbean was part of the Americas. They were no longer simply a series of islands within the Caribbean archipelago, but rather a collective with diverse populations, and importantly with shared and overlapping histories. It meant that to better understand the social and political development of the region, a perspective from within and encompassing the Americas, would have to be developed.

### **Mestizaje and Transculturation**

The search for Caribbean political and cultural autonomy in the Anglophone, francophone and Hispanophone linguistic blocs<sup>39</sup> began in earnest in the

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<sup>37</sup>Nugent, 64.

<sup>38</sup> For example, there were uprisings in Barbados in 1649, 1675 and 1692 involving over a hundred slaves from a number of plantations. Julien Fedon's 1795 rebellion in Grenada is often compared by historians to the Haitian Revolution. Fedon assumed the role of commandant-general of the revolutionary army which included 7000 slaves. For further details see D.H. Figuerdo and Frank Argote-Freyre, *A Brief History of the Caribbean*, (New York: Facts on File, 2008), 94-117.

<sup>39</sup>The use of the term 'blocs' here is not to suggest geographical locations but rather, linguistic groups.

mid-twentieth century, with a number of Caribbean intellectuals searching for the shared histories of the region. This quest for the Caribbean-ness of Caribbean identity however, had started to take shape a century earlier in the Hispanophone regions of the Americas, and was known as *mestizaje*. Gwen Kirkpatrick who has written extensively on Latin American literature and culture observes that '*mestizaje* the biological sense'<sup>40</sup> has been employed as a political force to unify very different regions and cultures within Latin America. Furthermore, according to Kirkpatrick, '*transculturation* in the cultural sense' according to Kirkpatrick has provided a lens through which to interpret the prevailing forms of Latin American cultures.<sup>41</sup> I consider it important, to look at ideas on *mestizaje* and *transculturation* through the works of three Hispanophone political and literary figures; Simón Bolívar, José Martí, and Fernando Ortiz. My objective here is to link these two ideas to Hall's notion of translation and in doing so I aim to highlight the subterranean connections of the pan-Caribbean/American voice.

Defeated and disillusioned with the failure of the republican project against the royalists in New Granada, Simón Bolívar left for Jamaica in May 1815. Here he addressed his famous 'Jamaica Letter' to his friend and admirer, the Englishman Henry Cullen, in which he contemplated his role within the liberation of Latin America and the future of the continent.<sup>42</sup> In the letter he explains that whilst the creation of the Americas might seem similar to that of Rome and other empires, there is a significant and unmistakable difference. Americans cannot re-establish 'their ancient nations' they 'scarcely retain a vestige of what once was'.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore Bolívar writes that Americans are 'neither Indian nor European, but a species midway between the legitimate proprietors of this country and the Spanish usurpers'.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Gwen Kirkpatrick, 'Spanish American narrative, 1810-1920', in John King, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Latin American Culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 62.

<sup>41</sup>Kirkpatrick, 62.

<sup>42</sup>John Lynch, *Simón Bolívar: A Life*, (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2006), 97.

<sup>43</sup>Simón Bolívar, 'Carta de Jamaica: The Jamaica Letter', (Caracas: Ediciones del Ministerio de Educacion, Direccion Tecnica, Departamento de Publicaciones, 1965).

<sup>44</sup>Simón Bolívar, 'Carta de Jamaica: The Jamaica Letter'.

Bolivar's letter touches upon what will become a central focus in the discourse of identity in the Caribbean and the Americas; the recognition that the communities of the Caribbean and the Americas cannot simply reform their ancient fragmented past to create a postcolonial political and cultural future. Rather, Bolivar contends that the future survival of the Americas depends on the creation of institutions and systems that reflect and understand the history and multiplicity particular to the region.

Bolivar left Jamaica in December 1815 and travelled to Haiti where he was welcomed by the Haitian President Alexandre Pétion, who provided Bolivar with financial aid and ammunitions, in his quest to liberate Latin America from Spanish rule.<sup>45</sup> In return for his generosity Bolivar states that he will show his gratitude by naming Pétion as the 'author of American liberty in all solemn acts addressed to the inhabitants of Venezuela'.<sup>46</sup> Pétion declined the offer but asked for the promise that 'the liberator would proclaim the abolition of slavery in the territory he [liberates] in Venezuela'.<sup>47</sup> At Angostura in February 1819 Bolivar's address to the national congress, states:

We must bear in mind that our population is not the people of Europe, not of North America, that it is neither a composite of Africa and America, which is an offspring of Europe [...]the European has mixed with the native American and the African, and this has mixed again with the Indian and European.<sup>48</sup>

Bolivar's vision on the cultural demographic of the region now includes the African presence. Yet as Marilyn Grace Miller points out, Bolivar's recognition of the black slaves is tactical, since all freed citizens were forced to take arms and join Bolivar's army.<sup>49</sup> She notes that his other writings reflected a race-based discrimination, but in spite of this she contends that unlike contemporary references which 'discounted the African

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<sup>45</sup>Dantes Bellegrade, "President Alexandre Petion." *Phylon* 2 (1941), 212.

<sup>46</sup>Bellegrade, 212.

<sup>47</sup>Bellegrade, 212.

<sup>48</sup>Simón Bolivar, 'Speech of his Excellency General Bolivar at the installation of the Congress of Venezuela in Angostura on the 15 February 1819', trans. J. Hamilton.

<sup>49</sup>Marilyn Grace Miller, *Rise and Fall of the Cosmic Race, The Cult of Mestizaje in Latin America*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 10.

contributions’, ‘Bolivar is ultimately unique in his recognition of an Afro-Euro indigenous American mestizaje.’ According to Miller, ‘Bolivar prefigures, to some extent, Caribbean approaches to mestizaje.’<sup>50</sup> The inclusion of the African presence within the creolisation process becomes a central and crucial focus of Caribbean intellectuals in the twentieth century and Bolivar’s words are later echoed in the discourses of Caribbean creolisation theories across the region.

Bolivar’s concept of a united America developing its own vision of what it means to be American is expanded upon in 1891 by the Cuban poet, essayist, political philosopher and revolutionary Martí. In his seminal essay ‘Nuestra America’<sup>51</sup> Martí considers the need for both political and educational progress in order for the population of Cuba and the wider Americas to understand their past. Martí writes that the approach must be wholesale if any political progress is to be made and claims that knowledge is the only salvation from the tyranny of colonialism as he writes ‘to know is to solve [...] the European university must yield to the American university [...] Our own Greece is preferable to a Greece that is not ours; we need it more.’<sup>52</sup> Martí also highlights the need for cultural progress and cites mimicry as the cause of stagnation, “there is too much imitation, [...] salvation lies in creating [...] Make wine from plantains; it may be sour, but it is our wine!”<sup>53</sup> Martí calls forth a pan-American discourse that uses the tools unique to the Americas to create this dialogue. Plantain wine<sup>54</sup> might be alien and sour to the outsider, but it is an essential part of the diets of many Caribbean and Latin American communities. In using plantain, the American

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<sup>50</sup>Miller, 11.

<sup>51</sup>José Martí, *José Martí Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. Esther Allen (London; New York: Penguin Books, 2002).

<sup>52</sup>Martí, 291.

<sup>53</sup>Martí, 294.

<sup>54</sup>Plantains belong to the same species as dessert bananas. A significant number of crops, such as bananas, sugar cane, mangoes etc are not indigenous to the region. The Transatlantic movement of peoples, goods, flora and fauna is a key and reoccurring theme throughout this study. I build upon this idea to discuss the notion of the ‘invented Caribbean.’

no longer indiscriminately imitates Europe but rather expresses his or her own culture.

This discourse on models that do not simply imitate Europe is a central concern in both the development of creolisation theories and the literary tradition of the Caribbean region. The importance of Caribbean historiography, touched upon by Martí continues to play a crucial role in the region's intellectual inquiries. As with Simón Bolívar, Martí's concept of mestizaje and mestizo has been criticised for the perceived absence of the African Cuban presence, yet Shalini Puri cautions against this simplistic interpretation. Martí's use of the term mestizo rather than Afro-Cuban is not a denial of the African presence and Puri argues that he 'was by no means silent on the subject of black Cubans.'<sup>55</sup> She points to his later work, 'My Race' (1893) and 'Manifiesto of Montecristi: The Cuban Revolutionary Party in Cuba (1895) where his 'position on Afro-Cubans emerges more clearly.'<sup>56</sup> In 'Nuestra America' then, Martí expands on Bolívar's concept of mestizaje by championing the notion of mestizaje as a 'fundamental characteristic of Latin America'<sup>57</sup> but it would take another Cuban, Fernando Ortiz to create a new word and explanation for the Caribbean experience.

The publication of Cuban historian, essayist and ethnomusicologist Fernando Ortiz's *Cuban Counterpoint* (1947)<sup>58</sup> has had a fundamental impact on the cultural development of not only Cuba but the entire Caribbean region. *Cuban Counterpoint* is a socioeconomic study of the production of tobacco and sugar in Cuba. It is also an investigation of the Cuban social and historical experience. Ortiz coined a new term 'transculturation' as a way of explaining the cultural, historical and political exchange that took place and continues to take place within the diverse communities of the Americas. For Ortiz, understanding the process of transculturation is essential to the understanding of every facet of Cuban society:

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<sup>55</sup>Puri, 54,

<sup>56</sup>Puri, 54.

<sup>57</sup>Millar, 12.

<sup>58</sup>Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, trans. Harriet De Onís, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947).

I have chosen the word *transculturation* to express the highly varied phenomenon that have come about in Cuba as a result of the extremely complex transmutations of culture that have taken place here, and without knowledge of which it is impossible to understand the evolution of Cuban folk, either in the economic or in the institutional, legal, ethical, religious, artistic, linguistic, psychological, sexual, or other aspects of its life.<sup>59</sup>

According to Ortiz, fundamental to the evolution of Cuba is the 'radical [and] contrasting geographic transmigrations[...] of the first settlers'<sup>60</sup>, which included Iberian, Mediterranean and African cultures. Ortiz has received criticism for his appraisal of the cultural negotiations that take place as a result of these complex transmigrations. Ortiz is accused of glossing over of the fact that not all groups exchanged their cultures in quite the same way.<sup>61</sup> Patricia Catoira observes that Ortiz's attempt at creating a 'meaningful place in the national story for Cubans from marginal races and cultures [...] gravitated towards a homogenizing cultural project'.<sup>62</sup> Yet she underscores the significance of Ortiz's term for the social sciences and observes that transculturation opposes the 'racialist discourse and other theories of cultural contact that were in vogue at the beginning of the twentieth century'<sup>63</sup>. Furthermore 'transculturation alludes to an effort to decolonize the language of social science.'<sup>64</sup>

What is important about Ortiz's theory of transculturation, in relation to my analysis on creolisation and literary representations of Caribbean modernity is that for the first time in the twentieth century, the focus moves away solely from how the 'Old World' has influenced the 'New World'. Instead, *Cuban Counterpoint* looks at the cultural exchanges and negotiations that take place and the fundamental impact that this has on both Europe and the Americas. Furthermore, Ortiz does not treat the

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<sup>59</sup>Ortiz, 98.

<sup>60</sup>Ortiz, 101.

<sup>61</sup>Catoira, 186.

<sup>62</sup>Catoira, 181.

<sup>63</sup>Patricia Catoria, 'Transculturation à la Ajiaco: A Recipe for Modernity' in Mauricio A. Font and Alfonso W. Quiroz, eds., *Cuban Counterpoints, The Legacy of Fernando Ortiz*, (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2005), 186

<sup>64</sup>Catoria, 186.

European settlers or the African slaves as homogeneous groups. He recognises the diverse range of European and African cultures<sup>65</sup> transported to the Americas over the course of four centuries, and is prescient in his declaration that no one group imposes its culture in totality. Ortiz begins the process of decolonising the language used to articulate the Caribbean and this becomes a central concern for the writers of the region and fundamental to the development of Caribbean literary modernity.

### **The Development of a Literary Tradition: Early Creolists of the Anglophone Region**

As I have outlined above, the development of creolisation theories within Haiti and the Hispanophone regions are intrinsically linked with the political upheaval taking place within those two regions. The early development of creolisation theories within the Anglophone region differs greatly vis-à-vis Haiti. This in part is due to the continuing presence of slavery in the Anglophone islands and to the subsequent waves of East Indian, Chinese, Portuguese, and later Syrian and Lebanese immigrants arriving in the mid-nineteenth century when slavery ended.<sup>66</sup>

I want to highlight four key dates involving four different authors between 1759 and 1857, focusing specifically on their contribution to the development of the discourse on the creolisation process within the Anglophone Caribbean. Although Mary Prince, Mary Seacole, J.J Thomas and Francis Williams were radically different writers, with contrasting lives, their writing offers a rare pre-nineteenth century glimpse into the consciousness of Caribbean writers and in particular, they provide us with a glimpse of the experiences of the African Caribbean writer.

J.J. Thomas, born into a poor black family soon after the declaration of the Emancipation Act,<sup>67</sup> was one of the first West Indian intellectuals to

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<sup>65</sup>Ortiz, 100-103.

<sup>66</sup>Bridget Brereton, 'Social Organization and class, racial and national conflicts', in K.O. Laurence, ed., *General History of the Caribbean, Volume IV, The Slave Societies of the Caribbean*, (London: Unesco Publishing/Macmillan Education), 334-370.

<sup>67</sup>Bolland, *The Birth of Caribbean Civilisation*, 294.

study the creole language. Thomas' work would prove to be seminal in the development of the region's linguistic and literary theory. Here for the first time, a Caribbean scholar was studying his own language and adding his own hypothesis (on the development of the creole language) to the creole linguistic debate; a space which had previously been occupied solely by European scholars. In 1869 he published a pioneering study of creole, *The Theory and Practice of Creole Grammar*<sup>68</sup> in which he argued that 'creole was not a debased or formless dialect, as most people persisted in seeing it, but a new language that synthesised elements of African and Caribbean languages'.<sup>69</sup>

With his book favourably received in London and Paris, Thomas was encouraged to publish a collection of creole folktales and proverbs. It had been Thomas' first job, as a school master, that had introduced him to the different ethnic groups that made up Trinidad's diverse population. Exposed to the French, English, Spanish and Indian languages of these communities, Thomas was sensitive to, and acutely aware of the processes of creolisation developing on the island. Thomas concluded that Caribbean culture was not simply made up of a single Afro-Caribbean community, in opposition to the white European settlers. Rather, for Thomas, Caribbean culture and in this particular instance Trinidadian culture, illustrated the complex relationships that had developed during the different stages of Spanish, French, and British colonial occupation. Thomas resisted and indeed rejected a Eurocentric explanation for the development of the creole language.

In 1888 the controversial British historian, James Anthony Froude published *The English in the West Indies; or the bow of Ulysses*.<sup>70</sup> Froude's text, littered with disparaging language, unwittingly set into motion the beginnings of a critical discourse into the examination of the creole language and the development of creole societies. Thomas was so incensed by

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<sup>68</sup>J. Thomas, *The Theory and Practice of Creole Grammar*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (London: New Beacon, 1969).

<sup>69</sup>Bolland, *The Birth of Caribbean Civilisation*, 295.

<sup>70</sup>James Anthony Froude, *The English in the West Indies; or the Bow of Ulysses*, (S.I: Longmans, Green, 1888).



Froude's claims that he produced a series of responses to Froude's work. *Froudacity* initially appeared as a series of fifteen articles in the *St George's Chronicle* and *Grenada Gazette* between March and July 1888.<sup>71</sup> The articles not only attacked Froude's negative portrayal of the Caribbean's native population, it also championed and celebrated the creolisation of Caribbean cultures some forty years before it was fashionable to do so. Thomas' experience and knowledge of the rural communities were the first steps towards creating a voice for the creole collective, and significantly, his work would prove to be a major influence on the fiction writers from the region. In Thomas, the creole societies, who had long been marginalised and grossly misrepresented, found a voice to champion and validate their creolised language(s).

Just over a century before J.J. Thomas' publication of *The Theory and Practice of Creole Grammar*, another West Indian writer had attempted to express his thoughts through the medium of the published text. 'Francis Williams a free black Jamaican, an intellectual, and the first person of African origin to receive a British university education [...] penned a Latin ode in praise of the new governor of Jamaica, George Haldane.'<sup>72</sup> Published in 1759 Williams' poem was translated into English by the eighteenth century historian Edward Long; author of the influential and highly controversial *The History of Jamaica* (1774).<sup>73</sup> The poem imitates the 'elaborate school rhetoric fashionable in the universities at the time'<sup>74</sup> and focuses solely on the benevolence of the newly appointed governor,<sup>75</sup> who protected his slaves from invasion. William's disconnect from the realities of the plantation system is not surprising in light of his social and educational development. Barbara Lalla contends that socially, emotionally and intellectually Williams was isolated 'from both of Jamaica's two major classes, the black (but largely

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<sup>71</sup>J.J. Thomas, *Froudacity*, *West Indian Fables*, (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1889).

<sup>72</sup>Jean D'Costa, 'Oral Literature, Formal Literature: The Formation of Genre in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica' *Eighteenth Century Studies* 27 (1994), 667.

<sup>73</sup>Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica, or General Survey of the Ancient and Modern State of that Island, Vol II*, (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1774).

<sup>74</sup>D'Costa, 'Oral Literature, Formal Literature', 667.

<sup>75</sup>David P. Henige, *Colonial Governors from the Fifteenth century to the Present: A Comprehensive List*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), 128-129.

uneducated) and the white (of varying education).<sup>76</sup> Williams was in effect part of an experiment conducted by the Duke of Montague as Anim-Addo informs us in *The Longest Journey: History of Black Lewisham*:

wishing to see if education would affect a black child in ways similar to a white, the duke [Montague] had provided for the young Francis to be educated at a grammar school and then at Cambridge university.<sup>77</sup>

The isolation experienced by Williams as a result of his education and vocation is not restricted to his time. Writers in the early and mid-twentieth century, like Williams, found writing removed them from their immediate creolised society which was heavily influenced by the oral tradition. Williams' pioneering literary work is Eurocentric in style and its content mirrors the racist language found in literary works concerning the Caribbean during the eighteenth century.<sup>78</sup> Williams' writing is problematic as it is subjected to a process of transformation, when his poem is translated from Latin by the historian Edward Long. Heavily flawed as it is, Williams' writing signals the awakening of a black Jamaican consciousness. It would take the combined experiences of the First World War and the socio-economic unrest of the 1930s before the African Caribbean experience could be expressed in a language suited to the experiences and nuances of the region.

As with Francis Williams, Mary Prince's literary identity was made possible through her association with a white, male benefactor. In 1829 Prince was employed in London as a domestic servant by Thomas Pringle who at the time was the Secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society. Staying at the Pringle's house during this period was Susanna Strickland,<sup>79</sup> to whom Prince dictated her life story. Two years later in 1831 *The History of Mary Prince* was published in which Prince recalled her life as a slave, and her journeys from Bermuda, to Turks Island, Antigua and finally London. Questions of

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<sup>76</sup>Barbara Lalla, 'Dungeons of the Soul: Frustrated Romanticism in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Literature of Jamaica' *Melus* 21 (1996), 3.

<sup>77</sup>Joan Anim-Addo, *The Longest Journey: History of Black Lewisham*, (London: Deptford Forum Publishing Ltd 1995), 48.

<sup>78</sup>For further information look at the works of historians Edward Long and Bryan Edwards, and literary works such as, Michael Scott's *Tom Cringle's Log*.

<sup>79</sup>Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave Related by Herself: The Narrative of Asa-Asa, a Captured African*, (London: 1831), x.

authorship are complex in relation to *The History of Mary Prince* as her account was structured, edited, and used as propaganda for the Anti-Slavery movement in Britain<sup>80</sup>. Prince's authorised biography is the first by a woman from the Caribbean and as Sandra Pouchet Paquet notes her contextualized and transformed literate voice emerges as a gender-specific, all-inclusive ancestral voice.<sup>81</sup> Prince's work may well have been edited and manipulated for the abolitionist cause, nevertheless she seeks to gain control of her narrative and attempts 'to assert herself and to reflect her presence and her place.'<sup>82</sup>

I connect the works of Thomas, Williams and Prince as a result of their articulation of the African Caribbean subject. I am also particularly interested in the relationship between their writing and mobility. Thomas travels across Trinidad, Williams sails to England, and Prince criss-crosses the Caribbean Sea before finally arriving in London. In the case of all three writers migration is pivotal to the development of their writing and their work. Although questions of authorship remain complex especially in relation to Williams and Prince, in the work of these three writers we begin to map a literary cosmopolitanism that I suggest is linked directly to the development of Caribbean literary modernity.

Mobility is also central in the work of Mary Seacole who in 1857 publishes *The Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands*.<sup>83</sup> As the title suggests, much of the narrative takes place outside of the Caribbean, depicting Seacole's journeys from Jamaica, to Panama, London and the Crimea. Seacole's text is in effect a travelogue and it 'reflects an enthusiastic acceptance of colonialism in the aftermath of slavery'.<sup>84</sup> Born between 1805 and 1810, Seacole was the daughter of a Scottish army officer and a free black

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<sup>80</sup> Brenda F. Berrian, 'Claiming an Identity: Caribbean Women Writers in English' *Journal of Black Studies* 25 (1994), 201.

<sup>81</sup> Sandra Pouchet Paquet, 'The Heartbeat of a West Indian Slave: The History of Mary Prince' *African American Review* 26 (1992), 132.

<sup>82</sup> Berrian, 201.

<sup>83</sup> Mary, Seacole, *The Wonderful Adventures of Mary Seacole in Many Lands*, (London: The X Press, 2004).

<sup>84</sup> Sandra Pouchet Paquet, 'The Enigma of Arrival: The Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands' *African American Review* 26 (1992), 651.

Jamaican woman<sup>85</sup> and as a result her narrative stands in stark contrast to Prince who was born into slavery. Furthermore Seacole is a confident business woman and an adventurer and her 'narrative is not one of victimisation, endurance and survival, but of accomplishment and achievement.'<sup>86</sup>

Seacole's text provides an alternative to the discourses on the development of Caribbean modernity and gendered subjectivity dominated by the plantation, as her experiences are located in port cities and on the high seas. This is particularly important to my analysis on the representations of Caribbean literary modernity. I suggest that whilst the plantation is fundamental to our understanding of Caribbean literary modernity, the Caribbean port city, which has received less critical attention, is central to its development. Politically and culturally the port city enables alternative means of counteracting the debilitating condition of the plantation. Port cities provide spaces in which linguistic, cultural and political exchanges can take place. The language that this urban milieu creates is later reflected in the works of modern Caribbean writers. Seacole then is an important pre-cursor to Caribbean literary modernity.

From a gendered perspective the work of Prince and Seacole are seminal moments in the development of Caribbean literature. Their texts give voice to the black Caribbean woman's experience and in relation to Seacole we glimpse the life of an economically independent travelling black woman. A remarkable feat in light of the fact that emancipation in the Anglophone Caribbean had happened only two decades previous to the publication of her text. Such early textual testimony is also startling in view of the pronounced absence and marginalisation of Caribbean women in the discussion on the development of Caribbean creolisation and modernity in twentieth century scholarship. Locating the theoretical position and literary

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<sup>85</sup>Bridget Brereton, 'Text, Testimony and Gender: An Examination of Some Texts by Women on the English-speaking Caribbean, from the 1770s to the 1920s' in Verene Shepherd, Bridget Brereton and Barbara Bailey, eds., *Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective*, (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 1995), 64.

<sup>86</sup>Sandra Pouchet Paquet, 'The Enigma of Arrival', 652.

representation of the Caribbean woman is a central concern throughout this thesis. In doing so I consider how a gendered perspective might allow us to revise our understanding of the representations of modernity in Caribbean literature.

### **Pre-Négritude**

My focus now turns to the development of creolisation theories within the Anglophone and francophone regions during the latter half of the twentieth century. Firstly, I wish to discuss the period before 1939, the year in which Martinican poet, and politician, Aimé Césaire, published his seminal poem *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*<sup>87</sup>. My purpose here is to map out the cultural and political events taking place within and outside of the francophone Caribbean that informs and influences the francophone concept of Négritude. I explore the notion of Négritude and examine the ways in which it contributes to the contemporary discourses on creolisation. I aim to show how the cultural and political discourses of the Négritude era move away from the pan-Caribbean and pan-American focus of Mestizaje. For Puri, this movement is a conscious one as she observes that Negrismo, Négritude and Indigenismo historically developed as contestatory alternatives to mestizaje.<sup>88</sup> This change in the critical discourse in Martinique and Guadeloupe produces racially aware writing that will have a lasting influence on the shape of the literary production to come. What is significant to this period is the development of the idea that Africa and blackness are no longer something to be ashamed of, but rather to be celebrated if the Caribbean is to assert its cultural and political autonomy.

Paradoxically, the development of critical discourses that recognises blackness within the Caribbean takes place outside of the region, within North America and the continents of Africa and Europe. On one level the reasons behind this are prosaic; the students developing these new

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<sup>87</sup>Aimé Césaire, *Return to My Native Land*, trans. Mireille Rosello with Annie Pritchard, (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe, 1995).

<sup>88</sup> Puri, 54.

theoretical discourses are studying in Paris and travelling in North America and Africa. This geographical relocation establishes alternative view points. On a metaphysical level, the geographical and cultural dislocation from the Caribbean calls into question the notions of identity, and allows for a recalibration of Caribbean identity politics.

### **Early Twentieth Century Writing in the francophone Region**

During the nineteenth century, the francophone islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe had provided little by way of published works from the native population. The French process of assimilation particularly in Martinique left little room for development of a Caribbean literary aesthetic. Mervyn C. Alleyne observes that until recently the texts books used to teach history to children in Martinique opened with 'our ancestors the Gauls'.<sup>89</sup> Located in the Caribbean Sea but defined by the cultural boundaries of the Hexagon, the literary production of the native population of Martinique and Guadeloupe were stifled unsurprisingly by this incongruous position. By the beginning of the twentieth century a change had begun to take place. Sam Haigh, who has written extensively on the francophone literary tradition, informs us that several volumes of poetry written by white creoles were published, most notably Daniel Thaly's *Lucioles et Canharides* (1900) and *Le Jardin des Tropiques* (1911) and Eugene Agricole's *Fluers de Antilles* (1900), which was the first volume of poetry to be attributed to a Black Antillean.<sup>90</sup> It was also during this period that the novel began to 'share the stage with poetry'<sup>91</sup> and it would later become the popular and dominant genre in the Antilles. Randolph Hezekiah in his essay, 'Martinique and Guadeloupe: Time and Space', notes that creative writing before the 1930s focused on the exotic beauty of the white plantocracy and the feelings of 'inferiority and of the

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<sup>89</sup>Mervyn C. Alleyne, *The Construction and Representation of Race and Ethnicity in the Caribbean and the World*, (Kingston: Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 2002), 179.

<sup>90</sup>Sam Haigh, *An Introduction to Caribbean Francophone Writing*, 9.

<sup>91</sup>Selwyn Cudjoe, *Resistance & Caribbean Literature*, (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1980), 121.

desire to be accepted by the European master' in both the mulatto and black populations.<sup>92</sup>

This changed in 1921 when Rene Maran's *Batouala: A True Black Novel* was published. Born in Martinique, Maran spent time in Equatorial Africa where *Batouala* is set. The novel depicts the 'shortcomings of France's Colonial Policy' in Africa<sup>93</sup> and because of this it 'cannot be called Caribbean in the thematic sense.'<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, it is important to mention Maran's work as he attempts to articulate the psyche of the colonised creole subject, in a literary landscape that had been focused solely on the experiences of the elite, white plantocracy. Furthermore the publication of *Batouala* signalled the emergence of a racially aware form of Antillean writing by the mixed race and black populations of the colonies.<sup>95</sup>

The complexities of colonisation and the tensions created by the assimilation process upon the francophone societies of Martinique and Guadeloupe would come to dominate the francophone literary and political landscape post the 1920s.<sup>96</sup> The question of how to engage with the actualisation of a Creole/Caribbean subjectivity whilst ultimately being governed by an overseas administration continues to preoccupy the works of francophone writers in the twenty-first century. All of this leads me draw to attention to the publications of *La Revue du monde noir*, *Légitime Défense*, and to the Harlem Renaissance. My aim is to show how the writers and movements in question have greatly influenced and informed the concepts of creolisation and Caribbean modernity developed by the Anglophone and francophone Caribbean writers in the latter half of the twentieth century.

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<sup>92</sup>Randolph Hezekiah, 'Martinique and Guadeloupe: Time and Space' in A. James Arnold ed., *A History of Literature in the Caribbean: Volume 1, Hispanic and Francophone Regions*, (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1994), 380.

<sup>93</sup>Mercer Cook, 'The Negro in French Literature: An Appraisal' *The French Review* 23 (1959): 382.

<sup>94</sup>Cudjoe, 21.

<sup>95</sup>Haigh, *An Introduction to Caribbean Francophone Writing*, 9.

<sup>96</sup>Hezekiah, 289.

## Harlem Renaissance

During the 1920s the Northern cities of America witnessed an explosion of cultural and artistic activity from the black American communities. The focus of this movement emanated from the New York City district of Harlem, which would give the movement its name. During the decade of the 1920s there was an 'outpouring of publications by African American artists that was unprecedented in its variety and scope.'<sup>97</sup> A. James Arnold in his text *Modernism and Negritude, The Poetry and Poetics of Aimé Césaire*, underscores the influence the Harlem Renaissance was having on francophone artists living in Paris at the time, 'Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, Countee Cullen enjoyed a heroic status among black intellectuals when Césaire arrived [in Paris]'. Moreover the work of the Harlem Renaissance writers resonated politically with the young francophone students in light of the changes taking place in the Caribbean.<sup>98</sup>

The requests for departmentalisation by local councils in the French Antilles were once again being renewed in the 1920s. Departmentalisation, for a number of political parties in the French Antilles, seemed like a natural progression of the assimilation policies that had defined the earlier periods of French colonisation in the Americas. The historian Raymond F. Betts in his seminal text, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory 1890-1914*, notes that although not French in origin, the assimilation process was a defining feature of French colonial policy.<sup>99</sup> This policy gained momentum in the nineteenth century where Haigh observes that 'France's colonial enterprise began explicitly to be framed as a 'civilising mission' [...] France's avowed aims became to export wholesale, the French language and French culture in order to re-create overseas colonies and their inhabitants in the image of France.'<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup>The Norton Anthology of African American Literature, eds., Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay, (London and New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 929.

<sup>98</sup>A. James Arnold, *Modernism and Negritude: The Poetry and Poetics of Aimé Césaire*, (Cambridge; Massachusetts; London: Harvard University Press, 1981), 27.

<sup>99</sup>Raymond F. Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory 1890-1914*, (New York, and London: Columbia University Press, 1961), 11-12.

<sup>100</sup>Haigh, *An Introduction to Caribbean Francophone Writing*, 19.



The call for departmentalisation, coupled with the works being produced and published by the Harlem Renaissance movement, invigorated the writers and artists in the French Antilles to explore and question their own cultural and political condition within the Americas as French citizens. Of particular importance to my analysis are the works of Jamaican born, Harlem based writer Claude McKay and the African American novelist, poet and social activist Langston Hughes. These two writers exert great influence on both the Anglophone and francophone Caribbean region. Hughes' and McKay's work give a voice to the modern struggles and the grinding realities of black life at the beginning of the twentieth century. For Nancy Cunard, McKay did more than present black life in America. He created black characters that portrayed the complex intellectual and emotional experiences of the black collective.<sup>101</sup> McKay's use of Jamaican Creole in his work is particularly important to my discussion on the representations of Caribbean modernity. In an attempt to portray Jamaican culture, McKay does not try to sanitize Jamaican creole, but rather records it to its fullest capacity, at a time when Creole languages were still considered inferior to European languages. This bold and modern approach to black culture and the Creole language had a highly significant impact on the writers in the Caribbean.

I suggest that McKay's pioneering approach to language allows writers such as Brodber, Reid and Zobel to consider alternative ways of decolonising the literary language of Jamaica. Furthermore McKay's work presents the complex relationship between the Caribbean writer and the Caribbean peasant. As I will demonstrate in Chapter One the Caribbean peasant is a recurring motif in the representations of Caribbean modernity. The peasants as with the Creole language offers the possibility of alter/native approaches to deconstructing Caribbean historiography and culture.

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<sup>101</sup>Nancy Cunard, ed. *Negro an Anthology*, (London; New York: The Continuum Publishing Group, Inc, 2002), 92.

### **La Revue du Monde Noir: Women of the Negritude Movement**

The writings of the Harlem Renaissance appeared in the influential publication *La Revue du Monde Noir*, a bilingual literary journal that was founded by Martinican intellectuals and sisters, Paulette and Jane Nardal. Paulette Nardal with the assistance of Clara Shepherd, a black American professor living in Paris, solicited, edited and translated material into English or French.<sup>102</sup> The Nardal sisters are significant to my discussion on Caribbean modernity for several reasons. As with Prince and Seacole the relationship of the francophone woman writer in the development of Caribbean literary modernity is problematic. Not least because the literary developments of the interwar period and the Negritude movement have as Shireen K. Lewis observes, been 'characterised and historicised as a literary and cultural movement by black men'.<sup>103</sup> The Nardal sisters' journal was responsible for introducing Léon Damas, Aimé Césaire, and Léopold Senghor to the works of Harlem Renaissance and their literary salon on the outskirts of Paris was central in facilitating the meetings between prominent Harlem Renaissance figures and the founders of the Negritude movement.<sup>104</sup> Yet they were more than simply conduits of the patriarchal intellectual discourses taking place in the Americas.

I am interested in the ways in which the Nardal sisters locate the black female intellectual presence. As editors of the journal they were critical in the literal and culture process of translation that takes place between the Caribbean and the American intellectuals. In choosing which writers to publish and promote they were central in creating a theoretical framework through which to analyse the processes of transculturation taking place in the region. By gendering Negritude they engage in the intellectual debates previously dominated by men. Significantly they challenge patriarchy as whole and as Carole Sweeney observes their 'work attempted to give a language to the construction of a metropolitan racial identity [...]and the

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<sup>102</sup>Shireen K. Lewis, *Race, Culture and Identity: Francophone West African and Caribbean Literature and Theory From Négritude to Créolité*, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006), 56.

<sup>103</sup>Lewis, 56.

<sup>104</sup>Lewis, 60.

different oppressions black women encountered both from white negrophiles and from their black male contemporaries.<sup>105</sup>

Once again the mobility and modernity of Caribbean women writers and intellectuals plays a pivotal role in the development of Caribbean theory and literature. The absence of Caribbean women in the critical debate has a significant impact on the representations of Caribbean modernity in the literature from the region. Women writers from the Caribbean I argue, excavate the marginalised gendered subject and place her centre ground and in doing so they begin the complex yet necessary process of recalibrating the critical and theoretical debate on Caribbean modernity.

### **Negritude**

The impact of Antillean Negritude on the discourses of Caribbean modernity has been pronounced. Antillean Negritude unearthed the subterranean African presence, to use Hall's term, and placed it at the nucleus of Caribbean literary and socio-political development. The masculine African presence of Negritude is complex both in its denial of the creolised make-up of the populations of the region and in its search for a return to Africa. Yet Antillean Negritude was central to the development of Caribbean modernity not least for the counter-discourse the movement generated.

Césaire arrived in Paris in 1931 and immediately found himself immersed in the celebration of a black American consciousness, which valorised and reclaimed an African heritage. With his fellow students Damas and Senghor he aimed to create a platform on which to declare their African heritage and celebrate their differences from the bourgeois western civilization; a civilisation that had dictated the politics and culture of their homelands. Beverley Ormerod Noakes and Gertrud Aub-Buscher explain that the employment of Negritude as a critical lens meant that 'the racial and cultural legacy of Africa, long denied or overlooked by the educated

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<sup>105</sup>Carole Sweeney, *From Fetish to Subject: Race, Modernism and Primitivism 1919-1935*, (Westport, Conn: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 132.

middle class, could no longer be excluded from any literary portrayal of modern Caribbean society.<sup>106</sup>

Surrealism struck a chord with the founders of Negritude, who were determined to reveal the racist and degrading realities of slavery which they believed had been denied by their forefathers who, rather than fighting for a space in which to declare their own selves, had slavishly attempted to imitate their European masters.<sup>107</sup> In Surrealism, the Negritude writers found the space in which to celebrate and honour their African ancestry; an association that had previously been denied to the islanders who had felt humiliated and undermined by Europe's continual portrayal of the African as the 'savage'.<sup>108</sup> Although Caribbean in its focus, Negritude was a concept born in part outside of the French Caribbean, in the city of Paris, and the theories employed by the founders of Negritude were on the whole created by European philosophers and intellectuals. Patrick Corcoran addresses this point he writes that Negritude 'can also be categorised as one manifestation of the 'French' taste for literary 'schools' and *côteries*, a damning criticism indeed since it assimilates the movement to a metropolitan literary tradition that...[they] were actively seeking to challenge and resist from outside.'<sup>109</sup>

Césaire wrote of a return to his native land, the island of Martinique, and of the need to metaphysically return to an African past. Yet as Haigh observes the Negritude movement's portrayal of an African return and the reality of contemporary Africa creates a Negritude myth, 'in which negritude as a discourse of return and self-reconciliation is reliant upon a highly problematic figuration of the hero's relationship with, and return to, Africa.'<sup>110</sup> In focusing solely on the black population, Césaire ignored the processes

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<sup>106</sup>Gertrud Aub-Buscher and Beverley Ormerod Noakes, eds., "Introduction" in *The Francophone Caribbean Today, Literature, Language, Culture*, (Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 2003), VII.

<sup>107</sup>Jean Baptiste Popeau, *Dialogues Of Negritude: An Analysis of the Cultural Context of Black Writing*, (North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 2003), 93.

<sup>108</sup>For further information on the contradictions that are present in theoretical discourse of Negritude see, Jean Baptiste Popeau, *Dialogues of Negritude*, 104-111.

<sup>109</sup>Patrick Corcoran, *The Cambridge Introduction to Francophone Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 187.

<sup>110</sup>Sam Haigh, *Mapping a Tradition: Francophone Women's Writing from Guadeloupe*, (London: Maney Publishing for the Modern Humanities Research Association, 2000), 63.

of creolisation that had been taking place in the region. Ormerod and Aub-Buscher observe that whilst Césaire was ‘critically inclusive of the economic oppressor- beke, metropolitan, grand mulatre’ he bypassed the ‘descendents of Indian and Chinese indentured labourer, of early French seamen and Syrian pedlars, and mixed-race population which had been growing from slave days onwards.’ Furthermore in concentrating on a metaphorical return to Africa ‘he also ignored the historical links between the francophone islands and the rest of the Caribbean.’<sup>111</sup>

Césaire’s Caribbean vision might appear to be in opposition to other theories of Caribbean creolisation, yet his contribution and the relevance of his work to its development cannot be underestimated. I suggest that the representations of Caribbean modernity that follow Césaire’s theoretical discourse whilst receptive to his affirmation of a black Caribbean consciousness are critical of his omissions of the gendered and racially creolised subject. The challenge set by Negritude I argue, lay not in advancing the notion of the mythical return but rather formulating models that would explain and encompass the whole creolised lived reality of Caribbean modernity.

### **Nation Language**

Whilst the writers and intellectuals within the francophone Caribbean were contemplating cultural and political position as overseas departments of France, the 1950s witnessed the stirrings towards independence in Anglophone Caribbean islands. In 1962, Jamaica and Trinidad gained their independence from Britain, followed in 1966 by Guyana and Barbados respectively. It is in this post-independence setting that the Barbadian historian, poet, theorist and essayist Kamau Brathwaite, published the *Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820* in 1971. The publication marked the beginning of contribution to the intellectual debate on creolisation and the development of modern Caribbean literature.

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<sup>111</sup>Aub-Buscher and Ormerod Noakes, *The Francophone Caribbean Today*, V.III.

Brathwaite's work on creolisation and tidalectics is a central facet in the theoretical framework of my thesis.

Although published in 1971, Brathwaite's *Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820*<sup>112</sup> was completed as part of his doctoral thesis in history at the University of Sussex in 1968. In his text Brathwaite explores the development of creolisation in pre-emancipation Jamaica, and argues that the reactions between the newcomers who were strangers to each other, and their responses to their new environment was the beginning of the process he calls creolisation. For Brathwaite, the single most important development in the history of Jamaican society is the composition of a 'new' social and cultural 'construction'<sup>113</sup>. As with Césaire, Brathwaite seeks to elevate the African presence within the Caribbean, but significantly his thesis acknowledges and explores the process of creolisation and multiplicity within the region.

According to Brathwaite, creolisation in the pre-emancipation period had four distinct stages, and he highlights miscegenation and socialisation as the two most significant periods.<sup>114</sup> Of miscegenation he writes that it is where 'the most significant-and lasting-intercultural creolization'<sup>115</sup> took place. He equates socialisation with imitation and in an echo of Martí's earlier work states that mimicry 'is one of the greatest tragedies of slavery and of the conditions under which creolisation had to take place.'<sup>116</sup> I draw on Brathwaite's work concerning mimicry and miscegenation in my examination of creolisation and the dynamics of sexual relations in the literary representations of Caribbean modernity. In particular I consider the implications of the sexual encounters on the black woman's body and agency.

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<sup>112</sup>Kamau Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

<sup>113</sup> Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820*, 296.

<sup>114</sup> Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820*, 298.

<sup>115</sup> Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820*, 303.

<sup>116</sup> Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820*, 300.

Brathwaite's collection of essays *Contradictory Omens, Cultural diversity and integration in the Caribbean*<sup>117</sup> develops his concerns on imitation and his wider theory of creolisation. Crucially in this publication Brathwaite's range extends beyond the island of Jamaica to encompass a pan Anglo-Caribbean viewpoint. It also includes an examination of the place/space occupied by the Chinese and East Indian population of the Caribbean, who had previously occupied the periphery of Caribbean intellectual discourse. Brathwaite compares the processes of creolisation between the Afro-Caribbean community, and the East Indians who arrived in 1845 after the system of indentured labour was introduced to the Caribbean. He notes that the East Indian population of the Caribbean were able to keep intact their native language as a result of not suffering the experiences of slavery and the plantation system. This resulted in process of 'selective creolisation'<sup>118</sup> as the East Indian community can choose which parts of the 'master-culture' to adopt. The African Caribbean on the other hand, who has had his/her language and culture suppressed is at a disadvantage, yet it is this act of suppression which in Brathwaite's opinion has allowed the African Caribbean to be 'most innovative and radical'.<sup>119</sup> Yet whilst the two ethnic groups find themselves at different points on the creolisation spectrum, their aims according to Brathwaite should be the same, as he writes:

The objective of all groups in this endeavour, however, it seems to me, should be similar and ultimately co-operative. Our advantage is that at last we all (Caribbean artist/intellectuals) seem to share a serious concern: the attempt to make ourselves visible within our own light and images.<sup>120</sup>

I consider Brathwaite's notion of imagery and light in relation to representations of Caribbean literary modernity, and attempt to tease out the complexities of inscribing a narrative language capable of achieving this.

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<sup>117</sup>Kamau Brathwaite, *Contradictory Omens, Cultural diversity and integration in the Caribbean*, (Jamaica: Savacou Publications, 1974).

<sup>118</sup>Brathwaite, *Contradictory Omens*, 54.

<sup>119</sup>Brathwaite, *Contradictory Omens*, 54.

<sup>120</sup>Brathwaite, *Contradictory Omens*, 55.

## Antillanité

Another movement I wish to foreground and one which is central to my theoretical framework is Martinican playwright, novelist, and theoretician Édouard Glissant's concept of Antillanité. Glissant was greatly influenced by Césaire's ideas 'on black consciousness and the value of literary creativity as an exemplary activity for the dispossessed colonial imagination'.<sup>121</sup> Yet, his theories on Caribbean identity are significantly different to Césaire's notions of identity. In 1989 Glissant published his collection of essays, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*<sup>122</sup> and, unlike Césaire, his primary interest does not lie with Martinique's African past, but rather with 'Caribbean memory'. Glissant declares a disinterest in a linear narrative and suggests that his analysis of Caribbean temporality is undertaken 'not in a vain quest for dates or facts, but in an attempt to acquire a sense of the continuous flow of time which lies dormant in the Caribbean landscape'.<sup>123</sup>

For Glissant, the French Caribbean is the site of a history characterised by ruptures, as a result the historical consciousness of the people could not be deposited in the same linear manner of the Europeans.<sup>124</sup> In order to counter this problem Glissant suggests that the Caribbean writer has to dig deep into the collective memory, 'following the latent signs that he has picked up in the everyday world'.<sup>125</sup> The site of this collective memory can be found in the landscape but according to Glissant, in order to understand the complexities of the modern Caribbean one must first get to grips with the impact and latent meanings of the plantation.<sup>126</sup> For Glissant it is within the hierarchical structures of the plantation, that modern Caribbean literature is created. It is this notion that the development of a literature and specifically a literature inextricably linked to the experience of

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<sup>121</sup>J. Michael Dash 'Introduction' in *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. J. Michael Dash (Virginia: Caraf Books: University of Virginia Press, 1989), xiv.

<sup>122</sup>Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. J. Michael Dash, (Virginia: Caraf Books: University of Virginia Press, 1989).

<sup>123</sup>Beverley Ormerod, *An Introduction to the French Caribbean Novel*, (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1985), 36.

<sup>124</sup>Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 61-62.

<sup>125</sup>Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 64.

<sup>126</sup>Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 123-129.



the plantation that I am interested in examining in relation to the representations of Caribbean literary modernity. Furthermore I draw Glissant's concept of history and temporality as a means of analysing and articulating the centrality of history in the literature from the region.

In 1990, Glissant further develops his theory on Caribbean identity and language in his publication *Poetics of Relation*.<sup>127</sup> He draws on the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari and in particular their concept of the rhizome. For Deleuze and Guattari the growth pattern of the rhizome presents a revolutionary response to the hierarchical model of Western thought, as they explain in the introductory chapter to *A Thousand Plateaus*, [t]he rhizome itself assumes very diverse forms, from ramified surface extension in all directions to concretion in bulbs and tuber [...] Perhaps one of the most important characteristics of the rhizome is that it has multiple entryways.<sup>128</sup> The rhizome then 'is always in the middle, between things, interbeing',<sup>129</sup> and it is this relationship, this in-betweenness that informs Glissant's discourse on the development of Caribbean creolisation.

In *Poetics of Relation* he argues for the Caribbean to be viewed not as a single entity but rather as a diverse 'network of regional relationships'.<sup>130</sup> As with Brathwaite, Glissant returns to the exchanges which have taken place between the Europeans, Indians and Africans in the Americas, and like Brathwaite, he privileges the collective both nationally and regionally. In this thesis I suggest that the collective is central to the writings of Caribbean literary modernity. A cacophony of voices populate the narrative landscape as the writers attempt to give voice to communities denied the right of speech. Glissant's ideas on the collective and the processes of linguistic exchange that takes place within the region provides an essential lens through which to explore the issues of voicelessness present in Caribbean literary modernity.

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<sup>127</sup>Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing, (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1997). *Poetics of Relation*, 65.

<sup>128</sup>Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, (London: The Athlone Press Ltd, 1988), 7 & 12.

<sup>129</sup>Deleuze and Guattari, 25.

<sup>130</sup>Ormerod, viii.

## Créolité

More recently in 1989, Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant, declared in their manifesto *Éloge de la créolité* that '[o]nly poetic knowledge, fictional knowledge, literary knowledge, in short, artistic knowledge, can discover us and bring us, evanescent, back to the resuscitation of consciousness.'<sup>131</sup> Simultaneously rejecting and building upon the ideas of Negritude and Antillanité, the creolists emphasise the centrality of the Creole language in their work. As with Glissant, they make regional connections with neighbouring Caribbean islands but also cast a wider global net to include the Creole speaking regions of the Indian Ocean and East Africa.

Créolité is problematic both from a gendered and theoretical perspective. Maryse Condé points out that the rigid boundaries it constructs in relation to language 'should not be transformed into a cultural terrorism within which writers are confined.'<sup>132</sup> She goes on to state 'Créolité should not prevent individuals from having the relationship they wish to have with West Indian reality.'<sup>133</sup> In this thesis I apply both the ideas of Créolité and the criticism that it receives to consider the wider implications of Caribbean theoretical discourse on modern Caribbean literature. As Hall notes, Creole and I would extend this to include the process of creolisation, 'remains a powerfully charged but also exceedingly slippery signifier [...] impossible to freeze [...] or give it any kind of fixed or precise racial referent'.<sup>134</sup> I question the extent to which Caribbean creolisation theories can enable us to interpret literary representations of Caribbean modernity. Hall suggests that Caribbean and culture more generally is never fixed but always 'poised'<sup>135</sup> for the next process of translation and transition. I draw on this idea to question

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<sup>131</sup>Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant, 'In Praise of Creoleness', trans. Mohamed B. Taleb Khyar, *Callaloo* 13 (1990), 896.

<sup>132</sup>Françoise Pfaff, *Conversations with Maryse Condé*, (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 114.

<sup>133</sup>Françoise Pfaff, *Conversations with Maryse Condé*, 114.

<sup>134</sup>Stuart Hall, "Creolite and the Process of Creolization", 29.

<sup>135</sup>Hall, 'Fundamentalism, Diaspora and Hybridity', 310.

the historic marginalisation of the gendered perspective. If as I argue in this thesis, translation and negotiation are central to Caribbean modernity, then the theoretical absence of the Caribbean woman within these transactions is problematic. I return to the works of fiction and locate the Caribbean female figure and consider how we might more explicitly inscribe her into the theoretical discourse. I foreground the work of feminist critics, Anim-Addo, Fumagalli, Audre Lourde and Verene Shepherd amongst others, to include their theories in the discourse of creolisation. Only then I argue can we begin to fully comprehend the representations of Caribbean literary modernity.

### **Creolisation: Critical Reception**

Over the last thirty years a number of monographs within the field of humanities, examining the processes of creolisation in the Caribbean region have been published. The exploration of how Caribbean creolisation has been represented in Caribbean literature is less well served. Simon Gikandi's *Writing in Limbo: Modernism and Caribbean Literature*<sup>136</sup>, is one of the first texts to examine the relationship between Caribbean literary modernity and the creolisation process. Gikandi notes that 'for many Caribbean writers and intellectuals, creolization has come to represent a unique kind of Caribbean modernism'.<sup>137</sup> In his interrogation of Caribbean modernity Gikandi observes that Caribbean modernism has 'evolved out of an anxiety toward the colonizing structure'.<sup>138</sup> He is interested in exploring how this particular modernism 'develops as a narrative strategy and counter discourse...to conventional modes of representation associated with colonial domination and colonizing cultural structures'.<sup>139</sup>

*Writing in Limbo* explores displacement and exile, language, nationhood and the revisionist approaches of Caribbean women writers in a number of Caribbean novels. Apart from the Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier,

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<sup>136</sup>Simon Gikandi, *Writing in Limbo: Modernism and Caribbean Literature*, (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1992).

<sup>137</sup>Gikandi, 6.

<sup>138</sup>Gikandi, 5.

<sup>139</sup>Gikandi, 5.

Gikandi's work focuses primarily on the Anglophone Caribbean writers with chapters on authors C.L.R. James, George Lamming, Samuel Selvon, Paule Marshall, Merle Hodge, Zee Edgell and Erna Brodber. *Writing in Limbo* has not been without its critics, especially since in defining Caribbean modernism Gikandi at times appears to treat Caribbean modernity as a reflection of European modernity. Caribbean critic Silvio Torres-Saillant puts forward this point in his own analysis of *Writing in Limbo*:

As a text that seeks to arrive at an understanding of Caribbean discourse, the book sins from an overdependence on Western secondary sources to legitimize its readings of the region's texts. At times, the author appears more committed to the history of Western ideas than to the project of investigating Caribbean texts as containers of autochthonous meaning.<sup>140</sup>

Nonetheless, *Writing in Limbo* can rightly be seen as an important moment in the critical reception of Caribbean literary modernity.

J. Michael Dash's, *The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World Context* (1998)<sup>141</sup> offers an examination of the region's literary imagination from a pan-Caribbean perspective. Concentrating on writing from the 1930s onwards *The Other America* argues that a 'hemispheric identity is an essential mediating context for understanding the Caribbean whole.'<sup>142</sup> *The Other America* 'proposes a reading of Caribbean Literature in terms of defining moments in the region's literary history.'<sup>143</sup> In providing his rationale for the scope of his study Dash points out to the frequency with which Caribbean literature is situated in all encompassing theories of third world culture. For this reason he states that in *The Other America* his aim was to set aside 'some of the more sweeping theories of postcolonial writing, and concentrates on the work of regional intellectuals.'<sup>144</sup> Dash acknowledges that his claim to explore a pan-Caribbean literary imagination, is somewhat thwarted by the absence of writing from the Dutch speaking territories.

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<sup>140</sup>Silvio Torres-Saillant, *Caribbean Poetics, Toward an Aesthetic of West Indian Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 25.

<sup>141</sup>J. Michael Dash, *The Other America: Caribbean: Literature in a New World Context*, (Charlottesville; London: University Of Virginia Press, 1998).

<sup>142</sup>Dash, x.

<sup>143</sup>Dash, xii.

<sup>144</sup>Dash, x.

Nonetheless, *The Other America* is impressive in its comparative study of English, French and Spanish Caribbean modern and postmodern writing.

More recently two texts exploring creolisation and Caribbean literary modernity have been published, they are Shalini Puri's *The Caribbean Postcolonial: Social Equality, Postnationalism and Culture*,<sup>145</sup> and Mary Lou Emery's *Modernism, the Visual and Caribbean Literature*.<sup>146</sup> Puri examines the relationship between discourses of cultural hybridity and projects for social equality. Writing from the discipline of postcolonial studies, Puri's central aim is to relocate Caribbean discourse of hybridity from the periphery to the centre of postcolonial discourse. Puri focuses on a range of genres including novels, essays, manifestos, carnival and the Indo-Caribbean observance of Hosay. Puri specifies Caribbean elaborations of hybridity and looks in detail at mestizaje, Creolization, douglaristaion and jibarismo. *The Caribbean Postcolonial*, uses a conjunctural approach to investigate cultural hybridity in both the Caribbean and contemporary metropolitan academy.

Mary Lou Emery's text, in contrast moves away from the regional perspective of Dash and Puri and explores twentieth century Caribbean writers and artists 'who have crossed the Caribbean Sea to Britain and, in some cases, Europe and the United States paying particular attention to the acts of vision (ways of seeing) in Caribbean art.'<sup>147</sup> Focusing on authors such as C.L.R. James, Wilson Harris and George Lamming; artists such as Ronald Moody and Edna Manley; and political activist Una Marson, Emery explores the creation of 'modernist countervisions' in Caribbean literature and visual art.<sup>148</sup> *Modernism, the Visual and Caribbean Literature* analyses the phenomenon of the extended creolisation process, which aims to evidence how 'the indigenous and inter-African diasporic arts of the Caribbean has helped to 'shape European [...] twentieth century British culture.'<sup>149</sup> Emery's work is highly significant, it argues for a revisionist approach in the discourse

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<sup>145</sup>Puri, 2004.

<sup>146</sup>Mary Lou Emery, *Modernism, the Visual, and Caribbean Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>147</sup>Emery, Emery, *Modernism, the Visual, and Caribbean Literature*, 1.

<sup>148</sup>Emery, *Modernism, the Visual, and Caribbean Literature*, 2.

<sup>149</sup>Emery, *Modernism, the Visual, and Caribbean Literature*, 3.

of literary and visual arts within the Caribbean and Europe, and warns against replicating colonialist discourse, which imbued European man with the capacity for sight.<sup>150</sup>

In 2002 Verene A. Shepherd and Glen L. Richards published a collection of essays entitled, *Questioning Creole: Creolisation Discourse in Caribbean Culture*.<sup>151</sup> This interdisciplinary text is primarily a tribute to Brathwaite and his seminal work *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica* and contains essays from a number of leading academics working in the field of Caribbean studies. The collection examines creolisation within economic and political history, anthropology and sociology, linguistics, literary criticism and cultural studies.

The essay of most relevance to this study is O. Nigel Bolland's 'Creolisation and Creole Societies: A Cultural Nationalist view of Caribbean Social History'. Bolland argues that the 'thesis of creolisation as exemplified in the work of Brathwaite, is not dialectical enough.'<sup>152</sup> He further describes Brathwaite's Creole-Society as 'ill-defined and ambiguous'<sup>153</sup> whilst at the same time recognising that Brathwaite 'himself has called for more complex, historical/sociological models to enable us to see the "plural/whole" of the Caribbean.'<sup>154</sup> I contend that Bolland's argument in relation to Brathwaite's Creole-Society model is ambiguous at best. I use Brathwaite's theory on creolisation and the development of the folk within Caribbean literature throughout this thesis. In doing so I attempt to demonstrate the centrality of the peasant/folk in Caribbean modernity and consider how this adds to our understanding of the literary development in the twentieth century Caribbean.

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<sup>150</sup>Emery, *Modernism, the Visual, and Caribbean Literature*, 2.

<sup>151</sup>Verene Shepherd, and Glen L. Richards, eds., *Questioning Creole: Creolisation Discourses in Caribbean Culture: In Honour of Kamau Brathwaite* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle: Oxford: James Currey, 2002).

<sup>152</sup>O. Nigel, Bolland, 'Creolisation and Creole Societies: A Cultural Nationalist view of Caribbean Social History' in *Questioning Creole: Creolisation Discourses in Caribbean Culture*, 18.

<sup>153</sup>Bolland, 'Creolisation and Creole Societies' 8.

<sup>154</sup>Bolland, 'Creolisation and Creole Societies: A Cultural Nationalist view of Caribbean Social History', 38.

## Structure

The geographical definition of the Caribbean is contentious. Traditionally it has been defined as the 'Caribbean Sea, rimmed by islands and the mainland territories of Central and South America'<sup>155</sup>, however this view excludes countries that are normally accepted as Caribbean such as Guyana, Barbados and the Bahamas.<sup>156</sup> For the purpose of this study my definition of the Caribbean is taken from the socialist Charles Wagley who describes the area as 'Plantation America'.<sup>157</sup> According to Wagley this cultural sphere extends spatially from halfway up the coast of Brazil, into Guyana, across the Caribbean coast taking in the north of the South America, the coast of Central America, the Caribbean itself and the southern half of the U.S.A. Wagley writes that 'sugar production by the plantation system within African slave labour became a fundamental formative feature of the Plantation-America culture sphere.'<sup>158</sup> This point links directly with my work, as a fundamental question of this study concerns the relationship between the spatial and cultural dynamics of the plantation and Caribbean literary modernity.

Chapter One is concerned with temporality and the representation of history in V.S. Reid's *New Day*<sup>159</sup> and Simone Schwarz-Bart's *The Bridge of Beyond*.<sup>160</sup> Drawing on Glissant's theory on history as my central theoretical framework, I pay particular attention to how these two writers have addressed the absent/fragmented historical narratives of the region. Reid's epic narrative set in post emancipation Jamaica focuses on two important historical dates, the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865 and the 1944 guarantee of

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<sup>155</sup>Jennifer Mohammed, *Cape Caribbean Studies, An Interdisciplinary Approach*, (Oxford: MacMillan Caribbean, 2007), 5.

<sup>156</sup>Mohammed, 6.

<sup>157</sup>Charles Wagley, 'Plantation America: A Culture Sphere' in Vera Rubin, ed., *Caribbean Studies: A Symposium*, (Jamaica: Institute of Social and Economic Research, University College of the West Indies in association with the research and training program for the study of man in the tropics, Columbia University, New York, 1957), 3.

<sup>158</sup>Wagley, 5.

<sup>159</sup>V.S. Reid, *New Day*, (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1973).

<sup>160</sup>Simone Schwarz-Bart, *Bridge of Beyond*, trans. Barbara Bay, (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishes, 1982). (This text is read in translation and as such, all spelling will reflect this)

self-rule under crown supervision. Similarly Schwarz-Bart's text retraces the post emancipation decades in Guadeloupe from 1848 to portray the dynastic history of four women from the Lougandor family. Glissant argues that the modern Caribbean writer must create their own chronology and concept of time to overcome the historical loss that has occurred in the region as a result of colonisation.

Using Glissant's notion of Caribbean temporality I explore the narrative strategies employed by Reid and Schwarz-Bart to examine the sociohistorical experiences of the Caribbean collective. I interrogate the relationship between the experiences of Caribbean modernity presented in the texts, and the representation of an emerging Anglophone and francophone nationhood. I focus on the pan-Caribbean nature of the two novels and examine the idioms and traces of the creole language found within their texts, in an attempt to highlight the shared histories of the region.

Chapter Two examines the connections between the Caribbean plantation system and the modern day Caribbean in Erna Brodber's *Myal*<sup>161</sup> and Joseph Zobel's *Black Shack Alley*.<sup>162</sup> Using Glissant's concept of 'the matrix of the slave ship and the plantation' I examine the ways in which the plantation and its systems of brutal commercial enterprise have created modern institutions and cultural concepts within the Caribbean. I ask how this historical legacy impacts on the twentieth century towns and villages located in Brodber's and Zobel's texts. For Brodber and Zobel the forced migration and re-distribution of world communities created by the Caribbean plantation system create a permanent state of flux amongst their fictional communities. Flights of the imagination and mythic tales of travel, intersect with real journeys undertaken by the characters, which in turn trace the global and modern routes of enterprise which created the Caribbean. How does this constant state of real and imagined migration

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<sup>161</sup>Erna Brodber, *Myal*, (London: New Beacon, 1988).

<sup>162</sup>Joseph Zobel, *Black Shack Alley*, trans. Keith Q Warner, (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc, 1997). (This text is read in translation and as such, all spelling will reflect this)



affect the modern Caribbean? What implication does this have on the Caribbean writer?

I draw on the work of Joan Anim-Addo, who in her reading of *Myal* highlights the tensions that exist in the process of creolisation. The modern creolised Caribbean communities are a direct result of the plantation's system of miscegenation and tellingly Brodber's mixed race character is zombified and a victim of spirit thievery, unable to articulate her creolised existence. Is there a link between the zombification of the creolised experience and the plantation system and what is the nature of this connection? Brodber does not allow for a simplified reading of her text as we find that spirit thievery also occurs to a character within the African-Caribbean community.

Chapter Three focuses on the literary presentation of the creolised Caribbean city. Anne Perotin-Dumon in her essay 'Cabotage, Contraband, and Corsairs: The Port Cities of Guadeloupe 1650-1800'<sup>163</sup> observes that 'port cities were service nodes for the Atlantic economy, centers of colonial power and crucibles for the formation of new societies.' I examine the literary representations of these 'new societies' in Joseph Zobel's *Black Shack Alley* and V.S. Reid's *New Day*. Roy Chandler Caldwell JR notes that the Caribbean city provides a route of escape 'from the past of slavery and the potential of forging future identities'.<sup>164</sup> In this chapter I analyse the ways in which Zobel's and Reid's characters forge new identities in their respective port cities of Kingston and Fort de France. I examine how their journeys from the plantations and the cays, to the streets and boulevards results in the awakening of a new black consciousness. The port cities introduce the characters to new communities from neighbouring Caribbean islands, from the Latin and North American mainland and from other European cities. The

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<sup>163</sup>Anne Perotin-Dumon, 'Cabotage, Contraband, and Corsairs: The Port Cities of Guadeloupe 1650-1800', in Franklin W. Knight and Peggy K. Liss, eds., *Atlantic Port Cities: Economy, Culture and Society in the Atlantic World 1650-1850*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 58.

<sup>164</sup>Roy Chandler Caldwell Jr., "For a Theory of the Creole City: Texaco and the Postcolonial Postmodern" in Mary Gallagher ed., *Ici Lá, Place and Displacement in Caribbean Writing*, (Amsterdam; New York NY: Edition Rodopi B.V., 2003), 28.

metropolis provides a space in which to share new ideas, political aspirations and ways in which to devise political and economic autonomy. The city also provides for the first time new sights and sounds, as the characters come into contact with the moving image and the cinematic and literary representation of the black self. Yet the imperial values that underpin the city's construction and rectilinear designs, means that rather than creating a new, liberated space, in the Caribbean city, 'old struggle[s] against oppression takes on new forms'. Indeed according to Glissant, the city is merely a transformation of the plantation as he states 'the plantation greathouse and the foreman's cabin are replaced by boards, offices, agencies.'<sup>165</sup> If as Antonio Benitez-Rojo argues, 'every Caribbean city carries deep within it other cities',<sup>166</sup> how do the characters in Zobel's and Reid's texts define and interpret their Caribbean-ness? How do they locate their new found black consciousness in port cities, built on the premise of supplying 'tropical commodities to Europe' and the global community beyond?<sup>167</sup>

Finally in Chapter Four I examine the spectre of the Negro, the terrifying 'other,' who both enchants and frightens 'Old World' audiences in equal measure. Of particular concern is the relationship between these terrifying spectacles, and the performances from which they emanate. I specifically examine how such performances - which are subsequently distorted in the Western literary imagination - are reconfigured in the twentieth century by Brodber, Schwarz-Bart, Reid, and Zobel. I include in my discussion, an analysis on theatre, film, carnival, and rituals, and draw on Benitez-Rojo, who reveals that the Caribbean novel is a space of 'total performance'<sup>168</sup> where a double discourse takes place. One that 'speaks to the West in the terms of a profane performance and, at the same time it

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<sup>165</sup>Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 37.

<sup>166</sup>Antonio Benitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, trans. James Maraniss (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 1996), 211.

<sup>167</sup>Perotin-Dumon, 'Cabotage, Contraband, and Corsairs: The Port Cities of Guadeloupe 1650-1800', 58.

<sup>168</sup>Benitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island*, 218.

speaks to the Caribbean in the terms of a ritual performance'.<sup>169</sup> I aim to underscore that Caribbean performance is central to the representations of modernity in Caribbean literature. If indeed, as Benitez-Rojo suggests, the Caribbean text is a 'consummate performer',<sup>170</sup> how are we to read Caribbean literary modernity? What symbolic codes,<sup>171</sup> to borrow from Benitez-Rojo, do these performances reveal, and how best might most meaningfully interpret these codes to expand on the notions of modernity and the text within the Caribbean?

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<sup>169</sup>Benitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island*, 221.

<sup>170</sup>Benitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island*, 221.

<sup>171</sup>Benitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island*, 220.

I

'A Tortured Sense of Time.'<sup>172</sup>

Temporality and History in V.S. Reid's *New Day*,  
and Simone Schwarz-Bart's *The Bridge of Beyond*.

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<sup>172</sup> Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, 144.

The American novelist, whatever cultural zone he belongs to, is not at all in search of a lost time, but finds himself struggling *in the confusion of time*. And from Faulkner to Carpentier, we are faced with apparent snatches of time that have been sucked into banked up or swirling forces.

Edouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*<sup>173</sup>

This chapter seeks to explore the notions of Caribbean literary modernity and its relationship to Caribbean historiography in V.S. Reid's *New Day* and Simone Schwarz-Bart's *The Bridge of Beyond*. Central to my concern is the privileging of history in the works of these two writers. My aim is to put forward the argument that a representation of history, particular to the Caribbean, and dating back to the fifteenth century has had far reaching consequences for the region's literary and cultural development. If, as I am suggesting, the Caribbean writer explores Caribbean historiography in order to excavate the Caribbean past, then Glissant's observation in the epigraph above that the American novelist struggles *in the confusion of time*<sup>174</sup> provides a useful framework through which to consider this. His statement reveals a sense of turmoil at the centre of literary and artistic representations of the Caribbean experience. I expand on this idea to suggest that the temporal confusion in representations of Caribbean literary modernity disrupts established notions of Caribbean subjectivity. In doing so, it provides writers such as Reid and Schwarz-Bart with the possibility of reconfiguring the modern Caribbean subject.

Futhermore, Glissant suggests that the American writer 'in dealing with their anxiety of time', are prey to 'a future remembering'.<sup>175</sup> The notion of a 'future remembering' indicates the absence of a regional audience, and of an audience yet to come. This raises concerns regarding who remembers, whose future histories are created, and which absences prevail? I explore

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<sup>173</sup>Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 144.

<sup>174</sup>Glissant's definition of the American novelist shares similarities with sociologist Charles Wagley's 'Plantation America'. Glissant's American writer includes and encompasses the entire Americas.

<sup>175</sup>Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 144.

the complexity of this temporal dilemma in relation to first-wave Caribbean women writers. I suggest that a patriarchal silence has prevailed and contributed to a historical silence concerning the roles played by Caribbean women in the political and cultural development of the region. In this Chapter I hope to demonstrate that the absence of a gendered perspective is problematic and the process of re-inscribing the personal and political experience of Caribbean women becomes an urgent and central feature of their work.

In my analysis of the modern Caribbean subject and Caribbean literary modernity I emphasise and seek to argue the centrality of the Caribbean tale, in the novels of Reid and Schwarz-Bart. Anim-Addo in her discussion on the relationship between the tale and the novel in the Caribbean highlights the synchronous relationship between the two forms. She reveals that 'oral narratives coexist and increasingly appropriate the novel form as a vehicle for narrative.'<sup>176</sup> I draw fully on this observation and in this thesis I argue that the relationship between the oral tale and novel is central to the development of Caribbean literary modernity. I contend that the tale enables the Caribbean writer to present a counter-history that challenges Western historiography. I suggest Reid and Schwarz-Bart's representations of Caribbean modernity demonstrate a complex relationship with Caribbean history. I argue that both writers privilege the history of the folk and the collective and historical knowledge is presented as a source of power.

Yet the history of the Caribbean simultaneously haunts and liberates the protagonists of their respective novels. For the writer of the Caribbean, articulating a Caribbean history and the ways in which this creates a modern Caribbean is paradoxical. It is both the violent movement away from traditional European and African ideals, and the awareness of the inextricable connection between the Caribbean, Africa and Europe. This is not to say that Caribbean modernity is simply a reflection of European

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<sup>176</sup>Anim-Addo, *Touching the Body*, 283.

modernity or a cannibalising of different literary traditions. Mary Lou Emery has argued, and I would agree, it has emerged from a distinctly Caribbean/American experience. As opposed to a 'delayed mimicry of an earlier'<sup>177</sup> European movement, she points out that 'Caribbean modernism draws on its own predecessors of the 1920s and 30s, such as Jean Rhys, Una Marson and Claude McKay, and responds to unique conditions of modernity.'<sup>178</sup> I shall attempt to demonstrate that in their attempts to articulate the contradictory and difficult relationship with Caribbean historiography, Reid and Schwarz-Bart turn to memory and language and a diverse range of global literary models.

This presence of a complex diasporic and global modernity in Caribbean literature of the twentieth century is reaffirmed in Giovanna Covi's reading of Una Marson's work. Covi observes that the Caribbean writer's relationship with modernity is not a simple binary of 'national-liberationist' and 'mimicries of imperial grandeur.'<sup>179</sup> Rather, Covi locates Una Marson's work within a global network and theorises that there exists within the Caribbean a complex series of local, national, and regional identities which seek to move away from colonialism, but significantly within a framework of cosmopolitanism/modernism.<sup>180</sup> I draw on Covi's idea that a cosmopolitanism and modernist discourse connected to, but independent of, Western notions of the modern existed in the Caribbean. I stress, that the exploration of the ideas concerning literary representations of modernity within the Caribbean must recognise the local and the regional cosmopolitan experiences of Caribbean subjectivity. By doing so, we can begin to consider how we might best interpret the modern Caribbean subject.

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<sup>177</sup>Mary Lou Emery, 'Taking the Detour, Finding Rebels: Crossroads of Caribbean and Modernist Studies' in Pamela L. Caughie, ed., *Disciplining Modernism*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 7.

<sup>178</sup>Emery, 'Taking the Detour, Finding Rebels: Crossroads of Caribbean and Modernist Studies' 7.

<sup>179</sup>Giovanna Covi, ed., 'Una Marson: African-Caribbean New Woman Peeking Truth to Power', in *Modernist Women, Race, Nation*, (London: Mango Publishing, 2005), 121.

<sup>180</sup>Covi, ed., *Modernist Women, Race, Nation*, 121.

### Writing the Caribbean Tale: History and Fiction in *New Day*

Since the publication of *New Day*, a body of fiction and short stories which explore the development of the creolisation process in Jamaica has been published. Kenneth Ramchand asserts that 'the history of West Indian prose fiction before 1950 is essentially the history of the short story.'<sup>181</sup> Moreover, Ramchand argues, 'There are no West Indian novelists, only short story writers in disguise.'<sup>182</sup> While I am privileging the position of the tale within the novel, I suggest that the emergence of the Caribbean novelist, emphatically signals the emergence of Caribbean literary modernity. The emphasis on the new, and the absence of formal conventions in the novel,<sup>183</sup> lent itself as a literary form, capable of articulating the breadth and depth of a fragmented Caribbean historiography.

Yet to dismiss the centrality of short story writing in Caribbean literary history is to miss the significance of this genre to the development of a literary language capable of articulating Caribbean subjectivity within the novel form. As Suzanne Scafe rightly observes in her work on the development of Jamaican short fiction, the 'transient status of these texts provided an opportunity for innovation and experimentation'.<sup>184</sup> Moreover, the short story writers who privileged Jamaican Creole as a narrative voice with which to articulate a complex interiority produced some 'of the most effective interventions in the dominant expressions of Jamaican culture'.<sup>185</sup> Within this corpus, Jamaican writers such as Roger Mais, Claude Thompson and Olive Senior, have employed a range of linguistic styles in their literary portrayals of the Caribbean experience. In these texts Jamaican Creole and Standard English coexist on the page and give voice to the plight of the rural

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<sup>181</sup>Kenneth Ramchand, 'The West Indian Short Story', *Journal of Caribbean Literatures*, 1:1 (1997), 27.

<sup>182</sup>Ramchand, 21.

<sup>183</sup>Ian P. Watt, *The Rise of the Novel, Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 13.

<sup>184</sup>Suzanne Scafe, 'The lesser names beneath the peaks': Jamaican Short Fiction and Its Context, 1938-1950' in Lucy Evans, Mark McWatt, and Emma Smith, eds., *The Caribbean Short Story: Critical Perspectives*, (Leeds: Peepal Tree Pres, 2011), 47.

<sup>185</sup>Scafe, 'The lesser names beneath the peaks': Jamaican Short Fiction and Its Context, 1938-1950 47.



and urban Jamaican communities. In light of the post-1949 literary developments, it can be difficult to grasp the magnitude of Reid's *New Day*, written during the 1940s and first published in 1949. Reid's epic novel marked a seminal moment in the history of Jamaican literature, and in the wider context of literary modernity in the Anglophone Caribbean. It signalled according to literary critic Gerald Moore, a break-away from colonial literary and cultural constraints. For Moore *New Day* represented a literary flight towards 'a distinctly tropical sky'.<sup>186</sup> West Indian writers were at last creating a literary landscape that reflected the nuances of their geographical and cultural condition.

Yet while *New Day* is pioneering in its use of Jamaican Creole and its attempts at articulating a Caribbean centred approach to the region's history, it has received a substantial amount of criticism for its perceived lack of historical focus. With parts Two and Three of the novel coming in for particular criticism. Trinidadian literary critic Kenneth Ramchand cites the novel's fictional perspective on the period post 1865 as the central flaw in Reid's narrative. He points out that had Reid stayed closer to the realm of actuality then 'the novel thus produced would have been a serious challenge to the historian.'<sup>187</sup> In light of Ramchand's criticism, it is interesting to note that Reid was insistent in proclaiming that his novel was a work of fiction. Pre-empting the dissenting voices of his critics he includes the following author's note at the beginning of the novel in which declares to the reader:

I have not by any means attempted a history of the period from 1865 to 1944. The entire Campbell family of my narrative is fictional. What I have attempted is to transfer to paper some of the beauty, kindliness, and humour of my people.

Of interest here is Reid's emphasis on transferring 'to paper' the cultural condition of the Jamaican population. I argue that the relationship between the page and the position of the modern Caribbean subject is enigmatic. I

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<sup>186</sup>Gerald Moore, *The Chosen Tongue: English Writing in the Tropical World*, (London, and Harlow: Longmans, 1969), 6.

<sup>187</sup>Kenneth Ramchand, 'History and the Novel: A Literary Critics Approach' *Savacou* 5 (1971), 103-113.

propose that at the heart of Caribbean literary modernity is the tension between historical textual representations of the region and the absence of the 'native' voice. Caribbean writers are not simply looking to reinscribe the 'Caribbean voice' into official history via literary tracts. They are seeking forms that can accurately translate and reflect the experiences of the region's inhabitants. In light of this I disagree with Ramchand's appraisal of *New Day* and do not read the text as a historical novel. Rather, I argue that we should consider Reid's novel as a modern rendering of the Caribbean tale.

Reid's *New Day*, as with Simone Schwarz-Bart's *Bridge of Beyond* is written in the first person and narrated by the ageing protagonist Johnny Campbell, who significantly speaks as opposed to writes, of his personal, familial, communal, and national historical experience. The novel, divided into three parts traces the lives of the fictional mixed-race Campbell family<sup>188</sup> and Reid employs a mixture of fictional and factual episodes in his rendering of Jamaican society. Although the novel spans an eighty-year period and appears to follow a linear sequence, the narrative I argue is fractious. Johnny as the narrator moves backwards, forwards and laterally.

This fractious movement according to Glissant is a central facet of the Caribbean oral tale which calls into question the concept of temporality in the region. Glissant reveals that the fractured narrative structure of the Caribbean folktale denotes that 'no chronology can emerge, that time cannot be conceived as a basic dimension of human experience.'<sup>189</sup> He observes that in the Caribbean oral tale the only temporal certainty is that day turns into night.<sup>190</sup> I suggest that, given the nature of a region where the historical account is plagued by disconnections, the shifting temporality and oscillating nature of the Caribbean tale allows Reid and Schwarz-Bart to encompass four centuries of Caribbean history within their respective

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<sup>188</sup>We are only now paying attention to the role of Scots in the Caribbean and the familial interconnections. See *Caribbean- Scottish Relations: Colonial and Contemporary Inscriptions in History, Language and Literature*, eds. Giovanna Covi, Joan Anim-Addo, Velma Pollard and Carla Sassi (London: Mango Publishing, 2007).

<sup>189</sup>Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 84.

<sup>190</sup>Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 84.

novels. Significantly, the Caribbean oral tale which encompasses the folktale, tall tale, cautionary tale, and the fable is a meeting point between the spoken and the written word. It provides a continuously transforming instrument through which to explore Caribbean modernity.

Furthermore, as Glissant observes the Caribbean oral tale provides the writer with alternative ways of confronting history. Reid, for example, applies the Caribbean tale as a vehicle through which to examine the inaccuracies of past histories, and as a means of representing the 'birth' of modern day Jamaica. The tale functions as a stratagem to combat the constraints of Western historiography and what Glissant describes as a 'paralyzing [...] yearning for history.'<sup>191</sup> While one would agree with his argument that the Caribbean tale combats Western historiography, I would add that the oral tale may be seen as part of a larger history, one which Fumagalli describes as the North Atlantic project.<sup>192</sup> For Fumagalli, the arrival of Columbus and the Conquistadors in the Americas is significant not only for the development of Caribbean modernity but also for North Atlantic modernity. Fumagalli argues that we should consider the North Atlantic 'more a project than place,' where the cultural translation and transformation is a two-way process. In this interpretation of Caribbean modernity, Western historiography concerning the region is itself a space of mythical encounters. At the same time, rather than being the antithesis of Western historiography, I suggest that the Caribbean oral tale simultaneously encompasses and rejects the European narratives that for many years masqueraded as official history.

Historically, the demarcation between fiction and non-fiction in the region has not always been clear. The early Spanish colonists used a diverse range of literary forms to relay and record their adventures and discoveries in the 'New World'. Examples of this include Christopher Columbus' letters dispatched to Castile during his four voyages between 1492-1504<sup>193</sup>; the royal

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<sup>191</sup>Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 84.

<sup>192</sup> Fumagalli, *Caribbean Perspectives: Returning Medusa's Gaze*, 2.

<sup>193</sup>Christopher Columbus, *The Four Voyages of Christopher Columbus*, trans. J.M. Cohen, (London: Penguin Books, 1969).

historian Captain Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo's *General and Natural History of the Indies* (1535) which provided a comprehensive history of the discovery of the Americas from 1492-1547<sup>194</sup>; and the military history provided by Hernan Cortés' letter in 1520, detailing the conquest of Mexico.<sup>195</sup> As Nana Wilson-Tagoe reveals, these were not historical texts but rather diaries and first-hand accounts. The documents according to Wilson Tagoe 'were unhistorical' in the sense in which history itself had become regarded in Europe by the nineteenth century.<sup>196</sup> Tagoe suggests that we should view the early writers as 'chroniclers, recorders of contemporary events which they knew first hand.'<sup>197</sup> I place emphasis on Tagoe's observation on the early historian's position as chronicler and reporter. Read within this context early European historical accounts of the Caribbean contain within them the vestige of the spoken word and the oral narrative. I would like to develop this further to suggest that Reid and Schwarz-Bart continue this particular tradition of mixing literary genres in their respective novels.

As I hope to demonstrate in the following pages, the process of translation and transformation that happens in Caribbean literary modernity creates a fictional landscape whereby Ananse the spider<sup>198</sup> sits comfortably alongside the fictional revolutionary figure of Paul Bogle. That is to say, characters of a tall tale originating from West Africa coexist on the literary page with Caribbean revolutionaries as Reid attempts to articulate the history of colonialism in the Americas. Whilst the appropriation of different narrative styles is not exclusive to the Caribbean, it speaks to that very

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<sup>194</sup>Kathleen Ann Myers, *Fernandez de Oviedo's Chronicle of America: a New history for a new world*, trans. Nina M. Scott, (Texas: Texas University Press, 2007), 1.

<sup>195</sup>Hernan Cortés, "The fifth letter of Hernan Cortes to the Emperor Charles V, containing an account of his expedition to Honduras", trans. Pascaul de Gayangos, (Hakluyt Society: First series; No. 40. 1868).

<sup>196</sup> Nana Wilson-Tagoe, *Historical Thought and Literary Representation in West Indian Literature* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida; Barbados: The University Press of the West Indies; Oxford: James Currey, 1998), 16.

<sup>197</sup>Wilson-Tagoe, 16.

<sup>198</sup>Ananse is the central character in a number of Caribbean tales. Of West African origin, he is a popular figure in Jamaican and other West Indian fables. His presence within the cultural traditions of the region points to the process of transference and translation present in Caribbean modernity. See, Frederic Gomes Cassidy & Robert Brock Le Page, eds. *Dictionary of Jamaican Creole*, (Kingston, Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 2002), 10.

modern phenomenon of cultural creolisation made possible by European mercantile expansion in the fifteenth century. Furthermore, the tale seeks to do more than relay and redress the historical accounts of the Caribbean. As Victor J. Ramraj notes the tale is concerned with the ordinary and the elusive social experience of the Caribbean populations. The tale makes visible and accounts for the intangible realities of the Caribbean lived experience. Extending on Ramraj's observations I suggest that the tale has the capacity to reveal the liminality of the modern Caribbean subjectivity.

### **Writing the Nation: *New Day* and the makings of modern Jamaican Society.**

*New Day* opens with the factual event of the 1865 Morant Bay Rebellion, in which the Jamaican Paul Bogle, a deacon in the Baptist Missionary, led a revolt against the local magistracy. From a localised dispute the trouble quickly escalated into a revolt against British rule. The ruthless response of the then Jamaican governor Edward John Eyre to the rebellion, led to over 400 executions, 600 floggings and the destruction of more than 1000 houses and cottages.<sup>199</sup> *New Day* climaxes in 1944, as Jamaica is finally awarded the guarantee of self-rule under the crown supervision of Great Britain.

A number of political and social factors lay behind the causes of the Morant Bay Rebellion. Reid highlights the Emancipation Act of 1834 and the droughts of the same period as key events leading up to the revolution. The the abolition of slavery in the British West Indies created social unrest on the islands, the plantocracy, accustomed to a free labour force, were now compelled to work within the structures of a formal labour system. Their reluctance to accept this change led to low wages, high unemployment and heavy taxation.<sup>200</sup> At the same time Jamaica experienced a series of droughts that had ruined most of the crops. Furthermore, the droughts coincided with the American Civil War raging in the United States, and American clipper

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<sup>199</sup>Clinton V. Black, *The History of Jamaica* (Essex: Longman Caribbean Series, 1988), 134.

<sup>200</sup>Black, *The History of Jamaica*, 130.

ships which provided goods to Jamaica were no longer sailing into the island's ports, further compounding the agricultural difficulties, and the economic hardships of the local communities.<sup>201</sup> It is this Jamaica to which we are introduced in Chapter One of *New Day*.

The connection between the structure of the novel and its portrayal of Jamaican society is highly significant to my argument. This is because Johnny Campbell's development into adulthood mirrors Jamaica's development as a nation. Part One opens with the eighty-seven year old Johnny experiencing a restless night, on the eve of the declaration of self-rule in Jamaica. As dusk settles, Johnny's 'mind turns back'(p.3) to his childhood, and the events of 1865. The eight year old Johnny Campbell to whom the reader is introduced is understandably naïve, and unable to fully grasp the political nuances of the events taking place around him. He is caught up in a revolutionary and violent period, where the political and economical options for the recently emancipated slaves are limited. Whilst Johnny is involved in the violent drama of the rebellion, it is important to note that he himself chooses cunning and guile over violence, two characteristics associated with the folktale hero Ananse, the trickster spider.

<sup>202</sup>

In Part One, Johnny, much like the spider figure is found creeping, crawling, hiding, running and above all using his intelligence as a means of surviving the Morant Bay Rebellion. In the popular folktales of the Caribbean region, Ananse's cunning and wit is usually pitted against superior strength with great success,<sup>203</sup> but as Richard D.E. Burton points out, 'Ananse's realm is the realm of the polymorphous perverse, of endless deviation [...] and multiple meanings.'<sup>204</sup> Ananse can also symbolise greed and envy<sup>205</sup> 'and before all else [is] an individualist.'<sup>206</sup> I am selective in my use of Burton's

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<sup>201</sup>Jack B. Watson, *Empire to Commonwealth, 1919-1970*, (London: Dent, 1971), 152.

<sup>202</sup>

<sup>203</sup>Frederic Gomes Cassidy et al, 10.

<sup>204</sup>Richard D. E. Burton, *Afro-Creole: Power, Opposition and Play in the Caribbean*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), 61.

<sup>205</sup>Frederic Gomes Cassidy & Robert Brock Le Page, eds., 10

<sup>206</sup>Burton, 63.

analysis of the Ananse figure in order to highlight that Reid does not associate the negative characteristics of Ananse with Johnny, who above all seeks to better the position of the collective. Rather, Reid chooses to instil in his main protagonist the positive characteristics of the trickster figure, and in doing so he introduces a creolised alternative to the revolutionary figure of Paul Bogle, and the imperial menace of Governor Eyre. In positioning Johnny in opposition to Bogle and Eyre, I suggest that Reid introduces a discourse that moves away from the binary debate centred on the Planter class, as represented by Eyre, and the revolutionary politics of Paul Bogle. Johnny represents such a moving 'away' and, indeed, an alternative route to locating Jamaican modernity, with creolisation at its heart.

As Johnny matures into adulthood, so too does the creolised African-Caribbean community's standing in Jamaica's political and economical hierarchies. As I will discuss in Chapter Three, by the third section of *New Day*, the Campbell family have advanced up the social ladder, and are firmly established members of the merchant and political class. In Parts Two and Three, Johnny's childhood belief in non-violent action, as a means of acquiring political and social independence is further developed. He seeks to establish his family's wealth and invests this money into the education of his great-nephew, Garth Campbell. History, highlighted above is a source of power which Johnny ensures that his nephew understands. Yet, whilst Johnny is proud of the revolutionary verve that runs through his family, he makes it clear that the prosperity of Jamaican society lies in the empowerment of the people through education, political diplomacy, and above all social unity. Throughout *New Day*, Reid privileges the position of the collective over the individual. Even in his valorising of the historical efforts of Caribbean activists, Reid pivots the story around the community. This of course allows him to include the voice of the collective, a voice long denied in the region. Yet I argue that there still exists a tension and an absence in the literary representation of the community and one that Reid does not resolve.

Throughout the novel, the Campbell family are concerned with the welfare of the poor in Jamaican society, the majority of whom are black. As a mixed raced family with skin like 'English plantermen' (p.24), and 'daylight under their hair' (p.24) the Campbells are acutely aware of their privileged position in a region defined by pigmentocracy, as Garth notes, for example, 'I grew up among my poor friends, but not with them.' (p. 252), At the end of novel Garth delivers the following statement at a political rally, 'in our island we have proven that race is but skin-shallow and that we are brothers in the depth of us'. (p.338) As the novel comes to a close in Part Three, an air of optimism surrounds Johnny, his family and fellow community members. Jamaica is in the throes of a new political era and the dawning of a new day is set to usher in a revitalised and renewed social structure. Yet, as Caribbean writer and theorist Sylvia Wynter warns, this optimistic stance fails to grasp the realities of Jamaican society:

By ignoring the fact that a change in the super structure of the plantation, a new Constitution, even independence were changes which left the basic system untouched.<sup>207</sup>

Wynter indicates in her argument that racial and social unity alone is worthless, if the structures that determine how a society is governed remain the same. Through Garth and Johnny, the black and poor collective of Jamaican society are provided a mouthpiece with which to air their grievances. Notably, however, it remains just that; a political and cultural structure in which they are passive. Reid's attempt to bridge the gap between the creole elites and the working class is less convincing and the narrative has been described as overly sentimental.<sup>208</sup> Where Parts Two and Three of *New Day*, are more successful are in the glimpses that they provide of the possibilities for Jamaica's creolised communities. Reid cannot yet write of a post-1949 Jamaica but *New Day* hints at what could be achieved for black and white Jamaicans through educational advancement, political and economical unity.

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<sup>207</sup>Sylvia Wynter, 'Novel, History, Plot and Plantation' *Savacou* 5 (1971): 95-102.

<sup>208</sup>Mervyn Morris, "Introduction" in *New Day*, (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1973). (The Introduction in this edition of *New Day* does not contain page numbers.)



Significantly in Reid's fictionalised account of the development of modern day Jamaica, obtaining political and cultural autonomy lies squarely in the hands of the male members of the Campbell family. The Campbell men participate in the numerous political discourses and movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Campbell family might speak to a racially diverse and unified Jamaica, but *New Day's* political vision is unmistakably patriarchal. The absence of female characters in the literary representation of the Morant Bay Rebellion, mirrors the omission of female participants in the wider national and historiographical discourse. Swithin Wilmot observes that female rebels have received little attention in 'the accounts of that pivotal event in the island's history.'<sup>209</sup> Yet she suggests that that they 'had some influence on Bogle's organisation' and were 'part of the crowd led by Bogle 'marching like soldiers'.<sup>210</sup> Moreover, she reveals that the omission of women from the historical records 'does not reflect an absence of information', rather, 'such information was considered irrelevant to the concerns of 'history'.<sup>211</sup>

The absence of politically engaged women and the literary silence afforded to their contributions to Jamaican self rule is deafening. *New Day*, then, can be seen as continuing the long line of Caribbean patriarchal discourse as outlined in the Introduction; a discourse which writes out the political agency of Caribbean women in Caribbean historiography. At the same time, it is clear that *New Day* does not claim to offer an analysis of Jamaica's political development. Rather, it sets out to write the social experience of the collective into the national and historical consciousness. Yet, from a gendered perspective, albeit at a later date, the literary representation of the collective is questionable.

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<sup>209</sup>Swithin Wilmot, 'Females of Abandoned Character?: Women and Protest in Jamaica, 1838-65', in *Engendering History, Caribbean*, 290.

<sup>210</sup>Wilmot, 291.

<sup>211</sup>Wilmot, 291.

### **Writing the Creole Nation: The use of Jamaican Creole in *New Day***

Reid chooses to write his novel in a modified Jamaican Creole in an attempt to portray the authentic experience of the Jamaican collective. For many of its critics including Louis James, the language Reid creates in *New Day* is considered unsuccessful. Yet Reid's choice of language is important and central to my analysis of the development of Caribbean literary modernity. The use of Jamaican Creole, as with the application of the Caribbean tale, signals an attempt by Reid to move away from the dominating Western discourse of what constitutes a literature, and a language. Hubert Devonish in his essay, 'Language Planning in Pidgins and Creoles'<sup>212</sup> examines how creoles have functioned within the nationalist discourses of the Caribbean and Indian ocean regions. In the case of Jamaica he argues:

For many if not most Jamaicans, Jamaican Creole does function as a symbol of national identity, but widespread doubts exist as to its capacity to function in official domains.<sup>213</sup>

Devonish's statement on the capacity of Creole to function as an official language in the latter stages of the twentieth century, reveals the tension that still exists around the usage of Jamaican Creole. At the time of *New Day's* publication, the belief in Caribbean communities that creoles were inferior to the metropolitan languages was prevalent. Creoles as language, were inextricably linked with slavery and subservience. The metropolitan languages were the domain of social prestige, education and wealth,<sup>214</sup> and in turn traditionally better suited to the production of literary texts. It is within this cultural and linguistic milieu that Reid produces a novel in which the language of narration is a creole<sup>215</sup>, effectively writing against all that Reid's formal education in colonial Jamaica would have taught him.

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<sup>212</sup>Hubert Devonish, "Language Planning in Pidgins and Creoles" *The Handbook of Pidgins and Creole Studies*, eds., Silvia Kouwenberg and John Victor Singler (Chichester, West Sussex; Malden MA: Wiley-Blackwell Publishers, 2008).

<sup>213</sup>Hubert Devonish, 'Language Planning in Pidgins and Creoles', 630.

<sup>214</sup>David Crystal, *Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 336.

<sup>215</sup>Mervyn Morris, "Introduction" in *New Day*.

It is not my intention to suggest that Reid was the first Jamaican writer to feature the creole language in his work. Jamaican poets Claude McKay and Louise Bennett had both used Jamaican Creole extensively before 1949, and Jamaican Creole could be found in West Indian short stories, but this was the first time an author had employed the use of Jamaican Creole throughout an entire novel.<sup>216</sup> Reid's use of Jamaican Creole has been both congratulated and lamented. In *New Day*, when Johnny is caught up in a tropical storm in Part One he states, 'sometimes the sun gets sick and does no' come up out of his sea-bed with morning' and when his brother Manuel catches fish he informs the reader, 'Monday morning, this is, so Manuel will be out with the canoe to see if any fool-fool mullet will mistake cane-bait for pear.' (p.71) In the process of inventing his literary Creole Reid appears to be using Standard English, while in the examples provided, the 'disappearance' of the t in no',<sup>217</sup> signals a common feature of Jamaican Creole. In addition, the use of reduplication of form (fool-fool), is a further signifier with repetition being the most popular kind of reduplication in Jamaican Creole<sup>218</sup>

Sandra Pouchet considers Reid's use of modified Jamaican Creole as 'pioneering'<sup>219</sup>, but for the critic Louis James, the creole used by Reid, 'cuts it off from the variation, the acerbity, the vigour that exists in the spoken word'<sup>220</sup>. James continues further stating that '[t]he rhythms become monotonous, the insistent emotion can veer into sentimentality.'<sup>221</sup> I do not dismiss James' observations on Reid's use of the creole language outright. It is evident that as a modified version of Jamaican Creole, the language deployed in Reid's writing does not always represent the exact sounds of the language. The rhythm of his sentences can at times appear stilted.<sup>222</sup> In part this is due to

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<sup>216</sup>Mervyn Morris, "Introduction" in *New Day*.

<sup>217</sup>Martin Mordecai and Pamela Mordecai, *Culture and Customs of Jamaica*, (Westport, Conn; London: Greenwood Press, 2001), 77.

<sup>218</sup>M. Mordecai and P. Mordecai, 80.

<sup>219</sup>Sandra Pouchet, 'The Fifties' *West Indian Literature*, ed., Bruce King (London: Macmillan, 1995), 53.

<sup>220</sup>Louis James, ed., *The Islands in Between*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 65.

<sup>221</sup>Louis James, 66.

<sup>222</sup>Mervyn Morris, "Introduction" in *New Day*.

Reid's decision to infuse Standard English with the idioms of rural Jamaica as the following extract shows:

The sea-breeze is putting anger-marks on the face of the bay. It is October month, and all over Salt Savannah silver arrows wave above our cane-field to say the juice is ripe. (p.11)

Maureen Warner-Lewis discerns a conflict at the heart of Reid's attempt to capture the language of the Jamaican population. She points to his desire to create a language that locates the 'narrative voice with the intimacy and experimental authority suggested by the vernacular' whilst simultaneously creating a literature that uses 'Standard English' to 'ensure international access'.<sup>223</sup> This, argues Warner-Lewis, results in a false composite which includes a 'blend of Jamaican Creole Structures [...] Burn's Scots English and Synge's Irish English'<sup>224</sup> in addition to Biblical references pointing to the dominant literary influence of the Jamaican population.<sup>225</sup> Building on Warner-Lewis' argument, I suggest that the conflict at the heart of Reid's linguistic experiment is also evident in the subject matter of his fiction. For Reid is torn in his attempt at bridging the gap between the cultural and linguistic representation of the rural and urban classes of Jamaican society in the novel form.

Significantly, *New Day* is also a rejection of the earlier Anglophone novels of the 1930s where Standard English was deployed for the narrative voice of the educated classes and Creole speech was used to indicate that the character was black and poor.<sup>226</sup> In Reid's novel the entire social stratum of Jamaica uses Creole. Furthermore, it is both a private and public language and one capable of expressing the political and intellectual will of the people. His experimental literary Creole is used to capture and showcase the rhythms of the ordinary and monumental experiences of the Jamaican

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<sup>223</sup>Maureen Warner-Lewis, "Language use in West Indian Literature" in A. James Arnold, ed., *History of Literature in the Caribbean: Volume 2 English- and Dutch- Speaking Region*, (Amsterdam: J Benjamins, 2001), 30.

<sup>224</sup>Warner-Lewis, 'Language use in West Indian Literature', 30.

<sup>225</sup>Warner-Lewis, 'Language use in West Indian Literature', 30.

<sup>226</sup>Warner-Lewis, 'Language use in West Indian Literature', 26.

people. This, I suggest, is what makes *New Day* pioneering and central in the development of Caribbean literary modernity.

The issues surrounding Reid's use of Jamaican Creole points to a larger problem faced by writers in the Anglophone and Francophone region. The absence of any comprehensive knowledge of the indigenous languages in existence prior to the arrival of the Conquistadors, has proved problematic for the writers when choosing an 'authentic' language in which to represent the creolised population. This has been further compounded by the loss of the African languages belonging to the slaves, and the process of assimilation into the English and French languages by African slaves and indentured labourers from South East Asia and the Middle East.

The linguist, George Lang, in his analysis of the creole languages states that 'there is something baroque in the profusion of creoles and in their entwisted irregularity.'<sup>227</sup> Lang's work reveals the existence of multiple varieties of maritime dialects which directly influenced the linguistic development of the region:

In the sixteenth and seventeenth century the Caribbean basin and its peripheral continental fringes were chaotic, quintessentially babelic [...] The colonisers, even of a given colonial power, spoke a variety of dialects. Nautical or maritime varieties of Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, English and French were the media of colonization, not the canonical dialects frozen and preserved in public documents and high literary works.<sup>228</sup>

Out of this linguistic chaos emerges the variety of Creole languages spoken amongst the different populations of the Caribbean. The tension that exists between the Creole languages and the languages of the former colonisers has created for Caribbean writers what Lang has termed a 'diglossic dilemma'. The writers function within a society where two or more language varieties coexist, as Lang explains:

The high variety is widely used in education, administration, legal contexts, and public or formal situations. Low or vernacular varieties

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<sup>227</sup>George Lang, *Entwisted Tongues: Comparative Creole Literatures* (Amsterdam; Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000), 70.

<sup>228</sup>Lang, 73.

are mostly oral, the voice of the everyday experience: private, informal, domestic and intimate.<sup>229</sup>

The dilemma for Caribbean writers lies in choosing which language to use, to best express the fictional creole collective. The use of Creole within Reid's novel poses problems not only for international readers, but also creates a significant barrier for a Caribbean readership, as the majority of the populations in both the Anglophone and francophone regions cannot read the basilectal (deepest) creoles and for the most part undertake their education within a system where lessons are taught in either French or English. To use a language other than creole, as Lang observes, 'puts the latter on a slippery slope of assimilation and extinction.'<sup>230</sup>

The relationship between the French language and Creole is different in Martinique and Guadeloupe, to the relationship between the English language and Creole in Jamaica. Nonetheless, it is worth considering Glissant's view on this issue. Glissant maintains, not least because he is both a novelist and a theorist that 'it is not a matter of creolizing French', but rather writers must consider 'exploring the responsible use (the creative exercise) that Martinicans can make of it.'<sup>231</sup> I suggest that Reid's project was similar: in choosing to use a modified version of Jamaican Creole, and highlighting its potential as a literary language, Reid legitimises and develops a space in which to create a distinctly Anglophone Caribbean novel. *New Day* attempts, not always successfully, to explore the limits of Jamaican Creole as a literary language, whilst all the while valorising the language of the collective as a means of subverting the official historical and cultural narrative.

The use of Jamaican Creole in *New Day* allows Reid to signal to his readership that they are not simply reading a novel, but are privy to the kind of performance with which they are already familiar. That is to say, they are the audience of an oral tale. In Part One, Johnny continuously uses the

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<sup>229</sup>Lang, 143.

<sup>230</sup>Lang, 143.

<sup>231</sup>Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 190.

phrase 'Jack Mandora', which refers to the telling of the folk tales, especially those of Ananse the spider. In particular, Jack Mandora, signals the use of a narrative device common in the delivery of the oral tales in the Anglophone Caribbean. Creolist Jean D'Costa who has written extensively on Jamaican oral literature and the 'remaking' of the Ananse figure in the Caribbean explains the relevance of the phrase 'Jack Mandora':

The African spider-god became the cunning hero of survival in the tales of creole society [...] The West African genre was remade so as to mirror Jamaican experience. Its dramatic and interactive nature remained, but it created characterisations drawn from plantation slavery and even developed a special formula used to mark the end of the tale. "Jack Mandora, me no choose none!" The narrator's exclamation rejects responsibility for the actions of the hero [...] and for the doings of the plot.<sup>232</sup>

The inclusion of the term 'Jack Mandora' enables Reid to signal the presence of the tale and the storyteller within the novel. It also performs the task of archiving the creole language. The phrase 'Jack Mandora' not only reflects the colloquial language of the rural nineteenth century Jamaican community, it contains the history of Jamaican Creole itself. In subtle ways Reid signals the process of linguistic and cultural creolisation that has taken place within Jamaica and the wider Anglophone Caribbean. My argument here is that by inscribing this process within the novel, Reid presents to the Jamaican and Anglophone readership, the nuances of their history.

As I noted previously the verbal composition of Reid's sentences uses repetitions and Jamaican rhythms reminiscent of the oral storyteller. Johnny speaks to his audience, engaging them in a dialogue concerning a number of popular cultural practices familiar to rural Jamaica. He asks:

You know how to play-crab-race? Down on the beach where the mangrove bushes are which never wet feet but at high tide, you find the holes of the little brown deaf-ears land-crab. It is easy to catch them, for they never hear you until you are right down on them. (p.40)

Similarly, when talking about mangoes he states:

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<sup>232</sup>Jean D'Costa and Barbara Lalla, *Language in Exile: Three Hundred Years of Jamaican Creole*, (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1990), 669.

You know how you eat *Number Eleven*?<sup>233</sup> Listen to me. You must find a smooth stone, then take Bro' *Number Eleven* and rub him and pound him until he is soft as pap. Pinch his top with your front teeth, making a little hole. (p.58)

Reid's use of Jamaican Creole as a literary creole in the above quotes and throughout the text enables him to record what Glissant calls the concealed realities of the everyday<sup>234</sup> so often missing from the official accounts, yet simultaneously a feature of the literature. *New Day* locates the voiceless collective and places them at the centre of pivotal socio-political movements and moments within Jamaican history. By this means, the use of Jamaican Creole in *New Day* symbolises a move away from a metropolitan-centred idea of what it means to write history and literature. In locating a place in modern Caribbean literature for the storyteller or the Griot, as the figure is known in the Anglophone and Francophone region, Reid signals the continuation of the key role that the Griot and oral language plays in the preservation and dissemination of the collective history of the community. In creating a literary Creole language and forcibly moulding it to fit within the structure of the novel, Reid deploys a literary language that proves problematic and as I have pointed out, above, one that appears static and strained. Reid's literary creole I suggest, presents the translated realities of his creolised community. In his struggle to create a literary language that best describes the complex and 'interlocking histories and cultures'<sup>235</sup> of people who 'belong at one and the same time'<sup>236</sup> to several histories, Reid creates a literary language that signals the beginning of Caribbean literary modernity in the Anglophone Caribbean.

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<sup>233</sup>Number Eleven mangoes are a local delicacy. As with the human population of the Caribbean islands, flora and fauna moved across the oceans and were part of the transatlantic trade. In 1782 HMS Flora captured a French ship sailing from Mauritius, carrying a collection of named and numbered plants, including a collection of young mango trees. The ship was taken as a prize to Jamaica, where the trees were planted. All the numbers became mixed up or lost apart from one mango tree which bore the label Number Eleven, which flourished and became a lucrative export. The mango keeps its name to this day. For further information see Kew Archives at, [www.kew.org.uk](http://www.kew.org.uk).

<sup>234</sup>Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 19-20.

<sup>235</sup>Hall, 'Fundamentalism, Diaspora and Hybridity', 310.

<sup>236</sup>Hall, 'Fundamentalism, Diaspora and Hybridity', 310.



### **Locating the modern day Griot in *New Day***

In *New Day* Johnny Campbell becomes the modern day Griot and in Part One, the story which he relays to the reader is made up almost exclusively of things that he has heard or experienced himself. The written text is mistrusted and the uneasiness between the community and the written word is made clear from the outset of the novel, with the announcement of the 'Queen's Advice'(p.8). As the economic hardship worsens, a petition is sent to Queen Victoria informing her of the difficulties faced in Jamaica by her subjects. In response, the Queen informs the community that they must on their own 'merits and efforts' advance their cause and overcome their difficulties. The people of St Thomas are doubtful that the Queen would betray them in this way, and suspect that their petition has been tampered with. The corrupted response becomes a symbol for the dangers inherent within the written text.

Knowledge transmitted through the written word occurs only once in the novel without it arousing suspicion and this is when Johnny informs the reader that his brother 'Davie knows enough-plenty of our island's history what he has got from books at Stoney Gut' (p.55). The history taught at the school which Johnny attends is also approached with caution. Thus Mr. M'Donald informs his pupils that:

If the people of the United States of America had obeyed the dictates of His Gracious Majesty, King George III, today they would still be children of the Mother Country, enjoying the wonderful privilege and safety which lies in being a member of the vast British Empire. (p.73)

Davie warns Johnny that this history is a reflection of the buckra government's imperialist agenda. The dissemination of history we encounter elsewhere in Part One, it is transmitted verbally through Davie, who provides Johnny with the recent history of the island:

He knows all about Tackey's insurrection at Port Maria. 1760 that was. He knows all about the Maroon War o' Ninety-Six. Great tales he can tell of the march o' five thousand soldiermen on Trelawney Town [...] and listening with all o'my ears to tales of the Spanish occupation and the war with France, and of Admiral Nelson at Port Royal. (p.55)

Furthermore, Johnny's knowledge of history extends to the wider Caribbean:

He talks of how the English put red coats on the backs of their slaves and took them to fight in the War o' Independence. He talks o' the war in Haiti, and I hear of Bro' L'Overture and his republic [...] he talks o' the black redcoats what the English soldiermen who were a-fight 'gainst France for their liberty. (p.56)

In addition to the histories of wars and revolutions, Johnny informs the reader of the local history which includes descriptions of the island's topography, the childhood games he plays with his friends, the types of food he eats and the local customs of his community. Notably, Johnny's rendering of the fictionalised historical accounts of Jamaican history stands in stark contrast to the official historical documents produced during the nineteenth century. For example, the British historians of the period such as James Anthony Froude<sup>237</sup> were continuing a tradition of historical writing in the Caribbean which had started two hundred years earlier. One in which the subjectivities of the black Caribbean population were distorted and misconstrued. The European settler society much like the Conquistadors recorded their observations of life in the Americas in texts such as, Pere du Tertre's *Histoire generale de Antilles*<sup>238</sup> published between 1654, and Pere Labat's *Nouveaux Voyages aux Iles d'Amerique*<sup>239</sup> published in 1722. These early historical accounts provided information concerning the societal structures of early settler communities. By the eighteenth century the planter class were firmly established and according to Wilson-Tagoe, this gave rise to 'the planter historian who was 'conscious of the distinctiveness of his society but, ironically aware of the metropolis as the bigger, more real world.'<sup>240</sup> Crucially, the distinctive Caribbean society portrayed in the writings of the planter historians either excluded the realities of the slave

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<sup>237</sup>Froude, *The English in the West Indies; or the Bow of Ulysses*.

<sup>238</sup>Jean Baptiste Du Tertre, 'Histoire generale des isles de S. Christophe, de la Guadeloupe, de la Martinique et autres dans l'Amerique', (Paris: Chez Jacques Langlois et Emmanuel, 1654).

<sup>239</sup>Jean Baptiste Labat, 'The Memoirs of Pere Labat 1693-1705', trans. and abridged (from *Nouveaux Voyages aux iles d'amerique*) by John Eaden, (London: Constable and Co., 1933).

<sup>240</sup>Wilson-Tagoe, 17.

population and the free blacks or they presented distorted images.<sup>241</sup> It is to this reality that two centuries after the rise of the planter historian, Reid attempts to redress by underscoring this historical absence through his fictional account of the Morant Bay Rebellion.

Considering Reid's 'redressing project' it is intriguing about *New Day* is that Reid does not place greater emphasis on the oral tradition, even as he highlights the scepticism required in relation to the act of writing. Reid acknowledges the detrimental effect of the written word and its legacy of distortion and misrepresentation within the region. In having Davie read about Jamaican history in the text books found at Stoney Gut, he insists on the necessity for both literary and oral forms in the dissemination of Jamaican history and culture, including the novel. Reid's local knowledge of history both counters and informs Western historiography. Hyacinth M. Simpson touches upon this issue in relation to the work of Olive Senior. She writes:

The affirmation of the oral signals a valid practice of literary creolisation, in which the oral culture of the folk and European scribal traditions are equally acknowledged, among the complex structures that make up West Indian experience, as literary parents/influences for the modern West Indian writer.<sup>242</sup>

Simpson's argument points to a creolising of the oral practices of their African heritage with the scribal tradition of Western Europe, which played a seminal role in defining the region. At the same time, whilst Reid's text contains the oral form, it cannot be interpreted as oral literature, since as Ruth Finnegan explains when writing of oral literature in Africa, 'oral literature is by definition dependent on a performer who formulates it in words on a specific occasion.' There exists in written literature, Finnegan continues, 'a distinction between the actual creation of a literary form and its

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<sup>241</sup>Gordon K. Lewis, observes that popular legends of the seventeenth century romanticised voyages to the Americas. Wondrous tales misinterpreted the geography and the culture of the region reporting sightings of cannibals and golden cities. These distortions according to Lewis did not die out in the eighteenth century and they can still be seen in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in the form of advertisements relating to the tourist trade. See Gordon K. Lewis, *Main Currents in Caribbean Thought*, 1-29.

<sup>242</sup>Hyacinth M. Simpson, "Voicing the Text": The Making of an Oral Poetics in Olive Senior's Short Fiction" *Callaloo*, 27 (2004): 831.

further transmission.<sup>243</sup> In relation to the Caribbean context I argue that what we find in Part One of Reid's text is not oral literature but rather what Glissant has called the 'oralization of the written, an 'oraliture'<sup>244</sup> that contains the rhythm of the folktale.<sup>245</sup> Importantly, it is a particularised oralization of the written that recognises and incorporates the diverse and far ranging influences that have impacted on the cultural development of the wider Caribbean.

The historical narratives of Reid's text, both grand and small, are unmistakably masculine. The female characters, such as Ma Tamah, Johnny Campbell's mother, and Davie's wife Lucille Dubois, are in the main, powerless and voiceless figures. Ma Tamah obediently complies with her husband's commands, and whilst Johnny provides the reader with descriptions of his mother's cooking, and of the household chores she performs, interaction between mother and son is limited. The reader learns little of Ma Tamah's thoughts or reactions to the rebellion taking place, even though her husband and sons are central to the actions of the uprising.

The character of Lucille Dubois is more fully developed in relation to Ma Tamah, but even she is portrayed as the stereotypically beautiful but fragile mulatress. We learn that Lucille Dubois is versed in revolutions; she is the Jamaican daughter of a Haitian creole as she informs us in Part One, 'my grandparents were with Toussaint L'Ouverture and took part in the fight for freedom.' (62) She believes in the rebellion and stands by Davie's side as he fights in the revolt, eventually escaping with Davie and Johnny to the small island of Morant Cays. Nevertheless, I argue that this is not an equal partnership, as Lucille herself makes clear when she describes her position in the relationship as one of servitude. She informs Johnny, that Davie 'is not my husband. He is my overseer.' (p.211) Davie, in the wake of emancipation has assumed the position of the overseer, the figure who in the days of slavery managed the slaves in the sugar cane plantations. This problematic

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<sup>243</sup>Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 2.

<sup>244</sup>Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 244.

<sup>245</sup>Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 245.

relationship points to the underdevelopment of female characters and the lack of information in Reid's text concerning the conditions faced by them. I argue, further that this reflects a larger problem; namely, a historiographic absenteeism of Caribbean women in the literary and historiographical development of the region.

The testimonies relating to the experiences faced by Caribbean women in the Americas are few and far between, and when documentary evidence is located, according to Bridget Brereton, it is normally generated by men. She contends that:

Whether one relies on official records of different kinds, newspapers and periodicals, correspondence and other materials produced by private citizens, missionaries or travellers, or published accounts by residents and visitors, the sources are mostly written by men.<sup>246</sup>

Similarly Elizabeth Betty Wilson writing on the relationship between Francophone Caribbean women and their historical representation notes that these male orientated accounts provide us with little knowledge. She states:

Even when official history, literary history, or political or sociological essays included the woman, it was often to stereotype and to condemn her, or, in the case of the Caribbean woman, to exoticize her. It is left largely to women writers to engage with History, with a capital H, to right/write the balance, as far as the Francophone Caribbean is concerned.<sup>247</sup>

In Wilson's view it is up to the Caribbean woman to piece together her individual and collective narrative. Re-righting/writing the balance is one of the primary objectives of Schwarz-Bart's novel *The Bridge of Beyond*. In the following section, I wish to examine Schwarz-Bart's representation of Caribbean women. I pay specific attention to the literary strategies she employs, in particular her use of autobiography and the testimonial, to convey Francophone history.

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<sup>246</sup>Bridget Brereton, 'Text, Testimony and Gender: An Examination of some Texts by Women on the English-speaking Caribbean from the 1770s to the 1920s' in Verene Shepherd et al, *Engendering History*, (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers; London: James Currey Publishers, 1995), 63.

<sup>247</sup>Betty Wilson, 'Francophone Writers and/in History' in Moira Inghilleri, ed., *Swinging Her Breasts at History*, (London: Mango Publishing, 2006), 19.

## Congo Cane and Red Canna: Reinscribing Caribbean Woman

First published in 1972, twenty-three years after Reid's *New Day*, Schwarz-Bart's *The Bridge of Beyond* retraces the dynastic histories of four generations of the Lougandor family. Divided into two sections, the text opens in the period just after the emancipation of slavery in the French Caribbean in 1848, and closes in the mid-twentieth century, with the arrival of electricity, tarred roads and 'cars going over the Bridge of Beyond.'(p.172) When Schwarz-Bart's text was first published, it was criticised for its lack of political awareness. Francophone critic Celia Britton observes that Schwarz-Bart's depiction of Antillean society was attacked by Marxist critics for being 'depoliticized and defeatist, for ignoring the social and historical determinants of the reality which it depicted as timeless and irremediable'.<sup>248</sup> Furthermore, *The Bridge of Beyond's* main protagonist remains 'relatively privileged and alienated from the community of cane cutters.'<sup>249</sup>

Yet, far from ignoring the social and historical determinants of its rural Guadeloupean reality, I argue that Schwarz-Bart's text skilfully gives voice to the experiences of a diverse range of Guadeloupean women, who have often been left on the margins of both historical and literary writing. *The Bridge of Beyond* rejects the grand historical narratives in favour of the ordinary, and the personal historical tales of her characters.<sup>250</sup> By centring the private and intimate realities of the female characters, Schwarz-Bart relocates the gendered creolised experience from the historical margins to the nucleus of Caribbean experience in the Americas. In doing so, I would argue, she constructs a highly politicised novel that gives voice to a post-slavery and gendered experience of Caribbean modernity.

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<sup>248</sup>Celia Britton, *The Sense of Community in French Caribbean Fiction*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 55.

<sup>249</sup>Britton, *The Sense of Community in French Caribbean Fiction*, 55.

<sup>250</sup>Mireille Rosello, *Littérature et identité créole aux Antilles*, (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 1992).

The story of the Lougandors is relayed to us in the space of a day,<sup>251</sup> as the aged protagonist Telumee Miracle stands in her garden, looking back over life. Indira Karamcheti in her essay on *The Bridge of Beyond* observes that through the character of Telumee, Schwarz-Bart makes 'time elastic' and in doing so is able to connect Telumee to 'the generations of Lougandor women, the history of slavery and [to her] African heritage.'<sup>252</sup> Written in the first person and delivered in the style of an autobiography, Schwarz-Bart's novel sets out to narrate the quest of Telumee's, her family's and the community's historical experiences. The quest motif is not exclusive to Schwarz-Bart's *The Bridge of Beyond*. Within the region, the publication of Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour pays natal*, in 1949, marks the beginnings of Francophone literary pre-occupation with the quest for an Antillean identity and history.<sup>253</sup> What makes Schwarz-Bart's novel intriguing for this inquiry is that unlike Césaire or fellow Guadeloupean writer Maryse Condé, her quest does not involve epic journeys. Kitzie McKinney, in her reading of the novel finds a peculiarity in Schwarz-Bart's use of the quest motif. She points to the sequential narrative movement present in standard quest literature and notes its absence in *The Bridge of Beyond*. Telumee's life as McKinney observes, 'does not contain grandiose adventures [...] or any of the grand traditional thematic trappings of quest literature [...] This is, in short, a quest that moves full circle without ever leaving its point of departure.'<sup>254</sup> McKinney rightly highlights that rather than moving from one stage to another, Schwarz-Bart's heroine stands still.

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<sup>251</sup>Abena P.A. Busia, 'This Gift of Metaphor. Symbolic Strategies and the Triumph of Survival in Simone Schwarz-Bart's *The Bridge of Beyond*, in Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory-Fido, eds., *Out of the Kumbia: Caribbean Women and Literature*, (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1990), 301.

<sup>252</sup>Indira Karamcheti, 'The Geographics of Marginality: Place and Textuality in Simone Schwarz-Bart and Anita Desai' in Margaret R. Higonnet and Joan Templeton, eds., *Reconfigured Spheres: Feminist Explorations of Literary Space*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 134.

<sup>253</sup>Sam Haigh, *Mapping a Tradition: Francophone Women's Writing from Guadeloupe*, (London: Maney Publishing for the Modern Humanities Research Association, 2000), 56.

<sup>254</sup>Kitzie McKinney, 'Second Vision: Antillean Versions of the Quest in Two Novels by Simone Schwarz-Bart', *The French Review*, 4, 62, (Winter 1989), 651.

If Schwarz-Bart's text fits awkwardly into the mould of the standard literary quest, it is perhaps because as Renee Larrier argues, it is not a quest at all. Whilst the story does adopt quest motifs, for Larrier, 'it is a woman's initiation tale that involves a journey and has many trials'.<sup>255</sup> This point is reinforced by Karamcheti, who notes that 'in fact during the course of the novel, she [Telumee] does not move at all from her garden, for the entire text takes place within her mind'.<sup>256</sup> Drawing on Larrier and Karamcheti's observations, I suggest that Schwarz-Bart's tale is more concerned with the small journeys, the repetitive cyclical journeys of generations of Guadeloupean women, which have taken place in and amongst the small villages of Guadeloupe. These journeys that are not recorded in books and nor are they stored in national archives. Rather they are located in the memories of these women, and it is to their memories that Schwarz-Bart turns in *The Bridge of Beyond*.

Employing memory as a central literary device enables Schwarz-Bart to present a fluid, mobile and multi-layered<sup>257</sup> representation of the experiences of Caribbean women. As Glissant points out, memory functions as a mechanism through which to explore Caribbean temporality in light of the region's fragmented historiography. Glissant notes that memory in the region is not measured by 'a calendar memory' as 'our experience of time does not keep company with the rhythms of month and year alone, it is aggravated by the void, the final sentence of the plantation'.<sup>258</sup> Read within this framework, time in the Americas is distorted and ruptured by the horrors of the plantation. Yet as Glissant highlights, a process of diffusion takes place where the roots and connections of lost histories can only be re-collated through memory. I suggest that Schwarz-Bart's fiction mimics this process of collection and Telumee is forced to gather the individual and collective memories of her community.

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<sup>255</sup>Renée Larrier, *Francophone Women Writers of Africa and the Caribbean*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 57.

<sup>256</sup>Karamcheti, 134.

<sup>257</sup>Mary Chamberlain, 'Gender and Memory: Oral History and Women's History' in *Engendering History, Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective*, 106.

<sup>258</sup>Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 72.



As with Reid's *New Day*, the history presented to us in *The Bridge of Beyond* is a series of memories, recounted by an ageing protagonist. Telumee, the narrator of the tale, exists in a time frame that consists of one afternoon; the point at which she tells us her story. The memories that she relays within the tale belong not only to her but to a number of different characters, and exist within the boundaries of a fragmented chronology. The reader learns of Queen Without a Name's childhood, via Telumee's mother's recollections 'When I was a child my mother, Victory, often talked to me about my grandmother Toussine.'(p.2) When Telumee informs the reader of her second husband Amboise's life, it is through the recollections that he has presented to her, 'and that was how, he told me with amusement, he got the idea of going to France.' (p.149) Even Telumee has to rely on the memories of others to piece together her experiences. When she leaves her abusive first husband Elie, she suffers a nervous breakdown, and can only piece together the sequence of events with the help of her community's recollections, 'I have no memories of the days that followed. I learned later that I was found next morning sitting on a stone.' (114)

I wish to highlight that Schwarz-Bart does not romanticise the notion of the collective and their relationship with memory. Instead she presents a highly complex interdependence between the collective and the individual. Britton who explores the relationship between the individual and the collective in *The Bridge of Beyond* notes:

Telumee's independence is indeed prominent throughout her narration[...] she does little to help the community as a whole [...] Conversely, the community helps and supports her at times. But her dominant characteristic is her very strong sense of her *individual* identity [...] *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* is a deceptively rich and complex text[...] *Télumée's* relation to the community is far more important than a superficial reading might suggest; but it is not straightforward at all.<sup>259</sup>

Personal memory belongs to the individual, but in a society whose histories are fragmented and disputed, such as the fictional community in *The Bridge of Beyond*, the boundaries between the collective and the individual are

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<sup>259</sup>Britton, 55.

porous. As Schwarz-Bart highlights, in order to complete the tale, they must share each other's recollections.

As well as sharing memories, the community in the *The Bridge of Beyond* share their stories, proverbs and songs amongst family members and the wider community. The stories, whilst connected to factual events, focus more closely on the intimate survival strategies deployed by Caribbean women. It is Telumee's grandmother, Queen Without a Name, who teaches her grandchild the art of oral storytelling. As shown in Reid's *New Day*, the realm of the storyteller is not gender exclusive, and the role of the griot is occupied by both men and women. Anim-Addo suggests that whilst the historic role of the storyteller has been gender-neutral, the development of family and social patterns during slavery, 'has served to drive storytelling into the private domestic space.'<sup>260</sup> As a result of this, the role of storytelling in the writing of Caribbean women has been ascribed to the 'elder African-Caribbean woman, the grandmother figures.'<sup>261</sup> In *The Bridge of Beyond*, Telumee informs the reader that her grandmother:

was conscious of her words, her phrases, and possessed the art of arranging them in images and sounds, in pure music [...] The stories were ranged inside her like pages of a book. (p.48)

and in addition to these stories, Telumee listens to her grandmother's songs:

She would give a delicate rendering of slow muzurkas, waltzes, and beguines [...] She sang 'Yaya', 'Ti-Rose Congo', 'Agoulou' [...] She knew old slave songs, too. (p.31)

Queen Without a Name's storytelling sessions, along with the songs and proverbs that she imparts to Telumee, function at one level as entertainment. As Telumee grows older, she understands that her grandmother's tales contain cautionary lessons about life outside the safety of her childhood home. They are narratives which teach her how to overcome adversity.

As with the tales, the songs and proverbs function as more than performance. The Mazurkas sung by Queen Without a Name is a Polish folk

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<sup>260</sup> Anim-Addo, *Touching The Body*, 143.

<sup>261</sup> Anim-Addo, *Touching The Body*, 143.

dance in origin, which spread throughout Western Europe in the eighteenth century, and transported to the Americas thereafter.<sup>262</sup> Likewise the Beguine is a fusion of French ballroom dance and the African music of the slave populations of Guadeloupe and Martinique.<sup>263</sup> In singing the traditional songs to her grandchild, Queen Without a Name performs the task of transmitting the processes of cultural creolisation which has taken place within the region. In the absence of archival material, histories of the region are located in a range of artefacts; both lived and static. The tales and their historical narratives as we have seen are remembered and performed. In *The Bridge of Beyond*, the songs, proverbs and tales are not simply passed on, they are, as Caribbean critic Clarisse Zimra notes 'passed on, passed down and passed up.'<sup>264</sup> I suggest that this particular trajectory, which avoids hierarchical and linear chronology, provides the creative space in which to reclaim the memories and marginalised tales of the Caribbean woman's historical experience. Moreover the movement from a linear and empirically based chronology emphasises Helene Cixous' observation that 'history is always in several places at once, there are always several histories underway.'<sup>265</sup> The different memories, tales, song and proverbs that Telumee has to collect attests to this fact and challenges the historical absenteeism not only in the historical narratives but also the literary texts from region.

As I have been arguing, Schwarz-Bart's text does not simply give voice to this historical experience; it also attempts to relocate Caribbean women in the historical discourse. Part One of *The Bridge of Beyond* begins in the realm of myth, with an introduction to Telumee's great-grandparents, Minerva and Xango. Minvera's name, and the dignity and wisdom that she

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<sup>262</sup>Don Michael Randel, *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 495.

<sup>263</sup>Bill Marshal, ed. assisted by Cristina Johnston, *France and the Americas: Culture, Politics and History: A multi-disciplinary encyclopaedia*, (Santa Barbara, California; Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 142.

<sup>264</sup>Clarisse Zimra, 'Righting the Calabash: Writing History in the Female Francophone Narrative' in *Out of the Kumbia: Caribbean Women and Literature*, eds. Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory-Fido (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1990), 156.

<sup>265</sup>Helen Cixous and Catherine Clement, *The New-Born Woman*, trans. Betsy Wing, introduction by Sandra Gilbert, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 160

shows in her actions towards the community, invokes the image of the Roman Goddess Minerva. In addition to being a warrior, Minerva was also connected with 'women's lives, especially domestic work.'<sup>266</sup> Her husband Xango, is named after the god of thunder in Yoruba mythology, and as with Minerva, he too is a venerated hero and warrior. The use of Ancient European mythology signals a reversing of a particular cultural practice prevalent during slavery, which involved the renaming of African slaves. Once in the Americas, newly arrived slaves were at times provided with simple classical names, such as Caesar, Pompey and Jupiter.<sup>267</sup> Elizabeth Betty Wilson, interprets Schwarz-Bart's use of classical European names as an act of subversion. She writes:

Schwarz-Bart inverts and subverts the common practice of giving slaves "mock heroic names" with Greek or Latin resonances and invests her characters with genuine heroism.<sup>268</sup>

Extending this I argue that in addition to subverting the process of renaming African slaves, Schwarz-Bart creolises Ancient European and African mythology to signal the birth of the Lougandor genealogy, and in doing so makes reference to the Caribbean's creolised past. Fundamental to this lineage, is the placing of Caribbean women at its centre, and in turn, at the centre of Caribbean history.

Unlike Reid's *New Day*, Schwarz-Bart's *The Bridge of Beyond*, does not provide the reader with specific historical dates yet, the factual history of Guadeloupe runs subtly throughout the text. Chapter One opens with Minerva moving away from the sugar plantations to the village of L'Abandonee, after gaining her freedom, following the abolition of slavery on the French owned islands. Minerva's journey to L'Abandonee mirrors the mass exodus of many freed slaves in Guadeloupe, and the wider Caribbean

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<sup>266</sup>Scott. C Littleton, *Gods, Goddesses, and Mythology*, (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 2005), 881.

<sup>267</sup>James Walvin, *Questioning Slavery*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 52.

<sup>268</sup>Elizabeth Betty Wilson, 'History and Memory in un Plat de Porc Aux Bananes Vertes and Pluie et Vent Sur Telumee Miracle' *Callaloo*, 15 (1992), 286.

after the emancipation of slavery.<sup>269</sup> The hardships faced by Minerva and the other characters are a reflection of the factual conditions in Guadeloupe during the mid nineteenth century. The abolition of the slave trade created a new form of oppression, since planters continued to monopolise the best lands, and in an effort to keep labour cheap they introduced new laws designed to immobilise the migration of former slaves.<sup>270</sup> Schwarz-Bart weaves this factual history into the narrative of her text as the reader is informed of 'wanderers seeking refuge' (p.2) and of the many who 'would not settle anywhere permanently for fear the old days might return' (p.2).

As the tale develops and moves into the late nineteenth century, Schwarz-Bart once again artfully signals this temporal movement. Between 1884-5 the price of sugar collapsed on the European markets, badly affecting the French colonies. In turn social unrest in the form of strikes, wage demands, and riots created tension on the island.<sup>271</sup> The strikes and the death of Telumee's second partner, Amboise is a reference to this particular turbulent point in Guadeloupe's history. The reader learns that:

strange rumours circulated throughout the countryside [...] It was said the cutters at Grand-Terre had gone on strike, led by some bold Negroes [...] The price of food had risen steeply in the last few years [...] The shops had closed their credit books long ago, and the people who worked in the cane fields grew exhausted. (p.153)

In *The Bridge of Beyond*, public history intersects and forms the backdrop to individual and family memory.<sup>272</sup> Wilson-Tagoe sees a similarity in the ways that Schwarz-Bart and Reid approach history in their work. They both, according to Wilson-Tagoe, connect personal and familial history, with the social history of their respective islands. Whilst Schwarz-Bart is interested in exploring the geographical and matriarchal space, Reid's overt political themes are exclusively patriarchal in its perspective and concern.

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<sup>269</sup>Frank Moya Pons, *History of the Caribbean: Plantations, Trade and War in the Atlantic World*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Marcus Weiner; London: Eurospan, 2007), 218.

<sup>270</sup>Moya Pons, 218.

<sup>271</sup>Oruno D. Lara, *Space and History in the Caribbean*, trans. Christine Ayorinde, (Princeton, New Jersey: Marcus Wiener Publishers, 2006), 82.

<sup>272</sup>David Paul Nord, "The Uses of Memory: An Introduction" *The Journal of American History*, 85 (1998), 409-410.

Wilson-Tagoe writes that *New Day* is 'essentially a male history that traces West Indian genealogy and history through a male line, virtually excising the voices and impact of women as participants in the process.'<sup>273</sup> I suggest that there are a number of reasons why Schwarz-Bart chooses to explore the geographical and matriarchal space, as a means of creating a permanent record of the historical and political contributions of Guadeloupean women. Firstly, women because of their gender were barred from political participation in the Americas in the nineteenth century.<sup>274</sup> This in part explains their absence from the overt political protests taking place in Guadeloupe during the nineteenth century, both in official history and in Schwarz-Bart's created world. Caribbean women's resistance to slavery in many instances took place within the domestic and matriarchal setting. Official records show that a number of cooks and domestic slaves across the Caribbean region, the majority of which were women, were responsible for poisoning their owners during slavery.<sup>275</sup> In this light, the domestic sphere provided a strategic position from which to exert control over one's survival.

Secondly, the geographical sphere and indeed the Europeanised development of natural history have played a significant role in Caribbean historiography. According to Mary Louise Pratt in her influential text *Imperial Eyes, Travel Writing and Transculturation*<sup>276</sup> the advancement of 'interior exploration' in the Americas led to 'the construction of global scale meaning through the descriptive apparatuses of natural history'.<sup>277</sup> Pratt's argument focuses on the 1735 French expedition to Peru led by the mathematician Louis Godin. The central narrative of this expedition belongs to French naturalist and mathematician Charles-Marie de La Condamine <sup>278</sup>.

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<sup>273</sup>Wilson-Tagoe, 232-233.

<sup>274</sup>Swithin Wilmot, "'Females of Abandoned Character'? Women and Protest in Jamaica, 1838-65" *Engendering History, Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective*, 287.

<sup>275</sup>Bernard Moitt, 'Women, Work and Resistance in the French Caribbean during Slavery, 1700-184' *Engendering History, Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective*, 155.

<sup>276</sup>Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, (London: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>277</sup> Pratt, 16.

<sup>278</sup>Charles Marie de La Condamine, 'A succinct abridgement of a voyage made within the inland parts of South America, from the coasts of the South Sea, to the Coasts of Brazil', (London: 1747).

As Pratt informs us, La Condamine's body of work reflects the role that natural history would play in the future analysis of the region's social, cultural and historical development. La Condamine's corpus, Pratt writes:

Oral texts, written texts, lost texts appropriated, abridged, translated, anthologized, and plagiarized; letters, reports, survival tales, civic description, navigational narrative, monsters and marvels, medicinal treaties, old myths replayed and reversed.<sup>279</sup>

Furthermore Gwen Kirkpatrick in her reading of the scientific and travel expeditions of the eighteenth century sees a direct link between these works and the literary development of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as she writes:

it is unarguable that the form of travel literature and scientific reportage, both in the natural and in the social sciences, had a direct impact on literary formation during the period.<sup>280</sup>

Building on the arguments of Pratt and Kirkpatrick I wish to suggest that the scientific and travel writing about the Caribbean produced in the eighteenth century has had a direct influence – still largely unrecognised – on Caribbean literary development in the twentieth century. Schwarz-Bart is concerned with the task of renaming Guadeloupe's natural history, as a means of reinscribing the Creole/Amerindian culture of the islands. This process of renaming is not simply a task of correcting etymological mistakes, but rather goes to the heart of what it means to (re)construct a creolised identity, from within the Caribbean. If the eighteenth century had belonged, in the words of Mary Louise Pratt, 'to the European observer'<sup>281</sup>, then the twentieth century signalled the arrival of the creolised gaze.

Thirdly, the geographical space has to a certain extent been appropriated by Caribbean male writers and theorists. During the twentieth century, historical and literary writing has tended to interpret the relationship between geography and socio-political development as a male

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<sup>279</sup>Pratt, 23.

<sup>280</sup>Gwen Kirkpatrick, 'Spanish American narrative, 1810-1920' in John King, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Latin American Culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 70.

<sup>281</sup>Pratt, 35-36.

dominated space. In the section below I examine how Schwarz-Bart (re)appropriates the geographical sphere and the ways in which she counters this male dominated space.

### **Caribbean Women and the Construction of post- Slavery Societies**

In *The Bridge of Beyond*, the women of the Lougandor family are constantly on the move. Minerva's flight from the plantations and into the safety of the coastal plains is later mirrored by her daughter Toussine, and granddaughter and narrator, Telumee. Both women move further inland into the deep forests and mountains. The characters are not the only ones to physically move either, Telumee's cabin and home move with her as she informs the reader, 'I have moved my cabin to the east and to the west; east winds and north winds have buffeted and soaked me.' (172). Pascale de Souza writes on the transitory nature of the Lougandor family and states:

Toussine, Tèlumèe's grandmother, first settles in a shack outside the village of L'Abadonèe, then moves into an abandoned Great House away from the villager's gaze and finally lives in thhe last shack abutting the mountain in Fond-Zombi. Victoire, Tèlumèe's mother, raises her daughters just beyond the limits of the village [...] She [Telumee] spends the rest of her life living in various locations.<sup>282</sup>

For de Souza, the continual movement of the Lougandor women is a sign of the complex and at times sinister relationship between Telumee and the wider society of La Fond-Zombi. The Lougandor family with their heritage of strong, individualistic women prefer to live on the margins of the collective, choosing to alienate themselves from the insidious actions of their community. Alternatively, Anim-Addo reads this transient nature within the broader context of the 'legacy of enslavement representative of the experience of black families'. She suggests that Telumee's moving cabin 'is thus a metaphor for the post-Emancipation era and post -slavery survival.'<sup>283</sup> The subtlety employed by Schwarz-Bart in her examination of the slave

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<sup>282</sup>Pascale de Souza, 'Gaudeloupean Literature: Multiple Versions of Creolite' in Kamal Salhi, ed., *Francophone Postcolonial Cultures: Critical Essays*, ed. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books: 2003), 183.

<sup>283</sup>Anim-Addo, *Touching the Body*, 136.



trade and its impact post-1848 is in keeping with the narrative style of *The Bridge of Beyond*. Through the use of metaphors, slavery is alluded to rather than directly referenced, but this subtlety I suggest highlights more than just narrative style. In *The French Atlantic Triangle: Literature and Culture of the Slave Trade*<sup>284</sup> Christopher L. Miller observes that the writers in the francophone Caribbean region unlike their Anglophone and North American counterparts have little in the way of factual information to reference when writing about slavery. He states:

In the English-speaking world, and especially in the United States, the problem of silence is significantly offset by testimonies and narratives, beginning with Equiano's. But in the French the problem is far more serious, for *there are no real slave narratives in French*- not as we know them in the Anglophone Atlantic, not that have yet been discovered.<sup>285</sup>

Miller argues that in the absence of such testimonies, literature became the key component in the inquiry into slavery and its affects.<sup>286</sup> Schwarz-Bart's sophisticated presentation of plantation and post-emancipation Guadeloupean society is more than just a tale. It stands in for a critical analysis of this historic period, and significantly, it assumes a gendered perspective.

*The Bridge of Beyond* opens in the period directly after the emancipation of slavery in Guadeloupe and thus Minerva is the only character to experience slavery directly. But it becomes apparent as the narrative develops, that the destructive effects of the pre-emancipation period are so pervasive, it casts a shadow on all of her descendants. The historical presence of slavery permeates the land, the air, and as I have highlighted earlier, even the songs of Queen Without a Name. The sugar plantations and all that is associated with its brutal mercantilist system of production are never far from the surface of the daily lives of the main protagonists. Although the rural communities have gained their

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<sup>284</sup>Christopher L. Miller, *The French Atlantic Triangle: Literature and Culture of the Slave Trade*, (Durham N.C: Duke University Press, 2008).

<sup>285</sup>Miller, 34.

<sup>286</sup>Miller, x.

independence and have moved away from the cane fields, they are still heavily reliant upon it as a source of income. Try as they might, there is a sense of futility in their attempts to escape from the oppressive grasp of the plantation. They are surrounded, engulfed even, by sugar and all of the historical connotations that it holds. This is perhaps not surprising in light of the economic history of Guadeloupe, which shows that even after emancipation the central factories<sup>287</sup> owned nineteen percent of the island's total area.<sup>288</sup>

In the absence of written words and oral testimonies, Schwarz-Bart turns to the land, itself a silent bearer of and witness to the conflicts of slavery, as a means of excavating the hidden memories. The very names of the villages and towns point to the hardships faced by their inhabitants; L'Abandonée, La Fond-Zombi, and La Folie, conjure up images of wild, deserted territories. La Fond-Zombi in the words of Ileana Rodríguez 'confronts a double darkness, territorial extremes.'<sup>289</sup> When Telumee moves to La Folie she describes the landscape as:

particularly lonely, and when I looked east across the green undulations of the canefields, I saw a kind a of impenetrable barrier of huge mahogany and balata trunks holding back the world and preventing it from reaching me. (p.127)

The geographic extremity of *The Bridge of Beyond* represses the development of the newly emancipated black community, and the reader finds that they are fixed in a cycle of uncertainty. I wish to argue that Schwarz-Bart's characterisation of the movement inland and into the depths of the forest, is pivotal to the process of addressing the absent gendered historical and political narratives of the region. The journey into the interior

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<sup>287</sup>In the post-emancipation Caribbean central factories replaced plantation based factories in a bid to modernise the sugar industry. This resulted in an amalgamation of sugar estates and a period of industrialisation and enhanced production rate. Whilst it signaled the end of the nineteenth century style planter class it did not enhance the economic standing of the black working class. For further information see J.H. Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry: An Historical Geography from its Origins to 1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>288</sup>Bill Albert and Adrian Graves, eds., *Crisis and Change in the International Sugar Economy 1860-191*, (Edinburgh and Norwich: ISC Press, 1984.)

<sup>289</sup>Ileana Rodriguez, *House/Garden/Nation; Space, Gender and Ethnicity in Postcolonial Latin American Literatures by Women*, trans. Robert Carr and Ileana Rodriguez, (Durham N.C.; and London: Duke University Press, 1994), 135.

of the island makes reference to the desire to gain freedom from French colonial rule in the late nineteenth century. It also alludes to a number of earlier attempts by women in Guadeloupe and the wider Caribbean to liberate themselves from slavery. Towards the latter stages of her life narrative, Telumee adopts a young girl named Sonore, to whom she relays the same stories that her grandmother Toussine had narrated to her as a child:

She would sit quiet in my lap by the lamp, listening to me tell old tales [...] and then all the stories of slavery, of hopeless battles, and the lost victories of the woman called Solitude that Grandmother had told me long ago. (p.158)

'The woman called Solitude' is a factual historical figure who was better known as Mulatresse Solitude. Through the private and domestic sphere of the home and the tale, Telumee continues the tradition of transferring the histories relating to historical figures such as Mulatresse Solitude to the younger generation of Guadeloupean women. The reference to Mulatresse Solitude accounts for no more than a line within Schwarz-Bart's entire novel. Yet the relevance of Solitude and Schwarz-Bart's incorporation of her name within the text is central to an understanding of Caribbean women, and their position within the nationalist and creolisation discourses that developed within the region over the past sixty years.

In 1794 the French Assembly passed a decree abolishing slavery in the French colonies. This was subsequently repealed by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802, and slavery was once again reinstated throughout the islands.<sup>290</sup> Martinique had at the time a large Béké population, which meant that it was relatively easy to reinforce slavery,<sup>291</sup> the reaction in Guadeloupe was markedly different. Led by Louis Delgrès, in 1802 three hundred Maroons revolted at Fort Matouba and resisted the French army's attempts to

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<sup>290</sup>Patrick Corcoran, *The Cambridge Introduction to Francophone Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 182.

<sup>291</sup>Sam Haigh, ed., *Introduction to Caribbean Francophone Writing, Guadeloupe and Martinique*, (Oxford: Berg Pres, 1999), 3.

reinstate their control over the area.<sup>292</sup> Mulatresse Solitude was amongst the Maroons and fought alongside Delgrès against the French troops. She was pregnant at the time, but continued to fight and was eventually captured.<sup>293</sup> Allowed to deliver her baby, she was finally executed on 2 November 1802.

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What is important to note here is the position afforded to Louis Delgrès in the Francophone cultural and literary tradition. Zimra observes that Delgrès has been erased from the official narrative of metropolitan dictionaries and texts books, but this absence has resulted in a number of male Antillean writers, such as Daniel Maxim in *L'Isle Soleil* chronicling his resistance to the French forces. In the unofficial version of Guadeloupean history, Louis Delgrès is the hero and focal point of one of the most 'symbolic moments in Guadeloupean history.'<sup>295</sup> Haigh suggests that in the process of presenting a counter-history that can challenge Western historiography, the 'Ancestor-Hero' has become [a] central and 'fundamental'<sup>296</sup> feature of this literary exercise. Yet I contend that in the process of challenging Western historiography both francophone and Anglophone writers have also obscured the role of women within the discourse.

Jamaica, too, has its famous female Maroon, Nanny, and it is interesting to note that Reid does not mention female maroons during his excavation of marginalised male revolutionaries. Reid makes reference to the uprisings at Nanny Town (p.120) but does not provide information on the role of Nanny of the Maroons, the famous woman figure of resistance, and rebel warrior. Although little information exists on Nanny, work has been undertaken by a number of scholars such as Lucille Mathurin Mair, who has

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<sup>292</sup>Anselita Reyes, *Mothering Across Cultures: Postcolonial Representations*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 126.

<sup>293</sup>Alec G. Hargreaves, ed., *Memory, Empire and Colonialism: Legacies of French Colonialism* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2005), 30.

<sup>294</sup>Anselita Reyes, 126.

<sup>295</sup>Micheline Rice-Maxim, 'The Maroon in Guadeloupean Literature' in *A History of Literature in the Caribbean: Volume 1, Hispanic and Francophone Regions*, 16.

<sup>296</sup>Sam Haigh, *Mapping a Tradition: Francophone Women's Writing from Guadeloupe*, 131.

located official records verifying Nanny's existence as the 'civic, military, and religious leader of a free community in the 1730s.'<sup>297</sup> Jenny Sharpe places emphasis on locating Nanny within the discourse of national self identity suggesting that Nanny is a rebel woman bound up with Jamaican national independence.<sup>298</sup> Significantly, Sharpe reads the story of Nanny as a 'story of contending forms of knowledge'. According to Sharpe, Nanny of the Maroons reflects a broader tension between 'written versus oral histories, colonial versus national cultures, institution versus popular ways of knowing.'<sup>299</sup> To this I add, patriarchal versus gendered histories. In *Parole Des Femmes*<sup>300</sup> Maryse Condé comments on the role of women within the liberation struggles before and after the abolition of slavery. She observes that Guadeloupe has Mulatresse Solitude and that Jamaica has Nanny of the Maroons, but that besides these two figures, many more revolutionary women would need to be recovered.<sup>301</sup> I suggest that for this recovery to be meaningful, it must be accompanied by a varied critical discourse that can successfully reconfigure and articulate the representations of the gendered Caribbean subject.

Mina Karavanta in her comparative reading of Anim-Addo's libretto *Imoinda: Or She Who Will Lose Her Name* (2003) and M. Nourbese Philip's collection of poems *Zong!* (2008), argues for a 'counter-memory'<sup>302</sup> and a process of 'counterwriting'<sup>303</sup> as a vehicle through which to recover and redress the implications of slavery and colonial modernity on the gendered Caribbean subject. Drawing on the work of Sylvia Wynter<sup>304</sup> she reveals that

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<sup>297</sup> Lucille Mathurin Mair, 'Recollections of a Journey into a Rebel Past', in Selwyn Cudjoe ed., *Caribbean Women Writers: Essays From The First International Conference*, (Massachusetts: Calaloux Publications, 1990), 57.

<sup>298</sup> Jenny Sharpe, *Ghosts of Slavery: A Literary Archaeology of Black Women's Lives*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 4.

<sup>299</sup> Sharpe, *Ghosts of Slavery*, 2.

<sup>300</sup> Maryse Condé, *Parole Des Femmes: essai sur des romancières des Antilles de langue française* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1979).

<sup>301</sup> Condé, *Parole Des Femmes: essai sur des romancières des Antilles de langue française*, 47.

<sup>302</sup> Mina Karavanta, 'the injunctions of the spectre of slavery: affective memory and counterwriting of community' in *Feminist Review* 104, 2013, 44.

<sup>303</sup> Karavanta, 44.

<sup>304</sup> Sylvia Wynter argues that the 'discovery' of the Americas and the policies of racial slavery constructed a genetic value differential between humans; acing the white, western, Christian subject as the zenith of this valuation. In light of this construction of what it mean

it is necessary to write the 'human and her world anew'<sup>305</sup> as a means of 'recreating and supplementing the archive of slavery with accounts of oppression and resistance.' Invoking Karavanta's new world order with its accompanying gendered discourse I argue that Schwarz-Bart's text in foregrounding female examples of resistance begins the process of excavating a gendered historiography. In the narratives of *Nanny of the Maroons* and *Mulatress Solitude* we can locate the tensions at play between Caribbean history, temporality and the representations of Caribbean modernity within the region's literature. These two revolutionary women as a result of patriarchal silence live within the myths and legends of the region. They exist outside the temporal parameters of the archive and the printed page and as such battle for recognition. I emphasise that *The Bridge of Beyond* begins to address absence and represents the start of a literary recovery. The fictional narrative of the Lougandor family moves away from the simplistic, symbolic figuration of women present in nationalist discourse. Schwarz-Bart's female protagonists are not waiting for the return of lost sons; instead they are forging new futures for their communities. Her female characters are central to the myths, they are present at the revolutions, and are inscribed into the historical narratives.

That Schwarz-Bart and Erna Brodber, whose work I discuss in the following chapter, include men, in their reconfiguration of Caribbean modernity is highly significant to the development of a gendered creolisation and my overall argument in this thesis. I am not suggesting here that a counterwriting of the creolised discourses can and should be achieved by disregarding masculinity. Rather, I argue for a critical lens that can negotiate the complex gender divisions within the region. By centring temporality and historiography in my analysis of *The Bridge of Beyond* and *New Day* I sought to demonstrate the complex relationship between

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to be human Wynter considers who we might reconfigure the human differently. See, Sylvia Wynter, 'Unsettling the Coloniality of being/power/truth/freedom: towards the human, after Man, its overrepresentation - an argument' *CR: The New Centennial Review*, Vol. 3, No.3, 257-233. 2003.

<sup>305</sup>Karavanta, 44.

Caribbean literary modernity and the hegemonic discourses of historiography as presented by Western and Caribbean patriarchy. In locating the narratives of resistance embedded in the texts of Reid and Schwarz-Bart I have placed emphasis on the Caribbean tale and memory and suggest that they represent cultural sources of creativity central to Caribbean modernity. In the next chapter, I develop further the relationship between acts of resistance and the tension between literary presentations of modernity and the meanings of plantation, systemic violence and voicing difference.

## II

### Gardening in the Tropics

Locating Meanings of Plantation in Erna Brodber's *Myal*  
and Joseph Zobel's *Black Shack Alley*



In Chapter One I examined the representation of temporality and history in Simone Schwarz-Bart's *The Bridge of Beyond* and V.S. Reid's *New Day*. Reading their texts within the framework of Glissant's theory on temporality and history, I sought with two aims in mind to locate the absent and fragmented histories of the region presented in the novels. Firstly, I questioned how reading the texts through this theoretical and thematic lens might enable an analysis of the socio-historical complexities of the region. Secondly, I considered the relationship between the absent and fragmented histories of the region, and the development of a Caribbean literary modernity, in order to highlight the integral relationship between Caribbean literary modernity and Caribbean historiography. I argued that understanding the complex local, regional, and national historical experiences was central and key to understanding the Caribbean experience of modernity, and in turn the representation of that modernity within Caribbean literature.

In this second chapter I wish to explore the third of the five key terms, which I am arguing is central to any examination of the development of a Caribbean literary modernity. The term in question is the 'plantation'. My aim here is to analyse how the pre-twentieth century socio-economic structure of the plantation system, has affected the development of modern Caribbean societies in two very different Caribbean novellas. I am particularly interested in locating the meanings of plantation in Erna Brodber's *Myal* and Joseph Zobel's *Black Shack Alley*. In their attempts to articulate this particularly modern<sup>306</sup> social and economic structure, Brodber and Zobel use very different narrative forms; marvellous realism and the bildungsroman respectively, and I am specifically interested in how they adapt these narrative forms to excavate and articulate the foundations of the

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<sup>306</sup>Plantation systems in the Caribbean and the Americas in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were producing plantation crops for the world market. According to the British anthropologist Raymond T. Smith, 'plantations were among the first industrial organization in which workers were separated from the means of production and subjected to something like factory discipline'. For further information see Raymond T Smith cited in Cesar J. Ayala, *American Sugar Kingdom: The Plantation Economy of the Spanish Caribbean 1898-1934*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 9.

modern Caribbean. I draw on the theories of Brathwaite paying particular attention to his idea of the Caribbean folk in his essay 'Jazz and the West Indian Novel'<sup>307</sup>. I focus on Anim-Addo's articulation of the zombified female body<sup>308</sup> as well as using Glissant's concept of 'the matrix of the plantation.'<sup>309</sup> In drawing on the works of these three theorists I analyse the position of the plantation within the Caribbean literary landscape and in doing so I ask: how might meanings of plantation in modern Caribbean literature be most effectively read? How does the individual and collective historical experience of the plantation system reveal itself in the works of these two selected writers, and how does it inform our understanding of Caribbean modernity? If as Erin Mackie argues, the plantation system is one of the central institutions of the colonial machine,<sup>310</sup> my aim is to illustrate that the plantation system is central to the exploration of Caribbean literary modernity. I examine the plantation within this context as a means of highlighting the particular cultural traditions borne out of the plantation system. These traditions I argue, inform the development of Caribbean literary modernity within the mid to late twentieth century. Whilst there is a forty year gap between the novels of Brodber, Reid, Schwarz-Bart and Zobel, I am suggesting here that the period during the 1950s, 1970s and 1980s witnesses the emergence and development of the Caribbean novel. This marks a fundamental moment in the development of a Caribbean literary modernity the literary configurations of the modern Caribbean subject.

### **Flights of the Imagination: Travels and Travails of the Caribbean Woman**

*Myal* is Brodber's second novel and she returns once more to the Jamaican parish of St Thomas, the setting for V.S. Reid's *New Day* examined in Chapter One of this thesis. Yet, the landscape and characters that Brodber chooses to people her text with are significantly different. Set in August 1919 in the

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<sup>307</sup>Kamau Brathwaite, *Roots* (Havana: Casa de las Americas, 1986.).

<sup>308</sup>Anim-Addo, *Touching The Body*, 206.

<sup>309</sup>Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 73.

<sup>310</sup>Erin Mackie, 'Welcome the Outlaw: Pirates, Maroons, and Caribbean Countercultures', *Cultural Critique* No. 59 (Winter, 2005), 33.

fictional community of Grove Town, *Myal* is the story of Ella O'Grady Langley and the Grove Town community she is born into. The setting for *Myal* is not located within a Jamaican plantation and nor does it explicitly explore the plantation complex. My definition here of the plantation society is taken from Philip Curtin whose work reveals that the plantation complexes established in the Americas stood out in stark contrast 'to other forms of cultural encounter[s] between Europe and non-Western societies.'<sup>311</sup> The plantation societies in the Caribbean were intense slave regimes where forced labour specialised in production for overseas markets. The European and African population of the plantations were not self-sustaining and relied on constant streams of migration to sustain the society. Furthermore the capitalist nature of the production influenced the political and judicial make-up of the complex. The owner oversaw all levels of production and determined the working life and social fabric of the population.<sup>312</sup> I suggest in this chapter that the historical implications of the plantation institution as described above, on the gendered bodies of the Caribbean population looms large in Brodber's novel.

When we are first introduced to Ella, the main protagonist in *Myal*, she is lying prostrate in Mass Cyrus' house, and we learn that she is there because after having 'gone too far, [she] had tripped out in foreign'. (4) Anim-Addo in her reading of *Myal* observes that in the opening chapters there are 'few time related references [...] locational clues related to place are sparse' and this serves to 'disorientate the reader temporally and locationally.'<sup>313</sup> Initially we understand very little about where Ella has travelled to, and how and why she has 'tripped out in foreign.' As the novel progresses we learn that Ella is the mixed race child of Mary Riley a black housemaid and Ralston O'Grady an Irish policeman stationed in Grove Town. Alienated from her immediate community due to her parentage and precocious nature, Ella is later adopted by the Methodist missionaries

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<sup>311</sup>Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 13.

<sup>312</sup>Curtin, 11-13.

<sup>313</sup>Anim-Addo, *Touching The Body*, 204-205.

Maydene and William Brassington. She is subsequently sent to America by the Brassingtons to act as a travelling companion to a wealthy North American woman, Mrs Burns.

The first journey Ella undertakes in the novel is through the figment of her imagination. Alienated by her peers at school, and ignored by her teachers because of her 'alabaster' skin, Ella becomes invisible, and as a result retreats into the recesses of her mind. As a means of coping with this alienation Ella journeys into the colonial texts taught in her classroom, and it is here that she feels most comfortable:

When they brought out the maps and showed Europe, it rose from the paper in three dimensions, grew big, came right down to her seat and allowed her to walk on it, feel its snow, invited her to look deep down into its fjords and dykes. She met people who looked like her. She met Peter Pan and she met the Dairy Maid who could pass for her sister. (11)

It is within the pages of the books depicting maps of Europe and European fairy tales that she sees an image of her self reflected. Fairy tales become more than just forms of escapism from the teasing Ella endures at the hands of her classmates. Reading, above, it would appear that Ella's fantastical migrations enable her to locate her mixed race heritage and allow her to create a space for her mixed race self; a space denied to her in the majority black community of Grove Town. Tellingly, during her fictional travels across Europe, Brodber writes that 'she never met O'Grady in all her travels. Ella wasn't sad about that. She didn't think she would like him.' (11) Yet, contrary to what Ella suggests, it appears that she has not found or created an alternative space in which she can exist. The dairy maids and fjords and dykes of Europe bear no relation to her Irish ancestry and nor do they speak of her mixed race heritage. Rather as a much older Ella learns by the end of the novella, only Grove Town can provide her with her salvation.

If Ella's first journey signals a form of self imposed exile in which her mind leaves Grove Town but her physical self is firmly rooted within the community, then her second journey is a reversal of this process. Ella physically leaves Jamaica for the first time yet her mind stays firmly within

Grove Town. Interestingly, Ella's journey to North America is a particularly modern encounter in that she travels for the act of travelling itself. She arrives in Baltimore in the company of Mrs Burns, a woman whose family manages a hotel on Jamaica's north coast, and who, Brodber suggests can live wherever she chooses. Independently wealthy, Mrs Burns travels for pleasure and leisure, and Ella, acting as her travelling companion, by extension does the same. In the literary landscape of the twentieth century Caribbean, female protagonists travel first and foremost for educational and economic advancement. Ella's initial journey which is individualistic in nature stands in stark contrast to other fictional protagonists.

Upon her arrival in America, Ella passes <sup>314</sup> through immigration as white, and it is left to her future husband, Selywn Langley, to explain to her that, 'in simple terms she was coloured, mulatto.' (43) While Ella's initial travel experience is one of leisure; she soon encounters what Brodber describes as 'growing pains' (47). These 'growing pains' reflect both the physical trauma that Ella's body endures and her own intellectual development and understanding of her subjectivity once she is 'exiled' from her home. As Ella journeys further away from her community she begins to understand her mixed-heritage and its place within the cultural and historical development of Jamaica. Her experiences within America, and more specifically her American husband Selwyn Langley's interpretation of her subjectivity leads to Ella's re-engagement with her home and community. Ella's migration from the town is ultimately a cathartic process and one which allows her to re-immense herself within the Grove Town community. Yet it is a harrowing ordeal.

Selwyn Langley is not the only character in *Myal* who attempts to redefine Ella. Throughout the text, Ella is presented as both a static and mute figure. The members of the Grove Town community project their collective hopes and fears on to her body and mind; she is spoken of and spoken for.

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<sup>314</sup> Passing here refers to African Americans who passed for white within American society. Nella Larsen's novel *Passing* See, George Hutchinson, *In Search of Nella Larsen, A Biography of the Color Line*, (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006).

When Ella is still a baby, her mother Mary is warned by the community that Grove Town is not a suitable home for Ella: 'Mary you see this is nowhere fi bring up a little brown skin girl chile like dat.' (7) At school Ella's teachers avoid her fearing that she will bring trouble to their classrooms: 'That child is odd. No fight at all. Suppose the colour will carry her through.' (10) For the elders in the community she represents salvation and is the one who will:

destroy what should be destroyed, replace it with what should be replaced and put us back together, give us back ourselves with which to chart our course to go where we want to go. (110)

In Baltimore, Ella becomes a doll and she is dressed up and displayed for Mrs Burn's amusement. Yet paradoxically and in spite of how others view her, Ella is not static, she moves and travels constantly. As with Johnny Campbell of *New Day* and Telumee of *The Bridge of Beyond*, Ella's imaginative journeys take place alongside real ones where she ventures from her mother's home in Grove Town to Maydene and Reverend Brassington's house in the parish of St Thomas, to Mrs Shard's school in Port Antonio on the north eastern coast of the island. She is shared between the houses of a number of men and women, and assumes various roles as daughter; gifted child; governess; wife; vulnerable creole/mulatress; and dying patient. Her physicality represents the legacy of Jamaica's multi-racial society and is a clear reminder of sexual relations between the black and white populations of the Caribbean's plantations. The breakdown of her body through the act of spirit thievery as conducted by her American husband represents the legacy of colonial exploitation conducted throughout the region. The feminist and cultural theorist Caren Kaplan in a paper on travel and theory<sup>315</sup> examines the etymology of the word travel and notes:

Etymologically, *travel*, is linked to *travail*, or "labor, toil, suffering, trouble." Thus in addition to the more commonplace meaning of taking a journey, *travel* evokes hard labor (including childbirth) and difficulty.<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>315</sup>Caren Kaplan, 'Transporting the Subject: Technologies of Mobility and Location in an Era of Globalization', *PMLA* Vol. 117, No. 1, Special Topic: Mobile Citizens, Media States (Jan., 2002), 32-42.

<sup>316</sup>Kaplan, 33.

Borrowing from Kaplan's analysis on the etymology of travel, I draw on the link between Ella's personal journey and suffering, with the wider experiences of travel and modes of travelling that have occurred in the Caribbean. Ella's maternal genealogy reinforces Kaplan's statement that to travel is to endure hard work and labour. Her mother Mary travels to Kingston to work as a house maid for the man who will become Ella's father. This labour which initially reflects the economic plight of a black woman in Jamaica at the turn of twentieth century takes on a new meaning when she falls pregnant with Ella. Mary's toil and hardship is compounded as she now has to navigate the cultural complexities of being a single mother to a mixed-race child.

Whilst Mary's experience is unique in the fictional Grove Town setting, it reflects a wider reality in Jamaica and serves to reinforce the historical relationship between the modern Caribbean and the plantation. Anim-Addo points out that in the plantation society of nineteenth century Jamaica the black woman's body represents 'a seriously contested site of conflict.'<sup>317</sup> Viewed by the planter as a labourer, Anim-Addo observes 'in this space, demands are made upon her body for labour for whites and sexual gratification for others, black and white.'<sup>318</sup> Travel and the forced migration of African women to the Caribbean permanently redefine their bodies and the labour they endure. Ella, as with her mother before her, falls pregnant after travelling to Baltimore. Hers is a phantom pregnancy, and she is cured by the will of the people of Grove Town and the natural remedies of the herbalist Mass Cyrus. The repetition and familiar patterns between the experiences of Ella and her mother serve to reinforce the historical plight of African Caribbean women in the region.

Ella's constant flights both real and imagined point to the historic mobilisation of peoples, materials and foodstuffs which heralded the creation and development of 'New World' plantations. Migration and the impact of an influx or effluence of migrants on a society's development is

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<sup>317</sup>Anim-Addo, *Touching The Body*, 66.

<sup>318</sup>Anim-Addo, *Touching The Body*, 66.

not exclusive to the Caribbean, but to understand the importance and centrality of migration to the development of Caribbean modernity we have to take into account that the two are inextricably linked as David Nii Addy writes:

Historically, migration has most likely shaped the formation and development of the Caribbean more profoundly than any other region of the world.<sup>319</sup>

Carole Boyce Davies, writing about her own mother's migratory patterns during the twentieth century notes that patterns of exile and return 'are fundamentally inscribed in the "New World" post-/modern identities',<sup>320</sup> and similarly historian Mary Chamberlain in her discussion on globalisation and migration in relation to the Caribbean states:

The idea of globalisation is not, of course, new – neither is migration. Both lie at the centre of modernity, were indeed midwives to its birth.

<sup>321</sup>

At the heart of the establishment of seventeenth-century Caribbean plantation complexes and development of modern globalisation, was the ability to travel and to forcibly export humans. The Jamaican economist George L. Beckford in his seminal text *Persistent Poverty: Underdevelopment in the Plantation Economies of the Third World*<sup>322</sup> describes the plantation as 'an institution of international dimensions'.<sup>323</sup> Beckford notes that the early Caribbean plantations were a racially mixed society which brought together enterprise, capital and labour from different parts of the world. The transnational web of maritime routes crisscrossing the Atlantic, and Caribbean Sea exhaustively over the span of four hundred years has left an indelible mark. As the geographer Elizabeth Thomas-Hope observes, 'the

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<sup>319</sup>David Nii Addy, 'Trends in Labour Migration and its Implications for the Caribbean', in *Living at the Borderlines: Issues in Caribbean Sovereignty and Development* (Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 1993), 379.

<sup>320</sup>Carole Boyce Davies, *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject* (London: Routledge, 1994), 2.

<sup>321</sup>Mary Chamberlain ed., *Caribbean Migrations: Globalised Identities* (London: Routledge, 1998), 1.

<sup>322</sup>George L. Beckford, *Persistent Poverty: Underdevelopment in the Plantation Economies of the Third World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972).

<sup>323</sup>Beckford, 31.



institutions of Caribbean society have evolved to accommodate and perpetuate migration'<sup>324</sup> with the first institution to place migration fundamentally at its core being the plantation complex. Yet, Ella also presents a break with the past. Anim-Addo in her essay on Amy Ashwood Garvey and Pan-Africanist women suggests that travel and more importantly the ways in which a woman travels is a signifier of black women's modernity:

What was modern for black women in 1890? I wish to suggest that travel that was not enforced was a key signifier of modernity for black women from the latter half of the nineteenth century, only decades removed from slavery and enforced transportation. I mean this in direct contrast to the enforced travel signified by slavery and accounts of slavery. In addition and related to the domestic lives of black women, freedom to travel without the ties of maternity was crucial.<sup>325</sup>

Ella's journey to North America is not enforced. She does not travel entirely of her own free will but nor is she transported as a slave or even as a maid. Her phantom pregnancy and her recovery from this ordeal ensure that Ella is free to travel again without the ties of maternity. *Myal* ends with the suggestion that Ella will travel again, this time to Europe and for the purpose of championing the advancement of Jamaican education and independence. Read within the context of Anim-Addo's travelling black woman, Ella represents a version of the modern Caribbean woman. Her subjectivity is inextricably linked to the Caribbean plantation, and her constant travels and travails highlight this problematic historical relationship. Yet, it also points to the complex development of what Susan Stanford Friedman describes as 'local modernities'<sup>326</sup>. Brodber's protagonist repeats and transcends the

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<sup>324</sup>Elizabeth M. Thomas-Hope, *Caribbean Migration* (Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 2002), 3.

<sup>325</sup>Joan Anim-Addo, 'Pan-Africanist Women, Modernity, Silence: Amy Ashwood Garvey, and Other Invisible Activists', in *Modernist Women Race Nation: Networking Women 1890-1950 Circum-Atlantic Connections*, ed., Giovanna Covi (London: Mango Publishing, 2005), 113.

<sup>326</sup>Susan Stanford Friedman argues that we must recognise that modernities concerning different locations do not develop in the same temporal periods, rather they exist outside of the conventional boundaries of Western modernism, usually located between 1890-1950. Furthermore a combination of the local and global must be taken into consideration. Where one is born, travels and the global forces beyond one's immediate location are central to understanding the development of local modernities. See Susan Stanford Friedman, 'Networking Women on a Transnational Landscape: Globalism, Modernism, and Gender', in Giovanna Covi ed., *Modernist Women Race Nation: Networking Women 1890-1950 Circum-Atlantic Connections*, (London:Mango Publishing, 2005), 36.

experiences of her foremothers. In doing so, Brodber constructs a complex and contradictory character but one that nonetheless allows us to examine and address Caribbean women's modernity in a new a light.

### **The Caribbean Home: Elegising the Black Mother**

Ella's constant displacement brings to the fore the politics of location and space. Despite her apparent rootless existence, Brodber refuses to romanticise notions of the 'home' and the 'private space'. French philosopher Gaston Bachelard in his study of space and place suggests that the physical structures of the home provide not only safe havens for the physical self but also allows a space in which to dream and find inspiration:

When we dream of the house we were born in, in the utmost depths of revery, we participate in this original warmth, in this well-tempered matter of the material paradise.<sup>327</sup>

The well-tempered paradise of Bachelard's structural spaces cannot be taken for granted or even as a given when considering ideas of home and house in the Caribbean. Brathwaite in his essay "Houses in the West Indian Novel" (1976) suggests that in the Caribbean, the notion of home and space is problematic. Space and place in the Caribbean is a violent and contested site which is inextricably linked to the plantation.<sup>328</sup> In its early configuration, Beckford suggests that the plantation resembled a 'type of settlement institution' and drawing on this analogy I want to consider the implications of the plantation as a frontier institution. The landscape architect and scholar Lynda H. Schneekloth in her essay 'The Frontier is Our Home' describes and deconstructs the frontier in the following way:

First, the frontier (the New World, the wild West, the city, or outer space) is an invention rather than a description of any place. Its emergence as a dominant mythic structure since the European settlement of the Americas is an important fiction for the national psyche. Second, the myth of the frontier both reveals and conceals a landscape for sanctioned violence, a place to express conquest and

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<sup>327</sup>Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 7.

<sup>328</sup>Brathwaite, 'Houses in the West Indian Novel', *Literary Half Yearly* 17.1 (1976), 111.

domination. Third, the same space on which the frontier is enacted is and always has been someone's home.<sup>329</sup>

In Schneekloth's observations the frontier is an invented space, a structure of sanctioned violence as well as a home. The designs of the invented space that eventually became the plantation complex in the Caribbean region varied in formation from island to island but they shared similar features. Plantation complexes consisted of the "great house", the overseer's house and the grinding mill. The slaves lived in hovels.<sup>330</sup> The slave did not have a place and could be transferred and sold as and when the plantation owner saw fit.<sup>331</sup> The first home then in the Caribbean for the plantation slaves was not only violent but also transitory.

Of course in the post-emancipation landscape of Brodber's novel it is not the explicit geospatial politics of the frontier/plantation space which is immediately foregrounded. Brodber instead presents a series of domestic spaces both within and outside of Grove Town that Ella inhabits. Chiara Briganti and Kathy Mezei suggest a link between the private space and the national landscape in the introduction to their anthology on domestic spaces. They suggest that just as the home mirrors nationalist and capitalist ideologies in microcosm, 'the social geography of the house itself charts the course of relations between sexes and classes.'<sup>332</sup> Drawing on ideas of the home as a reflection of nationalist agendas and of location as a marker of gendered and economic relations, I seek to locate the meanings of plantation within this context. Furthermore, I am concerned with the suggestion that home and loss of home is a recurring motif of modernity.<sup>333</sup> If we extend this

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<sup>329</sup>Lynda H. Schneekloth, 'The Frontier is Our Home', *Journal of Architectural Education*, Vol. 49, No.4, (1996), 210.

<sup>330</sup>Bonham C. Richardson, *The Caribbean in the Wider World 1492-1992: A Regional Geography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.), 46.

<sup>331</sup>Maeve McCusker 'No Place Like Home? Constructing an Identity in Patrick Chamoiseau's *Texaco*', in Mary Gallagher ed., *Ici-La: Place and Displacement in Caribbean Writing in French*, (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V, 2003), 42.

<sup>332</sup>Chiara Briganti, and Kathy Mezeieds eds., *The Domestic Space Reader*, (Toronto: University Press of Toronto, 2012), 8.

<sup>333</sup>Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti and Ella Shohat eds., *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation and Postcolonial Perspective*, (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 2.

idea to the Caribbean region what implications does this have for the reading of representations of Caribbean modernity within Brodber's text?

The first home Ella inhabits belongs to her mother Mary and grandparents Catherine Riley, and Bada D who represent the post-emancipation community. With their small plot of land within Grove Town they are part of what anthropologist Sydney Mintz has described as the 'proto-peasantry', '[Slaves] who later became peasant freedmen, either through emancipation (as in the case of Jamaica) or revolution (as in the case of Haiti).'<sup>334</sup> They are 'communities of peoples who have partially removed themselves from the plantations,'<sup>335</sup> to begin life anew in the villages. Bridget Brereton and Kevin A. Yelvington observe that in the post-emancipation period, nineteenth century European gender ideology was adopted in the Anglophone Caribbean by the colonial governments, the church, and the middle and upper class communities. Men were seen as the breadwinners and women were confined to the 'private sphere' of the domestic space. But as Brereton and Yelvington point out, this rarely reflected the experiences of the majority of Caribbean women's lives:

After the end of slavery, most Caribbean women continued to work in agriculture, either as wage labourers on the sugar, cocoa or banana plantation, or as peasant farmers cultivating family owned lands. They were also fully involved in marketing farm produce. Others moved to the towns and worked as domestics (the key non-agricultural occupation for Caribbean women after slavery), seamstresses, laundresses and petty vendors. Very few could be described as housewives uninvolved in social production.<sup>336</sup>

In Brodber's *Myal*, Mary's occupation as a domestic help and peasant farmer mirrors the historical reality of many Caribbean women in the period after emancipation, as presented above. Not only does she produce and sell her own crops, significantly, the house she owns 'she decided to build [...] in her mother's yard'. (50). As Brereton and Yelvington argue, plantation societies

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<sup>334</sup>Sidney Mintz, *Caribbean Transformations*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1974), 152.

<sup>335</sup>Bonham C. Richardson, 206.

<sup>336</sup>Bridget Brereton and Kevin A. Yelvington eds., *The Colonial Caribbean in Transition: Essays on Post-Emancipation, Social and Cultural History*, (Florida: University of Florida Press, 1999), 9.

were to an extent 'gender blind'. Women worked in the plantations alongside men and were considered equals.

The gender equality 'hangover' from the plantation period helps to shape the early twentieth century Caribbean and the modern Caribbean woman. Mary is capable of managing her own economy and physically building her own home. When she finds love with Taylor the blacksmith, he suggests that they marry stating, 'I can more than support myself and you, and whoever you carry. I am asking you to let me be the man.' (51) Mary allows Taylor in principle to occupy the position as 'the man' of the house, but not to the detriment of her gendered subjectivity. She is reluctant to give up her independence and agrees to marry Taylor on the condition that she stays in her own home. Through the character of Mary, Brodber creates the ultimate icon of female independence in the Anglophone Caribbean.

Writer and sociologist, Olive Senior, in her text *Working Miracles: Women's Lives in the English-speaking Caribbean* writes on the position of the market woman. She reveals that in the post-emancipation period the 'image of the independent black female became full-blown.'<sup>337</sup> The newly freed women employed the skills that they had learnt during slavery 'as vendors of farm produce or 'higglers' to dominate the internal marketing system.'<sup>338</sup> This, despite the limitations placed on black women's independence by the social and cultural institutions of colonial Jamaica. According to Senior, 'women, and black women especially came to establish a reputation for themselves as providers and managers of their own affairs.'<sup>339</sup> In countries with large peasant populations such as Jamaica 'the higgler or market-woman became the dominant icon of female independence and assertiveness'.<sup>340</sup> Read within the framework outlined by Senior, Mary as house builder and provider is the ultimate signifier of Caribbean women's modernity in the early twentieth century. Her independence and ability is an

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<sup>337</sup>Olive Senior, *Working Miracles: Women's Lives in the English-Speaking Caribbean*, (Barbados: University of West Indies; Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, and London: James Currey, 1991), 107.

<sup>338</sup>Senior, 107.

<sup>339</sup>Senior, 107.

<sup>340</sup>Senior, 108.

unwitting by-product of the plantation system. Yet, I want to suggest that in the character of Mary, Brodber creates a complex figure that is at once iconic and fragile. The complexity of her character and the tensions that she reveals about the development of Caribbean women and their relationship with Caribbean modernity is played out in her relationship with her daughter.

Ella's position within this proto-peasant community is fraught with complexities. Her mixed-race heritage causes consternation among the other community members and troubles her mother, Mary, who worries that her child will not survive the harsh reality of village life. It is not only Ella's physical appearance and her body's apparent inability to cope within the Jamaican environment that worries her mother:

She [Mary] couldn't give Ella what she needed [...] Ask Ella to scald the little milk and you would hear the phew-phew and smell the milk going down the side of the pot and being burnt by the flames. Ella was right there in the kitchen but she had made the milk boil over! Nothing left in the pot. Or simply ask her to roast two cocoes [...] The cocoes turn bright red in the fire. Is true what people did tell her. Ella was not bush mout pickney. (51)

Ella is also unable to carry out the daily tasks required to feed herself and her family. Read within this context, Ella's relationship with Mary is a reflection and repetition of historical patterns. The complexities of the plantation society is replayed and reasserted albeit under new guises in the post-emancipation community. Senior reveals that 'mulattoes were regarded as useless for plantation labour and were therefore given the higher-status jobs – usually inside plantation houses.'<sup>341</sup> In the literary setting of Grove Town, the plantation house has turned into Mary's single roomed house. Ella is the neo-mulatress, incapable of tilling the land and looking after herself. She is instead reliant upon her mammy figure, who in this case is her real mother. In this interpretation, Ella's mixed-race physical self is detrimental to her existence within the rural Jamaican community and in turn inhibits her development. In the post-emancipation period, she finds that she cannot transcend the narrative of the plantation society.

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<sup>341</sup>Senior, 106.

Yet, I would argue that Ella's and Mary's relationship when read within the framework of Jamaica's socio-political development, signals the Caribbean woman's movement away from the land and home, as defined within plantation societies. Furthermore Ella's narrative gives light to a marginalised history and speaks to the small but important number of Caribbean women who were involved in articulating and expressing Caribbean modernity in the inter-war period. Until the Second World War, the majority Jamaican women were limited in the variety of profession they could enter. Agriculture and domestic service were their only options. Senior reveals in her research on Caribbean women's lives, the mid 1940s ushered in expansive changes in Jamaica's economic and social conditions. The post-war period witnessed:

a broadening of the economic base and consequent enlargement of the occupational structure [...] Such changes included a shift from agriculture to the expansion of the public sector and the broadening of the educational base.<sup>342</sup>

*Myal*, set in the 1930s pre-dates the changes that are about to take place. Ella is a pre-cursor to the educated modern Jamaican woman. On her return from Baltimore she takes up a teaching post at the school in Grove Town. Forced to teach her pupils the allegory presented in *The Royal Crown Reader*,<sup>343</sup> Ella rebels:

'The major problem is this: there are alternatives. Why are they never presented in this book? [...] He has robbed his characters of their possibilities [...] and left them to run around like half-wits, doing what the master has in store for them.' (106)

The animals in the *Royal Crown Reader* revolt against colonial rule on Mr Joe's farm, but after tasting freedom they regret their actions and return to their benevolent master. The alternative that Ella wishes to present to her pupils is the possibility of self-governance and agency. Ella in her determination to map an alternative narrative for pupils echoes the work of modernist Caribbean women such as Una Marson and Amy Ashwood

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<sup>342</sup>Senior, 123.

<sup>343</sup>Royal Crown Reader, (London: Nelson Thomas and Son, 1895).

Garvey. Giovanna Covi in her introduction to *Modernist Women Race Nation*,<sup>344</sup> argues that modernist women such as Marson and Garvey who were working in the inter-war years demanded 'to be fully recognized as humans and citizens.'<sup>345</sup>

Ella rebuffs the *Royal Crown Reader's* allegory on the basis that it denies the local population their humanity and sovereignty and she demands change. Importantly, she associates this change not only with the act of travelling but also with the act of writing. The novel ends with Ella determined to write new alternatives, to fix words on to the printed page that engages with a gendered and racialised experience of Caribbean modernity. By emphasising Ella's relationship with writing, and ending the novel on this final image, I suggest Brodber invites us to consider the act of writing as a model through which to transcend the meanings of plantation in the modern Caribbean.

I want to suggest in *Myal* and more specifically in the relationship between Mary and Ella, that Brodber begins to create a discourse that breaks free from the stranglehold of the 'myth' of the strong black woman. The historian Barbara Bush claims that the image of the female slave rendered by planters and abolitionists alike is an amalgamation of 'the scarlet women, the domineering matriarch and the passive workhorse.'<sup>346</sup> Bush suggests that contemporary analysis of the black matriarch has too readily oversimplified her dominant position.<sup>347</sup> In the complex reality of slave societies, women were forced to engage in multiple roles. Bush does not downplay the matrifocal form of family organisation in slave societies, but suggests that there existed 'conflicts between the formal economic role of women and their role in the slave family [...] In the slave community male authority was far from moribund.'<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>344</sup> Covi, Introduction, *Modernist Women Race Nation*, 9.

<sup>345</sup> Covi, 9.

<sup>346</sup> Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838*, (Kingston: Heinemann Caribbean; Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, and London: James Currey, 1990), 5.

<sup>347</sup> Bush, 92.

<sup>348</sup> Bush, 92-93.



As I have already discussed, Senior's work has established that iconic black women did indeed exist. Their ability to navigate and reap limited benefits from commercial endeavours has been established by historians and sociologists alike. Yet in the literary landscape of the twentieth century the dominant and domineering black matriarch has become a romanticised and recurring motif. Her all-encompassing presence is duly felt and seen in a number of Caribbean novels <sup>349</sup>, from C.L.R James' Mrs Rouse in *Minty Alley* <sup>350</sup>, to Ma in George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin*.<sup>351</sup>

In *Myal*, Brodber writes Mary as a frightened and unsure black mother, who fears that she is unable to look after her child and provide her with the necessary protection. Jamil Khader in his essay on the 'Subaltern Cosmopolitan' examines Puerto Rican women writers and their relationship with 'rewriting the home.' Khader writes:

'Traditionally, the project of rewriting home in contemporary Caribbean women's writings has been confined to experiences of displacement and not belonging in the metropolitan, imperial home [...] The Caribbean home, in contrast, remains in these writings a mythical and over romanticized primordial site, where the Caribbean female subject is said to overcome the psychological scars of alienation in two related ways: by recuperating an originary ethnic identity (African roots) that reunites the subject with its authentic self, as posited in the influential philosophy of negritude and the Black Power movement in its different Caribbean incarnations.'<sup>352</sup>

Brodber of course is not 'rewriting the home' from the colonial metropolitan heartland; *Myal* was written in Jamaica. I use Khader's essay on Puerto Rican women writers because I am particularly interested in the idea that modern Caribbean literature has created the notion of an 'authentic' Caribbean female, whose authenticity is located in 'her African roots'. In *Myal* Mary cannot provide Ella with an 'originary ethnic identity' and nor does she exist within an 'authentic' ethnic space in the same way as other literary

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<sup>349</sup> Miriam De Costa-Willis, *Daughters of the Diaspora: Afro-Hispanic Writer* (Jamaica: Ian Randle Press, 2003), 130.

<sup>350</sup> CLR James, *Minty Alley*, (London: New Beacon Books, 1971).

<sup>351</sup> George Lamming, *In the Castle of My Skin*, (Essex: Longman Caribbean, 1987).

<sup>352</sup> Jamal Khader, 'Subaltern Cosmopolitanism: Community and Transnational Mobility in Caribbean Postcolonial Feminist Writings Feminist Studies', *Feminist Studies* Vol. 29, No. 1 (Spring, 2003), 64.

Caribbean mother figures. Mary is herself racially ambiguous as the following passage highlights:

Bada D [Mary's father] was strangeness itself. The man had thin lip, pointed nose and the hair thick and strong and curly like a coolie royal though Indian was nowhere in his strain for he step straight off of a African boat. That was common knowledge. Call himself a Moor [...] Smooth skin Catherine, [Mary's mother] colour barley turn. Something like tan tuddy potato. (7/8)

Brodber's characters as with the houses they inhabit are problematic entities that defy over simplified interpretations. Brodber's architectural structures contain female subjects who are transient, weak, black, racially mixed, and white. In creating a diverse range of female subjectivities Brodber moves beyond the traditional characters present in a number of Caribbean novels. In *Myal* Brodber centres the discourse on the complex multiplicities of Caribbean female identity and experience. Mary's inability to provide her daughter with a fixed African identity rather than being detrimental to Ella's development allows her to better understand the creolised society of which she is a part.

Brodber's portrayal of Ella within her American home in Baltimore with her husband Selwyn Langley provides a complex interrogation of the Caribbean woman's cultural and political agency in the West and in the modernity of the early twentieth century. When Brodber introduces Langley at the beginning of Chapter Seven, Brodber writes that 'If Selwyn Langley had been born in eighteenth or nineteenth century Britain and of upper class parentage, [...] He would have been sent off to Jamaica and would have met Ella O'Grady and chosen her from among his stock to be his housekeeper.'<sup>(42)</sup> Yet, as the American heir of a pharmaceutical empire, Langley is far removed from the planter society of colonial Jamaica and the post-emancipation community of Grove Town. Nevertheless as with the eighteenth and nineteenth century planters before him, Langley senses that a profit can be made from the newly arrived Caribbean migrant.

In Langley's home, Ella is fetishised and her perceived exoticism and difference is potential/profit currency to Langley who aims to turn her

stories of Jamaica and more specifically of Grove Town into a capital venture. Ella's body and history becomes both his frontier and the ticket which will allow his passage to the West coast of North America. Selwyn believes that in Ella he has found his fortune. Yet, turning Ella's story into a theatrical piece involves more than just stealing her narrative. Langley sets about to fashion Ella's physical self into what he believes a modern day young woman should look like:

There was the powdering and the plucking of the eyebrows, the straightening of the hair, all of which a loving husband did and just in case, just in case there should be a rare occasion on which she would be called upon to wear a non-sleeved bathing dress, he taught her the habit of shaving her armpits. The creator loved his creature. (43)

Significantly this North American makeover comes at the cost of her racial identity. Langley believes that in order to "sell" Ella's story, she must appear to be white, 'just one teeny little lie: her parents had come from Ireland, had succumbed to a tropical disease.' (43) Ironically the very difference which makes Ella profitable must be neutralised in order to continue her existence as Langley's wife. To exist within Langley's home Ella must fit into what Grenadian poet Audre Lorde calls the "mythical norm":

Somewhere, on the edge of consciousness there is what I call a *mythical norm* [...] In America this norm is usually defined as white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian and financially secure. It is within this mythical norm that the trappings of power reside within this society.<sup>353</sup>

Langley has all the attributes to fit into Lorde's mythical norm, yet as he himself admits no amount of powdering and plucking will sufficiently mask Ella's blackness and her Jamaican-ness:

Ella was a dear. She had given and was giving all she had but he would want more. In-laws with real pedigree for instance, who could appear in the flesh. (80)

Part of Ella's growing pains is linked to the realisation that Langley rejects her difference within the domestic space and the framework of the state. He

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<sup>353</sup> Audre Lorde, 'Difference and Survival: An Address at Hunter College, in Rudolph P. Byrd, Johnnetta Betsch Cole and Beverly Guy-Sheftall eds., *I Am Your Sister: Collected and Unpublished Writings of Audre Lorde*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 203.

cannot stay married to her as the state demands and nor can he have children with her, in the fear that they reveal Ella's black genealogy. Ella's value is linked with her cultural capital and the financial dividends that it promises. Once Langley the playwright has completed his text and 'coon masterpiece' (80), he is free to return to his mythical norm, a space and place that Ella's modern Caribbean subject cannot occupy.

### **Violent Encounters: literary representations of physical and mental abuse**

Brodber's representations of homes are not only problematic and fraught with tensions, they are also violent, dangerous places filled with mental and physical abuse. The Cuban postmodern critic Antonio Benitez-Rojo in his reading of Derek Walcott's historical play *Drums and Colours* asks the following question, 'What is the problem that, according to Walcott, remains constant in the Caribbean?'<sup>354</sup> Benitez-Rojo arrives at the following conclusion:

Violence, sheer violence, historic violence. It does not matter whether the theme is "War and Rebellion" or any other: in the end its ultimate meaning will be violence, whether this is called discovery, conquest, slavery or colonialism [...] it appears in *Drums and Colours* as an epic sound, uttered by history itself and consequently recorded in historiographic discourse.<sup>355</sup>

Violence, as Benitez-Rojo highlights in the above extract is pervasive in the writing concerning the region. From conquest, to plantation societies, to post-emancipation, the region has been marked by a violent continuance. So central has violence been to the discernment of Caribbean existence that Franz Fanon, Caribbean cultural critique and psychiatrist declared that not even independence and sovereignty would free the region from its grasp.<sup>356</sup> Chantal Kalisa observes that in spite of the centrality of violence in the development of African and Caribbean identities and the significant role afforded to gendered violence in African and Caribbean literary creativity,

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<sup>354</sup> Benitez-Rojo, *Repeating Islands*, 300.

<sup>355</sup> Benitez-Rojo, *Repeating Islands*, 300-301.

<sup>356</sup> Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (London: Penguin, 2001), 27.

'critics have devoted little work to this complex subject'.<sup>357</sup> Kalisa notes that critics have often explored the discourse of violence enacted in 'public spaces': the 'grand narrative' of violence during slavery and the more familiar acts of neo-colonial violence. But little attention is paid to the violence that takes place in the 'private' and domestic sphere. Kalisa writes:

For women writers, literature offers a privileged medium through which they attempt to resolve the tension between historical or external forms of violence associated with colonialism and postcolonial conditions and internal forms of violence that result from unfair cultural, social, and political rules based on gender. While they clearly aim to write gender within commonly validated, authenticated forms of violence, women are particularly interested in lifting taboos over traditionally silenced discourses about domestic and intimate violence.<sup>358</sup>

In *Myal*, Brodber considers the implication of historical and contemporary violence in both the public and private sphere. Running parallel with Ella's story throughout *Myal* is that of Anita's. A bright student, the fifteen-year-old year old Anita has been singled out by Grove Town's head teacher as a prospective member of staff. Whilst Anita studies one afternoon, she is interrupted by the sound of stones landing on the roof of her house yet the perpetrator is nowhere to be seen. Initially the stone throwing is interpreted as a love token from a shy suitor, but when events take a sinister turn and Anita is physically violated in her bed, her guardians, Teacher and Amy Holness realise that Anita is being sexually abused:

It was the nights which gave everyone trouble [...] On the first night Teacher and Miss Amy heard sobbing and a muttering sound like pleading coming from Anita's room [...] It was when the sound remained regular coming at 8p.m. every night and 5 a.m. every morning and becoming so loud that they could hear Anita's word clearly: "I don't want you to touch me please". (58)

It is later revealed that Mass Levi the retired District Constable has used spirit thievery on Anita as a means of regaining his strength and virility following a stroke. Spirit thievery in this instance is the act of rape and body possession.

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<sup>357</sup> Chantal Kalisa, *Violence in Francophone African and Caribbean Women's Literature*, (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 2.

<sup>358</sup> Kalisa, 3.

In attempting to control Anita's body, Mass Levi hopes to restore his sexual prowess.

Mass Levi's act of spirit thievery engages with the broader implications of historical and contemporary violence within the Caribbean region. In Brodber's *Myal*, the source of affliction is no longer the planter but rather the neo-colonial forces of power who have inherited their roles. Mass Levi, the District Constable albeit retired is now the enforcer of the law in the vacuum created in the post-emancipation landscape of Grove Town. Mass Levi ruled by fear and violence: 'he was a man who would use his cow cod whip on mule, on man and on a woman'. (31) Anecdotal observations by the residents of Grove Town hint at Mass Levi's public power: 'Everyone knew the full extent of Mass Levi's power. They knew it by fame or they knew it by fact.' (31). His violation of Anita within the private space of the home speaks of both the individual and collective trauma of historical violence enacted on the bodies of Caribbean women. The image of Mass Levi with the cow cod whip links his actions firmly to the plantation societies, where according to Barbara Bush, 'Women slaves were no less immune to physical punishment than male slaves. The whip constituted an important element in her life.'<sup>359</sup> The sexual violation of Anita also echoes the sexual violence that women endured on the Caribbean plantations. Kalisa in her reading of the works of Guadeloupean writers Gisele Pineau, and Calixthe Beyala observes:

With the violence of history as a backdrop, images of violated and traumatized Caribbean geographies overlay equally ravaged images of human bodies in their homes. The overlapping discourse of violence highlight tensions between the personal and the political and between the individual and the community.<sup>360</sup>

Yet, I argue that Mass Levi is not simply the plantation master reconfigured. Brodber provides a series of spirit thieves and multiple ways in which spirit thievery can occur.

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<sup>359</sup> Bush, 42.

<sup>360</sup> Kalisa, 118.

Pin-Chia Feng in her article 'Rituals of Memory: Afro-Caribbean Religions in "Myal" and "It Begins With Tears"'<sup>361</sup> draws a direct comparison between Mass Levi and Ella's husband Selwyn Langley. In different ways and by different means both are guilty of spirit thievery. For Feng, 'Mass Levi is the evil within the community and Langley is the evil from without.'<sup>362</sup> Langley is the imperial American businessman who has turned his eye on the Caribbean, as old European powers begin to lose their stranglehold on their once profitable empires. Langley's act is psychological and a cultural violation which distorts Ella's and her community's historical narrative. By making Langley, Mass Levi's double Brodber problematises the acts of violence wrought on African-Caribbean women's bodies. Whilst she does not deny the historical legacy and the impact that the violence incurred on plantation societies has on the post-emancipation landscape, Mass Levi's act of rape cannot be read simply as the after effect of colonialism. Shalini Puri writes that in the Mass Levi and Anita story we find that 'in this powerful instance, sexual possession and spirit possession – domination of body and domination of mind – become inseparable.'<sup>363</sup> Drawing on Anim-Addo's work on affect and gendered creolisation, I suggest that the Langley/Levi binary symbolises the latent violence and a culture of fear cultivated within the parameters of the plantation. As Anim-Addo reveals 'sexual violation was not recognised since 'under slave laws, property could not be raped.'<sup>364</sup> In this reading of a post-plantation community the violence incurred by the actions of Langley and Levi are repressed by the community. Not in an act of denial but rather as Anim-Addo highlights as a result of 'learnt responses.'<sup>365</sup> As such the systemic violence of the plantation is inherited, disseminated and social and cultural continuity is attained.<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>361</sup> Pin-Chia Feng 'Rituals of Memory: Afro-Caribbean Religions in "Myal" and "It Begins With Tears" *Melus* Vol 27 No 1, Contested Boundaries Spring 2002, 149-175.

<sup>362</sup> Feng, 157.

<sup>363</sup> Puri, 102.

<sup>364</sup> Anim-Addo, 'gendering creolisation: creolisaing affect', in *Feminist Review* 104, 2013, 8.

<sup>365</sup> Anim-Addo, 'gendering creolisation: creolisaing affect', 15.

<sup>366</sup> Anim-Addo, 'gendering creolisation: creolisaing affect' 15.

In Brodber's modern Caribbean landscape Caribbean women's bodies and minds exist within a post emancipation society but the possibility of being subjugated by cultural, economical, historical and patriarchal systems still looms large and is an ever present danger. The boundaries of the plantation system have changed and in its new delineation white and black patriarchies vie for power and control. The narrator informs the reader that in the old days, when Mass Levi had been District Constable he 'was not only physically strong and that obviously, but he was incorruptible'. (31) Brodber's narrative holds a mirror up to Jamaican society and challenges, to reference Pia Cheng, the 'evil within'. A powerful and corrupt black patriarchal system lies at the heart of Grove Town and threatens to destroy its future. In America a white patriarchal system with commerce at its centre, threatens to destroy Grove Town's past, both systems enacting their brutality on the bodies of young, black women. Ella and Anita are both too young and weak to withstand the domination of Mass Levi and Selwyn Langley respectively. Yet they are not silenced and nor are they allowed to suffer on their own. A collective of teachers and healers plot their salvation and map alternative routes from the historical stranglehold of the Caribbean plantation.

### **Healing and Literary Trauma**

Healing historical and contemporary trauma inflicted on the individual and collective bodies of Caribbean women lies at the heart of *Myal*. Mass Levi's spirit thievery and physical abuse of Anita's body as with Selwyn Langley's mental abuse of Ella's mind is brought to an abrupt end by the communal act of the Afro-Christian practices of Myalism and Kumina. June E Roberts in *Reading Erna Brodber: Uniting the Black Diaspora through Folk Culture and Religion* describes the practice of Myal as follows:

Myalism, an Ashanti spirit practice and healing art Akin to Obeah and Voodoo, came to Jamaica across the middle passage with Myal men, a cult of magicians dedicated to using their powers for good. The Obi man [Obeah man], another West African import to the New World,



used his gift of magic for good and ill, but mostly for personal advancement.<sup>367</sup>

In *Creole Religions of the Caribbean*<sup>368</sup>, Margarite Fernandez Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert reveal that Kumina is linked to the traditions of Myalism and that its practices are primarily focused on healing:

Healing ceremonies, which incorporate singing, drumming, dancing, spirit possession, and animal sacrifices – elements found in Myalism and Zion Revivalism – are intended to summon the spirits to descend and help restore the sick congregant to health.<sup>369</sup>

In the post-plantocracy landscape of Grove Town we find plantation rituals and solutions are still being enacted as a means of salvation. Ennis Edmonds and Michelle A. Gonzalez in *Caribbean Religious History*<sup>370</sup> point to the centrality of Myal and Obeah practices as forms of cultural resistance to the dominant forces of plantation life:

During the slave era, both Myal and Obeah were in themselves expressions of cultural resistance [...] Though conquered physically, exploited economically, and dominated politically, the slaves exercised the freedom of their minds and drew upon the memory of their past to fashion beliefs and practices that enabled them to understand and endure their current afflictions. In plotting and executing revolts against the system, rebels often drew upon their resources of Myal and Obeah.<sup>371</sup>

The healers in Brodber's *Myal* employ their beliefs to stave off physical exploitation. As the stones rain down on Anita's house Ole African the herbalist, Mass Cyrus the Myalist, and Miss Gatha who practices Kumina gather together to free Anita from the act of spirit thievery and in doing so they kill Mass Levi.<sup>372</sup> Whilst Anita's rescue is a communal effort, Ella is saved by the hands of Mass Cyrus. Anim-Addo finds this problematic as she writes:

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<sup>367</sup> June E. Roberts, *Reading Erna Brodber: Uniting the Black Diaspora through Folk Culture and Religion*, (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2006), 143.

<sup>368</sup> Margarite Fernandez Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert eds., *Creole Religions of the Caribbean: An Introduction to Vodou and Santeria to Obeah and Espiritismo*, (New York and London: New York University Press, 2011).

<sup>369</sup> Fernandez Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, 178.

<sup>370</sup> Ennis Edmonds and Michelle A. Gonzalez eds., *Caribbean Religious History*, (New York and London: New York University Press, 2010).

<sup>371</sup> Ennis Edmonds and Michelle A. Gonzalez, 125.

<sup>372</sup> Puri, 155.

*Myal*, for example, refuses a simple 'feminist' label since the female subject is not only silent but zombified and the power to heal lies in the hand of the male subject [...] The 'heroic actor' meanwhile is a detached figure able to command the attention of the people and inanimate objects alike with his powerful knowledge, yet he shows little positive interest in the female whose healing has been negotiated.<sup>373</sup>

Brodber's narrative may indeed signal a new way in which to engineer the modern Caribbean woman but according to Anim-Addo by investing the power of the healer in the hands of the 'privileged male' she appears to deny autonomy to her female subject. As Anim-Addo later points out, Mass Cyrus' healing of Ella 'cannot be considered as representative of the whole novel'<sup>374</sup>, yet it does raise questions about gender domination and feminist literary resistance in *Myal*. The ambivalence of the text's position with models of feminism is further highlighted in Puri's reading of the novel as she observes:

*Myal* avoids both models of feminism that wave away the problem of women's complicity by pointing to their victimization and lack of choice and models that celebrate all forms of agency or self advancement by women.<sup>375</sup>

Puri points out that Ella as with her mother Mary before her is engaged in a constant duel in which she displays moments of complicity and resistance. Ella enjoys being seduced by Selwyn Langley and desires sexual contact with him, 'Ella could touch him. He had taught her to and as a matter of fact, she liked touching him'. (81) In return for his touch Ella supplies him with her stories of Grove Town. When desire and longing turn into mental domination Ella resists Langley's control. Firstly by rebuffing his historical account with the claim 'It didn't go so' and secondly by descending into total silence.

Ella's disconnection with the outside world is the first step towards political agency. Her outward act of resistance is necessary as an internal battle rages in her mind:

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<sup>373</sup> Anim-Addo, *Touching The Body*, 208.

<sup>374</sup> Anim-Addo, *Touching The Body*, 209.

<sup>375</sup> Puri, 154.

-He took everything I had away. Made what he wanted of it and gave me back nothing [...] - It was you who let him take everything. You gave him everything [...] - But I didn't know when I was giving it, that it was mine and my everything. (84)

Ella's silence allows her to negotiate her position in the transaction of her story with Langley. Puri suggests that in *Myal* 'solidarity with the oppressed involves investigating precisely their political errors'.<sup>376</sup> Brodber's novel is the beginning of a discourse on the political transgressions of the Grove Town community and the wider Jamaican society. Ella redresses her complicity by taking control of other stories around her such as those found in *The Royal Crown Reader*. The community in Grove Town take action against the corrupting and violent force of Mass Levi by exorcising his power and finally killing him. Post-emancipation inevitably signals a period of transition and turbulence, in which violence assumes different forms. Brodber does not shy away from the complexities that such a shift had on the Jamaican landscape and in her fictional setting she presents a society that is misogynistic, corrupt and violent. That Brodber refuses to be silent about the 'evil' from within the community renders *Myal* on one level an uncomfortable and difficult textual survey of what it means to negotiate a modern Caribbean self in the twentieth century. Brodber eschews romanticised notions of the African-Caribbean collective and presents rather a community fraught with historic and contemporary tensions.

### **The Caribbean Plantation: Sugar Cane Alley**

In comparison, Joseph Zobel's earlier novel *Black Shack Alley* offers a more explicit and immediate connection with the meanings and repercussions of the Caribbean plantation on the development of Caribbean modernity. First published in Paris in 1950, *Black Shack Alley* marked a seminal moment in the development of modern literature in Martinique. At the time, there was very little literature by Martinican authors available despite the literary successes of the Negritude artists, and the increasing publication of works by

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<sup>376</sup> Puri, 154.

local authors in Paris at the time. Located between the two French Antillean intellectual movements of Negritude and Antillanité, *Black Shack Alley* explores the life of José Hassam, the novel's young protagonist. As with Brodber's *Myal*, Zobel's novel is set between the two world wars of the twentieth century and José much like Ella must first encounter his 'growing pains' through which he is forced to come to terms with his position firstly in *Black Shack Alley* and secondly within the glocal structure of Martinique's existence as a French colony.

*Black Shack Alley* exposes the hierarchical structure central to developing and maintaining the Caribbean plantation complex. Glissant in *Poetics of Relation* likens the formation of the plantation to that of a pyramid. With the African population at the base, holding up the mixed raced creole and European communities.<sup>377</sup> Within this slave society of 'oppression, of silent or professed dehumanization, forms of humanity stubbornly persisted.'<sup>378</sup> For Glissant, the humanity that persists in spite of the desolate and violent landscape provides glimpses of the communities to come and the cultures that they will eventually establish. Glissant suggests that it is within the hierarchial structures of the plantation that literature is created.<sup>379</sup> I draw on this idea of an inextricable relationship between the plantation and literature to suggest that exploring and articulating the meanings of the plantation is a necessary tendency of Caribbean literary modernity. Furthermore, central to my concern in this chapter is the relationship between the plantation, colonial education and representations of modernity in Caribbean literature.

In *Black Shack Alley*, Zobel underscores the problematic relationship between the black community and the assimilationist agenda at the heart of French colonialism. Set in the mid 1930's a decade or so before the "Law of Assimilation" was introduced on the 19 March 1946, giving rise to a new expression, 'Overseas Department' or 'Department d'outre-mer'. This law

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<sup>377</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 64.

<sup>378</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 65.

<sup>379</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 68.

assimilated France's four oldest colonies, Guadeloupe, Martinique, La Reunion and French Guiana with metropolitan France. It bound the political and judiciary systems of these countries to mainland France and since 1957 the four countries in question have been considered European territories.<sup>380</sup> The year 1946 also signalled the establishment of institutional, cultural and historical assimilation that had started three centuries previously. As Glissant underscores, 1946 is an important marker. He suggests in *Caribbean Discourse* that the post-1946 period ushered a fundamental change to the very ways in which the people of Martinique viewed their existence and position in the world.<sup>381</sup> The collapse of the plantation system after this date and the absence of a period of industrialisation to occupy the vacuum consign the population of Martinique to a period of flux. Interestingly Glissant argues that the pre-1946 colonial period offered a flawed but workable system within which existed two kinds of individuals, '[m]embers of the liberal professions and functionaries (teachers, academics, doctors, lawyers etc)' and '[a] small number of individuals'<sup>382</sup> who question the colonial system. I am particularly interested in Glissant's observation of the pre-1946 period as in many respects he is describing the political climate and the agricultural community that Zobel writes of in *Black Shack Alley*. I specifically want to consider the idea of the plantation structure and the types of individuals it creates through its education system. According to Glissant the stability that the plantation/colonial system provides comes at the cost of the individual's autonomy and demands a constant state of mimicry. Zobel's young protagonist José Hassam represents Glissant's example of the second individual: one of a small number of people who questions this system. José must leave the plantation in order to break free from its demands of mimicry and assimilation. Yet at the heart of plantation lies the culture which will allow José to supersede the system's stranglehold

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<sup>380</sup> Justin Daniel, 'The French Départments d'outre mer' in Dirk Kruijt and Lammert De Jong eds., *Extended Statehood in the Caribbean: Paradoxes of Quasi Colonialism, Local Autonomy and Extended Statehood in the USA, French, Dutch and British Caribbean*, (Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers, 2005), 59.

<sup>381</sup> Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 174.

<sup>382</sup> Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 175.

on him. It is this paradox at the heart of Caribbean literary modernity that I wish explore further.

When José is introduced in the narrative he is living in poverty on a Martinican plantation with his grandmother M'man Tine, whilst his mother Délia works in the island's capital, Forte-de-France. Although set in the twentieth century, not much has changed within the structure of the plantation communities since the 1850s<sup>383</sup> as Zobel describes the landscape of his text:

Black Shack Alley comprised some three dozen ramshackle wooden huts, covered with galvanize, standing at regular intervals at the side of the hill. To the top there stood, majestically, the house of the manager whose wife ran the store. Between the "house" and Shack Alley, one found the overseer's little house, the mule compound, the manure pile. Below Shack Alley, and all around, stretched vast fields of cane, at the end of which one could see the factory. (11)

José and M'man Tine occupy the lowest level of Glissant's pyramid system.<sup>384</sup> Their ramshackle wooden hut sits firmly in the gaze of the manager's majestic house and they are surrounded by the boundless sugar cane fields that engulf their very existence. Still heavily dependent on the planter and controlled by the overseer, their lives exist to produce for the sugar factory that looms large in the distance. As with Johnny Campbell's coming-of-age story in Reid's *New Day*, José's adolescent gaze mirrors the coming political maturity of his community.<sup>385</sup>

*Black Shack Alley's* linear narrative is divided into three sections and the opening chapter focuses on a pre-school José. Too young to attend formal school, his first classroom is the plantation. Whilst M'man Tine works in the cane fields during the day, José is left to entertain himself with the

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<sup>383</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 64.

<sup>384</sup> Glissant describes the plantation as a pyramid system; an enclosed space in which the top tier of the pyramid was occupied by planters and colonists. The middle tier was taken over by middle managers from Europe and later by the Creoles, mixed-race children of the planters. Finally the slaves, the black population occupied the lowest level. See Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 64-65.

<sup>385</sup> Hena Maes-Jelinek and Bénédicte Ledent in their work on the Caribbean novel underscore the metaphorical relationship between the child protagonist and the wider political scene. See, 'The Caribbean Novel Since 1970', in *A History of Literature in the Caribbean: Volume 2 English- and Dutch- Speaking Regions*, 177.

other children of the plantation, roaming the savannah with little care in the world. For José and his friends, the plantation is a beautiful place filled with an array of time consuming activities:

We were alone and the world was ours [...] We examined everything, destroying this or that at our fancy, uprooting plants [...] From guava tree to plum tree, from coco-plum field to cane field. We crossed the savannahs, joyously stoning the cows. (12)

This reckless abandon although carefree and at times joyful fails to mask the desperation of the children's lives. Food or more specifically the lack of it is a constant source of concern for the young children and their parents. Zobel's description of a picturesque landscape is juxtaposed with the rural community's glaring poverty. Importantly it also stands in stark contrast to beautiful images of the Caribbean being consumed by a global audience in the early twentieth century. James Beard's *The Fireside Cook Book* featuring the beautiful illustrations of the 'Banana Caribbean' and Kenneth Denton Shoesmith's poster for Royal Mail Lines Ltd are two such examples of pictorial distortions.<sup>386</sup> The respite from the poverty for both the children and their parents comes during the evenings and on Sundays when the plantation workers rest. On these occasions José finds himself in the company of Mr Médouze, Black Shack Alley's resident griot and a father figure to the young José. Médouze symbolises what Hall describes as the 'présence africaine',<sup>387</sup> the subterranean African voice that for years could only present itself through 'indirect means'.<sup>388</sup> These oblique messages concerning the creolised world of the black Martinican community are delivered to José through riddles and stories of far-away places. Confined to the very strict boundaries of the plantation and Black Shack Alley, Médouze's

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<sup>386</sup> In James A. Beard's text a trio of beautifully dressed Antilleans, one with bananas and fruits on her head dance gaily on a page describing banana recipes; Kenneth Denton Shoesmith's 1939 poster for Royal Mail Lines' Atlantis West Indies cruise features a black West Indian couple on the beach. The poster is striking in its composition but as with Beard's text distorts the realities of the Caribbean see, James A. Beard, *The Fireside Cookbook: A Complete Guide to Fine Cooking for the Complete Beginner and Expert* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1949); Kenneth Denton Shoesmith 'Atlantis West Indies Cruise Jan 1939', Royal Mail Lines Ltd.

<sup>387</sup> Hall, "Creolite and the Process of Creolization", 32.

<sup>388</sup> Hall, "Creolite and the Process of Creolization", 32.

riddles expands José's mind and allows him to travel where his body cannot go:

The main attraction of these riddle sessions was to discover how a world of inanimate objects managed to resemble and be identified with a world of people and animal [...] Thus, at the mere intervention of Mr. Médouze, the world expanded, increased, teemed in a swirl around me. (30)

Through Médouze's storytelling sessions José learns of Africa and the origins of his ancestors for the first time:

M'man Tine had already told me about a far-off country called France where people had white skins and spoke something called "French"; a country from which came the flour used to make bread and cakes, and where all things beautiful were made [...] Médouze evoked another country even further away, even deeper than France, which was that of his father: Guinea. There, people were like him and me; but they did not die of tiredness nor of hunger. There was no misery as there was here. (32)

Médouze presents the first crucial step in José's informal learning. He represents the last in a line of Martinicans who was alive during slavery and who remembers first hand accounts of life in Guinea. Along with M'man Tine's observations to José, Médouze's storytelling sessions hint at a triangular conflict and dependency between France, Guinea and Black Shack Alley. France provides beauty and food that Black Shack Alley residents depend upon. Guinea is free of misery thereby providing respite for the plantation workers. Yet as Médouze himself admits to José, Guinea is an elusive dream:

Alas! He replied, with a sad smile, "Médouze won't be seeing Guinea. Besides, I have no maman, no papa, no brothers or sisters in Guinea... Yes, when I'm dead, I'll go to Guinea; but then I won't be able to take you." (33)

Death and separation as a result of slavery has severed all ties between Médouze, his family and his country of origin.

In an essay on Glissant's novel *The Ripening*, Beverley Ormerod writes about the central character Papa Longue, who like Médouze functions as the link to an African past and states the following:



Papa Longue ultimately represents a retrograde force. As a quimboiseur, he keeps alive the African tradition of healing and prophecy handed down to him by his maroon forbearers. He also however, prolongs the maroon's old vain of hope of a return to Africa which as long as it survives prevents full acceptance of and commitment to the new country.<sup>389</sup>

Ormerod's observation above highlights that quimboiseurs such as Médouze and Papa Longue occupy a precarious position. As the keepers of folk history they safeguard the memories of the African communities, memories which have been denied recognition within official narratives. Yet their link to Africa and the desire to return ultimately denies African Caribbean communities now settled in the Caribbean with the space in which to create new identities within the Americas.

Médouze's narratives are important as they come to serve as a counter-point to the pervasive French culture that José encounters firstly at his junior school in the town of Petit-Bourg and later at the Lycée in the capital Fort-de-France. José's induction into the world of the griot introduces him to the power of storytelling. This experience allows the young boy a first glance at how tales/narratives can transcend the everyday and act as a means of preserving and curating the ordinary experiences of the Black Shack Alley community. The tales later provide José with the confidence to move beyond the French based curriculum taught at school, but it is not until he starts to read the works of African-American writers and to consider his position within the Americas that José comes of age. That Médouze dies at the end of Part One just as José enters formal education, metaphorically expresses the wider connection between Caribbean literary modernity, the 'présence africaine' and the plantation. Médouze and an adult José do not, and cannot, physically exist within the same literary space if José is to transcend the plantation system. Whilst Médouze's riddles will prove to be the foundation for José's literary exploits, in order to succeed in

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<sup>389</sup> Beverley Ormerod, *An Introduction to the French Caribbean Novel*, (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1985), 45 - 46.

inscribing the modern Caribbean experience, José must move beyond the world of the griot and onto the literary page.

Sam Haigh who traces the development of the Antillean literary tradition notes “it is a tradition which stretches like a paternal line of decent from colonisation to the present day.”<sup>390</sup> The distinctly male voices of storytellers and writers like the fictional Medouze and the real life Joseph Zobel afford a patriarchal gaze that has fundamentally informed the development of a modern Caribbean literature for both male and female writers. The discourse of the Negritude movement with its preoccupation with the search for an African ancestry has according to Haigh placed the question of ancestral home and belonging at the heart of the writing:

The question of origins, in particular, remains important in the work of Antillean writers, both male and female, and it frequently manifests itself as a search not only for a *place* of origin but also for an ancestor, an ‘original’ father to whom a legitimate line of filiation may be traced back in *explanation* of origins.<sup>391</sup>

It is interesting then, that Zobel as with Brodber in *Myal* eschews this search for a legitimate line of filiation. Medouze as indicated, above, cannot provide an ancestral link. At the same time, M’man Tine informs José that his father, sent to France during the First World War did not return once the conflict had ended. Thus in the literary landscape of *Black Shack Alley*, José is left with neither paternal nor ancestral filiations. Instead, his quest to escape the plantation is nurtured and aided by his matrilineal line, and the Black Shack Alley collective.

### **Our Ancestors the Gauls: Colonial education in *La rue Cases-Nègres***

The daily lives of both José’s mother and grandmother are consumed with the single task of making enough money to secure a decent livelihood to raise and educate José. M’man Tine informs her grandson that learning to read and write is the key. Moreover, ‘with that knowledge [he] was sure he

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<sup>390</sup> Sam Haigh, ‘Voix Feminiées/Voix Feministes’? Women’s Writing From the Francophone Caribbean’, in Kamal Salhi ed., *Francophone Voices*, (Exeter: Elm Bank Publications, 1999) , 141.

<sup>391</sup> Haigh, ‘Voix Feminiées/Voix Feministes’?, 146.

[he] wouldn't have to go to work on the plantations.' (p.91) Through such arguments, education becomes synonymous with exile and flight from the plantation and its many forms of violence against the individual, family and community. When José finally enters formal education, he approaches the task at hand with determination and significantly he enjoys his new regime, far away from the savannah of his pre-school years. The following passage describes his experience:

I was completely a different child. I had just been through a day full of new faces, new things and new feelings [...] Already I had learned the names of many new objects: the class, the desk, the board [...] Each day would bring me some new emotion. (62/63)

That 'new emotion' signals not only the physical movement away from the plantation but also linguistic movement away from the Creole spoken at home. As with Ella in *Myal*, José's early years are defined by the clash between the formal colonial education he is taught at school and the Nation Language (Brathwaite, 1984) that surrounds him on the plantation. Formal colonial education serves to create a linguistic and cultural chasm between José and his community in Black Shack Alley. Yet, interestingly, the division created as a result of formal learning is equally felt by José's peers in Black Shack Alley. I suggest that this division, between formal and informal education produces a tense relationship in Caribbean literary modernity between the act of writing and the writer's wider community. In order to give voice to the Black Shack Alley collective, José is forced to distance himself from the very people he wishes to empower.

As with other coming of age novels in the region, from George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin*, Merle Hodge's *Crick Crack Monkey*, and Lakshmi Persaud's *Butterfly in the Wind*, Zobel's young protagonist must engage with and ultimately subvert the colonial education system. *Black Shack Alley* in this sense is no different to a number of other novels in the Caribbean but as with VS Reid's *New Day*, it is one of the first novels to come out of the region in which the writer attempts to break free from colonial mimicry. Madeleine Cottenet-Hage and Kevin Meehan in their essay

“Schools and Schooling in Two Caribbean Novels” consider the role of education in the Francophone Caribbean. Colonial schools they reveal ‘constitute points of uneasy contact where knowledge, codes, and values coming from *somewhere else* are transmitted, deliberately and forcibly, to a diverse local population.’<sup>392</sup> It is a space where they encounter the difficult challenge where they must learn to assimilate ‘western knowledge and values [...] knowledge and cultural values transmitted by another school, that of nature and familial/ancestral traditions.’<sup>393</sup>

Zobel and the fictional José centre their examination on this problematic process of assimilation and renouncement around the meanings of plantation. Mining the plantation complex for its cultural signification offers a critical lens through which to articulate Caribbean modernity. José seeks and creates acquaintances with people who have a connection to the plantation. At school he becomes friends with Vereil, a young boy who “knew lots of things and told us sparkling, captivating tales that delighted us” (83) Vereil enchants and scares the boys in equal measure with tales of zombies, gens-gages and baton-volants.<sup>394</sup> In Fort-de-France he becomes friends with Carmen, a handsome car driver for a rich French family who like José was born on the plantation. Although José recognises the stories and songs that Carmen recites to him from his youth, it is not until this point that he starts to listen to their meaning:

Some nights, Carmen came in whistling [...] and began to beat out rhythms with his fingers on the edge of the table. They were plantation songs [...] But when he stopped whistling and switched to singing, his words were new to me [...] I spent a long time listening to him, speechless, almost in a trance. (152)

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<sup>392</sup>Madeleien Cottenet-Hage and Kevin Meehan “Our Ancestors the Gauls...” “Schools and Schooling in Two Caribbean Novels’ *Callaloo* 15.1 (1992), 76.

<sup>393</sup>Madeleien Cottenet-Hage and Kevin Meehan, 76.

<sup>394</sup>Across the Caribbean region there are different names for paranormal creatures. These stories have their roots in African religiosity for further information on Martinique and Guadeloupe See R. Slama, C. Gillet, R. William, J.L. Longuefosse and R. Brunod, ‘Histoire de la folie à la Martinique: 1. Les origins et leur evolution actuelle’. *L’Information Psychiatrique* 79 (2003), 493-499.

In the town of Cour Fusil, José seeks out the company of Mr Assionis “storyteller, singer, and a drummer by profession” whose wife Ti-Louise was a dancer:

He [Assionis] did not work at the factory nor on any plantation [...] almost every night he would put his drum on his back, take his stick and, together with Ti-Louise, would set off [...] On Saturday nights he would go to play and sing on the plantations; and it was there, between the two *laghias* of death, that Ti-Louise would dance the *bel-air* like a woman who had sold her soul to the devil, according to bystanders. (81)

The Laghia as Michael Dash describes it is “a traditional Martinican dance in which two partners go through the motions of a fight without touching each other”.<sup>395</sup> As with the lyrics of the plantation songs, and the steps of the *bel-air*<sup>396</sup> knowledge of the laghia stems from a deep rooted knowledge of the plantations; a knowledge known only to those born in the depths of the savannahs. When José is asked to write an assignment of a childhood memory at the Lycée it is to this knowledge that he turns. He is excited by this task as it provides a welcome break from reading “those wretched little books *Le Cid, Le Misanthrope, Athalie*” (156) yet, he is accused of plagiarism:

“Hassam”, Mr. Jean-Henri continued, unfolding my assignment, you’re the most cynical chap I’ve ever met! When you have to do literary essays, you’re never brave enough to consult the works recommended; but for an assignment as subjective as this one, it seemed easier to you to open a book and copy passage from it. (157)

Deemed to be weak in French and Literature and disinterested in the tragedies and comedies of Corneille, Racine, and Moliere, the only conclusion that José’s teacher can offer to his sudden burst of literary proficiency is plagiarism. The teacher fails to understand that the lives of seventeenth century playwrights and their plays of Castilian noblemen and Parisian aristocracy are of little interest to a young man from the plantations of Martinique. Whilst José is disappointed that his creativity has not been

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<sup>395</sup>J. Michael Dash, *Edouard Glissant*, (New York: Press Syndicate of the Cambridge University Press, 1995), 188.

<sup>396</sup>The *bel-air* is an outdoor dance of West African origin performed across the Caribbean by women. See Richard Allsopp and Jeanette Allsopp eds., *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 91.

acknowledge, this episode confirms to him that firstly, the black inhabitants of the plantation can exist on the literary page, and secondly, he too can become a writer. This key moment is important to my thesis on the literary representations of Caribbean modernity as it signals the awakening of the 'presence americaine.' By locating the griot to the literary page, Zobel responds to the process of translation that has taken place in the region.

Glissant in *Poetics of Relation* argues that there are three moments in the development of this literature: 'literary production – first as an act of survival, then a dead end or a delusion, finally as an effort or passion of memory.'<sup>397</sup> He suggests that the literary production on the plantation in the form of oral narratives/songs serves as acts of survival: 'akin to other subsistence-survival-techniques set in place by slaves and their immediate descendants.'<sup>398</sup> Glissant reveals that the desire to manoeuvre around the rule of cultural and political silence imposed on the slaves by the plantation owners creates a discontinuity that "bursts forth in snatches and fragments".

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To this Antillean theory of literary development Anim-Addo suggests that we should consider Glissant's 'moments' as modes of 'literary production' and adds a further stage: 'the third, memory mode, I suggest, is essentially post-plantation. In effect, the latter marks the beginnings of African-heritage writing in the region.'<sup>400</sup> I employ both Glissant and Anim-Addo's theories to suggest that José through his interaction with friends and acquaintances collects the fragments and snatches of the plantation narratives and uses this to break the silence/absence of the rural black population in the colonial education's curriculum. This post-plantation 'memory mode' enables José to relocate the cultural traditions of the collective of Black Shack Alley to the page. In doing so, both José the fictional writer and Zobel legitimise and give authority to the cultural practices of

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<sup>397</sup>Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 68.

<sup>398</sup>Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 69.

<sup>399</sup>Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 69.

<sup>400</sup>Anim-Addo, *Touching The Body*, 131.

poor African Caribbean plantation communities for a future generation of writers and readers.

Although Zobel, like Césaire and other negritude writers explicitly links the middle passage to the cultural and political severing of ties between the black Caribbean diaspora and mainland Africa, he does not advocate a physical or metaphorical return. At the end of *Black Shack Alley*, José's happiness at passing his baccalaureate is tempered by the death of M'Man Tine. Whilst his friends Carmen and Jojo try to console him, he decides to lift the gloom by telling his friends a story:

I was the one who wished to rid them of their self-imposed gloom out of respect for my grief. I should, for example, tell them a story. But which one? The one which I knew best and which tempted me most at that time was quite similar to theirs. It is to those who are blind and those who block their ears that I must shout it. (182)

The story that he must tell, is the story of the plantation. The stories that the planter class did not and could not tell in their nineteenth century diaries and travelogues.<sup>401</sup> As Medouze's death signals at the very early stages of the novel, this is not a story concerned with a return to Guinea, but rather with Martinique and the wider Caribbean. The social realism employed in *Black Shack Alley* and the didactic style of Zobel's narrative means that at first glance José's encounters with the singers, dancers and storytellers of rural Martinique can appear nondescript. Yet, Zobel's depiction of the cultural practices of the black population points to a seminal moment in the development of Caribbean literary modernity. I argue that this moment fundamentally shapes how the writers across the region who follow him approach the Caribbean novel. In locating the cultural traditions hidden in the depths of the plantation, Zobel provides for the writers who precede him a glimpse into the fragmented past. It is from these fragments that they go on to consider how language and a literary culture begin to develop on the plantation. Their modernity is explicitly and inextricably linked to this

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<sup>401</sup>Anim-Addo, *Touching the Body*, 67.

landscape and its trauma and Zobel in committing the black bodies on to the page, is central to the development of this literary modernity.

### **We All Had a M'man Tine: The Toils of the Antillean Woman**

José's early childhood world revolves around the plantation, his friends and most importantly M'man Tine his grandmother. As I underscore in Chapter One with Simone Schwarz-Bart's protagonist Telumee, the grandmother figure acts as a nexus, providing the food and knowledge that enables her grandchildren to navigate the wider world. In both the Francophone and Anglophone Caribbean literary landscape(s) her figure looms large and Jamaican writer Michelle Cliff, when reflecting on her own writing notes "at her most powerful, the grandmother is the source of knowledge".<sup>402</sup> Whilst the grandmother figures centrally in these Caribbean novels it is left to her grandchildren to write her tale. She is always spoken for and her thoughts and experiences go through a filtering process, as they are firstly deconstructed through the gaze of a child and then reshaped by the adult writer in later life. This process of translation is problematic when locating the African Caribbean woman's voice in the development of Caribbean modernity. The transference of her experience to the gaze of the child protagonist reduces her literary presence, and raises questions surrounding the elegizing that takes place with regard to her position within the family and wider community. The mythical status that she assumes within the literary texts masks the hardships and violent encounters that she endures.

That Zobel concentrates not only on the grandmother's recollections of her childhood and young adult life, but also on her physical self and the impact that the plantation has on her body, is significant to my argument. The black body is a recurring image in *Black Shack Alley* and the young José continually describes the bodies of his grandmother, the plantation workers and the boat yard workers in Fort-de-France. Indeed he is almost haunted by his grandmother's withered body as he watches "her rags and her skin

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<sup>402</sup>Michelle Cliff, 'Leh we talk see' in *Caribbean Women Writers: Essays from the First International Conference*, 267.



weather-beaten, soaked like a sponge” (136). He longs to finish his baccalaureate so he can save her from undertaking further work:

It seemed to me that time wasn't passing quickly enough [...] When I had left her last time, M'man Tine had gone back to the cane fields; but she no longer felt any strength [...] I wrote to my grandmother every week, telling her over and over that I was soon going to leave school. (158)

The plantation saps M'man Tine's strength and when she recollects her former years to José, the inextricable relationship between the plantation and the violence that it exerts upon M'man Tine's body is made clear:

When my mother died nobody wanted me, except Uncle Gilbert [...] He enlisted me in the *petites bandes*, to uproot weeds from the young canes so I could bring him a few cents on Saturday nights [...] From morning to night I remained bent over in the furrow, my head lower than my behind, until the commander, Mr. Valbrum, seeing how I was built, held, rolled me over on the ground and drove a child into my belly. (24)

M'man Tine reveals that she is not the first in her family to be raped. The plantation owner of her childhood home is also her grandfather. In a matter-of-fact manner that consists of no more than ten lines M'man Tine exposes the historical subjugation that she and her foremothers have suffered. Suzanne Scafe in her reading of Donna Heman's *River Woman* (2002) links the pragmatic approach of the female protagonists to the violence they encounter directly to the 'plantation's affects.' Although Heman's narrative is set in the twentieth century, Scafe argues that the 'plantation's affects, [with] its unanticipated layers of trauma that are the consequences of repeated ruptures and scenes of violence'<sup>403</sup>, continue to haunt the narrative landscape of Caribbean literature. M'man Tine's pragmatic approach to the sexual violence wrought upon her body is a marker of the psychological violence endured within the plantation complex.

Whilst the literary discourse on rape and the violence against women during slavery period is more readily discussed than in contemporary texts

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<sup>403</sup>Suzanne Scafe, 'she found a way, left the child': 'child-shifting' as the plantation's affects and love's paradox in Donna Heman's *River Woman* in *Feminist Review*, 104, 2013, 62.

by twentieth century Caribbean writers. The denial of political and sexual agency firstly by the state and secondly by the plantation society brings in to further question the literary portrayal of the strong and reticent older black woman. As Mimi Sheller points out, the end of slavery did not signal an end to the practices prevalent during that period:

When slavery ended, techniques and practices of sexual domination and bipolar power remained entrenched. Violence against the body continued to be exercised in corporeal forms of private and political embodiment that reproduced racial, gender, sexual and class hierarchies.<sup>404</sup>

As I highlighted in my analysis of *Myal* and as the above quote from Sheller stresses, the end of the slave trade signalled a lateral movement into new forms of patriarchal domination. M'man Tine does not reveal to José if her rapist is black or white and as the actions of Mass Levi in *Myal* reveals, political and sexual domination of Caribbean women is not limited to one particular race. Zobel and the young narrator José are not able to give a complete account nor are they fully able to voice M'man Tine's experience. That we are presented with a tenacious grandmother signals the literary creation of different types of Caribbean matriarch. In line with other literary Caribbean grandmothers, M'man Tine works hard for her grandson's future yet she is also a grandmother who is traumatised both physically and mentally. Whilst her voicing of this experience is brief, it is an important marker nonetheless of her gendered subjectivity.

Joycelin Massiah in the introduction to Olive Senior's *Working Miracles* acknowledges that Caribbean women were only beginning 'to speak for themselves, to name their experiences and to make their own connections'<sup>405</sup> at the turn of the twentieth century. Michelle Rowley and a number of other Caribbean feminists at the beginning of the twenty-first century take on Senior's and Massiah's challenge of locating Caribbean women's difference and suggests "voicing":

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<sup>404</sup>Mimi Sheller, *Citizenship from Below: Erotic Agency and Caribbean Freedom* (North Carolina: Dukes University Press, 2012), 8.

<sup>405</sup>Joycelin Massiah, 'Foreword', in Olive Senior, *Working Miracles*.

The term “voicing” stems from the need to reflect women’s lived realities within our theoretical frames [...]The act of voicing is one that challenges dichotomous representations in that it prompts the recognition that women’s voices are not locked within social, ethnic, classicist, or ideological groups but that there is a long pendulum between discourse and harmony, exclusions and inclusions.<sup>406</sup>

My argument throughout this chapter has been that voicing difference is not only essential if we are to locate the Caribbean woman’s development in Caribbean literary modernity. It is imperative to an analysis of the wider implications of Caribbean literary modernity. The strong grandmother at the centre of so many Caribbean bildungsroman is a problematic figure to deconstruct. Her trauma is necessarily hidden from her grandchildren, a result of not only their age but also of the cultural constraints which surrounds discussing female sexuality. Nevertheless, the romanitised notion of the grandmother so prevalent in Caribbean literature creates a dichotomous view of Caribbean women that is neither grounded in empirical research nor anecdotal evidence. In voicing difference, I hope to suggest a model of reading that considers meanings of plantation from a gendered perspective. In addition I argue that by gendering creolisation we can at last begin to break free from the literary representations of the homogeneous black woman.

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<sup>406</sup>Michelle Rowley, ‘Reconceptualizing Voice: The Role of the Matrifocality in Shaping Theories and Caribbean Voices’, in Patricia Mohammed ed., *Gendered Realities: Essays in Caribbean Feminist Thought*, (Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 2002), 25.

### III

**'In the aquarium of the Great Zoo'<sup>407</sup>**

**The Image of the Caribbean City in Vic Reid's *New Day*  
and Joseph Zobel's *Black Shack Alley***

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<sup>407</sup> Nicolás Guillen, *The Great Zoo*, in *El apellido/My Last Name and other poems*, trans. Roberto Marquez (London: Mango Publishing 2002), 313. I used Guillen's poem as means of thinking through ideas concerning the Caribbean and the Sea, and Caribbean tidalectics.

What is the City? you say.

It's the bottleneck where all our stories come together. The Times too. The plantations used to keep us apart. The hills planted us in rooted driftings. City gets going ties moors blends and blends again at full speed.

Patrick Chamoiseau, *Texaco*<sup>408</sup>

As I hope to have argued thus far, the spectre of the plantation looms large for Caribbean writers and scholars, when considering the cultural and political development of the region. Flight and exile from a society dominated by an agricultural landscape, harbouring a wretched history is a reoccurring motif in the works of Brodber, Reid, Schwarz-Bart and Zobel. The literary representation of this flight in Caribbean novels of the twentieth century, has largely focused on the protagonist leaving the island altogether. In this particular narrative pattern, flight from the last page of the narrative signals a journey into an unknown landscape, of an unnamed European metropolitan centre. In novels such as George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin* and Merle Hodge's *Crick, Crack Monkey* where the main protagonists have undertaken such journeys, these acts of flight, I suggest, can be understood as a metaphor for flight from the known Caribbean self and towards the modern. Flight from literary page, then, is representative of the changing political landscape within the region, and ushers in the new dawn of independence.

In the Antillean tradition, the relationship between the exiled writer, Caribbean literary production, modernity, and the metropolitan centre can be traced to the 1930s and 40s, where a wave of writing emerged from black students and artists living in Paris at the time. Similarly, London in the 1950s and 60s hosted a number of Caribbean literary exiles,<sup>409</sup> whose critical

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<sup>408</sup> Patrick Chamoiseau, *Texaco*, trans. Rose- Myriam Rejouis and Val Vinokurov (London: Granta Publications, 1997), 293.

<sup>409</sup> The Caribbean Artists' Movement was founded in London in 1966 by Kamau Brathwaite, John La Rose and Andrew Salkey to address the absence of a critical discourse on Caribbean literature. A number of established artists, writers and critics such as Wilson Harris, Stuart Hall, Orlando Patterson, Merle Hodge, Lucille Mathurin-Mair amongst others were artists associated with the Caribbean Artists Movement. See Ann Walmsley *The Caribbean Artists Movement 1966-1972- A Literary and Cultural History*, (London: New Beacon Books, 1992.). Similarly the Nardal Sisters, *Légitime Défense* and the artists of the Negritude Movement

writings shaped and influenced a subsequent generation of writers. In view of this relationship between Caribbean literature, the exiled writer and the European metropolis, it is perhaps not surprising that the connection between Caribbean literature, the Caribbean city, and the attendant modernity that shaped it, has received considerably less attention. At the centre of the relationship between the Caribbean exile/migrant and the European city, is the postcolonial condition which questions the notions of home, and self, for the Caribbean diaspora. Gikandi in his book *Writing in Limbo* places exile at the centre of Caribbean modernist discourse, and suggests '[t]hat the most important literary and cultural documents in the Caribbean tradition [...] were produced in exile.'<sup>410</sup> He contends that 'exile and the displacement it engenders constitute the ground zero of West Indian literature, its radical point of departure.'<sup>411</sup> Read within this context, Caribbean literary modernity is forced to exist within a discourse that continually locates it on the margins of the metropolitan centre. Furthermore, the theoretical discourses deployed to deconstruct the exiled migrant experience, are rooted in European/Western critical thought. This is highly problematic, as Arun P. Mukherjee rightly argues, it serves to obliterate the 'internal centres and peripheries'<sup>412</sup> specific to each Caribbean island.

Moreover, as Mukherjee observes, Postcolonial and Postmodern criticism rarely takes into consideration the origins or the traditions that non-Western texts are written out of. The absence of the cultural insider relegates non-Western writing to the periphery, fixed in a binary where the centre is always the metropolitan literary ideal.<sup>413</sup> On the margins and inextricably linked to its occupiers, the non-Western text is forced to appropriate a homogeneous critical model, in order to articulate and justify

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were producing work in Paris during the 1930s and 40s, see introduction to this thesis, 29-37.

<sup>410</sup> Gikandi, 33.

<sup>411</sup> Gikandi, 33.

<sup>412</sup> Arun, Mukherjee, 'Whose Post-Colonialism and Whose Post-Modernism?' *World Literature Written in English*, 30, 2, 1990, 6.

<sup>413</sup> Mukherjee, 1-9.

its presence. Read within this theoretical framework, the European city and its implied modernity, provides respite for the Caribbean, and the associated histories of repression and dependence. Exile is equated with distance and freedom, which in turn provides a critical eye, to better understand the socio-political implications of contemporary and historiographical events in the region. Of course exile for the Caribbean writer can hasten the modern by offering a diasporic context in which to reconfigure black identity. Mary Lou Emery writing on the migratory experience of the Caribbean artist observes that a process of 'transformations in seeing'<sup>414</sup> takes place. These transcontinental movements she argues, creates 'disturbances of visions' and different ways of seeing emerge.<sup>415</sup> Here, the catalyst for the clarity reflected in the literary narrative, is the European / Western city.

Drawing on Mukherjee's analysis I shall attempt to explore the relationship between the Caribbean writer and the city, through the lens of the 'internal centres and peripheries' specific to Jamaica and Martinique. Whilst I agree, and indeed have argued in earlier chapters, that displacement is central to the development of a Caribbean literary tradition, I posit that an over-privileging of exile, and writing produced in exile, has significantly shaped the critical discourses of Caribbean literary modernity. For the purpose of this thesis, I am concerned with examining the literary representations of the metropolitan centres of the Caribbean in Reid's *New Day* and Zobel's *Black Shack Alley*. As I have demonstrated in Chapter Two, plantation realities must be considered in the discourses relating to Caribbean literary modernity. My aim here is to extend this discourse by emphasising the position of the creolised port city in the representations of modernity in Caribbean literature. In doing so I connect the political and economic condition of the urban population, and suggest that the historical acts of resistance in the Caribbean metropolis, points to a defining juncture in the development of Caribbean literary modernity.

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<sup>414</sup>Emery, *Modernism, the Visual, and Caribbean Literature*, 38.

<sup>415</sup>Emery, *Modernism, the Visual, and Caribbean Literature*, 39.

### Street Dreams: The Caribbean Port City

The relationship between the plantation and the city in the Caribbean is paradoxical. In the epigraph, above taken from Martinican writer Patrick Chamoiseau's novel *Texaco* (2008), Papa Totone is asked what is the Caribbean city? His observation serves to highlight that the city provides a space in which the different communities of Martinique can come together. It offers an ever changing landscape where the characters stories meet, blend, and evolve again. Significantly, it also suggests movement and mobility, away from the plantation, an activity historically denied to the black population of Martinique. The city, according to Papa Totone, is the antithesis to the plantation.

Roy Chandler Caldwell Jr. writing on the creole city in Chamoiseau's *Texaco*, observes that in the West, theorists such as the German philosopher and historian Oswald Spengler have situated the city in opposition to the countryside. The city represents the 'new field of possibilities opening into the future'<sup>416</sup>, whilst the countryside is regressive and always linked to the past. Caldwell Jr. suggests that this trajectory is less useful when considering the Caribbean, and in particular, Chamoiseau's, *Texaco*. The fictional Martinican city of this literary landscape he reveals, 'signifies escape from the past of slavery, and the potential of forging future identities. Yet in *Texaco* the figure of the City assumes another, and contradictory, value. Here the city becomes simultaneously future and past.'<sup>417</sup>

Caldwell Jr.'s argument points to the contradictory elements of the creole city. The Caribbean city, post slavery, provides respite from the ultra-modernising forces of the sugar industry, and the inherent dehumanising characteristics of its modernity. Unlike Western Europe, where the agrarian communities of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were characterised by stability and tradition,<sup>418</sup> the Caribbean plantation in

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<sup>416</sup> Roy Chandler Caldwell Jr, 'For a Theory of the Creole City: *Texaco* and the Postcolonial Postmodern' in *Ici-La: Place and Displacement in Caribbean Writing in French*, 28.

<sup>417</sup> Chandler Caldwell Jr, 28.

<sup>418</sup> Paola Malanima, 'Urbanization', in *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Europe, Vol 1: 1700-1870*, ed. Stephen Broadberry and Kevin H. O'Rourke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 236.



contrast, was located at the cutting-edge of modern technology. At the same time it was immersed in a global system of contact and exchange. That the creole city's relationship with the agrarian communities surrounding its borders, continues to be haunted by the spectre of the plantation, even after the abolition of slavery, is far from surprising. The city does indeed allow the African-Caribbean population to forge new identities within its spatial boundaries, but paradoxically, this discourse takes place in the shadow of the modernity that engulfs its periphery.

The centre/periphery model, of rural countryside versus modern urbanity differs in the Caribbean, in comparison to other colonial regions.<sup>419</sup> During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the plantation and its produce was the economic heartbeat of the region. While the port cities were important links between the plantation and the wider world, the wealth and power of the planter class far outstripped that of the merchants in the Caribbean port cities during this period. In this complex relationship, coastal cities in the Caribbean were developed to serve the rural economy and not the other way round.<sup>420</sup> This is not to say that port cities were merely conduits for plantation produce. The urban spaces located at the edges of Caribbean harbours were thriving entities within themselves. It must also be emphasised that not all port cities in the Caribbean followed this pattern of rural dominance. In islands such as Jamaica, the port city was an established and thriving economy long before the plantation and the sugar economy became the main source of revenue.<sup>421</sup>

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<sup>419</sup> According to Bonham C. Richardson, in African colonies the European port cities were the end termini for railways and transport penetrating non-Western interiors. The metropolitan centres became the concentration points for development. This, in comparison to the Caribbean, where the plantations were the points of development, and the port cities were transient spaces in a larger network of transportation. See Bonham C. Richardson, *The Caribbean in the Wider World, 1492:1992: A Regional Geography* (Cambridge; New York: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge Press, 1992), 43.

<sup>420</sup> Richardson, *The Caribbean in the Wider World*, 43.

<sup>421</sup> Nuala Zahedieh has written extensively on the Atlantic economy, merchants and the development of Port Royal, and other Jamaican port cities. For further see "The Merchants of Port Royal, Jamaica, and the Spanish Contraband Trade, 1655-1692", *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Oct, 1986), 570-593.

In highlighting the complex historical relationship, between the rural and the urban spaces of the Caribbean, I want to emphasise the tensions at play in the creolised city and its position as a space that, in the words of Caldwell Jr., simultaneously inhabits 'past and future.' I suggest that in the Caribbean port city, new meanings of modernity are fashioned. These act as a counter discourse to the types of modernity produced in depths of the sugar factories linked to the plantation. The creolised city has long been seen as the plantation reconfigured. Glissant acknowledges that for the African Caribbean communities living within the boundaries of the city, a limited form of social progress is obtainable. Nevertheless, he argues that the city offers the old order rearranged, with authority and control remaining in the same hands. He suggests that in the metropolitan centres of the Caribbean, 'the plantation greathouse and the foreman's cabin are replaced by boards, offices, agencies.'<sup>422</sup>

Moving away from this interpretation of the Caribbean port city, as a reconstituted urban plantation, I shall attempt to locate the Caribbean creole city, at the centre of the awakening of a new black consciousness. I hope to demonstrate the implications that the Caribbean city has had on the literary representations of modernity and a modern Caribbean subjectivity in Caribbean literature, and more specifically, in *New Day* and *Black Shack Alley*. In doing so, I consider the ways in which the characters in *New Day* and *Black Shack Alley* journey from the plantations and the cays, to the streets and boulevards of their respective cities. The port city I suggest provides new modes of communication and interaction unthinkable on the plantation. The physical structures of the city with squares and harboursides, presents new ways of considering and locating a sense of self as a burgeoning merchant class connected to, but distinct from the planter class develops and expands. As I have already noted, Chamoiseau's Papa Totone suggests the city demands and provides a space in which Caribbean identities can be forged anew. Of particular interest to my analysis is the

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<sup>422</sup> Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 37.

concept of identity within the port city, vis-à-vis the plantation complex. If, as I suggest, the port city represents more than merely a lateral movement away from the plantation, how do the characters in Zobel's and Reid's texts define and interpret their modernity and their equally important sense of Caribbean-ness?

### **The Brothel as Heterotopia: Sex and Agency in the Caribbean port city**

In 1967 Michel Foucault delivered his lecture 'Of Other Spaces' to a group of architects, and it is here that he introduces his concept of heterotopia. Unlike utopias, that 'present society itself in perfected form'<sup>423</sup>, heterotopias are 'other spaces, 'counter sites' in which 'all other sites 'are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted'.<sup>424</sup> Heterotopias function between extreme poles, creating spaces of illusion or perfection. Foucault provides the brothel and the colony as two examples of extreme heterotopias. He points to the boat's relational position to the sea, the port and the indefinite spaces of its own microcosmic community to reveal that within these spaces idealised visions and counter-narratives are created. The boat enables Western Europe to present to its own population and the spaces it occupies radical reconfigurations of its metropolitan centres.

The journeys it undertakes 'from port to port, from tack to tack, from brothel to brothel'<sup>425</sup> secures Western Europe's economic position and as equally significant, it ushers in the age of the fantastical, a chimera of a promised paradise. On this basis Foucault duly observes that the ship 'has been simultaneously the greatest reserve of the imagination. The ship is heterotopia *par excellence*.<sup>426</sup> I shall attempt to apply Foucault's idea of heterotopia to my examination of the port city and Caribbean literary modernity. If as Foucault suggests, the colony is a heterotopia of compensation, a mechanism through which to counterbalance European

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<sup>423</sup> Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, Vol 16 No. 1 (Spring 1986), 24.

<sup>424</sup> Foucault, 24.

<sup>425</sup> Foucault, 24.

<sup>426</sup> Foucault, 27.

failings, where are we to locate the enslaved and the creolised subject? Moreover, what implications does this heterotopia of compensation have on the development of Caribbean modernity?

Part Two of V.S. Reid's *New Day* presents two examples of the extreme heterotopias as described by Foucault. The narrative moves from Morant Bay, to the Morant Cays<sup>427</sup> and finally to Kingston. Having escaped the Morant Bay rebellion, Johnny the young narrator, with his brother Davie and Davie's wife Lucille seek refuge on the Morant Cays. Lucille gives birth to a son and together with Davie and Johnny they build a profitable business collecting and selling guano and bird eggs. Their family life is torn apart by a devastating hurricane that kills Davie and shipwrecks Lucille, who is later presumed to have died at sea. In 1882, eight years after the hurricane, Johnny, with his nephew in tow, leaves the Cays for the port city of Kingston. After learning that Lucille survived the hurricane he goes in search of her and finds her desolate and living in a brothel on Kingston's wharves. Before Johnny meets Lucille he is greeted by a prostitute at the brothel door who offers her services to him:

So then after I leave James Creary with the woman at the lodging house it was no' hard for me to find the house in a narrow street leading off the waterfront on the edge o'town [...] I had no need to knock then, for the door is flung open and a woman is smiling at me [...] "Nice blond boy – what does nice blond boy want? Come inside, nice blond boy, and ha' your bellyful!" [...] "Make madam take care o' you – plenty nice women here, sailorman!"  
"I am no' a sailorman" I tell her with quickness, backing from the door.  
(225/226)

I want to examine this passage in depth. Although brief in relation to the rest of the novel, its glance at the city's complex gendered dynamic, is central to my discussion on the gendered relationship between the creolised city, and Caribbean literary modernity. *New Day's* fleeting, yet compelling observation of the underbelly of the nineteenth century Jamaican port city, points to the acts of political and economical resistance taking place amongst the black

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<sup>427</sup> Morant Cay is part of the Jamaican archipelago lying off the South Eastern coast of the island.

female population of Kingston. Their presence within the spatial limits of the literary city, articulates a gendered presence at the heart of the development of a black urban and modern political awakening. As I will argue throughout this Chapter, to reconfigure the discourses on Caribbean literary modernity, we must include the Caribbean city and in doing so complicate the gendered dimensions of Caribbean urbanity and Atlantic-world historiography.

The Caribbean port city in the popular imagination and historical documentation is an undeniably masculine space, created in the vision of the metropolitan occupier.<sup>428</sup> The Jamaican capital of Spanish Town was overtaken by the British in 1655, and ushered in 200 years of British rule. Although the Spanish had built on the island the subsequent waves of English migration saw the architectural development of the plantations and urban areas. The styles developed by the British both mirrored and emulated the architectural landscape of London and other British urban centres of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Historian James Robertson points to the settlement of second generation English settlers in the latter part of the seventeenth century, who erected elaborate buildings emphasising the “Englishness” of the new structures.<sup>429</sup> The descriptions of Port Royal during the seventeenth century ‘consistently evoked parallels with London’s Cheapside. Observers noted that the façade and shops of the port city that ‘echoed the older city’s [London’s] main trading street.’<sup>430</sup>

By the middle of the eighteenth century fashionable houses were being built in the Georgian style<sup>431</sup> and by 1733 plans for Kingston had already

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<sup>428</sup> Literature on the population and architecture of the Caribbean port city in the main focuses on writing from the francophone and Hispanophone islands. British architecture in Caribbean cities differs greatly to their counterparts in the francophone and Hispanophone islands. For the first initial settlers their Caribbean sojourn was a temporary affair and the buildings they built reflected this. By the eighteenth century with a permanent colony in place ostentatious buildings were erected but again, following the trend in Britain, these were located in the plantations, thereby copying the country houses in rural England. Less urban-minded than the Spanish, this might in part explain the paucity of literature concerning British colonial port cities. See Andrew Gravette, *Architectural Heritage of the Caribbean: A-Z of Historic Buildings* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2000).

<sup>429</sup> James Robertson, ‘Jamaican Architectures before Georgian’ *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 36, No. 2/3 (Summer – Autumn 2001), 90.

<sup>430</sup> Robertson, 90.

<sup>431</sup> Cleveland Salmond, *Architectural Designs for Tropical Regions*, (New York: Wiley, 1999), 12.

been drawn. Historian Matthew Mulcahy reveals that the town plan drafted by 'John Grosse laid out Kingston in a classical grid pattern with a large central square and wide streets'<sup>432</sup> once again mirroring the features of London and other British cities. Moreover he points to the work of other historians who 'have suggested a number of influences for Kingston's layout, including Spanish town planning ideas and William Penn's recent designs for Philadelphia.'<sup>433</sup> The cosmopolitan landscape of Jamaica's urban centres carried within them not only plans of the colonial metropolitan centre but also of other burgeoning and established metropolises. As already noted by Benitez-Rojo 'every Caribbean city carries deep within it other cities, which live as foetal miniscule nodules of turbulence, that proliferate [...] through marinas, plazas and alleys.'<sup>434</sup> Significantly to my wider analysis on the relationship between violence and representations of modernity in Caribbean literature, Benitez-Rojo pinpoints a latent violence that exists in the very fabric of the city.

That the modernity and ambition for Kingston and its population was as great and comprehensive as seventeenth century Philadelphia provides an indication of the port city's ambition and global strategic positioning. Within this heterotopia of compensation flocked skilled English migrants from the mercantile community seeking their fortune as bookkeepers and clerks for the plantations and merchant houses located on the wharves.<sup>435</sup> Yet, the passage taken from *New Day* reveals that the city was occupied by more than economic migrants from the metropolises of Britain. Central to my concern are the hotels, inns, and brothels located on the wharfs of Kingston. These architectural structures housed black and mixed-race Caribbean women so that Lucille's plight and position as a prostitute in *New Day*, highlights that in the Caribbean city, as with the plantation, the black

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<sup>432</sup> Matthew Mulcahy, "That Fatal Spot": The Rise and Fall – and Rise and Fall Again – Of Port Royal Jamaica, in *Investing in the Early Modern Built Environment: Europeans, Asians, Settlers and Indigenous Societies*, Carole Shammas ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 200.

<sup>433</sup> Mulcahy, 200.

<sup>434</sup> Benitez-Rojo, *Repeating Island*, 211.

<sup>435</sup> Trevor Burnard, 'European Migration to Jamaica, 1655-1780', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 53, No. 4 (Oct, 1996), 789.

woman's body continues to function as valuable commodity that can be bought for sexual consumption.

As I have already discussed in Chapter Two the work of Barbara Bush amongst others has highlighted the relationship between sex, power and control on the plantations. In this Chapter I focus on the work of Marisa J. Fuentes, Hilary Beckles and Paulette A. Kerr respectively. Fuentes' essay on Barbadian business woman Rachel Pringle Polgreen, Beckles work on Barbadian brothels, and Kerr's research on Jamaican lodging-houses all shed light on the problematic connection between sex, commerce and agency for Caribbean women in the port cities of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Proprietor and entrepreneur Rachel Pringle Polgreen<sup>436</sup> was born into slavery in Barbados during the eighteenth century. After obtaining her freedom she established multiple businesses in Bridgetown and was the owner of a well-known brothel.<sup>437</sup> Her life story appeared in J.W. Odersen's novel *Creolana* (1842) and her substantial wealth was documented in the official archives of Barbados. Significantly she is by no means an anomaly. Beckles in his book *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados* (1989) observes that towards the end of slavery and during the beginning of the nineteenth century, in port cities and other urban centres prostitution was a social institution like any other in the Caribbean.<sup>438</sup> Whilst Beckles' book focuses on Barbados he writes 'this book [...] should be read not only as a case study of Barbados but also for its direct relevance to the overall history of plantation America'.<sup>439</sup> Organised

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<sup>436</sup> Due to limited space and the focus of this thesis does not allow me to discuss the complexities of Rachel Pringle Polgreen's narrative further. Although born a slave Polgreen owned thirty-eight enslaved women, twenty-three of whom were women who worked in her brothels and lodging-houses. Thereby complicating the historiography of freed and enslaved black women in the port cities of the eighteenth century. See Marisa J. Fuentes, "Power and Historical Figuring: Rachel Pringle Polgreen's Troubling Archive" *Gender and History* Vol. 22 No. 3 November 2010, 564-584.

<sup>437</sup> Fuentes, 564.

<sup>438</sup> Hilary Beckles, *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados*, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 4.

<sup>439</sup> Beckles, *Natural Rebels*, 4.

prostitution then was a business like any other in the port cities of the Caribbean.

Julia Bruggeman in her essay on prostitution in nineteenth century German port city of Hamburg emphasises the economic organisation of prostitution and what it reveals about the prevailing gender relations governing that society. Prostitution according to Bruggeman destabilises 'the clear cut-notions of what gendered behaviour should be.'<sup>440</sup> Of course in a Caribbean context the connection between the black woman's body in the nineteenth century port city is explicitly linked to plantation realities, where she was deemed to be sexually immoral and always available.<sup>441</sup> Within the spatial limits of the city, her sexual mores takes on yet another context. Here, it is linked to power and economic advancement. Maria Nugent upon her arrival in Spanish Town notes in her journal "the ladies told me strange stories of the influence of black and yellow women, and Mrs Bullock called them serpents."<sup>442</sup> Interestingly the physical appearance of the black and yellow women is not of immediate concern to Mrs Bullock. This is surprising when you consider the number of seventeenth and eighteenth century texts and travelogues that fixate on the black body.<sup>443</sup> What most troubles her is the *influence* that these women exert on the white men in society, thereby reconfiguring the accepted socio-political hierarchies of their society. The mistress whether in brothels or brothels masquerading as lodging-houses,

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<sup>440</sup> Julia Bruggemann, 'The Business of Sex: Evaluating Prostitution in the German Port City of Hamburg' in, *Women Business and Finance in Nineteenth Century Europe: Rethinking Separate Spheres*, Robert Beachy, Beatrice Craig and Alistair Owens eds., (New York; Oxford: Berg, 2006), 182/183.

<sup>441</sup> Bush, 14.

<sup>442</sup> Nugent, 18.

<sup>443</sup> French Naturalist and Zoologist Georges Cuvier, whose work on race in the late eighteenth century described native Africans as having "crisped or woolly hair, compressed cranium [...] and the thick lips evidently approximate it to the monkey tribe" see Baron Georges Cuvier, *The Animal Kingdom: Arranged in Conformity with its Organization*, trans. H.M.M'Murtrie, (New York: G&C and H. Carvill, 1833), 50; Cuvier was also the anatomist who dissected the body of Sartjee Baartman. His published scientific paper in which he compared Baartman to an Orang-utan influenced a number of other European scientists. See Bernth Lindfors, "Hottentot, Bushman, Kaffir: The Making of Racist Stereotypes in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Britain", in *Encounter Images in the Meetings Between Africa and Europe*, ed. Mai Palmberg, (Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute, 2001).



assume a position within the colonial Caribbean society that constitutes an aberration of accepted European propriety.

The brothel in *New Day's* literary landscape then reflects socio-economic realities of a number of Atlantic port cities during the nineteenth century. In the urban economies of the Caribbean the brothel provides the freed black Caribbean woman with a means of securing an income, in a society that offers few alternatives. Stranded in Cuba and unable to speak Spanish, Lucille informs Johnny, that prostitution was the only occupation available to her in the aftermath of the devastations caused by the hurricane. Upon her return to Jamaica, Lucille continues to trade her body and secure her livelihood with the only means available to her.

I am not suggesting here that Reid is overtly concerned or that he places the plight of the urban Caribbean woman at the heart of his narrative. Indeed, the section on Lucille who eventually dies as a consequence of a fire at the brothel is problematic. Mervyn Morris in his introduction to *New Day* notes: 'Lucille Dubois' tragedy is too obviously contrived, a sensational blemish.'<sup>444</sup> Lucille is the beautiful tragic mulatto's whose subsequent fall into prostitution and eventual death is reminiscent of the simplistic pre-twentieth century narratives concerning Caribbean women.<sup>445</sup> Similarly Eve Allegra Raimon in her work on the 'tragic mulatta figure' describes the formulaic narrative sequence evident in a number of Caribbean texts. The quintessential tragic mulatta is a fair skinned orphan and heroine 'whose white benefactor and paramour (sometimes also the young woman's father) dies, leaving her to the auction block and/or the sexual designs of a malevolent creditor.'<sup>446</sup> She goes on to reveal that the narrative predictably

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<sup>444</sup>Mervyn Morris, 'Introduction' in *New Day*.

<sup>445</sup>The tragic mulatta figure is a prominent protagonist in a number of Caribbean novels and travel narratives by European writers. Beautiful and sensual she is often vilified for either being too black or too white. See Cirilo Villaverde, *Cecilia Valdes*; Edward Long, *A History of Jamaica*; Janet Shaw, *Journal of a Lady of Quality*; Médéric Louis-Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'île de Saint Domingue*.

<sup>446</sup>Eve Allegra Raimon, *The "Tragic Mulatta" Revisited: Race and Nationalism in Nineteenth Century Anti-Slavery Fiction*, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 7.

ends in destitution and sometimes even death as 'the protagonist, sheltered from the outside world, is driven to despair by her predicament.'<sup>447</sup>

The character development of Lucille follows this trajectory and indeed continues another tradition of typecasting. Dominique Rogers and Stewart King in their work on free women of colour in eighteenth century Saint Domingue underscore, that until recently, the representation of these women were 'veiled in stereotype'.<sup>448</sup> 'Male observers in the eighteenth century presented them essentially as [...] concubines and courtesans for white men, and historians long retained this image.'<sup>449</sup> The light-skinned Haitian Lucille I argue bears a disturbing likeness to this historical representation. Furthermore her death rather conveniently removes her from the literary historiography of *New Day*. In Part One, as the child of Haitian Revolutionaries she is an emphatic supporter of the Morant Bay Rebellion. Yet, as she traverses the literary landscape of *New Day* she becomes a caricature of her former self, as 'she sits on the beach with a fashion book on her knees.' (210) Her final descent into prostitution seals her fate, and removes her from the discourse of independence and nationalism taking place in *New Day*.

Unarguably the portrayal of her character in *New Day* is problematic. Nevertheless, I would like to suggest that Reid's inclusion, unwittingly or not, of the Caribbean prostitute in his text is an important juncture in the representations of modernity within the Caribbean novel. As I will argue, the literary portrayal of the relationship between the Caribbean prostitute and the heterotopia of the brothel and by extension the port city, is evidence of the permeability of the political and gender boundaries in the colonial city. Furthermore, located within the liminal spaces of the city, the Caribbean prostitute, the female owners of the brothels and taverns, stand on the threshold as dynamic and central participants in Caribbean modernity.

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<sup>447</sup>Allegra Raimon, 7.

<sup>448</sup>Dominique Rogers and Stewart King, 'Housekeepers, Merchants, Rentières: Free Women of Color in the Port Cities of Saint-Domingue, in *Women in Port: Gendering Communities, Economies, and Social Networks in Atlantic Port Cities, 1500-1800*, Douglas Catterall and Jodi Campbell, Atlantic World: Europe, Africa and the Americas, 1500-1830, (2012), 357.

<sup>449</sup>Rogers and King, 357.

These are new women, operating in distinctly new and modern roles in the Caribbean port city.

Returning once again to the passage from *New Day* I want to turn my attention to the lodging house where Johnny leaves his nephew before his encounter with Lucille. Jamaican historian Dalea Bean's work on the ownership of twentieth century inns, and lodging houses in Jamaica, traces their origins to the nineteenth century. Of importance to my argument here, is the revelation that these businesses in the twentieth century were 'primarily owned by women' thereby drawing a direct link and historical legacy between the business acumen of nineteenth century Jamaican women, and the modernity of twentieth century female entrepreneurs.<sup>450</sup> Referring to the Jamaican census of 1844, Paulette A. Kerr reveals that the total number of lodging-house keepers in Jamaica was one hundred and fifty-seven and of these, eighty-eight was female.<sup>451</sup> By 1878 'all lodging houses in Kingston were operated by women.'<sup>452</sup>

A closer analysis of the development of the lodging-houses show that the women were strategists, with the business acumen to not only set up their properties in prime locations but to also reinvest the profits accrued from their establishments. Kerr's work points to the number of women who were able to diversify their trade and become very wealthy as a result. They turned their business into new ventures by reconfiguring their properties into shops, bakeries and hospitals, and in doing so they tuned 'their wealth into more wealth.'<sup>453</sup> Furthermore as they established their businesses the women began to proliferate the sector and create a network of business savvy women, as there was 'a tendency to involve other female family members.'<sup>454</sup>

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<sup>450</sup>Dalea Bean, 'Vectors of Venereal Diseases: The Perceived Threat of Prostitutes to Military Efficiency in Jamaica during World Wars I and II' in *Readings in Caribbean History and Culture: Breaking Ground*, ed. D.A. Dunkley, (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2011), 130.

<sup>451</sup>Paulette A. Kerr, 'Victims or Strategists? Female Logging-house keepers in Jamaica, in, *Engendering History*, 200.

<sup>452</sup>Kerr, 200.

<sup>453</sup>Kerr, 204.

<sup>454</sup>Kerr, 203.

The heterotopia of the lodging-house, tavern and brothel indicates the beginning of economic and political agency for the urban Caribbean woman. Yet, the violent displacement of the Caribbean woman's body from the slave ship, to the plantation and into the urban milieu of the city as proprietor and entrepreneur represents a problematic continuity. That the lodging-houses were not always explicitly connected to the sex trade, points to a complicated dynamism and positionality of the Caribbean woman in the economic structure of the port city. Beckles' work on Barbados has shown that the majority of the women who owned taverns were mistresses of white men who in turn provided the financial support needed to establish the businesses. Further to this the asymmetrical power dynamic between the proprietors and their benefactors saw the lodging-houses on the wharves of Jamaican port cities turn into locums of power, where 'trials of petty offences or court martials were held'.<sup>455</sup> In addition, they acted as community centres 'where favoured people from the private sector and from government met for business'.<sup>456</sup> Interestingly the women of the lodging-houses not only played host to men of power, they themselves engaged in political discussions.<sup>457</sup> In view of this I suggest that in the liminality of the port city, the Caribbean woman's subjectivity is reconfigured in ways indicative of a break with the past. Caribbean women in the port city negotiate altered realities, in which they begin to disrupt the complex, social, racial and patriarchal structures of power.

Undeniably social mobility in nineteenth century Jamaica continued to be inextricably linked to patriarchal structures. As I have highlighted, in the literary city of *New Day*, women become wealthy through prostitution, as owners of lodging-houses or through the union of marriage, as in the case of Johnny's sister Naomi:

A good marriage Naomi has made to a sugar-wharf owner in Kingston, and when he died, all his wealth went to her [...] I

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<sup>455</sup>Kerr, 206.

<sup>456</sup>Kerr, 206.

<sup>457</sup>Anthony Trollope, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main*, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1867), 195.

am-a-think there is nothing nicer to her than to order the motor  
which will drive us for cool breezes in the hills. (232)

Constrained economically, socially and politically, Naomi, Lucille and the proprietor of the brothel are forced to negotiate the labyrinth of the city, at the heart of which lay their eroticised and commodified bodies. Their roles in Atlantic port cities highlight the fluid relationship between gender, commerce and agency in early Caribbean modernity. Although patriarchal power is pervasive, the women are able to manipulate their circumstances into forms of independence. Johnny's sister Naomi is able to drive to the hills, suggesting mobility and modernity. The brothel and lodging-house owners, as Kerr's work has shown, held lunches and receptions for men of power in Jamaican high society and in return became women of influence themselves or at the very least, negotiated a better economic position. In their introduction to the roles held by racially diverse women in a number of Atlantic port cities, Douglass Catterall and Jodi Campbell note that women in maritime communities 'could not always act independently'. Nevertheless, their ability to manipulate and control 'at the internal and external margins of their communities', consequently afforded them, an 'important if not always dominant role in the more fungible segments of port populations.'<sup>458</sup>

In this baroque landscape the modernity imposed upon the Caribbean city is European in its inception. Yet, the city's development is a creolised affair. The heterotopia of the nineteenth century Caribbean brothel is located on the borders of both European and colonial Jamaican society. In this space the black woman profits directly from the sale of her body. Here the European gaze openly acknowledges its sexual desire for the black body and duly pays for it, thereby operating outside the European value system. In the brothel and lodging-house the black woman gains access to the rich and influential men of nineteenth century Jamaican society in ways unthinkable on the plantation or in the metropolitan centres of Europe. Of course the city

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<sup>458</sup>Douglas Catterall and Jodi Campbell, 'Mother Courage and Her Sisters: Women's Worlds in the Premodern Atlantic world', *Women in Port: Gendering Communities, Economies, and Social Networks in Atlantic Port Cities, 1500-1800*, 9.

creates more than just a collective of prostitutes and lodging-house proprietors. In Zobel's *Black Shack Alley*, José's mother Delia is a domestic worker in the house of a rich French white man, and I will return to the role of the domestic worker and the city later in the chapter.

Yet, in the messy and isolated spaces of the brothel and the lodging-house we begin to see the mechanisms at play in the Caribbean city. The port city creates a complex network of transactions that allows the Caribbean woman to negotiate a space within the urban landscape. Within the labyrinth of its streets, the city places demands on the black woman's body which are violent and demeaning. Yet here, in the modernity of the Caribbean port city, she enters the market economy and though the exchanges are unequal, she begins to negotiate a space for her creolised self.

### **Pirates and Buccaneers: Re-imagining the Caribbean Port City**

My second point of interest in the passage from *New Day* centres on Johnny's mistaken identity. The brothel owner confuses him for a sailor. The ease with which she assumes that the "nice blond boy" is a sailorman waiting for his 'bellyfull' of women, indicates that a black or mixed-race Caribbean seafarer, in the late nineteenth century port city was a familiar sight. The ship as Foucault notes is the "heterotopia *par excellence*". Sailing from colony to colony, it is central to the development of both European and Caribbean modernity. While Foucault acknowledges that the boat has been instrumental in the economic development of a number of nations, the ship's helm, in his lecture on heterotopia, is undeniably controlled by European hands. The gaze atop the crows' nest, as the ship sails from "port to port [...] in search of the most precious treasures they conceal in their gardens"<sup>459</sup>, belongs solely to the coloniser. In considering the link between the sea, and Caribbean literary modernity I am specifically interested in locating the black seafarers inhabiting the seascapes and port cities of Reid's and Zobel's narratives.

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<sup>459</sup>Foucault, 27.

In privileging the position of the seafarer and the ship, I wish to examine the centrality of the sea in the work of Caribbean theorists, during the latter stages of the twentieth century. While Atlantic historiography is important to my argument on the relationship between Caribbean modernity and the heterotopia of the ship, I want to focus my discussion on the implications of Caribbean tidalectics. I suggest here, that Caribbean tidalects, which explicitly references the distinct patterns of Caribbean life, and the relationship between Caribbean peoples and the sea, is a useful lens through which to consider the literary representations of Caribbean modernity. Furthermore, by considering the connotations of the sea, the ship and the port city within the context of the Caribbean, I aim to complicate the notions of territory and coloniality. In doing so I hope to move the discussion on the literary representation of Caribbean modernity beyond the borders of the plantation, which as I have already underscored, is a central and important concern of this Chapter.

The fluidity and motion of the political and cultural development of the Caribbean, and the connection between this movement to the region's spatial formation as an archipelago, has featured in the work of poets and artists throughout the twentieth century. Making sense of the 'archipelagisation' of the deportation of Africans,<sup>460</sup> to borrow from Glissant, is a primary concern. From St Lucian poet Derek Walcott's tribal memory, 'locked in the grey vaults of the sea'<sup>461</sup>, to Cuban artist Manuel Mendive's haunting wood carving,<sup>462</sup> 'Barco Negrero' (1976)<sup>463</sup> the Caribbean Sea with its cyclical motions remains a constant edifying source in this process.

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<sup>460</sup>Manthia Diawara, 'Conversation with Édouard Glissant aboard the Queen Mary II (August 2009)', in *Afro Modern: Journeys Through The Black Atlantic*, Tanya Barson and Peter Gorschlüter eds., (London: Tate Enterprises Ltd, 2010), 60.

<sup>461</sup>Derek Walcott "The Sea is History" in *Collected Poems, 1948-1984*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), 364-367.

<sup>462</sup> Mendive's wood carving depicts the journey of the Middle Passage, deploying Yoruban mythology to make sense of a Caribbean cosmos. See Edward J. Sullivan, ed., *Latin American Art in the Twentieth Century* (London: Phaidon Press Ltd, 1996), 92-97.

<sup>463</sup>Manuel Mendive, Barco Negrero (Slave Ship), 1976, casein and carving on wood, National Museum of Cuba, Havana.

For Brathwaite, the Caribbean Sea not only enables the Caribbean artist/theorist to locate the submerged African presence in the region, it also provides an effective theoretical lens through which to counter the linearity of Western cultural production.<sup>464</sup> In 1976 Brathwaite proclaimed that the 'unity is submarine'<sup>465</sup> thereby explicitly linking the fragmented geospatial formation of the Caribbean archipelago, with his concept of "tidalectics".<sup>466</sup> Here, Brathwaite argues that the mechanistic Hegelian chronology promised by dialectics, is unsuited to the study of Caribbean historiography and subjectivity. Rather he suggests a global vision of a tidal dialectics,<sup>467</sup> that maps the ebb and flow of the ever present Caribbean Sea.<sup>468</sup>

Significantly, the Sea, as with the plantation is central in the framework of Caribbean historiography. In the same way that the plantation harbours a wretched yet transformative characteristic, so too does the Caribbean Sea occupy a complex narrative in the region's lived experience. In an interview with Nathaniel Mackey, Brathwaite reveals that the Caribbean Sea haunts the collective, and suggests that this haunting it is as much about the unknown, as it is about the memory of a tortured collective experience:

But one is haunted that there is more there. I mean, whales, inhabit my imagination. Underground and under the water there are larger forms which have deeper resonance and we haven't yet reached them.<sup>469</sup>

Interestingly, as his quote reveals, Brathwaite believes that the submarinal seascape offers the possibility to redefine the Caribbean lived experience. The Sea, in Brathwaite's tidalectics provides the Caribbean population with the opportunity to produce their own creation myths and to reclaim their

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<sup>464</sup> Ignacio Infante, *After Translation: The Transfer and Circulation of Modern Poetics Across the Atlantic* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 151.

<sup>465</sup> Brathwaite, *Contradictory Omens*, 64.

<sup>466</sup> Elizabeth DeLoughrey, *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 17.

<sup>467</sup> Silvio Torres-Salient, *An Intellectual History of the Caribbean* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 42.

<sup>468</sup> Anim-Addo, *Framing the Word: Gender and Genre, in Caribbean Women's Writing* (London: Whiting Birch, 1996), 16.

<sup>469</sup> Nathaniel Mackey, 'An Interview with Kamau Brathwaite', in *The Art of Kamau Brathwaite*, ed. Stewart Brown, (Bridgend: Seren, 1995), 20/21.



American beginnings. In the same interview whilst discussing his poem *Son*, Brathwaite emphasises the importance of the young protagonist's self knowledge, which is borne out of his immediate environs. This idea of the self, as Brathwaite reveals, 'comes from his own sense of splash and glitter, like when he sees the wall, the sea throwing its messages on the wall of his room. That is his creation myth.'<sup>470</sup> This constant shifting wave of the lived Caribbean experience underpinning tidalectics, offers an "alter/native" narrative of a colonial experience rooted in an ultra oppressive relationship with the soil.

Yet, as I have already highlighted, the absolving force of the shifting tide contains its own tyrannical past, which Glissant, who uses Brathwaite's "unity is submarine" in his own work, refers to as the abyss. The Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, according to Glissant, is the site of '[t]he torment of those who never escaped it: straight from the belly of the slave ship into the violet belly of the ocean depths they went'.<sup>471</sup> Of interest to my argument here is Glissant's notion of the transformation that takes place during this ordeal. Rather than the finality of death, their submarinal torment is regenerative. The memory of the initial crossing, although subsequently erased from the historical narrative becomes 'the alluvium for the metamorphoses'<sup>472</sup> of the forced African migration. The sediments of this submarinal persecution are eventually deposited on to the Caribbean shores and here they become the foundations for Caribbean self knowledge.<sup>473</sup>

Elizabeth DeLoughrey extends Brathwaite's and Glissant's observations on tidal dialectics by emphasising the importance of what she calls a "'transoceanic imaginary'".<sup>474</sup> She points to the process of re-mapping Caribbean seascapes, and highlights this as a central concern in the work of intellectuals exploring Caribbean migration, regionalism, and historiography.

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<sup>470</sup>Mackey, 21.

<sup>471</sup>Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 7.

<sup>472</sup>Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 7.

<sup>473</sup>Glissant, *Poetics of Relations*, 8.

<sup>474</sup>Elizabeth DeLoughrey, 'Routes and Roots: Tidalectics in Caribbean Literature' in *Caribbean Culture: Soundings on Kamau Brathwaite*, ed. Annie Paul, (Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2007), 164.

DeLoughrey suggests that this theoretical cartographic undertaking can be 'characterized as a type of cultural oceanography that maps a transatlantic and regional identity'.<sup>475</sup> This is important in the context of the Caribbean, as discourse of rootedness 'naturalized in national soil'<sup>476</sup> is less useful in a region whose history is inextricably linked to shifting oceanic tides. The 'transoceanic imaginary' enables the Caribbean writer to 'establish a series of external relationships through transoceanic routes and flows,'<sup>477</sup> that better expresses the historiographical rhythms of the region.

Importantly, DeLoughrey stresses that this particular remapping differs 'from other theories of re-territorialization'<sup>478</sup> as the theory of tidalectics 'foregrounds how a dynamic model of geography can elucidate island history and cultural production.' Moreover she interprets tidalectics as a constantly shifting relationship between the island and the sea 'that allows island literatures to engage in their spatial and historical complexity.'<sup>479</sup> Drawing from DeLoughrey's ideas on tidalectics – after Brathwaite and Glissant – I consider how the notion of 'routes and flows' offers a theoretical model within which to read the literary representations of Caribbean modernity. Of particular interest to my analysis is how the concept of tidalectics provides a framework within which to locate the creolised subject in heterotopia of the ship and the Caribbean port city.

The heterotopia of the ship has long been a concern for Caribbean scholars and black intellectuals working on Atlantic historiography. The implication of the triangular relationship, between the Caribbean, the Middle Passage, and the transatlantic slave trade, on the development of a modern Caribbean, is well established. Paul Gilroy's seminal work on the black presence in the North Atlantic, examines the cultural exchanges that take place amongst the communities who circumnavigate the Atlantic. For Gilroy, ships and sailors, are central to the transnational cultural commutations

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<sup>475</sup>DeLoughrey, 'Routes and Roots: Tidalectics in Caribbean Literature', 164.

<sup>476</sup>DeLoughrey, 'Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures, 2.

<sup>477</sup>DeLoughrey, 'Routes and Roots: Tidalectics in Caribbean Literature', 164.

<sup>478</sup>DeLoughrey, 'Routes and Roots: Tidalectics in Caribbean Literature', 164.

<sup>479</sup>Elizabeth DeLoughrey, 'Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures, 3.

taking place in this oceanic seascape as within the Black Atlantic, '[s]hips were the living means by which the points within the Atlantic were joined.'<sup>480</sup> Gilroy's observation implies that the ships crisscrossing the Atlantic were more than mere conduits for travel and trade. They were 'modern machines that were themselves micro-systems of linguistic and political hybridity.'<sup>481</sup>

As Gilroy underscores, the lived realities of the microcosm of the ship were points of relation in a transoceanic process of translation. Moreover the cultural and political modernity associated with the development of maritime technology, between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, altered the seascapes of the Atlantic and Caribbean indefinitely. The process of creolisation that took hold of the heterotopia of the ship permeated throughout the coastal regions and into the hinterlands of the circum-Atlantic region. The implications of these political developments on the lives of the populations of Caribbean port cities and plantations are far reaching. The ship and the port city are conduits for the modern political ideas developing across the Atlantic and moreover their spatial dynamics are central to the awakening of a political black consciousness in the Americas. I am interested in how the historiographical developments concerning the process of maritime creolisation taking place on board the ships and in the Caribbean ports cities are represented in both Reid's and Zobel's fictional narratives. The ebb and flow of the Caribbean Sea becomes a central and defining crux in the lives of the protagonists of both novels, as they try to make sense of the political reality of their respective Caribbean communities. Furthermore, both Reid and Zobel populate their literary vessels with autonomous black bodies, thereby complicating the historical position of the creolised subject within maritime historiography.

Both Johnny Campbell in *New Day* and José Hasam, in *Black Shack Alley* are fascinated by ships, and the promise of transformation and translation they offer to the communities in the urban centres of their

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<sup>480</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993), 16.

<sup>481</sup> Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 12.

respective literary sea/landscapes. In the case of *New Day*, the historical relationship between the ship and the black community of the port city is more immediate. The Campbell family are associated with both the centre and periphery of Jamaican colonialism. They are planters and landowners, whose histories are rooted to the land and more specifically to the plantations of Jamaica. As the novel progresses they migrate to the periphery of the port city of Kingston, to become merchants and ship builders, trading their fruit crops across the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea. Interwoven in this tale of political and economic development concerning the middle-class population of a post-emancipation Jamaica, are the seafaring narratives of rebellions and uprisings more commonly associated with the mariner's tales of Western literature.<sup>482</sup>

The position of the Caribbean port city as the site of adventures undertaken firstly by pirates and buccaneers, and secondly by admirals of the respective European naval fleets, is well established in both reality and folklore. Piracy in the Atlantic Ocean is an ancient crime,<sup>483</sup> but the popular images of pirates and its association with the Caribbean dates to the middle of the seventeenth century.<sup>484</sup> Famous figures such as Francis Drake, Henry Morgan and William Kidd who all moved between the spheres of piracy and privateering sanctioned by the monarchy, cemented the relationship between the Caribbean, and the seafaring explorers/exploiters.<sup>485</sup> The position of the black sailor, although documented in national archives and

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<sup>482</sup> Margaret Cohen charts the history of literary mariners in Western narratives, starting with Homer's Odysseus and his 'descendants' all capable mariners who survive adversity on their own. She notes that this form of narrative is 'an enduring, international form of modern fiction' and dates this literary development from the eighteenth century to the present day see, Margaret Cohen, *The Novel and the Sea* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010).

<sup>483</sup> Kris E. Lane, *Pillaging the Empire: Piracy in the Americas 1500-1750* (New York: M.E. Sharpe Inc, 1998), 12.

<sup>484</sup> My interest lies specifically with sailors employed in the Merchant and Royal Navies, but piracy was also a form of employment for black mariners. Estimates suggests that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries 'black and mulatto sailors comprised at least one-quarter of all pirates'. See Issac Curtis, 'Masterless People: Maroons, Pirates and Commoners', in *The Caribbean: A History of the Region and Its Peoples*, 154.

<sup>485</sup> Kris E. Lane, *Piracy*. Oxford Bibliographies Online Research Guide, (Oxford: The College of William and Mary, Oxford University Press, 2010), 3.

eighteenth and nineteenth century maritime paintings remains paradoxically, less visible.

Historian Ray Costello's work on the subject of black seafarers reveals a long and varied history concerning sailors of African descent charting the world's ocean. Journeys made by Caribbean sailors can be traced in the log books of European port cities and by the end of the slave trade a considerable number of Caribbean men had made their living on the high seas. According to Costello by the mid-nineteenth century 'at least 3 percent of all crew men [on British Ships] were black mariners from Africa, the Atlantic islands, the West Indies or America.'<sup>486</sup> Significantly, life as a mariner was not simply an alternative form of slavery, as records show not all the sailors were slaves.<sup>487</sup> Life at sea was not without its pitfalls. Black sailors who served in both the Merchant and Royal Navies experienced racism and discrimination on board the ships. There is also the contradictory and complex reality of the free black seafarers who either readied or worked on slavers trading in African bodies.<sup>488</sup> These men received a wage, and ledgers from ships such as the *Hawk*, show that African seamen seemed to have been paid at much the same rate as European crewmen of comparable rank.<sup>489</sup> Therefore existing within the circum-Atlantic, from an economic perspective, at least, as a maritime proletariat much like any other.

Politically, the ships were radical spaces in that they functioned on the periphery of accepted social norms. From the middle of the eighteenth century, seamen of varying racial backgrounds 'were prominent in rowdy demonstrations'<sup>490</sup> and strikes, demanding better wages and living conditions.<sup>491</sup> Peter Linebaugh's important work on the centrality of the ship to the development of the political modernities of the circum-Atlantic underscores the communication and cooperation taking place amongst the

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<sup>486</sup>Ray Costello, *Black Salt: Seafarers of African Descent on British Ships*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), 32.

<sup>487</sup>Costello, 11.

<sup>488</sup>Gilroy, 13.

<sup>489</sup>Costello, 40.

<sup>490</sup> Costello, 48.

<sup>491</sup> Costello, 49.

crew members of varying racial backgrounds. Of importance here is the centrality of the ship not only as a means of 'communication between continents,'<sup>492</sup> but as Linebaugh rightly points out 'it was the first place where working people from the continents communicated.'<sup>493</sup> Moreover the sharing of sea shanties<sup>494</sup> containing the ideals of civil liberty facilitated the development of a political internationalism as Linebaugh notes:

Shipboard cooperation, plus the libertarian, anti-slavery ideology of such [shanty] songs provided the background to the many instances of trans-continental, multi-racial struggles of the maritime proletariat.<sup>495</sup>

This nautical language then<sup>496</sup> developed in the bowels of the ship, and shaped and disseminated by the radical currents of maritime experience, emphasise the centrality of the ship in the development of a pan-African /Caribbean modernity. As Linebaugh argues, the ship is 'perhaps the most important conduit of pan-African communication before the appearance of the long-playing record.'<sup>497</sup> This particular political and linguistic exchange fundamentally alters the discourse on political autonomy throughout the circum-Atlantic region. The oceanic political evolution taking place during the crossing of Atlantic flows towards the port cities of the Caribbean and it is here that Reid and Zobel extrapolate the consequences of this modernity in their fictional narratives.

In *New Day* Reid depicts his own version of the swashbuckling adventures of eighteenth black seafarers. In this literary seascape the daring

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<sup>492</sup> Peter Linebaugh, "'All The Atlantic Mountain Shook'", *Labour / Le Travailleur*, 10 (Autumn 1982), 109.

<sup>493</sup> Linebaugh, 109.

<sup>494</sup> Sea shanties were songs, sung aboard merchant vessels and war ships. They were designed to help men pull together for instance when raising the sail, or new masthead. Songs such as 'Rule Britannia' and Hearts of Oak, espousing notions of freedom were popular amongst the crews of such vessels. See, Angus Konstam, *Naval Miscellany* (Oxford: Osprey, 2010).

<sup>495</sup> Linebaugh, 112.

<sup>496</sup> The process of communicating ideas aboard the ship took place in a variety of dialects. Nautical or maritime variations of Portuguese Dutch, English and French contained within West African grammatical constructions, became the go-between language of the crewmen and the conduit for radical and ultra modern discourses amongst the maritime proletariat. See Lang, *Entwisted Tongues*.

<sup>497</sup> Linebaugh, "'All The Atlantic Mountain Shook'", *Labour / Le Travailleur*, 119.

exploits of black sailors in black led rebellions are brought to the fore. In Part One of *New Day*, Reid's fictional rendering of Paul Bogle's speech provides a literary interpretation of the heterotopia of the ship which significantly includes the creolised perspective:

Thirty-eight [1738]-you ha' rallied your people, and now there are Mosquito Indians out o' Honduras marching with the redcoats as they hunt your people. 'Forty, [1740] and changed again, you ha' sailed to fight beside the redcoats before the Spanish city o' Cartagena. Forty six and 'Sixty, and back you are in your island, fighting for freedom against English soldiermen. But come 'Sixty-four [1764] and now you stand with the redcoats before the Cuban city o' Havana [...] Then in 'Seventy-eight you went to America [...] the glory o' Eighty, as you followed Horatio Nelson into Nicaragua and the city o' San Juan. But O, the shame o' Ninety-three [...] when you went with the English up the Windward Passage to fall on L'Ouverture. (120)

Bogle's historical narrative quoted above, charts a sixty year history concerning the waters of the Caribbean, Central, and North American coastlines. The speech highlights the involvement of black sailors and soldiers in a complex and turbulent shifting seascape that finds the maroon and black Caribbean population regularly changing allegiance.<sup>498</sup> From Cartagena, to Cuba, to America, they journey through the multiple cultural and linguistic boundaries of the Americas. Here the political creolisation that takes as result of the spatial dynamics of the ship is transposed to the rebel community of Morant Bay, culminating in a highly charged and astute political speech. Bogle draws on the transoceanic experiences of black Jamaican seafarers to motivate his followers in their fight for political justice against British rule.

These fictional seafaring journeys of Reid's narrative mirror factual events that take place in the middle of the eighteenth century and reaffirm the process of exchange and negotiation at play in the development of

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<sup>498</sup> Reid's narrative documents the ever changing relationship between the English Redcoats, the diverse black Caribbean population and the wider Caribbean region. The passage highlights the involvement of Native American Mosquito Indians who worked with the English to hunt down Jamaican Maroons. See Eric R. Wolfe *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Mavis C. Campbell, *The Maroons of Jamaica 1655-1796: A History of Resistance, Collaboration and Betrayal*, (Granby Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey, 1988).

Caribbean modernity as argued by Fumagalli. Bogle's fictional speech not only locates the importance of the ship, but also highlights the centrality of the port cities in the process of dissemination. He lists the cities of Cartagena, San Juan and Havana, all formidable port cities of the eighteenth century American hemisphere, as the contact zones for the process of political creolisation. The black sailors in Bogle's speech not only travel to these cities but in the case of Havana they are stationed there during the British occupation which lasts for just under a year. Benitez-Rojo observes that Havana during this period was a sizeable city with more than 40,000 inhabitants'.<sup>499</sup> Cosmopolitan in nature, the population came into close contact with thousands of French, English, and U.S. visitors.<sup>500</sup>

The urbane nature of the physical, cultural, and intellectual contact taking place as highlighted by Benitez-Rojo is further emphasised by the African American scholar Julius S. Scott. He notes that the black seafarers of the Caribbean coast played an important role in 'transmitting [the] political currents as anti-slavery movements [...] gathered momentum'.<sup>501</sup> Echoing the maritime pan-African activism taking place in the Atlantic as cited by Linebaugh, Scott reveals that Caribbean sailors acted as important channels for 'spreading rumours and reporting news'. The revolutionary political discourse moves beyond the bowels of ship and permeates the harbours and wharves of Caribbean cities as reflected in Reid's *New Day*.

In extending and complicating the centre/periphery binary, by including the creolised heterotopia of the ship, I suggest that *New Day* emphasises the critical relationship between global ocean travel, and literary representations of Caribbean modernity. Moreover, Reid advances the discourse beyond the Middle Passage, and in Bogle's literary speech, there is evidence of political agency amongst the black sailors and soldiers, as they

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<sup>499</sup> Benitez-Rojo, 'Creolization in Havana: The Oldest form of Globalization', trans. James Maraniss in *Contemporary Caribbean Societies in a Global Context*, eds. Franklin W. Knight & Teresita Martinez-Vergne, (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 79.

<sup>500</sup> Benitez-Rojo, 'Creolization in Havana: The Oldest form of Globalization', 79.

<sup>501</sup> Julius S. Scott, "Negroes in Foreign Bottoms": Sailors, Slaves and Communication (selection) in *Origins of the Black Atlantic*, eds. Laurent Dubois and Julius S. Scott, (Oxford: Routledge, 2010), 69.



decide where to place their allegiance. Reid's depiction of able mariners, writes against what Costello calls the 'exaggerated notion of the African seafarer as the hapless aboriginal recipient of European maritime skills'.<sup>502</sup>

In *New Day* the seafaring adventures much like the other tales in the novel, are relayed to the rebels of Morant Bay and Johnny, through the act of speech. Yet, Margaret Cohen in her book *The Novel and the Sea* (2010) highlights that seafaring narratives relied upon the act of writing. With sea voyages taking place in remote spaces, 'their vital information and events were known only to their participants and depended on writing to be passed on.'<sup>503</sup> I want to extend Cohen's observation on the connection between seafaring narratives and the act of writing to include the position of the literary black mariner. In doing so, I wish to suggest that the act of writing by black mariners is a significant marker in the development of a literary Caribbean modernity. Unlike the eighteenth and nineteenth century Caribbean plantations, where writing was limited to the Planter/Creole elite and their European visitors, the experience of the black seafarer of the circum-Atlantic converged onto the page in the form of political tracts and autobiographies. From Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* (1789), to Robert Wedderburn's *The Axe Laid to Root* (1817), and Frederick Douglas' *Life and Times of Frederick Douglas* (1850), the development of a black nationalist discourse in the circum-Atlantic directly influences the ideas concerning black American/Caribbean modernity. They become the foundational texts that give voice to the ultra-modern forms of global economic, political and cultural exchange taking place as a result of ultra-oppressive plantation realities. The black literary mariner, is evidence of the process of translation, central to Caribbean modernity and the development of Caribbean creolisation. The lived and literary experience of the black seafarer critically destabilises the historiographical notions of liberty and the process of cultural production in Western modernity. The

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<sup>502</sup>Ray Costello, *Black Salt: Seafarers of African Descent on British Ships*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), 13.

<sup>503</sup>Cohen, 5.

inclusion of the maritime experiences of Bogle's rebels in *New Day* signals the process describe by DeLoughrey as the re-mapping of Caribbean seascapes.

By the time the Campbell's arrive to the literary port city of Kingston, the ship has become, for the Campbell family at least, a symbol of wealth and a signifier of the processes of creolisation that have taken place within Jamaica. As I have already discussed, Glissant marks the spatial boundaries of the boat (slave ship) as a profound moment in Caribbean history and not simply for the obvious transportation of African slaves to the Americas. The boat according to Glissant 'generates the clamor of your protests; it also produces all the coming unanimity [...] this boat is your womb, a matrix, yet it expels you.'<sup>504</sup> The paradoxical relationship as articulated by Glissant, points to the matrix of the ship that both gives birth to Caribbean creolisation and suppresses its right to exist though its continued centrality to the slave trade. In *New Day* the Campbell family transcend the 'abyss'<sup>505</sup> Glissant's term for the middle passage, for the slave ship, and for the historical amnesia that this experience creates. In Reid's fictional timescape we can locate what Glissant calls the "sail/veil"<sup>506</sup> of the Caribbean experience. The sail according to Glissant is not used to return to the "Former Land" instead this "undreamt sail [...] in the end became knowledge". By the end of the novel, the knowledge and wealth that the ship generates underpins the Campbell family's political aspirations, and the struggle for political independence in Jamaica. The cyclical motions of the ever shifting Caribbean current ushers in a new dawn and enables Reid's protagonist to once again redefine their Caribbean subjectivity.

### **Mi Revalueshanary Fren: The Caribbean port city and political unrest**

The final parts of both *New Day* and *La rue cases-nègres*, signal a movement away from the plantation and its by-product, sugar. Part Three of *New Day*

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<sup>504</sup>Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 6.

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<sup>506</sup>Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 7.

opens in 1925 with Johnny and his family business firmly established in the port city of Kingston:

Three ships o' the Davie Line do the trade to Boston with bananas from our acres in Yallahs Valley. The sugar and rum from the Campbell Estates bring wages to hundreds o' St Thomas men. For true, we ha' prospered. (233)

The Campbells now own three ships, and trade across the Eastern Seaboard of America selling bananas to Boston. The cyclical motion of Caribbean historiography as presented in *New Day* reaffirms Glissant's notions of the regenerative nature of the relationship between the Caribbean population and the Caribbean Sea. Significantly, I suggest that it also touches upon a much earlier idea concerning Caribbean autonomy as presented by the Cuban political activist Martí, whose concept of plantain wine, as a local source of wealth and knowledge connects with the importance that Reid affords the banana trade in *New Day*. Here the significance of the banana is that much like the port city, it is initially located on the peripheries of the Caribbean economy. Although no exact date can be assigned to their introduction it is thought that the banana was one of the first crops to be introduced to the Americas in the sixteenth century. They were taken to the Dominican Republic by Portuguese settlers and 'from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, European traders carried bananas all over tropical America.'<sup>507</sup>

The banana had been a traditional crop among slaves and after emancipation the newly freed peasants cultivated and sold them in local markets.<sup>508</sup> Even as the sugar market declined, the potential profits to be made from the banana were initially dismissed by the plantocracy, who believed it to be a passing fad and 'nigger business' due to its association

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<sup>507</sup>Patrick Quénéhervé, "Integrated Management of Banana Nematodes" in *Integrated Management of Fruit Crops and Forest Nematodes*, ed. K.G. Mukerji (Delhi: University of Delhi, 2009), 30

<sup>508</sup>Pedro L. san Miguel and Kathleen Montheith, 'Economic Activities Other than Sugar', in *General History of the Caribbean IV, The Long Nineteenth Century: Nineteenth Century Transformations*, ed., K.O. Laurence, (Paris: London: Unesco Publishing; MacMillan Education, 2011), 124.

with black farmers.<sup>509</sup> This all changed in 1880, with the arrival of American Captain, Lorenzo Dow Baker. He returns to Boston from Jamaica in 1871 with 1,450 bananas. At the time the fruit was virtually unknown in the United States and Baker's first consignment of banana earned him \$2,000. In 1890 he established the Boston Fruit Company, later known as the United Fruit Company<sup>510</sup> and the Jamaican peasants who had cultivated this humble crop were eventually displaced as producers by large landholdings.<sup>511</sup>

Although this peasant-economy would eventually be taken over by multinational corporations, it initially heralded a sense of hope and a vision of a future cultivated through the knowledge of the folk. Josh Gosciak in his reading of Claude McKay's connection to this peasant crop draws on the significance of the banana to the cultural production of the region. He argues that banana became 'a thoroughly integrated staple used to advantage by peasants and poets alike against the hegemonic impulse of empire.'<sup>512</sup> Drawing on Gosciak's analysis of McKay's work, I wish to suggest that Reid's depiction of the Campbell family as banana merchants in Kingston is highly significant to his overall portrayal of Caribbean modernity. If as Mervyn Morris suggests, the function of Parts Two and Three of *New Day* 'is to establish that prosperity can be shared'.<sup>513</sup> Then I wish to extend this argument to suggest that the promise of prosperity as espoused by Reid is built on the notions of the creolised folk and the tidal dialectics of Caribbean modernity. The bananas, as with the peasant community are products of the transoceanic experience of the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. By locating the banana as a catalyst to the political developments taking place in *New Day*, Reid's narrative presents a new reading of Caribbean modernism. Here, in the literary port city of Kingston, the rhythms of Caribbean lived reality are concerned with the internal centres and peripheries of plantation

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<sup>509</sup>George L. Beckford, *The George Beckford Papers*, selected and introduced by Kari Levitt, (Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 2000), 253.

<sup>510</sup> Krista A. Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 49.

<sup>511</sup>san Miguel 124.

<sup>512</sup>Josh Gosciak, *The Shadowed Country: Claude McKay and the Romance of the Victorian* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 40.

<sup>513</sup> Morris, 'Introduction', *New Day*.

/city; sugar/banana; landscape/seascape. Moreover, here in the literary port city of Kingston, the Caribbean lived experience is expressed through the nuances of the folk and a language concerned with a local and regional audience.

The port city in addition to providing an economic future divorced from sugar and the plantation, offers the possibility of creating a new political discourse. As I have already indicated, the money from the banana business creates a substantial amount of wealth for the Campbell family, and this enables Johnny to send his great nephew Garth to Cambridge to study law. Once again the connection between the peasant economy and the political aspirations of Jamaica are reaffirmed as Johnny informs the reader that '[w]e ha' seen him a-wave to us from the deck of the banana ship which is to take him to London town.' (249) Upon his return to Kingston, Garth begins to champion the position of the poor.<sup>514</sup> He establishes a trade union in an attempt to confront the imbalance of wealth and power on the island:

the poor must march together [...] time has come for trade unionism. We must have collective bargaining with employees. A fairer share of profits. Or otherwise no profits at all. (258)

In addition to his political activism Garth introduces a scholarship scheme for his employees, declaring that educating young Jamaican men 'is a good investment' (294) for the country's political future. Symbolically the Campbell family's agribusiness breaks free from the historiographical patterns of the plantation and offers its black workers the promise of prosperity via economic and educational equality.

In a reference to the factual political developments taking place in Jamaica during the 1930s, Garth's political activism gains momentum with the arrival of his long lost cousin Carlos Fernandez, from Cuba. This fictional relationship, modelled on the real relationship between Jamaican politicians and cousins Norman Manley and Alexander Bustamante, symbolises as Morris notes, 'the new liberating [political] forces of the twentieth century.'<sup>515</sup>

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<sup>514</sup>Morris, 'Introduction', *New Day*.

<sup>515</sup>Morris, 'Introduction', *New Day*.

Moreover the arrival of Carlos Fernandez once again reaffirms the archipelagic current that binds and defines Caribbean modernity. The Jamaican born Carlos spends time in Cuba and returns to Kingston with a pan-Caribbean outlook on the working conditions and labour rights of the Jamaican work force. Carlos' trade union activism follows a similar pattern to emigrant labourers in the 1930s. Many returned to Jamaica, from Cuba, North America and Central America,<sup>516</sup> with trade union experience and the political language and know-how to mobilise the work force into demanding better working conditions.

While Jamaican women played an important role in the labour unrest of the 1930s, the women of *New Day* are largely written out of the narrative. Johnny's sister's Naomi plays a maternal role in Garth's political development but much of this is of a domestic nature. She is relegated to hosting his holiday in her house, and nursing his injured head in her lap after an altercation at a protest rally, this despite her wealth and middle class connections in Kingston. Naomi's lack of political involvement is at odds with historical personalities of women such as Adina Spencer, who tried to establish an unemployment bureau for women,<sup>517</sup> and Lady Bustamante (Gladys Longbridge), who with her husband Alexander Bustamante founded the trade union in Jamaica in 1938.<sup>518</sup> Furthermore, Bridget Brereton points to the involvement of middle class Jamaican women, in establishing organisations connected to nationalist groups and the labour unrest of the interwar period.<sup>519</sup>

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<sup>516</sup> Abigail B. Bakan, *Ideology and Class Conflict in Jamaica: The Politics of Rebellion* (Montreal; Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 100.

<sup>517</sup> Henrice Altink, 'We are Equal To Men In Ability To Do Anything!': African Jamaican women and citizenship in the inter-war years', in *Women's Activism: Global Perspectives from the 1980s to the Present*, Francisca de Haan, Margaret Allen, June Purivis and Krassimira Daskalova eds., (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), 80.

<sup>518</sup> Lynn A. Bolles., 'Making Women Matter: Anglophone Caribbean Women Trade Union Leaders', in *Revisiting Caribbean Labour: Essays in Honour of O. Nigel Bolland*, ed., Constance R Sutton (Kingston: New York: Ian Randle Publishers; Research Institute for the Study of Man, 2005), 92.

<sup>519</sup> Bridget Brereton, 'Gender and Historiography and the English-Speaking Caribbean', in *Gendered Realities: Essays in Caribbean Feminist Thought*, Patricia Mohammed ed., (Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 2002), 137.

While the gendered reality of Reid's landscape is problematic, it must be underscored that he is boldly writing of a Jamaican future whilst the political unrest of the 1940s unfolds around him. This not only explains why his representation of politically motivated women is less than fully developed, it also highlights the unrealistic expectations placed on the character of Garth. Wynter, in her 'Novel and History, Plot and Plantation', observes that Garth is made to bear the weight of an expectation that can never be realised.<sup>520</sup> Yet, I would also suggest that Garth's character is as much a statement concerning the position of the writer in the region, as it is about the political awakening of the population of *New Day*. In the closing pages of the novel Garth delivers the following rallying cry: 'we must handle our destinies ourselves, and every man and woman in this island must be allowed to share in the shaping of this destiny' (331). I suggest that the position of the artist in this process of 'shaping' is of paramount importance in *New Day* and the wider development of Caribbean literary modernity. In attempting to present the political destiny of the Jamaican population through the ebb and flow of Caribbean currents, Reid begins to remap Caribbean space and time, and in turn Caribbean modernity.

### **Freedom and The West Indian Town**

In Zobel's *Black Shack Alley* José's relationship with the port city and the sea is somewhat more ambiguous. The boat is the first step in his journey away from the plantation, and a life connected to the hardship of agriculture and sugar. It transports him from Black Shack Alley to Fort-de-France, where he sits the scholarship exam that will eventually allow him entry into the Lycée and later, the middle class echelons of Martinique. While the sea has always been on José's horizon, this is his first contact with open water, and the journey is turbulent and uncomfortable. The city too is initially disorientating, as José observes, '[t]he town seemed to me more extensive, noisier than the deepest forests, the biggest plantations, the most awful

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<sup>520</sup> Wynter, 102.

factories I could ever imagine.’ (121) José is stunned by the number of streets and cars he sees in the city and the modernity of Fort-de-France appears frightening.

Yet, José’s perspective on the city changes as he grows older and becomes a permanent resident. In the port city of Fort-de-France, he is enchanted by the waterside cafes, and the botanical gardens where lovers and dreamers stroll, evoking the ‘bookish characters’(146) that he encounters in his literature classes. The sea that had troubled him on his initial journey into the city is now a source of fascination as observes the workers populate its wharves:

More than anything else I liked the port [...] the port meant, above all, boats of all sizes-steamboats and sail boats-anchored not far from the shore and off-loading in pot-bellied barges cargo from all the ports in France and the West Indies. And in that port. (143)

The port and the cargo ships that sail in and out of its harbour hold a promise of distant and exciting shores, which links Fort-de-France to the wider Caribbean, the circum-Atlantic and the Mediterranean. Yet, although the city holds the promise of a distant future, José is weary of the price he and his fellow city dwellers have to pay. Dash writing on *Black Shack Alley* observes that in comparison to the plantation and José’s rural childhood, the city is ‘presented as an unliveable space peopled by the repressed and the hypocritical. French institutions are shown to be essentially destructive.’<sup>521</sup>

In addition to the repressive institutions that drive forward the process of assimilation, the city presents forms of social divisions not present in Black Shack Alley. Class divisions in the city come to the fore when José attends the lycèe. His ill fitted clothes and obvious poverty cause embarrassment for him and his peers alike. As a result, he is ignored by his by his classmates and he notices the unpleasant glances from the fathers and drivers as they collect their children from school in their shiny black cars. American philosopher Marshall Berman, writing on the social divisions in the city concludes that class ‘opens up new divisions within the modern self

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<sup>521</sup>J. Michael Dash, ‘Exile and Recent Literature’, in *History of Literature in the Caribbean: Hispanic and francophone regions*, 453.



[...] the presence of the poor casts an inexorable shadow over the luminosity of the city.<sup>522</sup> Berman here is writing on the position of the privileged in relation to the poor in Baudelaire's essays. Yet in *Black Shack Alley* José is the shadow. From his down trodden clothes, to the rented shack that he and his mother call home on the edges of Fort-de-France, his poverty symbolises the contradictions at the heart of the modern black subject, in the literary port city of the Caribbean. The social mobility of his family attests to the life changing opportunities present in the city. Yet his mother's position as a maid reflects the continued social imbalance.

José is troubled by the servants, gardeners and drivers employed in the service industries of Fort-de-France. He is embarrassed by this form of servitude that to him symbolises the process of assimilation and the loss of a sense of self for the black collective. As he observes the city workers on his journeys in to school he compares them to the considerably poorer plantations workers of Black Shack Alley. While the residents of the plantation toiled like slaves for white planters, he contends that they 'did not prostrate themselves before them. Whereas those in Route Didier formed a devoted category, dutifully cultivating the manner of serving the békés.' (148) As they sit and talk to José, the gardeners he observes 'did not complain about anything. Their condition seemed justified [...] But how they dreamed [...] of becoming a driver [...] of climbing the rungs of the servant world.' (163) In this repressive system, the pristine gardens of the rich white residents and prospect of driving a car becomes the Antillean dream. Life in the city introduces José to a 'category of black people' (147) that he had not known before.

Yet although the communities of the city appear to be different, the inhabitants of Zobel's literary Fort-de-France to some extent reaffirm Glissant's observation that the city offers the old order rearranged. Here the spoils of the capitalist system that had underpinned the plantation complex, appears obtainable to the black workers of the service industry. Yet as José

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<sup>522</sup> Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 154.

concludes, this is simply a mirage where they are locked in a cycle of servitude. Moreover, the position of the servants reflects the underlying fears of the black residents of the early twentieth century Caribbean city. Christopher Winks in his essay on the literary representations of the Caribbean city in Brathwaite's poems observes that 'the prospect of a re-emergent Plantation city encroaching upon, indeed expropriating the territories in the form of hotels, golf courses, highways and other tourist orientated amenities'<sup>523</sup> is a central concern. I suggest that José's discomfort towards the social positioning of the gardener and the driver, is connected to this idea of a re-emergent plantation city. A society in which the black resident's resilience and acts of resistance, a familiar feature of plantation life, is abandoned, or worse forgotten in the pursuit of modernity and materiality.

This process of assimilation moves beyond the social enclaves of the working class and its effects are felt amongst the black middle class communities who will eventually govern Martinique. As José whiles away his afternoons in Fort-de-France he ventures to the Caribbean shores where he observes the waterfront activities:

There would be a sail boat being pushed toward the town by the trade-winds that blew over the Caribbean Sea; or a cargo boat turning around [...] that conjured up in the setting sun images of Marseille, Bordeaux, Saint-Nazaire. (171)

From these French ports return students 'fresh from the Sorbonne or the Faculty of Medicine' (173). Sons of modest civil servants who have received scholarships to Paris because, as José concludes, 'their fathers served as yes-men for some deputy.' (173) The process of transformation that the emerging political classes go through affect their entire families. José observes that mothers are made to conceal their rural origins, and change 'their West Indian style of dress' (173) for fear of looking like the 'lower class peoples' (173) and jeopardising their son's political futures. Zobel, writing

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<sup>523</sup> Christopher Winks, *Symbolic Cities in Caribbean Literature* (New York; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 153.

*Black Shack Alley* in the late 1940s reflects a sense of discomfort at what assimilation will mean for a future Martinique.

Nick Nesbitt in his chapter on the affects of assimilation in the late twentieth century notes that the process of assimilation has undeniably improved the inhabitants quality of life in comparison to neighbouring Caribbean islands. Yet, this has come at the price of genuine growth and productivity. An over bloated public service and a dependency on tourism has cultivated a culture of increased dependency on metropolitan France.<sup>524</sup> In *Black Shack Alley* the cultivation and productivity of land in the city is reduced to a series of well manicured gardens and flowerbed that serve little purpose to the wider population. José's prescient observations on the demands placed on the servants and graduates, who work within these systems of dependency, highlight the tensions at play in the francophone Caribbean city. Central to my concern here, is the suggestion that the regenerative qualities of the city are negative, as the black body is forced to wear a mask. In the city, economical advancement is equated with 'cultural whitening'. The mother, as with the politician son, both in a literal and metaphorical sense is forced to inhabit a space that denies a black Antillean tradition and historiography.

José is troubled by this modernity in Fort-de-France that promises to simultaneously enhance and destroy his sense of self. The uneasy relationship with the city and modernity in *Black Shack Alley* reflects Berman's observations on the city and the modern condition. Berman argues that to be modern 'is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power [...] transformation [...] and at the same time threatens to destroy everything we have [...] everything we know'.<sup>525</sup> This notion, that the city poses both a threat to an inherent knowledge and the possibility of transformation is central to the ideas on the condition of the modern black subject in *Black Shack Alley*. The knowledge that Zobel writes of here is of

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<sup>524</sup> Nick Nesbitt, *Voicing History and Memory: History and Subjectivity in French Caribbean Literature*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 7-8.

<sup>525</sup> Berman, 15.

course, the knowledge of the folk, which had been a prominent facet of José's childhood in Black Shack Alley. As I have already discussed in Chapter Two, José counteracts this destructive force and sense of alienation by surrounding himself with friends and acquaintances who are either from, or are familiar with, rural life in the plantations.

Yet in the midst of the confusion and alienation that José experiences in Fort-de-France there is palpable sense of excitement and exhilaration at the freedom that the city affords. Unlike the workers in Black Shack Alley, who work in the harsh conditions of the cane fields from sunrise to sunset, the spatial limits of the city cultivate anonymity and idleness. José is unable to articulate why this fills him with a sense of joy but he admires the 'bare-backed men lazing around not doing anything' (142) His admiration for this refusal to work is of course linked to the brutality of the plantation, where physical work was all encompassing and relentless. It also connects to an affective memory which links the childhood recollections of his long suffering grandmother to the wider pan-Caribbean experience of the plantation. The city redefines the condition of black subjectivity in the modern Caribbean and significantly distorts the binaries of the plantation.

Fumagalli in her reading of *Black Shack Alley* notes that José leisurely strolls through Fort-de-France 'like a Baudelairean flâneur.' As he moves through the public spaces of the Savannah he wanders around the 'bars and drinking kiosks' (172) observing the 'semi-elegant crowd' (172) as they consume the food and drink on offer in the cafes lining the boulevard. These fleeting observations of city life offer a panoramic view of the fluid and transformative experience of modernity <sup>526</sup> in mid-twentieth century Fort-de-France. As with Reid's *New Day*, the port city offers a reconfiguration of the black female body. José notes with 'fervent excitement' the 'dark-eyed woman, who with two large gold rings in her ears, passed back and forth in the middle of the main walk'. (172). Kim Toffoletti writing on Baudelaire's flâneur suggests that his style of

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<sup>526</sup> Kim Toffoletti, *Cyborgs and Barbie Dolls: Feminism, Popular Culture and the Posthuman Body* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2007), 42.

observation relies on the movement of an inherently male viewer. Within this space of the masculine gaze the women - 'namely prostitutes' - become objects of consumption.<sup>527</sup> José, as with Baudelaire's flâneur, consumes the black female body. Yet what is striking about *Black Shack Alley* is Zobel's literary representation of the black male body.

Fumagalli writes that whilst Baudelaire's flâneur is fascinated by the spectacle of commodities, Zobel's celebrates the spectacle of black freedom.<sup>528</sup> Extending Fumagalli's observation, I wish to suggest that José not only celebrates black freedom but also the spectacle of the free black male body. As he walks through the streets and boulevards of Fort-de-France he is confronted with new images of the black body that are in stark contrast to the black bodies he witnesses in Black Shack Alley. Gone are the open wounds, running sores and swollen broken ankles of the plantation workers (34). Instead in the port city José gazes upon:

Herculean black men [...] who, by their zeal alone [...] did all the work [...] black giants walking the length and breadth of the wharves [...] Covered with dust and dirt, they looked like veritable bronze statues. (143/144)

Here in the anonymity of the city, the black body is presented as beautiful, powerful, and most importantly as an autonomous entity. The men bathe in the setting sun, and José notes that 'the whole twilight belonged to those naked black men - some standing, others swimming - with the silhouettes of the cargo boats riding at anchor'. (144) The image of the black men bathing in the sea return us once again to the tidal dialectics of Caribbean historiography. In the opening lines of his poem 'Sel Noir' (1960) Glissant writes, 'For the salt it signifies. Again the brilliance and the bitterness'.<sup>529</sup> In Zobel's literary port city, the ebb and flow of the Caribbean Sea washes away the dirt on the black worker's body. In the bitterness of transoceanic flows the brilliance and the resistance of black subjectivity is celebrated by José.

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<sup>527</sup> Toffoletti, 43.

<sup>528</sup> Fumagalli, n.10, 166.

<sup>529</sup> Glissant, 'Le Sel Noir; Le Sang Rivé, Boises', preface de Jacques Berque, (Paris: Gallimard, 1983).

I suggest that the historiography of pan-Caribbean mobility as presented in *New Day* and *Black Shack Alley* plays a defining and pivotal role in the development of the modern Caribbean subject. Transcontinental journeys not only reshape the modernities of elsewhere, but they reconfigure the centre and peripheries across the archipelago of the Caribbean. The ebb and flow of the Caribbean Sea with its submerged historical narratives laps against the wharves and harbours of the port cities, reshaping notions of Caribbean selfhood and agency. As I hope to have demonstrated throughout this Chapter within the port city, with its burgeoning and developing merchant class new meanings of modernity are fashioned. Distance from the plantation creates new types of black people with new concerns. The search for cultural and artistic language that best reflects the historiography of the region becomes a necessary vocation. As I move on to the final Chapter of this thesis I consider the position of the writer in the quest for a 'nation language' and argue that at the centre of Caribbean literary modernity is the performance of folk. Here, in the dancing, and the drum beat and the Carnival performance, Caribbean subjectivity is reconfigured to fit the complex contours its landscape.

IV

**'Foreshadowing Deeper Shadows to Come'** <sup>530</sup>

**Fear and Performance in  
Caribbean Literary Modernity**

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<sup>530</sup> Herman Melville, *Benito Cereno* in Dan McCall, ed., *Herman Melville's Short Novels*, (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002), 35.

“You are saved; what has cast such a shadow upon you?”  
“The Negro.”

Herman Melville, *Benito Cereno*<sup>531</sup>

Notions of black subjectivity within European and American modernities, as suggested by Herman Melville in the epigraph above, casts a long shadow on modernity itself. The spectre of the Negro, the terrifying ‘other,’ both enchants and frightens ‘Old World’ audiences in equal measure. From Zombies to Obeah, from Cannibals to savages, the ‘New World’ and its black populations present a petrifying spectacle. The presence of the black body as articulated by Melville in *Benito Cereno* reinforces the horrors at the heart of Western and Caribbean modernity. Of particular concern in this Chapter, and the wider analysis developed throughout this thesis, is the relationship between these terrifying spectacles, and the performances from which they emanate. I specifically examine how these performances - which are subsequently distorted in the Western literary imagination - are reconfigured in the twentieth century by Brodber, Schwarz-Bart, Reid, and Zobel.

By drawing on elements of literary performances in the work of these four writers, I aim to underscore that Caribbean performance is central to the representations of modernity in Caribbean literature. I shall include in my discussion, an analysis on theatre, film, carnival, and rituals, as I hope to demonstrate that the inclusion of these performance within the text, can be read as literary acts of resistance. I draw on Benitez-Rojo, who reveals that the Caribbean novel is a space of ‘total performance’<sup>532</sup> where a double discourse takes place. One that ‘speaks to the West in the terms of a profane performance and, at the same time it speaks to the Caribbean in the terms of a ritual performance’.<sup>533</sup> If indeed, as Benitez-Rojo suggests, the Caribbean text is a ‘consummate performer’<sup>534</sup> how are we to read Caribbean literary

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<sup>531</sup>Herman Melville, *Benito Cereno* in *Herman Melville’s Short Novels*, ed., Dan McCall (New York; London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002), 101.

<sup>532</sup>Benitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island*, 218.

<sup>533</sup>Benitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island*, 221.

<sup>534</sup>Benitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island*, 221.



modernity? What symbolic codes,<sup>535</sup> to borrow from Benitez-Rojo, do these performances reveal, and how best might we interpret these codes to expand on the notions of modernity and the text within the Caribbean.

As I have attempted to demonstrate throughout this thesis, Brodber's, Reid's, Schwarz-Bart's, and Zobel's narratives are littered with the literary representations of cultural and religious performances. From spirit thievery in *Myal*, to shape-shifting women in *The Bridge of Beyond*, the grotesque and the supernatural occupy the literary space, alongside for example, the more conventional scenes of carnival and dancing. These performances enacted in the region for five centuries serve a myriad of purposes, and provide a means by which to consider the processes of cultural and socio-political creolisation that have taken place in the Caribbean. Indeed, Elizabeth A. McAlister argues that 'rituals are primary documents that can be "read" just as well as books in a library and that can reveal as much about culture as any written text.'<sup>536</sup>

Drawing on McAlister's work, I propose to read meanings of performance within these texts. In doing so, I shall attempt to draw out the cultural significance of the performances to the region, and to the wider notions of Caribbean modernity. Of importance to my analysis here, are the roles that these performances play in the acts of resistance amongst the Caribbean communities. Furthermore, I am concerned with how these performances enable us to read agency and modern Caribbean subjectivity. This is because as Benitez-Rojo has suggested, Caribbean literary discourse puts on a masquerade.<sup>537</sup> Yet submerged beneath the masks of performance, lies a highly politicised literary discourse that attempts to deconstruct Enlightenment ideologies concerning the Caribbean. Critical to my examination of the representations of modernity in Caribbean literature, are the ways in which these cultural and religious performances counteract the

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<sup>535</sup>Benitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island*, 220.

<sup>536</sup>Elizabeth A. McAlister, *Rara!: Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and it's Diaspora* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2002), 14.

<sup>537</sup>Benitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island*, 306-308.

notions of blackness and culture in Western discourse, and ultimately enable Caribbean writers to reconfigure the modern Caribbean subject.

### **Beating the Literary Drum: Performance and Ritual**

Towards the end of Schwarz-Bart's *The Bridge of Beyond*, Telumee recalls her second husband's time in France. She remembers that Amboise had been haunted by loneliness in Paris, and his greatest fear had been alienation:

As soon as he left the hotel he felt as if he were going through places peopled with evil spirits, strangers to his flesh and blood who watched him go by with complete indifference, as if for them he didn't exist. (150)

The evil spirits in Amboise's Parisian cityscape are the French strangers who ignore his presence, his blackness, and his humanity. Of particular importance to my analysis is how Schwarz-Bart reverses the familiar experience of the traveller in a distant land, frightened by the spectre of the unknown. Here the unknown is Europe, and the fear experienced by Amboise relates to the apparent emotional and physical detachment of his fellow city dwellers. Amboise's journey to France, much like Telumee's personal narrative functions as a personal quest. As a young boy his grandmother warns him that 'a Negro is a well of sins, a creature of the devil (159), and after being imprisoned for attacking a gendarme in the city of Point-à-Pitre, he associates the rage and violence he feels towards society with his immoral subjectivity. Horrified by 'the blackness of his soul', (149) Amboise wonders how he might wash it clean. France, and in particular the city of Paris, is the chosen elixir. Yet, unlike the conventional heroes of epic quests, Amboise is already a creature of the underworld. Born a child of sin, according to his grandmother, and the colonial ideology that has informed her cultural and theological frame of reference, his journey towards redemption is complex and shrouded in uncertainty.

Amboise's fear of evil spirits may appear surprising in light of his fictional home of Fond-Zombi, and indeed his relationship with Telumee,

who by this point has assumed the position in her community of the healer / sorcerer. Furthermore, Amboise and the village life described in *The Bridge of Beyond*, is closely connected to the spirit world, and stories relating to the phantasmagorical are commonplace. As I discussed in Chapter One, the village names in *The Bridge of Beyond*, evoke images of hauntings and troubled histories. L'Abanonnée, Fond-Zombi, and La Folie, are signifiers of madness and monstrous encounters. It is not only the land that is troubled, for Telumee's family are either possessed, or assumed to be possessed throughout the novel. In the opening Chapter, the villagers whisper that Telumee's grandfather, Jeremiah, 'must be under the spell of the Guiablesse, [...] the woman with the clovern hoof, who feeds exclusively on your desire to live, and whose charms drive you [...] to suicide.' (5) In addition to the spirit possession, the characters lives straddle two worlds, as they comfortably co-exist with their departed ancestors, continually negotiating the space between the living and the dead. When Jeremiah dies, her grandmother, Queen Without a Name, visits a family friend Ma Cia in the hope that 'she would put her in touch with Jeremiah.' (15) After Amboise dies, he continues to live with Telumee. A ghostly figure in her cabin, she feeds him and washes his body in citronella-scented water. (155) Moreover, when Telumee suffers a mental and physical breakdown, as a result of domestic abuse at the hands of her first husband, the village declares that she 'been changed into a zombie' (103) as she ceases to communicate with the living. I will return to the figure of the zombie. To contextualise the performances further, I firstly wish to address the literary representations, as highlighted above, of Caribbean cosmography. Of particular concern here, are the rituals and performances that are enacted, as the characters attempt to negotiate their lived realities in *The Bridge of Beyond*. By placing emphasis on the position of the drum and the rhythms of Caribbean reality I hope to demonstrate, that rather than monstrous spectacles, the performances enacted in *The Bridge of Beyond* can be read as strategies through which the

inhabitants articulate and make sense of the complexities of Caribbean lived reality.

As I have been suggesting, the relationship between life and death in Fond-Zombi is complex. Ronnie Scharfman points out that, '[in] creole cosmogony, with its traces of African cultural heritage, the boundaries between the dead and the living are of course more fluid.'<sup>538</sup> Performances in *The Bridge of Beyond*, involving drums, music, and song are enacted at weddings, wakes and Christian festivals such as Christmas and Easter. As forms of celebrations for the living and the dead they function as communal acts of worship, and nodes of communication connecting the community to an ancestral past.<sup>539</sup> In African societies such as Nigeria and Zaire, different drums are used for different purposes. War, drums, talking drums, and ceremonial drums amongst, others accompany a myriad of performances.<sup>540</sup> This central position afforded to the drum migrates to the Americas and its importance is maintained - albeit in translated and creolised form- in the depths the Caribbean plantation. In addition to the drumming other performances attest the creolisation of cultural practices within the plantations. Carol singing co-exists with the rumble of the drums, and the Christian stories at Sunday mass live side-by-side, with the African derived tales of the folk.

Moreover, the sound of drums being played is carried throughout the novel, at times warning Telumee and reader alike, of an impending danger, or signalling the individual or collective desire for freedom. Significantly the drum and the act of singing, plays an important role in the forms of resistance employed to counteract oppression. Indeed, Telumee metaphorically turns herself into a 'drum with two sides', and in doing so nullifies the racist abuse that she receives at the hand of her white employee, Madame Desaragne, a direct descendant of a French slave owning family. To

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<sup>538</sup>Ronnie Scharfman, "Reciprocal Hauntings: Imagining Slavery and the Shoah in Caryl Phillips and André and Simone Schwarz-Bart, *Yale French Studies*, No. 118/119, *Noeuds de mémoire: Multidirectional Memory in Postwar French and Francophone Culture* (2010), 97.

<sup>539</sup>Fernandez Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert eds., 13.

<sup>540</sup>John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1975), 8-9.

Madame Desaragne and the colonial world that she symbolises, Telumee presents one side of the drum, 'for her to amuse herself, for her to thump on, and I, underneath, I remained intact, nothing ever more so.' (61) Catherine A. John, writing on *The Bridge of Beyond*, suggests that evil, within the lived socio-political reality of the Caribbean islands 'is typified by the internalization of these negative [colonial] legacies.'<sup>541</sup> She notes that in *The Bridge of Beyond*, the affirmation and 'positive belief in the culture and spiritual self is revealed to be the only antidote for this sickness.'<sup>542</sup> In becoming a drum, Telumee refuses to internalise the derogatory statements made by her employee, and refutes this damning legacy through the act of drumming. Telumee's survival strategy is contrasted to that of Amboise who rather than turning to the rhythms and rituals of the folk, searches for salvation in the metropolitan and colonial centre of Paris. As John suggests, Amboise is finally 'cured' of his colonial malaise by plunging himself into the depths of the forests of Fond-Zombi and its associated spirits, in a bid to rid himself of the shadows cast, as result of his experience in Paris.

The position of the drum in the historiography of the wider Caribbean, explains its centrality as a recurring image in the work of Caribbean writers. Yet, the relationship between the drum, its associated rhythms and performances, and the wider question of Caribbean subjectivity, remains a fraught and contested theoretical issue. Martin Munro observes that the notions of performance, and specifically the position of rhythm, has often been 'neglected and disowned by Caribbean elites'.<sup>543</sup> Read as a sign of the putatively backward African culture of the (often darker-skinned) masses<sup>544</sup>, the connection between rhythm and a primitivist interpretation of Caribbean culture has proved difficult to dismiss. I aim to highlight the significance of the drum and its associated performances to the

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<sup>541</sup>Catherine A. John, *Clear Word and Third Sight: Folk Groundings and Diasporic Consciousness in African Caribbean Writing*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 208.

<sup>542</sup>John, 208.

<sup>543</sup>Munro, 'Fighting' the Future': Rhythm and Creolization in the Circum-Caribbean' in Martin Munro and Celia Britton, eds., *American Creole in the Francophone Caribbean and American South*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), 117.

<sup>544</sup>Munro, 'Fighting' the Future': Rhythm and Creolization in the Circum-Caribbean', 117.

development of a modern Caribbean political consciousness, and in doing so suggest that the literary representations examined in this Chapter, begin to recalibrate the position of black subjectivity within Western, Atlantic and Caribbean modernities. I draw on the work of Munro, who argues, 'to ignore rhythm completely is to neglect a fundamentally important feature of circum-Caribbean aesthetics, history, and indeed contemporary lived experience.'<sup>545</sup>

During plantation slavery the drum was considered a central force in the rhythms of Caribbean life by planters and slaves alike.<sup>546</sup> As early as 1688, planters in Barbados had noted the connection between music and revolt, leading to officials banning the beating of drums and the playing of musical instruments.<sup>547</sup> In Jamaica, Tacky's Rebellion (1760) led to the colonial government issuing a series of laws not only banning the beating of drums but also the blowing of horns and shells.<sup>548</sup> By the time of the Haitian Revolution (1791) reports of drumming accompanying the march of the revolutionaries were widespread. Geggus writes that, 'beating drums, chanting, and yelling, slaves [...] marched from plantation to plantation, killing, looting and burning cane fields.'<sup>549</sup>

Planters and European visitors to the Caribbean noted that drums were more than instruments of warfare. Maria Nugent on several occasions

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<sup>545</sup>Munro, *Different Drummers: Rhythm and Race in the Americas*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 4.

<sup>546</sup>Whilst I am only concentrating on drumming it is important to highlight that Obeah and Vodou along with the act of drumming were considered central facets of slave insurrections. Obeah practitioners such as the legendary Francois Mackandal who through his fearsome reputation was able to organise and provide slaves in Haiti with poisons made from plants found on the island. They in turn were to add the poisons to the meals of the French plantation owners. Mackandal was arrested and later executed on the eve of the revolt, but his association with vodou enhanced the myths surrounding him, and stories concerning his immortality, his ability to predict the future and metamorphosis into animals prevailed long after his death. This association between Vodou and Obeah saw the introduction of colonial laws banning drumming, the practice of Obeah and preparation of Obeah tools, such as poison. See Benitez-Rojo, *Repeating Island*, 159-161; Arvilla Payne-Jackson and Mervyn C. Alleyne, *Jamaican Folk Medicine: A Source of Healing* (Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2004), 66-72.

<sup>547</sup>Maurice Jackson, 'The Rise of Abolition' in *The Atlantic World 1450-2000*, Toyin Falola and Kevin D. Roberts (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 225.

<sup>548</sup>D.A. Dunkley, *Reading in Caribbean History and Culture: Breaking Ground* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011), 99.

<sup>549</sup>Geggus, "The Haitian Revolution", 29.

writes of the incessant singing and dancing that occupies the private spaces of the slaves on the plantation. She hears the rhythms of the drums during Christmas celebrations in Jamaica in 1804, and writes, 'nothing but banjos, drums, and tom-toms, going all night, and dancing and singing and madness'.<sup>550</sup> The association of the drum, with darkness and madness highlights the differing realities for colonised and coloniser.<sup>551</sup> Where Nugent hears madness, the twentieth century writers of the Caribbean read resistance and agency. From a Caribbean lived reality, the rhythm of the drum then, beats a sound of freedom that echoes throughout the Caribbean islands. This aural history continues to repeat itself in the fictional performances and in part explains the 'distant drum sounds' (57) that echo throughout the woods of Fond-Zombi. The sounds are not always immediate but they form part of the fabric of communal and ancestral memory. As Telumee explains, sounds are passed on much like the oral tales, to future generations. She notes that although Queen Without a Name had not heard the sounds of slavery first hand, her mother had 'heard it with her own ears [...] and she told grandmother.' (57). These ancestral dins then, continue to resonate throughout the forests of Fond-Zombi and act as sonic historical markers.

Pointing specifically to the importance of the drum within the communal space, Munro declares its rhythms to be 'a Caribbean "soundmark", a marker of space that is recognised by the community [...] It is moreover one of the most enduring and dynamic aspects of African diasporic cultures.'<sup>552</sup> In light of this he suggests that it is not surprising to find the drum at the centre of Black Atlantic theoretical discourses on Black Atlantic musical forms and Caribbean culture more widely. Munro observes that for the artists of the Negritude Movement, rhythm was deemed 'as an essential element of black being and culture'. Similarly, Césaire argued that

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<sup>550</sup>Nugent, 229.

<sup>551</sup>Kelly Baker Josephs, "Dreams, Delirium, and Decolonization in Derek Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain*", *Small Axe* No. 32 (Volume 14, No. 2), June 2010, 7-12.

<sup>552</sup>Munro, "Reading Rhythm and Listening to Caribbean History in Fiction by Jacques Roumain and Joseph Zobel" *Journal of Modern Literature*, Volume 31, Number 4, Summer 2008, 132.

rhythm functioned as a cathartic and dynamic way of sounding history and recovering a lost African-ness. In an interview with Jacqueline Sieger in 1961 he suggested that rhythm is an innate feature of black identity.<sup>553</sup> Yet, as Georges Ngal warns, the rhythms of black culture are by no means inherent and rather should be seen in the context of cultural production, and the experiences that these rhythms are enacting with, and indeed reacting to.<sup>554</sup> Likewise, Edward Baugh, writing on the rhythm of John Agard's cycle of poems, *Man to Pan* (1982) stresses the direct relationship between the invention of the steel drum and the repressive circumstances of the Trinidadian proletariat.<sup>555</sup> Read in this light, I suggest the drum and the performance, to which it keeps a rhythm, reflect a specific Caribbean political consciousness. Extending Benitez-Rojo's conceptualisation on the double discourse at play in the Caribbean text, I suggest that the literary representation of the drum functions not only as a reaffirmation of an African past, but also attests to the latent acts of resistance embedded in Caribbean historiography. The articulation of this resistance and agency, as I have been highlighting throughout this thesis, functions as a central concern for the Caribbean writer in presenting a more meaningful discourse on the lived Caribbean experience and the modern Caribbean subject.

Writing on Caryl Phillip's novel, *Crossing the River*, Benitez-Rojo expands on the idea between Caribbean performance, rhythm, and the transformative process of creolisation. He observes that the 'ancient pulsations brought by the African diaspora, the memory of the sacred drums and the words of the griot'<sup>556</sup> can be found in Caribbean performances. Yet, a complex 'poly-rhythmic orchestration is born on the plantation'.<sup>557</sup> One that contains the sounds and rhythms of the overseer's whip, the stroke of the

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<sup>553</sup>Jacqueline Sieger, 'Entretien avec Aime Césaire, *Afrique* (Paris, 1961) numéro 5, octobre, 64-67, accessed on [www.potomitan.info/cesaire/entretien](http://www.potomitan.info/cesaire/entretien).

<sup>554</sup>Georges Ngal, *Création et rupture en littérature africaine* (Paris: L'Harmattan), 54.

<sup>555</sup>Edward Baugh, 'A History of Poetry', in *A History of Literature in the Caribbean: English and Dutch speaking countries*, 269.

<sup>556</sup>Benitez-Rojo, 'Three Words Toward Creolisation', trans. James Maraniss, in *Caribbean Creolisation: Reflections on the Cultural Dynamics of Language*, 58.

<sup>557</sup>Benitez-Rojo, 'Three Words Toward Creolisation', 58.



machete on cane, and the planter's language and dance.<sup>558</sup> This 'poly-rhythmic orchestration' is audible in the literary performances of Schwarz-Bart's *The Bridge of Beyond*. Telumee's wedding to Amboise, one of the novels more vivid passages<sup>559</sup>, captures the centrality of the performance to Caribbean lived experience. The villagers arrive at night to celebrate the union:

Amboise sat astride a drum [...] slowly raised his arm, as if all he'd ever seen or heard, everything he knew from today and yesterday was at the tip of his outstretched fingers. (144)

As Amboise strikes the drum he invests his life experience, and those of Fond-Zombi into the rhythms that he plays. He remembers and calls forth both the living and the dead, to celebrate in his union with Telumee. As he drums, Telumee's friend Olympia starts to dance, she 'whirled and bent, and straightened up again, snatching away our anguish with a gesture'. (145). The dance performs a dual function, existing as a performance and as restorative force for the wider community of La Folie. John S. Mbiti writing on the dancing and singing in African ceremonies observes that [t]hrough, music, singing and dancing, people are able to participate emotionally and physically in the act of worship.<sup>560</sup> In the Caribbean and specifically in relation to plantation life, Munro suggests that dancing takes on an additional meaning and acts as necessary sedative to the pain of the Caribbean lived reality, located in the shadow of the plantation. Writing on the dance related performances in *Black Shack Alley*, Munro suggests that rhythm and performance function as a 'palliative force'.<sup>561</sup> Here, in the depths of the night, the celebration is as much a testament to the hardship of Caribbean lived reality as it is a performance in honour of a union between a man and a woman.

As with Schwarz-Bart's *The Bridge of Beyond*, Zobel's *Black Shack Alley* locates and gives prominence to the performances and sounds of the

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<sup>558</sup>Benitez-Rojo, 'Three Words Toward Creolisation', 58.

<sup>559</sup>J. David Danielson, "Telumee Miracle, and the Creole Experience" in *The International Fiction Review* January, 1976, 42.

<sup>560</sup>Mbiti, 61.

<sup>561</sup>Munro, "Fighting' the Future': Rhythm and Creolization in the Circum-Caribbean' 122.

Black Shack Alley collective. Jose recollects the performances that take place every Saturday evening after the plantation workers have received their pay. Amongst the bustle and the noise and their 'alcohol-drenched sadness' (36) he feels the 'pulsating beat of the tom-tom.' (36) The plantation workers with their 'quivering breasts [...] and frenzied feet [...] glassy eyes' (36) forget all their cares by 'dancing, dancing, dancing.' (36) Munro suggests that these performances in *Black Shack Alley* and the wider Caribbean can infer meanings at an individual, societal and national level. The performances take place at times of crisis but also 'act as a means of imagining a future freed from the restrictions of the present.'<sup>562</sup> Olympia in *The Bridge of Beyond* as with the plantation workers of *Black Shack Alley* dance through their individual pain as well as snatching away at the anguish of the wider community. The hope that lies at the heart of these performances 'expresses the desire for a world remade.'<sup>563</sup>

Returning once again to Benitez-Rojo's poly-rhythmic orchestration, I wish to suggest that in *Black Shack Alley* and *The Bridge of Beyond* the modernity of the Caribbean performance is wrested from the madness and monstrous space that it occupies in the Western imagination. Significantly it also provides a counter-discourse to the primitivism and essentialist views<sup>564</sup> on the relationship between an Africanised Caribbean subjectivity, and performance, as championed by the Negritude and Haitian indigenist movements.<sup>565</sup> Here, it is reconfigured as a choreography of the creolised folk and speaks to the modernity of Caribbean experience. From the depths of the plantation to Zobel's and Schwarz-Bart's literary townscapes, the drum beat is refashioned, and the aural experiences of the francophone

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<sup>562</sup>Munro, 'Fighting' the Future': Rhythm and Creolization in the Circum-Caribbean' 123.

<sup>563</sup>Munro, 'Fighting' the Future': Rhythm and Creolization in the Circum-Caribbean' 127.

<sup>564</sup>The literary and artistic Indigenous Movement in Haiti developed during the 1920s challenged the racist U.S. administration during its military occupation of Haiti during 1915-1934. Haitian intellectuals began to question the over attachment of Haitian writes to French writing styles and genres as well as emphasising the legacy of African cultural heritage in Haiti. See, Michael R. Hall, *Historical Dictionary of Haiti*, (Lanham, Scarecrow Press, 2012), 137.

<sup>565</sup>Munro, "Reading Rhythm and Listening to Caribbean History in Fiction by Jacques Roumain and Joseph Zobel", 132-136.

Caribbean region is relocated and celebrated on the page. Telumee admires 'the ingenious Negro' (73) who 'performs these magic tricks, dancing and drumming simultaneously' (73) as means of negotiating the debilitating existence that is life on the plantation. The pain that this performance derives from and speaks to is central to the notions of Caribbean subjectivity and modernity. In beating the literary drum, Schwarz-Bart and Zobel shed light on the 'shadow of the negro', and in doing so locate acts of resistance which are central to an understanding of the Caribbean modern subject.

### **Fractured Hearts: Haggard Ghosts and Zombies in Caribbean Modernity**

After her grandmother dies, Telumee leaves Fond-Zombi to stay with Ma Cia, the village quimboiseur.<sup>566</sup> As Ma Cia imparts her knowledge on herbal medicines to Telumee, she discusses slavery and its effects on the francophone population. She informs Telumee that 'we have been goods for auction, and now we are left with fractured hearts.' (130) Telumee experiencing at first-hand the debilitating effects of life on the plantation when venturing out to the cane fields to find work, observes that the workers walking 'in the fading light of the stars' (135) appear as a 'procession of dim and haggard ghosts'. (136) Broken and torn, the impact of the brutal capitalist system on the bodies and subjectivities of the African slaves is a fundamental concern in the narratives of Schwarz-Bart and Brodber. In light of this, I am specifically interested in drawing out the connections between the Caribbean body, plantation and theatrical performance in particular, central to which is the notion of voicelessness. If, as I am suggesting – after Benitez-Rojo – a double and opaque discourse takes place in the textual performances of Caribbean literature, what meanings are to be inferred from the inclusion of motifs and images long associated as evidence of the grotesque and the debased in the Caribbean?<sup>567</sup> I am referring specifically

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<sup>566</sup>Quimboiseurs are healers and counsellors who are believed to hold powers that allows them to call upon the supernatural for good and evil. See Fernandez Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, 180.

<sup>567</sup>Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, 'Colonial and postcolonial Gothic: the Caribbean' in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, Jerrold E. Hogle ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 230-233.

here to Cynric R. Williams' *Hamel, the Obeah Man* (1827) and Matthew Gregory Lewis' play *The Castle Spectre* (1797).<sup>568</sup> I pay attention to the figure of the Zombie, and other gothic forms, and examine how these images of "terror" employed in performances beyond the Caribbean, define the modern Caribbean subject. In doing so, I consider the ways in which *The Bridge of Beyond* and *Myal* employ ghoulish motifs to re-interrogate Caribbean subjectivity, and reconfigure the Caribbean body in modernity.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Ella's American husband Selwyn Langley uses Grove Town and its community as the setting for his debut play. Ella's stories are the basis for his research, and her narratives on the poltergeist and supernatural occurrences of Grove Town 'excite Selwyn'. (54) When she relays the tale concerning the herbalist Ole African, he misinterprets the homeopathic remedies as magic or voodoo. Seeing Ella's fear as she communicates her narrative, leads him to proclaim excitedly, 'What delightful theatre!' (55) Mesmerised by the unknown and gothic landscape of Ella's Grove Town, its perceived phantasmagorical events become the backdrop for his theatrical spectacle. Selwyn's fictional *Caribbean Nights and Days* reflects a number of theatrical representations of Jamaica, and Jamaican subjectivity on the European and American stage. I want to focus on two of these stage productions, paying particular attention to how Caribbean subjectivity is imagined. By connecting these theatrical productions to *Myal's* fictional theatrical piece, I aim to expand on my ideas concerning re-interrogating Caribbean subjectivity, voicing difference, and the modern Caribbean subject as discussed in Chapter Two.

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<sup>568</sup> *Hamel, the Obeah Man*, set in early nineteenth century Jamaica, tells the story of a slave rebellion in the ruins of a plantation. While the novel presents a complex picture it is sympathetic to the white planters and hostile against the anti-slavery missionaries. With themes of lust, power and Obeah ceremonies, *Hamel* is written in the Gothic tradition. See, Cynric R. Williams, *Hamel, the Obeah Man*, Candice Ward and Tim Watson, eds., (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2010); Matthew Gregory Lewis' successful nineteenth century Gothic drama ' *The Castle Spectre*, sees the lead character employ his African slaves to through their knowledge of the supernatural to do his nefarious biddings. See Matthew Lewis Gregory, *The Castle Spectre*, (London: Lacy, 1797).

Calypso flourished as a popular style of music in New York in the late 1930s<sup>569</sup> and by the 1950s the calypso craze had swept through the city. The 1957 production of the folk musical *Jamaica* capitalised on this trend. Initially intended as a socialist fable, the production based on E.Y. Harburg's and Fred Saidy's book depicted an unscrupulous Harlem businessman's attempts to introduce capitalism to a small Jamaican fishing village. The script was hastily rewritten when its leading star Caribbean-American calypso artist, Harry Belafonte pulled out. The revised version of the play now focused on the lead female character, Savannah, played by African-American actress, Lena Horne.<sup>570</sup>

My interest in *Jamaica*, the musical, centres on its depiction of the female lead and her position within American/Caribbean modernity. The beautiful Savannah desires to leave Jamaica for the modernity of New York where the natives relax in style and where 'all de money controlled by de wife.'<sup>571</sup> Savannah carries the musical, thereby asserting a physical presence on the stage, while tales of wealth and independence relayed in the songs she performs evoke notions of gendered and economic equality. Yet, despite the prominent physical space that she is afforded, Savannah remains paradoxically, an absent figure. Furthermore as Shane Vogel writing on the musical observes, the calypso presented in *Jamaica*, bears little resemblance to Trinidadian calypso with its 'surreptitious critique of poverty and colonial rule couched in boasts, sarcasm and biting wit.'<sup>572</sup> The character of Savannah as Vogel argues, is 'an island girl who never fully materializes.'<sup>573</sup> Occupying a space of 'mistranslation and displacement', Savannah and the production of *Jamaica* more widely presents a Jamaican subjectivity and modernity far removed from the complexities of lived Caribbean realities. This distortion

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<sup>569</sup>Donald Hill, 'I Am Happy Just To Be In This Sweet Land Of Liberty: The New York City Calypso Craze of the 1930s and 1940s', in *Island Sounds in the Global City: Caribbean Popular Music and Identity in New York*, eds., Ray Allen and Lois Wilcken (New York: New York Folklore Society: Institute for Studies in American Music, Brooklyn College, 1998), 74

<sup>570</sup>Shane Vogel, 'Jamaica on Broadway: The Popular Caribbean and Mock Transnational Performance', *Theatre Journal*, Volume 62, Number 1, March 2010, 1-21.

<sup>571</sup>Vogel, 14.

<sup>572</sup>Vogel, 9.

<sup>573</sup>Vogel, 14.

of Jamaican culture on the American stage is reflected in Selwyn's fictional *Caribbean Nights and Days*. As Ella watches the performance that her husband has fashioned from her recollections, all she can do is state "it didn't go so" under her breath'. (84) The theatrical space that Selwyn invents and presents to his American audience is littered with geographical and climatic inaccuracies, as Ella notes in horrified amazement:

But this Grove Town in which Selwyn set his play, had to be the most fruitful place in the whole world and one which respected no seasons [...] It was unnatural and it shook Ella (83)

I am interested in Ella's notion of what constitutes unnaturalness vis-à-vis Selwyn and his production. It is not simply that he has misunderstood the topographical arrangement of Grove Town, he has also painfully misrepresented its creolised community. Blackfaced, the cast appear, 'like an old army boot, they were polished, wet, polished again and burnished.' (83) As with Savannah in *Jamaica*, the female lead presented in the fictional stage in *Myal* is never fully realised. Moreover Selwyn's theatrical Ella undergoes a racial transformation and is presented as a white blonde girl with flowing hair. This transmogrification terrorises Ella more than any of the supernatural occurrences that have taken place in Grove Town. Similar to Amboise's experience in *The Bridge of Beyond*, the terror for the Caribbean subject lies in the distortion and miscomprehension of their black subjectivity. As Ella watches her blonde theatrical self, she finds the mis-appropriation of her stage presence struggling in the midst of a sea of darkened faces. White and pure, she is 'chased by outstretched black hands, grabbing at her.' (83/84) In order to contextualise Selwyn's recasting of Grove Town, and to expand on my argument concerning the re-configuration of the modern Caribbean subject, I wish to illustrate a connection between Selwyn's *Caribbean Nights and Days*, and a much earlier theatrical production situated in Jamaica: the pantomime, by English actor and playwright John Fawcett, *Obi, or, Three-Finger'd Jack* (1800).<sup>574</sup> I find it useful here to consider Paravisini-Gebert's work on the relationship between the

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<sup>574</sup>Paravisini-Gebert, 'Colonial and postcolonial Gothic: the Caribbean', 230.

Caribbean and Gothic Literature. She discloses that a number of eighteenth-century Gothic novels were directly involved in the slavery debates, and points out that, writers such as Lewis, author of the classic Gothic novel *Monk: A Romance* (1796) was heir to several West Indian plantations. Paravisini-Gebert's reading of the late Gothic fiction, implies a direct connection between plantation atrocities, and the horror presented in Gothic landscape.<sup>575</sup> According to Paravisini-Gebert, in the literary imagination of the Gothic writer, the Caribbean was a location of 'terror-laden imagery.'<sup>576</sup> In the nineteenth and early twentieth century Gothic narrative, the region emerges 'as a site of colonial "dystopia of savagery and backwardness" replete with Obeah and Vodou practitioners.'<sup>577</sup>

Although Fawcett's pantomime is not located in the Gothic tradition, Paravisini-Gebert's observations on how Gothic literature influenced Western conceptions of Caribbean subjectivity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is pertinent to my discussion. Furthermore, Paravisini-Gebert's suggestion that Vodou and Obeah practitioners are located at the heart of Caribbean identity in the Gothic and Western imagination<sup>578</sup> lends further support to my argument concerning the double and opaque discourse taking place in twentieth century Caribbean literature. I suggest that interrogating the position of the Caribbean subject in late Gothic fiction provides a useful framework through which to locate the meanings and signifiers of the modern Caribbean subject in Caribbean literature.

The hugely successful *Obi, or, Three-Finger'd Jack* (1800), 'played for nine years in London, and entered the repertoires of theatres in the provinces and in the United States.'<sup>579</sup> Based on the story of the eighteenth century black Jamaican bandit, Jack Mansong, the pantomime presents a

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<sup>575</sup>Paravisini-Gebert, 'Colonial and postcolonial Gothic: the Caribbean', 230.

<sup>576</sup>Paravisini-Gebert, 'Colonial and postcolonial Gothic: the Caribbean', 234.

<sup>577</sup>Paravisini-Gebert, 'Colonial and postcolonial Gothic: the Caribbean', 234.

<sup>578</sup>Paravisini-Gebert, 'Colonial and postcolonial Gothic: the Caribbean', 234.

<sup>579</sup>Frances R. Botkin, 'Revising the Colonial Caribbean: "Three-Fingered Jack" and the Jamaican Pantomime', *Callaloo*, Volume 35, Number 2, Spring 2012, 497.

black (blackface) antihero and his ill-fated rebellion.<sup>580</sup> The historical Mansong, escaped from slavery in 1799 and sought refuge in the Blue Mountains of Jamaica. Mansong became a highwayman, and conducted a two year campaign, where he was responsible for the killing of hundreds of travellers.<sup>581</sup> Mansong's terrorising exploits against the planter class earned him 'a reputation for superhuman powers among the slave population.'<sup>582</sup> For the planters he became known as the 'terror of Jamaica' and was immortalised in Benjamin Moseley's brief account of his exploits, *A Treatise on Sugar* (1779). Mansong was finally captured and executed in 1781, and his narrative spawned over twenty biographical accounts,<sup>583</sup> including Fawcett's successful production at the Little Theatre, Haymarket, London, in 1800.

Significantly, as with the fictional Selywn's, *Caribbean Nights and Days*, the spectacle and distortion of the supernatural, is a prominent feature in the pantomime *Obi, or, Three-Finger'd Jack*. Here the realm of the supernatural takes centre stage, as the role of obeah is presented as an exotic magic that enables Jack's banditry.<sup>584</sup> Contemporary accounts of Mansong's exploits in Jamaican newspapers, wrote of the threat he posed as a figurehead for other slaves and bandits. Yet, later accounts move the focus from his ability to inspire the collective, and instead point to his individual heroism, and expert knowledge on the terrors of witchcraft. As Mansong's narrative is translated from fact to fiction, the resistance and agency that his exploits infer, are subsumed in favour of the phantasmagorical spectacle of obeah. Again, much like the fictional playwright in *Caribbean Nights and Days*, Fawcett distorts the historical accounts, and 'whitens'<sup>585</sup> the narrative by introducing white characters and a romantic subplot to the pantomime.<sup>586</sup> In doing so, both Fawcett and the fictional Selwyn, amplify the supposed

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<sup>580</sup>Peter P. Reid, 'Conquer or Die: Staging Circum-Atlantic Revolt in Polly and Three Finger'd Jack', *Theatre Journal*, Volume 59, Number 2, May 2007, 253.

<sup>581</sup>Botkin, 494.

<sup>582</sup>Charles J. Rzepka, *Selected Studies in Romantic and American Literature, History and Culture: Inventions and Interventions* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing), 85.

<sup>583</sup>Botkin, 499.

<sup>584</sup>Peter. P. Reed, 254.

<sup>585</sup>Peter. P. Reed, 254.

<sup>586</sup>Botkin, 49



grotesqueness of blackness and Caribbean-ness as the characters are compared and contrasted to their white counterparts. As Toni Morrison writes in, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and Literary Imagination*, the African persona becomes a reflection and 'extraordinary meditation on the self; a powerful exploration of the fears and desires that reside in the writerly conscious.'<sup>587</sup> The subsequent literary and stage productions concerning Jack Mansong's narrative, present, as Morrison rightly point out, the fears and apprehensions of the colonisers towards the colonial mission and the slaves located at its centre. Selwyn's writerly consciousness betrays him, and his fear, that Ella's black Jamaican heritage might be uncovered, is articulated through her theatrical transmogrification and the amplification of the grotesque nature of blackness, and Africaness.

Although the production presents Jack as a hero he is finally overcome and order is restored to Jamaica. Frances Botkin writes of the contradiction in Fawcett's pantomime that simultaneously portrays as a rebellious hero, and a savage, thereby reaffirming conservative narratives concerning racial dynamics within the colonies.<sup>588</sup> Fawcett's *Three Finger'd Jack*, presents compassionate planters, contented slaves and justly punished rebels.<sup>589</sup> Of significance to my wider argument, is the paradoxical positioning of Jack who is the central point of the production's narratives, and yet he remains voiceless throughout. In part this can be explained by the pantomime form of Fawcett's production, which had no spoken dialogue, but rather a plot that was delivered through written signs, action, gesture and song.<sup>590</sup> Yet as Peter Reed notes, the form of the play not only denies Jack his own voice, but even within the context of a musical he does not have 'the

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<sup>587</sup>Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and Literary Imagination*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 17.

<sup>588</sup>Botkin, 496.

<sup>589</sup>Botkin, 496.

<sup>590</sup>Diane Paton, 'The Afterlives of Three-Fingered Jack', in *Slavery and The Cultures of Abolition: Essays Marking the Bicentennial of the British Abolition Act of 1807*, (Cambridge: DS Brewer, 2007), 45.

privilege of singing.<sup>591</sup> Rather his voicelessness reduces him to 'a silent, menacing, shadowy threat, a background presence of the performance.'<sup>592</sup>

The black presence in *Obi, or, Three-Finger'd Jack* as with the blackface cast, and terrifying outstretched hands in *Caribbean Nights and Days* are relocated to the periphery of the stage, of the plantation, and of modernity itself. The horrors of the plantation are reconfigured, and here the black body, as opposed to the debilitating violence inflicted on it, becomes the terrifying spectacle. The acts of resistance that the historical Jack Mansong, and the fictional Ole African in *Myal* symbolise are contorted, until they are reduced to the mysterious practices of a region and a people 'plagued by superstition and witchcraft.'<sup>593</sup> The theatrical performance presented to Ella in *Myal*, with its distortions of Caribbean lived reality, not only reduces her capacity to speak, but as Anim-Addo writes, renders her 'essentially passive'.<sup>594</sup> Ella is more than silenced, she becomes zombified. If, as I am arguing in this Chapter, Brodber and the other selected writers in question reconfigure horror motifs concerning the Caribbean, then the process of zombification that Ella suffers as a reaction to the gothic horror presented on the stage is highly significant. The literary representation of zombification within the Caribbean highlights the horror of slavery and plantation life in general. Yet, further to this, I wish to suggest that the literary exploration of zombification can be seen as signalling a break with the past, and an attempt on the part of Caribbean writers to voice difference, and renegotiate the meanings of Caribbean modernity on their terms among which was a reconfiguration of zombification.

The figure of the zombie, and the process of zombification is more readily associated with the imagery and the performance of the 'ghoul who lumbers around trying to eat people'<sup>595</sup> in twentieth century popular culture. Yet as McAlister notes the word zombi has a much longer history, and

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<sup>591</sup>Peter. P. Reid, 255.

<sup>592</sup>Peter. P. Reid, 255.

<sup>593</sup>James Ferguson, "Haiti, History and the Gods (Book Review)", *Race and Class* 38 (1997), 94.

<sup>594</sup>Anim-Addo, *Touching The Body*, 208.

<sup>595</sup>McAlister, "Slaves, Cannibals, and Infected Hyper-Whites: The Race and Religion of Zombies", *Anthropological Quarterly*, Volume 85, Number 2, Spring 2012, 460.

'appears in writing as far back as colonial Saint-Domingue.'<sup>596</sup> The Martinican lawyer Mederic Moreau de Saint-Mery, travelling around Haiti during the eighteenth century had noted that Haitian slaves born in the colony, trembled on hearing stories concerning the 'loup-garoux' (vampire), and 'de Zonbi' (zombie), which he translated as the creole word for spirit, or a returned soul (revenant).<sup>597</sup> Originating in African-Haitian practice, McAlister writes that the figure of the zombie can be traced in part to a 'colonial-era Kongo religion from Central Africa.'<sup>598</sup> As a result of the processes of syncretism and creolisation once in the Americas, the zombie takes on a number of meanings for different audiences and is regarded as both a creature of horror, and a creature of despair.<sup>599</sup> Benitez-Rojo highlights that in the Haitian belief system there are 'two zombies: one spiritual and another material.'<sup>600</sup> The spiritual zombie is the 'bon ange', a vital force that no subject can live without. The bokor (sorcerer) captures the 'bon ange' and 'keeps it in a receptacle, and uses it whenever he wants in matters of cosmogonic relevance'. The material zombie once again involves the capture of the 'bon ange' and the preservation of the empty body in which it used to reside. Yet, this time the empty vessel is handed over to third parties who may benefit from its work.<sup>601</sup> It is this zombie figure, and the notion of a third party controlling an empty body that I am particularly concerned with in relation to Caribbean modernity.

In *Myal*, Brodber represents different ways in which the process of zombification can take place. In the closing pages of the novel, Ella's adoptive father Reverend Brassington has a conversation with the Baptist

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<sup>596</sup>McAlister, "Slaves, Cannibals, and Infected Hyper-Whites: The Race and Religion of Zombies", 459.

<sup>597</sup>Saint-Mery 52.

<sup>598</sup>McAlister, "Slaves, Cannibals, and Infected Hyper-Whites: The Race and Religion of Zombies", 461.

<sup>599</sup>Ann Kordas, 'New South, New Immigrants, New Women, New Zombies: The Historical Development of the Zombie on American Popular Culture' in *Race, Oppression and the Zombie: Essays on Cross Cultural Appropriations of the Caribbean Tradition*, Christopher M. Morman and Cory James Rushton eds., (North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 2011), 15.

<sup>600</sup>Benitez-Rojo, *Repeating Island*, 164.

<sup>601</sup>Benitez-Rojo, *Repeating Island*, 165.,

leader Reverend Simpson, concerning Ella's experiences within Grove Town and North America:

I say Simpson, have you heard the term 'zombification' before? [...] The Reverend Simpson was slow in answering [...] – Yes, – he said [...] People are separated from the parts of themselves that make them think and they are left as flesh only. Flesh that takes directions from someone. The thinking part of them is also used as nefariously ... 'immorally' might be a better word right. (108)

As discussed in Chapter Two the spirit thievery performed by Mass Levi, and his zombification of Anita, reflects the more common image of the local sorcerer practising magic to an evil end. Yet, as Simpson's answer reveals, other forms of zombification are present. In his response to Reverend Brassington, he points to the subject's agency and notes the 'thinking part' of the subject is dislocated from the body. Melvin B. Rahming observes that zombification in *Myal*, is the zombification of the consciousness<sup>602</sup> as the Grove Town community capitulate to colonial ideologies.<sup>603</sup> It is also possible, as Rahming suggests, to unwittingly engage in the process of zombification. He notes the role of Reverend Brassington, who zombifies his congregation with the oppressive and restrictive teachings of the colonial church.<sup>604</sup> Forced to discard their colourful clothes and head ties, for expensive felt hats and colourless white garments, the Grove Town community are subject to the Church's colonial policy "to exorcise and replace". (18) The evil, in the eyes of Reverend Brassington and the wider colonial ministry is the creolised and syncretised cultural and religious nature of community. The "whitening" of this colourful existence is seen as the only solution.

While Reverend Brassington's concern with Grove Town's creolised culture is understood within a theological and colonial paradigm. Mass Cyrus' concerns, reflect the anxiety concerning the sexual relationships that have taken place between the European and African population,s and the

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<sup>602</sup>Melvin B. Rahming, 'Towards a Critical Theory of Spirit: The Insistent Demands of Erna Brodber's *Myal*,' *Revista/Review, Interamerican*, 31 (1-4), 2001, 2.

<sup>603</sup>Rahming,, 3.

<sup>604</sup>Rahming, 3.

repercussions of these unions. Mass Cyrus, who is responsible for rescuing Ella from her zombified state declares his apprehension at her being mixed-race, and the wider implication of this for the region. As he works on curing Ella he states “These in between people” [...] “These in-between colours people, these trained minded people, play the percussions so loud”. (1) Ella, as Anim-Addo highlights is the indigenised offspring of colonial fathers and local mothers<sup>605</sup> and as such, is part of a group ‘representative of a key strata of the hierarchised society.’<sup>606</sup> According to Mass Cyrus, they are distanced from the ‘his people’ who we assume to mean the folk, and through their experience of colonial education, they function as ‘trained minded people’ unable to hear or play the rhythms of the folk accordingly. He surmises that it would be better for Grove Town, “to let them [in-between people] keep their distance after all,” (1)

Ella’s in-betweenness, and the sense of fear at what she represents reflects a long and ambiguous position with the children of mixed-race relationships within the region and beyond. Indeed, Ella’s in-betweenness in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries represented the horror at the heart of the colonial adventure in the Americas. Paravisini-Gebert citing H.L. Malchow writes that in the Western imagination the mixed-characters of Gothic fiction represented the ‘tainted products of the undisciplined sexual passions of their white fathers and the “savage inheritance of their non-white mothers.”’<sup>607</sup> Furthermore she notes the connection between sexual miscegenation, and infection in the work of English historian Long, who exclaims that in the course of a few generations more ‘English blood will become... contaminated with this mixture [...] until every family catches infection from it.’<sup>608</sup>

This notion of infection is re-affirmed in Schwarz-Bart’s *The Bridge of Beyond*. Whilst working for the Desaragne family Telumee is approached by

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<sup>605</sup> Anim-Addo, *Touching The Body*, 209.

<sup>606</sup> Anim-Addo, *Touching The Body*, 209.

<sup>607</sup> Paravisini-Gebert, ‘Colonial and postcolonial Gothic: the Caribbean’ 232.

<sup>608</sup> Long, *Candid Reflections Upon the Judgement Lately Awarded by the Court of King’s Bench, in Westminster-Hall on What is Commonly Called the Negro-Cause*, (London: T.Lowden, 1772), 82.

Monsieur Desaragne, who buys her a dress in return for sexual favours. After being rebuffed by Telumee, he declares that his infatuation for her has taken him by surprise, and he likens it to 'a tick that jumps on you and sucks you to the last drop of your blood.' (72) The sexual infatuation and desire for the body of his black maid, far from invoking images of romantic ideals points, to the horrors of blood-sucking. Telumee's body, and in particular the implications of such a union becomes complicated with notions of disease and contagion.

In Reid's *New Day* the position of the mixed-race character and interracial relationships is viewed in a less ambiguous light in comparison to Brodber's *Myal* and Schwarz-Bart's *The Bridge of Beyond*. Wilson-Tagoe writing on the position of the mixed-race Campbell family in Reid's novel, observes that he presents an 'uncomplicated relationship'<sup>609</sup> regarding the Campbell's position vis-à-vis the black population, and his outlook is 'more open' in contrast to his literary, and academic contemporaries writing in the early to mid-twentieth century. According to Wilson-Tagoe, the decision to write the Campbell family as mixed race, and the explorations on the position of the mixed-raced communities, within literary discourses of the wider Caribbean, points to a necessary process of revaluation of the complexities in the modernity of the Caribbean. The mixed-race and in-between characters function as a visual reaffirmation of the processes of creolisation that have taken place as a result of Caribbean modernity. Significantly, the impact of this process is not limited to one racial group, but rather in Caribbean societies which have historically been structured around a pigmentocracy,<sup>610</sup> the desire to explore and articulate the effects of this become a primary concern for Caribbean artists of the twentieth century. As Wilson-Tagoe argues:

the phenomenon of miscegenation [...] as a historical fact of Caribbean experience, is fraught with cultural, psychological and

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<sup>609</sup>Wilson-Tagoe, 49.

<sup>610</sup>Race in the Caribbean is configured according to a complex pigmentocracy which determines social standing not only on the basis of black and white, but also according to a broad spectrum of colours between these peoples. See Marilyn Grace Miller, *Rise and Fall of the Cosmic Race: The Cult of Mestizaje in Latin America*, 24.

other conflicts which need to be explored as part of any reassessment of the Caribbean experience.<sup>611</sup>

I suggest that this process of reassessment, in relation to the mixed-race population as highlighted by Wilson-Tagoe, is central to the literary representations of the modern Caribbean subject in the works of Brodber, Reid, Schwarz-Bart, and Zobel. I extend this notion of re-evaluation to suggest that the exploration of the zombified figure, the performances and rituals of the sorcerers and healers presented in the four novels engage with the psychological and cultural acts of resistance deployed by Caribbean populations. These performances, read as spectacles of horror from the outside, are reconfigured by cultural insiders and presented as examples of Caribbean political consciousness and agency. The Haitian poet and political activist René Depestre writing on the myth of the zombie in Haiti argues that “[t]he history of colonization is the process of man’s general zombification. It is also the quest for a revitalising salt capable of restoring to man the use of his imagination and culture.”<sup>612</sup> Depestre’s analogy, serves my argument that the presentation of Caribbean culture, and performance in the works of Brodber, Reid, Schwarz-Bart, and Zobel, requires to be read as engaging in the salting quest, as articulated by Depestre. In the process the writer and the artist become the quimboisers, the sorcerers of old, as they remould and present Caribbean experience anew. The representations of the ‘total performance’ of Caribbean lived reality to borrow from Benitez-Rojo, reconfigured within the literary parameters of the novel, becomes the ‘revitalising salt’ necessary to awaken not only the Caribbean, but the wider global audience from a zombified existence induced by colonial history. Above all, Caribbean literary modernity, breaks free from the distorted cultural imaginary so long associated with the region, and presents instead a spectacle that is at once horrific, and remarkable. Significantly, this re-writing is undertaken from within the Caribbean, and whilst these explorations present contrasting and at times conflicting positions, they

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<sup>611</sup>Wilson-Tagoe, 48.

<sup>612</sup>René Depestre, *Change*, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1971), 20.

nonetheless point to the condition of Caribbean subjectivity, at the heart of modernity, as understood within the rhythms and drum beat of Caribbean consciousness.

### **Sound and Motion: Locating the Black Self in the Americas**

As with Ella in *Myal*, Jose in *Black Shack Alley* is equally confused when confronted with the image of the black body in performance. His encounter takes place in the cinema, rather than the theatre, nonetheless the spectacle that he is presented with is alien both visually and aurally. After watching yet another film depicting a caricature of black subjectivity, he and his friends ponder on these performances:

who was it who created for the cinema and the theatre that type of black man, houseboy, driver, footman, truant, a pretext for words from simple minds, always rolling their white eyes in amazement [...] That black man with his grotesque behaviour [...] Who was it who invented for the blacks portrayed in the cinema and in the theatre that language the blacks never could speak. (168)

The black subjects in film, far from being inspirational or heroic, as so often is the case for their white counterparts, are depicted in a language and a style that is contrary to Caribbean lived reality. Keith Q. Warner's personal recollections on his experience as a cinema-goer in the Caribbean mirrors the fictional Jose's excitement, and disappointment of this cinematic encounter. Warner's exposure to the world of film in the region also emphasises the complex relationship between the image, and the construction of black subjectivity in the Caribbean, and the wider Americas. He writes that the majority of images he and his peers received of black people in America were transmitted through film. He states 'we celebrated the inclusion of nearly all black faces in positive roles and suffered along with the unfortunate who were cast in negative undignified roles.'<sup>613</sup> Warner observes that in the cinema, as opposed to the theatre, 'one expects a closer representation of reality' and this distortion of the black subject within the

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<sup>613</sup>Warner, 'Film, Literature, and Identity in the Caribbean', in *Ex-iles: Essays on Caribbean Cinema*, ed., Mbye Cham, (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc., 1992), 49.



motion picture troubles the fictional Jose. That the cinema, or rather film more specifically, is considered a vehicle for the transmission and translation of 'real' images, underscores the primary role of image-making in notions of agency and subjectivity.

The experience of going to cinema in *Black Shack Alley* is a loud and communal affair. Jose shares his growing literary knowledge with friends Carmen and Jojo, providing them with books by René Maran and Honoré de Balzac amongst others. They in return introduce him to the projections of 'the first combinations of sound and motion in the West Indies.' (167). In the darkness of the auditorium the cinema goers' 'conversations and comments continued, attracting anonymous replies that clashed, exploding into violent discussions'. (168.) This scene depicted in *Black Shack Alley*, captures precisely the centrality of the cinematic experience in Caribbean lived reality during the mid-twentieth century. Warner discerns that 'from one end of the archipelago to the other, from Jamaica to Trinidad, the lure of the cinema [...] was inescapable.'<sup>614</sup> According to Warner not only was the cinema a 'relatively inexpensive activity for the masses, but it also allowed them to experience a world beyond the Caribbean.'<sup>615</sup> In *Black Shack Alley* Jose notes that in the midst of the raucous clamour, despite the noise and disagreements the atmosphere generated by the cinematic experience turns out to be 'inoffensive and even pleasant- simply foreign.'(168) The world depicted to Jose is as complex and distorted, as it is new and engaging. Yet I wish to suggest that the cinematic performances concerning black subjectivity are pivotal to shaping his desire by the end of the novel, to shout his Antillean story and selfhood, to the region and beyond.

Zobel's novel occupies a curious position in relation to the representations of black subjectivity, and performance in Caribbean modernity. *Black Shack Alley* is adapted into a film by Martinican director Euzhan Palcy thereby complicating my argument on the notions of

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<sup>614</sup>Keith Q. Warner, *On Location: Caribbean and Film in the Anglophone Caribbean*, (London and Oxford: Macmillan Education Ltd, 2000), 6.

<sup>615</sup>Warner, *On Location: Caribbean and Film in the Anglophone Caribbean*, 6

performance and Caribbean subjectivity. The literary Jose of Zobel's narrative is fascinated by, and despairing of, the cinematic representations of black identity. Yet, his narrative is translated onto celluloid, and presented to a francophone and global audience as a more truthful vision of the black Caribbean experience. The fictional Jose then, comes to embody, for the Antillean and Caribbean cinema-going public, a more truthful representation of the Caribbean lived experience: the very same cinematic performance for which the fictional Jose had longed and yearned for.

Palcy's feature length film, *Rue Cases-Nègres* (Sugar Cane Alley)<sup>616</sup> was not only the first to be directed by a Martinican woman, but it was also among the limited number of films to emerge from the Antilles in the 1980s.<sup>617</sup> Moreover, the film was released at the same time as Zobel's text was gaining wider recognition, regionally and globally. Although *Black Shack Alley* had been published in 1950, it was not translated into English until 1980 and for the majority of the regional audience their first encounter with 'the Zobel story'<sup>618</sup> was through the film. Tarshia L. Stanley notes that for the people of Martinique specifically, *Rue Cases-Nègres* became 'their own cinéma vérité'<sup>619</sup>, a truer, more observational cinema, which freed the Antillean subject from previous cinematic presentations.

In an interview in London in 1988 with June Givanni, Palcy discussed her reasons for adapting Zobel's text. She revealed that the novel 'was like a mirror to me. What I was reading, I was also seeing [...] It was no lie, no romantic literature.'<sup>620</sup> Palcy's comments on locating and recognising her cultural experience in Zobel's novel, echoes the reception that the film *Rue Cases-Nègres* received in Martinique and Guadeloupe. Alain Ménil writes that even a month after its release it was still extremely difficult to

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<sup>616</sup>*Rue Cases-Nègres*, dir. by Euzhan Palcy, (Nouvelles Éditions de Films, 1983).

<sup>617</sup>Sheila J. Petty, *Contact Zone: Memory, Origin and Discourses in Black Diasporic Cinema*, Detroit Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 2008). 60 /61.

<sup>618</sup>Tarshia L. Stanley, 'The Boy's Price in Martinique: Visions of the Bildungsroman in Sugar Cane Alley' in *Where the Boys Are: Cinemas of Masculinity and Youth*, Murray Pomerance and Frances Gateward eds., (Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 2005), 203.

<sup>619</sup>Stanley, 203.

<sup>620</sup>June Givanni, 'Interview with Euzhan Palcy', in *Ex-iles: Essays on Caribbean Cinema*, ed., Mbye Cham, (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc., 1992), 297.

obtain a ticket to watch the film.<sup>621</sup> Not only did it break all box office records for the two islands, members of the public were travelling miles into Fort-de-France to watch the film on more than one occasion.<sup>622</sup> This excitement surrounding the film was not simply because the community recognised itself on the screen. As Ménil rightly points out, other Antillean films such as Guadeloupean film director, Christian Lara's *Adieu Foulards*, (1983)<sup>623</sup> did not receive the same attention or admiration from the local audience.<sup>624</sup> Rather the film *Rue Cases-Nègres*, offered a vision of the Antilles that was devoid of exotic motifs and caricatures of black subjectivity. Here instead it presented to a Caribbean audience, in sepia and dull tones, a simple narrative of the ordinary and the everyday. Ménil suggests that with Palcy's film the Antillean audience saw 'the emergence of a world where, through the alteration of rain and sunshine, one can find in the mud of *Rue Cases-Nègres* the concrete density of everyday experience.'<sup>625</sup>

The desire and the need for seeing the ordinary being performed is perhaps not surprising considering the position of Caribbean culture in cinematic history, and the position of the cinema in Caribbean culture. As within the Western literary imagination, the Caribbean in the history of the motion picture has functioned as a backdrop for celluloid fantasies presenting exotic destinations. Whereas the literary imaginations of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries firmly situated the Caribbean as a site of terror, in twentieth century motion pictures, the Caribbean became "any place", of lushness and beauty.<sup>626</sup> The Caribbean as a tropical moving image then, presented stock visual narratives, out of context in relation to the physical environment, and 'radically at odds with the [social] reality of the

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<sup>621</sup>Alain Ménil, 'Rue Cases-Nègres or the Antilles from the Inside', in *Ex-iles: Essays on Caribbean Cinema*, ed., Mbye Cham, (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc., 1992), 155.

<sup>622</sup>Ménil, 155.

<sup>623</sup>*Adieu Foulards*, dir. by Christian Lara, (Caraibes Production, 1983).

<sup>624</sup>Ménil, 155.

<sup>625</sup>Ménil, 163.

<sup>626</sup>Jean Antoine-Dunne 'Sound and Vision in the Caribbean Imagery', *Journal of West Indian Literature*, Vol 18. No. 2 2010, 96.

people'.<sup>627</sup> Warner, citing a *New York Magazine* film critic observes that the sepia tone of the cinematography in *Rue Cases-Nègres*, so disturb the stereotypical notions of Caribbean topography, that the writer in question noted with lament the film was short changing its audience. Even going as far as to suggest that the choice of cinematographic style was an error 'for a movie trying to capture the life of a Caribbean island, where strong, bright colors are bound to be part of anyone's experience and memory.'<sup>628</sup>

Exactly whose experience and memory is being recalled here is not made clear. Yet, even for a Caribbean audience the notions of Caribbean cinematography are identified with vibrant hues evoking idyllic and verdant vistas. In the case of the French Antilles, Ménil writes that there was nothing that could be called a "local image". From local print publications, to the radio and television programmes, the images viewed by Antillean residents were those sent from the metropolitan.<sup>629</sup> Ménil suggests that a "postcard effect"<sup>630</sup> was the only natural outcome in a society fed on a regime of "sent"<sup>631</sup> images and imported notions of Caribbean selfhood. Elevating the position of the local and the folk by projecting and making evident their lived experience not only empowers the local, it also disturbs the hierarchical structures of socio-political realities. Brathwaite writing on the premiere of Perry Hanzell's and Trevor D. Rhone's reggae film, *The Harder They Come* (Kingston, 1972)<sup>632</sup>, underscores the significance of the event for Jamaica. The premiere according to Brathwaite 'marked a dislocation in the socio-colonial pentameter'.<sup>633</sup> The elite turning up to watch the film were for once insignificant. The film did not represent their society nor their reality, rather it celebrated the people, or in Brathwaite's words, 'the raw material'.<sup>634</sup> The

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<sup>627</sup>Mbye Cham, 'Shape and Shaping of Caribbean Cinema', in *Cinemas of the Black Diaspora: Diversity, Dependence and Oppositionality*, Michael T. Martin, ed., (Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1995), 242.

<sup>628</sup>Warner, 'Film, Literature, and Identity in the Caribbean', 55.

<sup>629</sup>Ménil, 155.

<sup>630</sup>Ménil, 155.

<sup>631</sup>Ménil, 155.

<sup>632</sup>*The Harder They Come*, dir. by Perry Hanzell, (New World Pictures, 1972).

<sup>633</sup>Brathwaite, *History of the Voice*, (London and Port of Spain: New Beacon Books), n.41.

<sup>634</sup>Brathwaite, *History of the Voice*, n.41.

film presented to Jamaica and the wider world, 'for the first time [...] a local face, a native ikon, a nation language voice was hero.'<sup>635</sup> Whilst Brathwaite is positive about the presentation of Jamaican subjectivity in *The Harder They Come*, the film is not without its critics. Gladstone Yearwood sees it as a betrayal of Jamaican identity.<sup>636</sup> My interest here in highlighting Brathwaite's comments regarding the reception the film received in Kingston, relates to his notion of a hero being voiced in a language, to borrow from playwright Brian Friel, which matches the linguistic contours of the landscape.<sup>637</sup> This I suggest is central to the writer and the artist locating and reconfiguring Caribbean selfhood in the Americas. Jose's quest in *Black Shack Alley*, from the plantation to the port city, centres on unearthing the 'raw images' that are familiar and commonplace, yet paradoxically remain obscured. As I have discussed in Chapter Two, his pursuit of the dances, the sounds, and the narratives of the black folk population of Martinique, marks him out as a collector of Martinician culture. He becomes Glissant's storyteller, 'a handyman, the djobbieur of the collective soul'.<sup>638</sup> Yet, more than this, I suggest that the fictional Jose, and the writer Zobel, become image makers of Caribbean modernity. They present to the Antillean population and beyond, the tangible and intangible motions, of the modern Caribbean subject.

Trinidadian poet, playwright and essayist M. Nourbese Philip in her essay "The Absence of Writing of How I Almost Became a Spy", emphasises the importance of image-making, and notions of the self for Caribbean artists. Whilst Philip's essay considers image in relation to writing, she argues that '[f]undamental to any art form is the image, whether it be the physical image as created by the dancer and choreographer [...] the visual image [...] of the artist [...] or the verbal image [...] of the writer and poet.'<sup>639</sup> Philip

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<sup>635</sup> Brathwaite, *History of the Voice*, n.41.

<sup>636</sup> Gladstone L. Yearwood, *Black Film as a Signifying Practice: Cinema, Narration and the African American Aesthetic Tradition*, (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2000), 161-183.

<sup>637</sup> Brian Friel, *Translations*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), 43.

<sup>638</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 69.

<sup>639</sup> M Nourbese Philip, "The Absence of Writing of How I Almost Became a Spy" *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks*, (London: The Women's Press Ltd, 1988), 78.

asserts that the 'power and threat'<sup>640</sup> of the artist and the writer lies in the 'ability to create new i-mages [...] that speak to the essential being of the people among whom and for whom the artist creates.'<sup>641</sup> In translating image to i-mage, Philip privileges the "I" and in turn notions of selfhood and agency, in relation to the Caribbean, and black diasporic identity in global modernity. She contends that if, and when, the i-mage maker is allowed 'free expression' the images created, 'succeed in altering the way a society perceives itself, and eventually, its collective consciousness.'<sup>642</sup>

Philip's theoretical stance on the position of the i-mage maker, and how a society articulates itself through imagery, provides a useful framework through which to consider the position of performance and the image in Zobel's *Black Shack Alley*. At the centre of Jose's question concerning cinematic representations of blackness, is the role of the image maker and in particular, the absence of the cultural insider within this process. Jose considers the position of cultural dissemination at a national and global level and angrily asks 'shouldn't every enterprise in such a country aim to promote the people?' (168) The 'Black Shack Alley' style as he calls it, presented in the cinescapes in which destitution is resolutely the position of 'persons of dark complexions' (168) leaves him both exasperated and despondent. This idea of how to create a genuine or 'true' articulation of a community is discussed by Hall in a paper concerning modern Caribbean cinema. Hall cites Benedict Anderson's argument that communities 'are to be distinguished not by their falsity/genuineness but by the style in which they are imagined.'<sup>643</sup> He emphasises the notion of style in Anderson's argument, and concludes that the vocation of the modern Caribbean artist/i-mage maker is to reconfigure the meanings of this style, in order to

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<sup>640</sup> Philip, 78.

<sup>641</sup> Philip, 78.

<sup>642</sup> Philip, 78.

<sup>643</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and the Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1983), 6.

‘construct those points of identification, those positionalities we call “a cultural identity.”’<sup>644</sup>

I wish to suggest that the Caribbean novelists of the twentieth century, and in particular the four authors central to this thesis, begin to construct a ‘style’ that signally locates the cultural identities of their respective regions. If, as I have suggested throughout this Chapter, image making and the reconfiguring of images of black subjectivity are central to an exploration of Caribbean modernity, then the position of the carnival is fundamental to any such analysis. In the following pages I hope to demonstrate, that by locating meanings of carnival in Caribbean literary modernity, it is possible to find the convergence of Hall’s, Brathwaite’s and Phillip’s ideas on i-mage making. Moreover, in emphasising the centrality of carnival in my reading of Caribbean modernity, I suggest that the Carnival performance, with its forms of masking, subversion and distortion, articulates the modern Caribbean subject, in a style that accurately negotiates the nation language of its performers, thus presenting to the Global, the Caribbean world anew. By drawing on this masquerade the writers central to this thesis present a modern Caribbean subject that is as fragmentary as it is whole. In short, the complex and undefined spatial limits of the carnival performance, the closed and open spaces, the double discourse, paradoxically present an unhindered lens, through which to distil, the meaning of Caribbean modernity.

### **Carnival: I-mage Making in the Modern Caribbean**

In *The Repeating Island*, Benitez-Rojo writes of his experience of organising a carnival in Havana in 1979. The event, and the subsequent research he conducts, leads him to theorise the position of the carnival, and the carnivalesque, in Caribbean society. He posits that:

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<sup>644</sup> Hall, ‘Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation’, *Ex-iles: Essays on Caribbean Cinema*, ed., Mbye Cham, (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc., 1992), 236.

Of all possible sociocultural practises, the carnival [...] is the one that best expresses the strategies that the people of the Caribbean have for speaking at once of themselves and their relation with the world.<sup>645</sup>

Benitez-Rojo further clarifies his statement by writing that carnival alone cannot provide a full definition of the Caribbean condition, but within the chaos and the noise, a series of meanings can be discerned. While Benitez-Rojo's theory sheds an important light on the paradoxical nature of the Caribbean performance, I firstly want to highlight two very brief passages on carnival taken from *New Day* and *Black Shack Alley* that I intend to examine in greater depth. In these two literary representations of the Christmas and Lent carnival performances, I suggest that we can begin to discern the beginning of i-mage making in the modern Caribbean. Moreover, as I hope to demonstrate, the two contrasting scenes of Caribbean performance described above, presents what Benitez-Rojo calls, 'the Caribbean's travesty mirror'<sup>646</sup>, a reflection of, 'the tragic and the comic, the sacred and the profane'.<sup>647</sup> All of which, I am arguing, are fragments of the modern Caribbean whole.

In Part Two of *New Day*, Johnny visits Kingston and he is mesmerised by the sounds and sights of the scenes of revelry taking place. He witnesses and hears for the first time, 'the punch and Judy shows, the handless man playing the mandolin with his toes, the *John Canoe dancers* in their tall feathers.' (197). By contrast, the carnival scene depicted in Zobel's *Black Shack Alley*, is markedly different. In the final pages of the novel Jose describes the carnival season in Route Didier. The villas, he observes, 'were often gay with evening parties.' (177) As light pours through the windows of the large houses, music, laughter and the clink of silver, the ring of porcelain and crystal' (177) can be discerned. Through it all, Jose notes, the house 'glittered like a huge jewel.' (177) *Black Shack Alley's* carnival scene, at first glance, appears at odds with the more familiar depictions of carnival performances. Zobel does not write of masks, or drums, or costumes. Rather, he presents

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<sup>645</sup>Benitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island*, 298.

<sup>646</sup>Benitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island*, 311.

<sup>647</sup>Benitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island*, 311.



the carnival experience of the rich French creoles of Martinique. Even so, I suggest that as with much of *Black Shack Alley*, this subtle and apparently nondescript depiction of a Caribbean performance, is highly significant and an overt political statement.

Returning to the 'John Canoe' dancers in *New Day*, Frederic G. Cassidy reveals that conflicting accounts exist for the origin of the word and the celebration of John Canoe/Jonkonnu.<sup>648</sup> Long suggests in *The History of Jamaica*, that the dance is a celebration in honour of 'John Conny',<sup>649</sup> a celebrated local Ghanaian chief who held off European attacks on the fort of Friedrichsburg between 1709 and 1725, before he was finally overcome by the Dutch.<sup>650</sup> Conversely, the Jamaican born artist, Issac M. Belisario, refers to the French name given to the masked dancers, gens inconnus as the etymological source.<sup>651</sup> Regardless of the uncertainty surrounding the exact origins of the Jonkonnu celebrations, the performance played an important role in pre-twentieth century acts of resistance within the Anglophone Caribbean. Celebrated during the Christmas holidays, the Jonkonnu parade comprised of a group of mask-wearing male dancers. The procession, accompanied by drums saw the performers move from door to door, dancing as they stopped at each house.<sup>652</sup> The Jonkonnu performance whilst celebratory in tone appeared curious and strange to European observers, such as British physician and collector Hans Sloane. He notes that the slaves 'very often tie Cow Tails to their Rumps, and add such other odd things to their bodies in several places, as gives them very extraordinary appearance.'<sup>653</sup> I suggest that here in the depths of the early eighteenth century, the African slaves in 'their extraordinary' costumes, were already

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<sup>648</sup> Frederic G Cassidy, 'Some New Light on Old Jamaicanisms', *American Speech*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Oct., 1967), 196.

<sup>649</sup> Long, II, 424.

<sup>650</sup> Cassidy, 'Some New Light on Old Jamaicanisms', *American Speech*, 196.

<sup>651</sup> Cassidy, 'Some New Light on Old Jamaicanisms', *American Speech*, 198.

<sup>652</sup> Thomas Pettitt, 'New World Traditions in the Study of Early English Custom and Customary Drama', in Konrad Eisenbichler and Wim Husken, eds., *Carnival and the Carnavalesque: The Fool, The Reformer, The Wild Man, and Others in Early Modern Theatre*, (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, B.V., 1999), 271.

<sup>653</sup> Hans Sloane, *A Voyage to the islands of Madera, Barbados, Nieves, St Christophers and Jamaica*, (London: printed by B.M. for the author, 1707), xlvii -xlix.

participating in the act of i-mage making, in order to celebrate their subjectivity and agency, however limited it may have been at the time.

According to Burton, the Jonkonnu celebrations can lay claim to being the 'most ancient and most enduring non-European cultural form in the Caribbean.'<sup>654</sup> He reveals that unlike the region's other performances, such as Carnival in Trinidad, the Jonkonnu, 'is not a European cultural form [...] its origins are without doubt African and until the late eighteenth century developed without significant interference from European influence.'<sup>655</sup> Burton reveals that towards the end of slavery different forms of Jonkonnu performances emerged, and now included groups of creole slaves, who had not previously participated in the parades. There was also a distinction to be made, between the Jonkonnu performances staged in the plantation, which were neo-African in style, and the creolised and more aggressive performances of the urban areas.<sup>656</sup>

By the time Johnny witnesses the Jonkonnu dancers in the urban streets of Kingston in the late nineteenth century, the form has been creolised. By this point many of the costumes and even some of the parades were backed financially by white planters and wealthy European residents.<sup>657</sup> Sandra L. Richards reveals that although the construction of the festival's political and aesthetic meanings had never been stable, they metamorphosed during the process of creolisation, 'adding to its retinue additional masquerades'.<sup>658</sup> Of importance to my analysis here, are the pre-emancipation Jonkonnu performances, and the disruption that occurs as a result of their enactment. I am particularly interested in how the Jonkonnu performance presented an inversion - albeit temporarily - of

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<sup>654</sup> Richard D.E. Burton, *Afro-Creole: Power and Opposition and Play in the Caribbean*, (Ithaca New York and London: Cornell University Press, 1997), 65.

<sup>655</sup> Burton, 65.

<sup>656</sup> Burton, 70.

<sup>657</sup> Steeve O. Buckridge, *The Language of Dress: Resistance and Accommodation in Jamaica, 1760-1890*, (Kingston Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2004), 102.

<sup>658</sup> Sandra L. Richards, 'Horned Ancestral Masks, Shakespearean Actor Boys, and Scotch-Inspired Set Girls: Social Relations in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Jamaican Jonkonnu', in *The African Diaspora: African Origins and New World Identities*, (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 267.

accepted norms of behaviour.<sup>659</sup> I suggest that in these pre-emancipation parades, the early Caribbean i-mage maker can be discerned. This figure, I am arguing is central to the consideration of Caribbean subjectivity.

In her diary entry for Christmas, 1801, Maria Nugent stationed in Jamaica at the time, writes of her glee at seeing the 'strange processions, and figures called Johnny Canoes. All leap, dance, and play a thousand antiks.'<sup>660</sup> Nugent's contemporary account significantly reveals that during the Jonkonnu celebrations, the planter class and slave community occupy the same spatial boundaries. The slaves greet and praise their masters, and are in turn presented with gifts. The festival contains elements of satire and the performances by the slaves make a mockery of the ruling class. This carnivalesque theatre is greeted in polite and benevolent tones from their masters as they watch the parades in the knowledge that this suspension of reality is only temporary,<sup>661</sup> and with the assurance that the militia are nearby should the line between reality and theatre become blurred. Yet, the planters are not just mere spectators, they have been reported to dance with their slaves<sup>662</sup> to the beat of the drum that they so fear at other times and in other circumstances of plantation life. Here during the Jonkonnu celebrations with the performers in their masked costumes distort and subvert colonial hierarchies. Burton notes, that the singing and dancing provided a brief yet "sacred"<sup>663</sup> suspension in the 'profane order of plantation society'.<sup>664</sup> The Jonkonnu performance then, represented a rupture in a debilitating world dominated by 'work, exploitation, and oppression'.<sup>665</sup>

Writing on late medieval-early Renaissance festival forms in Europe, Mikhail Bakhtin argues that, 'carnival is not contemplated and strictly

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<sup>659</sup> Paravisini-Gebert, 'Writers Playing Mas: Carnival and The Grotesque in the Contemporary Caribbean Novel', in A. James Arnold, ed., *A History of Literature in the Caribbean: Cross Cultural Studies Vol 3*, (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1997), 216

<sup>660</sup> Nugent, 65.

<sup>661</sup> Paravisini-Gebert, 217.

<sup>662</sup> Burton, 71.

<sup>663</sup> Burton, 76.

<sup>664</sup> Burton, 76.

<sup>665</sup> Burton, 76.

speaking, not even performed, its participants live in it'.<sup>666</sup> Furthermore Bakhtin's theorises that the carnivalistic life is, 'to some extent, "life turned inside out" the reverse side of the world.'<sup>667</sup> Extending on the Bakhtinian reading of the European carnival, I return to the image of the drum, as discussed previously, to suggest that the suspension of the metronomic patterns of plantation life, present to the plantation societies, not only the reverse side of the world, but the 'underside of the drum.' Significantly this expression and movement, takes place not under the cover of darkness, as with the other performances the slaves enact, but rather in daylight, and in full view of the wider colonial society. During the two or three day celebrations, the slave presents in a riot of colour and noise, the anger and the pain the '[self] expression that Glissant notes, is 'not only forbidden, but impossible to envisage' <sup>668</sup> at other times during the year. This doubleness, a masking of the lived expressions of the African slave locates what Glissant has called the 'forced poetics' which 'exists where a need for expression confronts an inability to achieve expression.' <sup>669</sup> This 'counterpoetics' to borrow from Glissant once more, points to the complex negotiations at play in the Caribbean lived reality, and given expression the through the literary imaginary of the modern Caribbean text.

The process of masking is central to the performances of Jonkonnu. Long, in his description of the festival noted that there were masks from the Ebo and Papaw, thereby testifying to the differing diasporic African communities transported to the 'New World'. Within the African slave communities of the plantations, the horned masked dancer of the Jonkonnu performance 'would have been understood as a sign of superior abilities.'<sup>670</sup> Yet, the process of masking also speaks to the doubleness that is central to the lives of the slaves, in Caribbean plantation societies. The Glaswegian novelist Michael Scott, who had spent twenty years in Jamaica, describes a

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<sup>666</sup>Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. W.R. Rotsel, (Michigan: Ann Arbor, 1973), 122.

<sup>667</sup>Bakhtin, 122.

<sup>668</sup>Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 122.

<sup>669</sup>Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 120.

<sup>670</sup> Richards, 257.

scene from the festival in his novel *Tom Cringle's Log*. The dancer he writes 'had an enormous cocked hat on, to which was appended in front a white-false face, or mask, of a most Methodistical expression, while Janus-like, there was another face behind, of the most quizzical description, a sort of living Antithesis'.<sup>671</sup> Similarly, Bakhtin writing on the medieval carnival mask, associates it with Janus, the Roman god of transitions and beginnings, and argues that the mask is 'related to transition, metamorphoses, the violation of natural boundaries'.<sup>672</sup> The African-Caribbean slave in the Jonkonnu performance gives expression to the oppositionality at play in the plantation society.

Furthermore, the Jonkonnu dancers masks themselves in the names of dominant white colonial figures, not in an attempt, as Burton argues, to imitate their masters, but rather 'to invest themselves symbolically with the power of their bearers.' For the three days of this Christmas celebration, the slaves, through their ritualistic performances reverse colonial authority, and subvert the power dynamics of their society. As they dance in their assembled costumes made of shells, horns and cows tails, they construe an image of a fragmented disorder, a discord in a cacophonous and riotous display of noise and fury. In the midst of this performance emerges a figure who is, as Burton highlights, 'an assemblage of borrowed bits and pieces who nonetheless contrives to be uniquely, and ineffably himself - in a word, a Creole'.<sup>673</sup>

If, the three day suspension of reality in Caribbean carnival and festivals give voice to the destitution of the African-Caribbean slave, then the performance is also an affirmation of the social hierarchy of Caribbean colonial society. While the population are allowed to vent their anger, it just that, a temporary cessation of their lived reality. Additionally the carnival performance, rather than being a liberating force, can be read as an orchestrated performance of mock violence. Benitez-Rojo suggests that the

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<sup>671</sup> Michael Scott, *Tom Cringle's Lodge*, (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood), 248.

<sup>672</sup> Bakhtin, 39-40.

<sup>673</sup> Burton, 80.

simulated performance was necessary in order 'to preserve the [real] violent order of plantation society.'<sup>674</sup> The slaves he underlines 'naturally, desired the opposite',<sup>675</sup> their carnival performances were enacted 'in order to take the violence out of tomorrow, when they would have to reintegrate themselves as slaves within the order set by the planter.'<sup>676</sup> I suggest that this notion of the order re-establishing itself is the political statement at the heart of Zobel's carnival scene. As the revelry unfolds in and around Fort-de-France, the power structures that have governed the society for over four hundred years are still intact. The 'Great House', now sits as a glittering villa but the same masquerades are being played. Jose notes that as the carnival season gets underway, his friend Jojo, working as a driver and a servant for the one of the rich white French families, had 'multiple errands to run [...] dishes to be washed, he had to spend hours turning the handles of the great heavy freezers to make ice-cream. (177) The order set by the descendants of the white planters, still govern the daily rhythms of the descendants of the Black Shack Alley collective.

Although the carnival in *Black Shack Alley* takes place nearly a century after Johnny witnesses the Jonkonnu dancers, the fragments and repercussions of the Caribbean's colonial past are still in evidence. It is for this reason I suggest, that Caribbean writers return to the notions, of temporality, history, plantation and performance. The modern i-mage makers of the Caribbean archive their historiography, as means of preservation, from a space in which they had been historically denied. Also a means of celebrating, of a resistance that been meaningfully articulated, but also as exploration of the continued repercussions of the latent affects of the colonial experience on the region's population. As the characters migrate from the plantations to the urban centres of their islands, the ever-shifting site of political and cultural consciousness demands that Caribbean theoretical discourse moves with the current of the Caribbean Sea. Not in an

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<sup>674</sup> Benitez-Rojo, *Repeating Island*, 306.

<sup>675</sup> Benitez-Rojo, *Repeating Island*, 80.

<sup>676</sup> Benitez-Rojo, *Repeating Islands*, 80.

act of forgetting, but rather the opposite, as a means of adding further composite layers to the meaning of Caribbean subjectivity. The Caribbean performer in the midst of the carnival, with the fragmented and assembled costumes may have only been given the three days, but within the liminal spaces of the travel narratives, and planter diaries, we begin to discern the everyday acts of resistance taking place on the plantations. The carnival performances make visible these acts of resistance and it is to these brief, and fragmented movements, that modern Caribbean writers turn, as a mean of piecing together, a modern Caribbean narrative whole.

**'This is not a conclusion'<sup>677</sup>**

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<sup>677</sup> Philip, 87.



I find it apt to close this thesis where it began, in one sense, that is, the literary seascape of Herman Melville's novella, *Benito Cereno*, a core text read in the second year of my undergraduate course in English Literature. As with Melville's maligned Spanish Captain, I too was gripped by the shadow of the Negro, but for different reasons altogether. I was enthralled by the African Babo, whom Melville understandably could not write a literary language for, and the mixed-race Francisco, who hovered in the liminality of the ship, existing in the in-betweenness, of land and sea, of Spain and Africa, of the Caribbean and the Americas. My research since reading Melville's novella has centred on making a sense of the historiographical, cultural, and socio-political experience particular to the Americas, and more specifically the archipelago located in the Caribbean Sea. I wanted to locate the Caribbean presence, or more accurately the présence américaine in the literary and artistic work by writers from the region during the twentieth century. Of particular concern, and central to my analysis in this thesis, has been how the writers of the Caribbean approached the literary form of the novel in the twentieth century, in an attempt to write their world anew.

The Caribbean has been, and unfortunately continues to be, four hundred years after a cartographic miscalculation, a space of misappropriation and mistranslation. In the light of this, the novel form provided the crucial space, and the structure within which to come to grips with past distortions. In their attempts to represent the everyday lived experience of Caribbean reality, the private and the domestic, the silent and the absence were made visible and audible. In so doing, the writers of the region presented a model for a counter discourse to the hegemonic European and Western literary thought, which for so long had defined the ebb and flow of misaligned theoretical currents concerning the region. In the hyper-violent and modern world of the plantation complex, and on the transient and liminal spaces of the ship a particular type of modernity was taking place. Here for the first time in our global history, the modernity and

technology of the ship connected peoples from different communities and different continents, albeit in a brutal and systematic way.

Developing a thesis about the modernity of the Caribbean has been problematic, not least because, as Fumagalli rightly points out, the Caribbean, and in particular the creolised population of the region, have always been considered as the non-modern. Viewed from beyond and outside of it, the region provided images of the grotesque and fantastical, a backdrop to the dreams or horrors of others, but never a space of innovation. At the same time, the novel form in the Caribbean is relatively new, in comparison to its European and American counterparts. To some extent, this has made it difficult for theorists outside of Caribbean scholarship to locate and accurately reflect the modernity of the Caribbean subject and its presence in the novel form that emerged from the region in the mid-twentieth century. Yet the Caribbean novel, with its rejection of Enlightenment ideology, its self-conscious experimentation with linguistic and stylistic form, its desire to reshape the cultural and socio-political landscape of its environment, is an ultra-modern declaration of Caribbean literary artistic expression.

In light of this, I sought in the thesis to explore the literary representations of Caribbean modernity through the key terms of temporality, historiography, plantation, performance, and the Caribbean city. To do this, I proposed to examine how Erna Brodber, V.S. Reid, Simone Schwarz-Bart, and Joseph Zobel reconfigured the Caribbean modern subject, and presented the modern Caribbean condition anew. Drawing on the work of other critics, I emphasised the relationship between Caribbean literary development and historiography, and sought to make explicit these connections. By complicating the relationship between Caribbean literatures, Western, and Caribbean historiography in Chapter One, I highlighted the hegemonic discourse of Western and Caribbean patriarchy at play in the theoretical and artistic examination of Caribbean literature. I sought to propose a model of reading that necessitated the gendering of

creolisation theories. My purpose here was to suggest that this was a critical and urgent requirement for all literary exploration concerning the historiographical development of Caribbean literature. Only then I argued, could we begin to fully understand the complexities of the lived Caribbean experience.

As I have underscored elsewhere in this thesis, Caribbean creolisation models, while central to my exploration on the literary representations of the modern Caribbean subject, has proved problematic. An overwhelmingly masculine space, the theoretical discourses of Caribbean creolisation has tended to marginalise the experiences, and embedded acts of resistance concerning Caribbean women. This gendered absence, extended to the literary output of the region. Perhaps this is not surprising, in a theoretical landscape where the literary and intellectual space are occupied by the same personalities. Drawing fully on the theoretical work of Joan Anim-Addo, my analysis expressed the need to voice difference, not only between male and female, but also to locate and articulate the diversity of the modern Caribbean experience. Strong, weak, scared, angry and passive, I sought to show the multiplicity of Caribbean female subjectivity. A major concern here was to problematise the character of the 'strong black woman'. Whilst not denying her existence, I felt it necessary to consider this complex literary motif present in a long line of Caribbean novels. For example, the black grandmother although vocal and ever present, is paradoxically absent from the process of writing. Romanticised and translated through the complex negotiations of her literary grandchildren, the 'strong black woman' further articulates the need for a process of literary excavation, as a means of locating the fuller discourse on the gendered Caribbean experience.

A concern running throughout my discussion was the presence of violent encounters, at times submerged, at other times explicit, which was, as I suggested a foundational and fundamental feature of the *présence américaine*. The works by Brodber, Reid, Schwarz-Bart and Zobel, in conflicting and contrasting ways, presented the latent violence of the first

encounters in the 'New World'. Yet the novels also dared to express a violence separate to the colonial world, and one that occurred in the private and domestic spheres of the modern Caribbean home. From the depths of the ships' hull, in the midst of the sugar cane stalks, and amongst the corrugated houses of the port cities, the latent violence in the literary landscapes brought into sharp focus what Suzanne Scafe has called 'plantation affects'. In the representations of Caribbean literary modernity the layers of trauma, reveal and repeat themselves anew. Discourses on violence, and in particular gendered violence are understandably complex but the paucity of such critical discourses points to a critical theoretical gap that needs to be addressed.

The spectre of the plantation and the notions of flight and exile, in relation to the plantation as I suggested, were central to an understanding of the modern Caribbean condition. Yet in an attempt to complicate the readings concerning Caribbean subjectivity and modernity, I choose to re-examine the centre and peripheries of Caribbean lived experience by exploring the Caribbean port city. Foucault's theory on the heterotopia of the ship and the brothel provided a useful theoretical lens through which to consider agency and resistance. I suggested that in the urban and transient spaces of the port city and the ship, a new type of Caribbean subject emerged. In the baroque liminality of Caribbean urbanity the development of African Caribbean mercantile business communities were indicative of a break with the past. Although the notions of economic independence and political agency are complicated by the submerged yet continued presence of plantation politics, my analysis highlighted the emergence of reconfigured Caribbean subjects. Exploring literary representations of Caribbean modernity through the lens of the port city brought into question the relationship between modern Caribbean subjects vis-à-vis the Caribbean Sea and in particular the notions of tidalectics. The thesis argued that theories concerning tidal dialectics not only complicates ideas concerning territory and coloniality in the region but also presents a framework that

attempts to accurately reference the distinct rhythms and motions present in the ebb and flow of Caribbean modernity.

Articulating the distinct rhythms of Caribbean lived experience inevitably demands an exploration of Caribbean performance, from the drum beat, to the carnival, to the syncretised African derived rituals, the performances of Caribbean lived reality has been central to the work of Caribbean writers in the twentieth century. By drawing on the elements of masking and unmasking in a series of carnival, theatrical, musical, filmic and religious performances in the texts of Brodber, Schwarz-Bart, Reid, and Zobel I aimed to locate the modern Caribbean subject and the double discourse at play in these performances. In exploring these literary representations of Caribbean performance, I sought to articulate the connection between the Caribbean writer, and the position of the i-mage maker – after M. Nourbese Philip. In so doing I presented a reading of Caribbean literary modernity which situated the Caribbean writer as central to a modern process of i-mage making. This seemed particularly important because, as Philip suggests the Caribbean artists must create in his or her own –i-mage and ‘in so doing eventually heal the world wounded by the dislocation and the imbalance of the word/i-mage equation’,<sup>678</sup> distorted in and by the ‘New World’ encounter.

Since its ‘discovery’ in 1492 by the Conquistadors, the archipelagos of the Caribbean has spawned countless tales; its peoples and landscapes the focus in a multitude of documents. From navigational charts, to European treaties, from the diaries of scientific expeditions to the travelogues of eighteenth century tourists, the Caribbean’s conception and existence within the context of Western Europe’s imperialist agenda has been well documented; as the Caribbean historian Hilary Beckles informs us, ‘Enlightenment discourse then, invented the Caribbean’.<sup>679</sup> Writing about the meanings of Caribbeaness, Antonio Benitez-Rojo suggests, that the region

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<sup>678</sup> Phillip, 87.

<sup>679</sup> Hilary McD Beckles, *Capitalism, Slavery and Caribbean Modernity*, Callaloo, Vol.20 No.4 , Eric Williams and the Postcolonial Caribbean: A Special Issue. (Autumn, 1997), p 779

with its complex historiographical and socio-political structures 'can be regarded as a cultural sea without boundaries, as a paradoxical fractal form extending infinitely through a finite world'.<sup>680</sup> Who, he asks, 'can tell us he's travelled to the origins of Caribbeanness?'<sup>681</sup> When I think about the reasons for developing this thesis, I recall that my initial concerns were not about locating the origins of Caribbeanness, but rather the peculiar origin of the Caribbean. As Benitez-Rojo rightly argues the Caribbean is a cultural sea without boundaries, caught in the ever-changing ebb and flow of cultural and political currents. In my reading of the works by Brodber, Reid, Schwarz-Bart and Zobel, I hope to have added to the discourses on the literary representations of Caribbean modernity and demonstrated the urgency of applying theoretical discourses that more meaningfully locate the modern Caribbean subject. The humanity, and the acts of resistance present in the lived experience of the Caribbean populations only fully come to light in the twentieth century. Caribbean writers and artists, as I have argued, have been central to this process of reconfiguration and documentation. In exploring their translated modernities and inscribing this onto the literary page they have reconfigured the Caribbean anew. I expect this thesis to have contributed to the debate an awareness of the agency and resistance of the modern Caribbean subjectivity. Far from being non-modern, I hope this discussion goes some way towards opening up the debate on local and global modernities, to include the lived realities of the ultra modern Caribbean subject.

In arguing for a reconsideration of the key terms, of temporality, history, plantation, performance, and the city, I hope to have contributed to the discourse that demands the gendering of creolisation, and the articulation of modern Caribbean subjects who remain on the peripheries. Of crucial concern also has been for a critical discourse that encompasses the reconfigured modern Caribbean subject within a framework of a pan-Caribbean modernity. I am aware, however, that there remains is still

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<sup>680</sup> Benitez-Rojo, 314.

<sup>681</sup> Benitez-Rojo, 314.

much research to be done especially in reconfiguring the discourses of modernity with regard to positioning the Caribbean modern subject more centrally as a critical concern within this debate.

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