

TRANSLATING LINGUISTIC CONFLICTS: A DECOLONIAL
PERSPECTIVE ON MULTILINGUAL CARIBBEAN LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Translating Linguistic Conflicts: A Decolonial Perspective on Multilingual

Caribbean Literature

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Bringing together perspectives from literary multilingualism and decolonial theory, my dissertation addresses how multilingualism in Caribbean literature, particularly the use of marginalized linguistic practices, contributes to debates about literary study between languages. I argue that multilingual Caribbean literature addresses the legacies of colonialism, a factor that is often obscured in discussions about language conflict in the field of comparative literature. While comparative literature debates generally focus on the nation-state as their unit of analysis, multilingual Caribbean writers draw on the region's colonial history and offer insight into a range of multilingual practices operating within and beyond the nation-state framework. I accomplish this shift in perspective by analyzing literary texts that represent specific linguistic conflicts situated within global linguistic hierarchies and considering these literary works in conversation with decolonial theorizations of translation and multilingualism. I argue that literary writers contribute to decolonial linguistic projects both by proposing new relationships between languages and by harnessing the contact between these languages as a source of linguistic and literary creativity.

Chapter one analyzes two translation anthologies *Múltiples* and *Palabras de una isla/ Paroles d'une île* to explore how a decolonial, Caribbean framework grounds discussions of

radical translation practice in specific literary projects and the hierarchical linguistic conflicts they represent or ignore. Chapter two turns to literary multilingualism, an outlook that urges us to reconsider the linguistic divisions often taken for granted in translation perspectives. I explore linguistic difference both within and between languages in three Dominican literary works: Pedro Antonio Valdez's young adult novel *Palomos*, Josefina Báez's theatrical prose work *Levente no. Yola york dominican york*, and Juan Bosch's short story "Luis Pie." The third chapter further problematizes the space between languages by considering literary conflicts between Caribbean Creoles and European languages. I analyze the theatrical works "Mémoires d'île" by Ina Césaire and "Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine" by Patricia Cumper and her collaborators, in order to argue that these works strategically create opacity between Caribbean Creoles and European languages. In the final chapter, I further explore the role of opacity in M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!* and Harold Sonny Ladoo's *No Pain Like This Body*. By analyzing these texts, I argue that opacity can operate as a decolonial reading methodology.

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Introduction

[Multilingualism] is not only the ability to speak several languages, which is often not the case in our region where we sometimes cannot even speak our oppressed mother tongue. Multilingualism is the passionate desire to accept and understand our neighbor's language and to confront the massive leveling force of language continuously imposed by the West . . . with a multiplicity of languages and their mutual comprehension. (Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 249)

Monolingualism is a foundational assumption of literary study in the United States. Literature departments have historically been organized according to linguistic divisions, and even comparative literature scholars who work on multiple languages generally conceive of their research in relationship to monolingual fields like English, Spanish, or French literature. However, literary works regularly transgress the linguistic boundaries established by monolingual fields of literary study. Recently, scholars like Yasemin Yildiz, Brian Lennon, and Elke Sturm-Trigonakis have given renewed attention to multilingual literary texts in order to analyze how these works complicate a monolingual perspective on literature. These scholars argue that multilingual literary texts merit critical attention due to their radical potential. However, their vision for multilingualism is constrained by a focus on the linguistic history of Europe, and specifically of the monolingual nation-state. As a result of these critics' emphasis on the independent nation-state, they frame the disruptive potential of multilingualism primarily in terms of migration or cosmopolitan political projects. Multilingual literature from the Caribbean, among other sites in the Global South, calls for the analysis of linguistic multiplicity beyond the context of the nation-state. Writers and thinkers from the Caribbean like Frantz Fanon, Édouard Glissant, and Sylvia Wynter emphasize the connection between coloniality and the region's linguistic and literary production.

Approaching literary multilingualism through this framework of coloniality both problematizes the definitions of literary multilingualism typically offered by comparative literature scholars and also offers an expanded vision of how literary creation at the borders between languages can imagine and enact interventions into global linguistic hierarchies.

My project places the emerging field of literary multilingualism in conversation with an extensive body of theoretical work about linguistic conflict and coloniality from a Caribbean perspective. Although I draw on insights from a variety of approaches that consider the legacies of colonialism, including postcolonial criticism, this project is primarily grounded in decolonial theory.¹ Decolonial theory offers a framework for considering writers like Fanon, Glissant, and Wynter as part of a constellation of anti-colonial thinkers, writers, and activists beginning with early opposition to modern colonization in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century and continuing and intensifying during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Maldonado-Torres, “Thinking Through the Decolonial Turn” 2).² Rather than focusing exclusively on colonialism, decolonial thinkers prioritize coloniality or “long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations,” which they analyze in their projects to imagine and create alternative

¹ See Walter Mignolo's *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* for an extended discussion of the overlap and divergences between postcolonial and decolonial thought. However, like Mignolo, for the purposes of this project, I consider the two approaches “as complementary trajectories with similar goals of transformation” (*Western Modernity* xxvi).

² Because decolonial thought extends significantly before and after the moment of formal decolonization, this framework is particularly useful for the context of the Caribbean, where Haiti gained independence in 1804, while many islands remain under colonial rule. This historical breadth contrasts with postcolonial theory, which prioritizes the period after formal decolonization in the British empire, and, by extension, an English-language perspective on coloniality.

futures (Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality of Being” 243). While the scale of social transformation imagined by decolonial thinkers like Fanon, Glissant, and Wynter may initially seem incommensurable with that imagined by scholars of literary multilingualism such as Yasemin Yildiz or Brian Lennon, I argue that these writers' common interest in linguistic conflict offers unexpected connections between these two fields.

Comparative literary study of the Caribbean brings these related concerns about the coloniality of language and the literary representation of linguistic diversity into closer conversation. While language conflict has historically been a fertile area of theorization across the Caribbean, the popular and academic division of the region into Anglophone, Francophone, Hispanic, and Dutch blocs frames linguistic diversity as a feature that divides the region. Furthermore, this organization obscures the linguistic diversity within each bloc, particularly the conflict between imperial and local or Creole language practices. Some writers have suggested that an attention to this additional linguistic diversity can prompt a turn to multilingualism as a primary unifying feature of the Caribbean (González 43). Scholars including Silvio Torres-Saillant, Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel, and Kavita Ashana Singh have approached multilingualism as a central feature of broader comparative Caribbean analysis.³ While these scholars use comparative methods and postcolonial and decolonial theory to explore linguistic diversity, they do not explicitly engage with the field of literary multilingualism. My project builds on this comparative Caribbean work to consider how a growing attention to

³ Responding to the guidelines outlined in the 2006 disciplinary volume *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization*, Christopher Winks connects the goals of literary comparison and the requirements of regional study of the Caribbean. He writes, “Surely, if comparative literature is about making connections across languages, cultures, and literary traditions, Caribbean literature could be described as always already comparatist” (247).

language conflicts within as well as across the Anglophone, Francophone, and Hispanic Caribbean can reshape the field of literary multilingualism studies.

As a comparative literature project, my work considers how analyzing multilingual literature from the Caribbean can elucidate connections between disparate disciplinary frameworks that share a critique of the monolingual nation-state. In pursuing these conversations, I draw on a tradition of self-reflective comparatists grounded in decolonial critique, including Gayatri Spivak, Walter D. Mignolo, and Sylvia Wynter who engage the methods of comparative literary study while remaining critical of the discipline's limitations, particularly how its historical development from European philology continues to shape the organization of the field and the questions it prioritizes. A comparative, decolonial perspective on multilingualism proposes a shift from some of the major debates within literary multilingualism studies. Scholars of literary multilingualism, many of whom are informed by world literature approaches, prioritize a European, national focus, whether or not the literature they address is, in fact, European in origin.

The tendency of world literature scholars like Franco Moretti and Pascale Casanova to employ simplistic categories of core, periphery, and semiperiphery has been widely critiqued both from the perspective of comparative literature and decolonial theory, yet the implications of a world literature framework for the study of multilingualism have not been fully explored.⁴ Rather than considering the Caribbean as a peripheral location in a Eurocentric narrative of multilingual literary experimentation, I

⁴ For a comparative literature critique of world literature, see Emily Apter's *Against World Literature*. For a postcolonial critique, see Nirvana Tanoukhi's "The Scale of World Literature." For a critique at the intersection of comparative literature and postcolonial theory, see Gayatri Spivak's *Death of a Discipline*.

analyze the Caribbean as what Francesca Orsini calls a “multilingual local” or a multilingual situation that is more stable than a “contact zone,” which often prioritizes the moment of initial encounter between cultures (352). A multilingual local framework offers an alternative to center-periphery models of analysis, because it draws attention not only to linguistic conflict between Europe and the rest of the world but rather to the broad range of vertical and horizontal linguistic relationships that shape a particular region. Furthermore, Orsini's framework of the multilingual local, which she develops through an analysis of the northern Indian region of Awad in the early modern period, also offers insight into potential South-South conversations when multilingualism is read outside of a European narrative. Considering multilingualism from a non-European, regional perspective undermines dominant narratives of literary multilingualism by questioning their chronology and their assumptions about the critical potential of this linguistic practice. In particular, a focus on coloniality calls for new models of literary multilingualism outside of the history of the European nation-state.

National Histories of Literary Multilingualism

Scholars like Yasemin Yildiz and Elke Sturm-Trigonakis offer a historical framework that connects contemporary, global literary multilingualism with earlier traditions of multilingualism in European literature. According to this framework, multilingualism was common in European literature prior to the Romantic period. For example, Leonard Forster's classic account of literary multilingualism highlights traditions such as the practice of alternating between Latin and the vernacular in medieval European poetry (10). Forster argues that writers' decisions about which languages to use lacked the strong emotional charge associated with twentieth century debates about the topic. He writes, “there are very many people and very many situations for which

different languages are simply tools appropriate to certain definite purposes, analogous to the different stylistic levels within any one language” (7). Forster and other critics argue that traditions of multilingualism became less common over time, pointing to the late eighteenth century as the period in which European writers turned away from literary multilingualism. Various factors contributed to this shift including the rise of the nation-state and the Romantic idea that each language possessed a unique soul. Yasemin Yildiz calls this phenomenon the monolingual paradigm.⁵ She writes that under this framework, “individuals and social formations are imagined to possess one ‘true’ language only, their ‘mother tongue,’ and through this possession to be organically linked to an exclusive, clearly demarcated ethnicity, culture, and nation” (2).⁶ After the institution of the monolingual paradigm, multilingualism as a literary practice and lived experience clearly continued, as Forster and Yildiz explain. However, the monolingual paradigm led to the marginalization of writers and texts that do not represent a natural relationship between speaker, language, and nation.⁷

Throughout the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, however, literary multilingualism has become more widespread both in elite and popular literatures. Scholars of multilingualism argue that, since the 1960s, globalization has weakened the monolingual paradigm due to increased levels of migration, travel, and international

⁵ Leonard Forster uses the term “language loyalty” to describe this phenomenon (54). His terminology highlights the affective nature of identification with a national language.

⁶ Naoki Sakai also points to the eighteenth century as the era in which Japanese scholars began to attach local or foreign values to different writing systems, a process which could be considered as an alternative monolingual paradigm (77).

⁷ The popularity of literary multilingualism in European modernist texts offers a notable exception to this argument about marginality. The modernists’ multilingual experimentation, while it may have been marginalized initially, later became canonical. Juliette Taylor-Batty provides an extensive study of what she calls the “new awareness of multilingualism” in modernist fiction (3). However, my project considers the use of multilingualism in a region with an ongoing awareness of multilingualism.

communication. Elke Sturm-Trigonakis, for example, defines multilingualism as a primary structural feature of what she terms the “new world literature” of globalization (5). Likewise, Yildiz argues that globalization fosters a “new awareness” of multilingualism (110). By focusing on the newness of recent multilingual literature, scholars consider how contemporary literary multilingualism is different from pre-Romantic multilingualism due to the rise of the monolingual paradigm. Yildiz uses the term “postmonolingual” to characterize the time period after which multilingual literary practice can no longer be described in the neutral terms Forster uses for medieval period (4). The flexibility of the category postmonolingual recognizes both the rise in recent multilingualism and the continued power of the monolingual paradigm as a framework for reading national literature. However, this historical narrative is limited to a European context.

A Decolonial Perspective on the History and Critical Potential of Multilingualism

Multilingual literary production from the Caribbean challenges the national focus of this historical narrative of the monolingual paradigm. The European shift towards monolingualism described by Forster and Yildiz clearly shaped language politics and literary production in the Caribbean due to the European colonial presence in the region. However, this historical framework is insufficient to explain the region’s extensive body of multilingual literature, primarily because the monolingual nation-state has not been the dominant form of political organization in the Caribbean. In order to understand the linguistic history of the Caribbean, it is necessary to consider colonialism, a fact that Caribbean theorists of multilingualism, particularly during region's mid-twentieth century political shifts, have consistently emphasized. The contributions of figures like Frantz Fanon and Édouard Glissant continue to resonate in contemporary literary debates about

the region. However, this attention to coloniality is not simply a local perspective which contrasts with the supposedly global framework offered by critics like Sturm-Trigonakis. Instead, decolonial theory reveals the connection between the nation-state model and modern colonialism. From this perspective, then, a decolonial critique of the monolingual paradigm challenges existing narratives of literary multilingualism both as they relate to the Caribbean and to Europe.

For example, a decolonial perspective shifts the chronology established by Yildiz and Forster. While they focus on the late eighteenth to nineteenth century as the period when monolingualism became consolidated in Europe, colonial history points to an earlier date. Walter Mignolo argues that early Spanish colonization of the Americas was built upon a different type of monolingual paradigm. He examines Bernardo de Aldrete's *Origenes de la lengua castellana* [*Origins of the Castilian Language*] (1606) in order to analyze how colonial discourse explicitly linked the Spanish language with alphabetic writing, Christianity, and civilization (*Darker Side of the Renaissance* 34). This connection, central to Aldrete's origin narrative of peninsular Spanish, justifies the never fully-realized imposition of the Spanish language in the colonies. I argue that shifting from a European national perspective to a colonial perspective reveals important dimensions of the monolingual paradigm. A colonial framework suggests both that the monolingual paradigm began earlier and that it was less complete than Yildiz describes. Mignolo writes, "The late European Renaissance (the early modern period), a landmark in the idea of modernity, was the beginning of an effort to constitute homogeneous linguistic, national, and religious communities" (315). Mignolo's focus on the call for monolingualism in sixteenth and seventeenth century Latin America is notable because

this time period predates Romantic nationalism as well as the formation of independent nation-states in continental Latin America. In this context, colonization is not an exception to the monolingual paradigm, but rather is integral to its development.

This shift in historical perspective questions fundamental critical assumptions about the resistant power of multilingual literature. Comparative literature scholars generally disagree about the type of multilingualism that counts as resistant, ranging from Elke Sturm-Trigonakis, who includes “metamultilingualism” or “speaking about languages in the broadest sense” to Yildiz, who excludes highly multilingual texts that assume monolingualism as the natural state for each of the speakers represented (Sturm-Trigonakis 85, Yildiz 21). However, these scholars share a common understanding of the ultimate goal of literary multilingualism. Due to the close relationship between monolingualism and the nation-state outlined by Yildiz, scholars tend to consider multilingualism as a strategy that is inherently critical of both of monolingualism as an ideology and of nation-states as its enforcers.

However, these critics' focus on monolingualism as a unitary ideology obscures the differential ways that languages come into contact depending on their local inscriptions in global linguistic hierarchies. By celebrating multilingualism as an end in itself, the major theoretical paradigms of literary multilingualism rarely engage how specific instances of multilingualism interact with hierarchical relationships between languages. Yildiz points to this problem in the conclusion of her text, which compares the relative status of English and Turkish bilingualism in contemporary Germany. She calls social preference for English bilingualism “selective multilingualism” (209). Although Yildiz recognizes this tension between elite and marginalized practices of

multilingualism, her historical framework does not meaningfully differentiate between them. In general, literary multilingualism scholars group together diverse forms of multilingualism into a single category like Sturm-Trigonakis's "hybrid literatures" (1). While Sturm-Trigonakis claims that the framework of hybridity responds to hierarchical power relationships between languages, her analysis, like many assessments of multilingual literature, focuses more on the act of crossing boundaries between languages than on the relationships between these languages, a theoretical move that obscures the selective multilingualism Yildiz identifies.

Given the intersections between theories of coloniality and theories of hybridity in the Caribbean, decolonial Caribbean perspectives offer relevant insight into this dilemma. For example, Shalini Puri critiques the urge to uniformly promote hybridity as a theoretical category for understanding the Caribbean. She interrogates the assumption that since hybridity is constructed against a monolithic idea of "purism," the border-crossing invoked by theories of hybridity is inherently destabilizing. Puri argues that hybridity in itself does not necessarily challenge colonial structures, and she compares cruise ships with slave ships as distinct vessels for border crossing in order to emphasize range of interactions that can be considered through a framework of hybridity (24-25). Puri's insight indicates the importance of coloniality to the larger theoretical conversation about literary multilingualism. The scholarship about colonial linguistic conflicts in the Caribbean provides a model for how to shift from the abstract categories of monolingualism and multilingualism to the concrete conflicts between particular languages and their speakers. As I explore in chapters two and three, writers can critique linguistic hierarchies both by blurring the boundaries between languages and by

strategically defining linguistic boundaries. A focus on specific linguistic conflicts, rather than a general promotion of blurring linguistic boundaries, serves as a necessary corrective in a theoretical discussion that struggles to reconcile how multilingualism relates to continued global linguistic hierarchies.

Although linguistic hierarchies are often underemphasized in scholarship about literary multilingualism, they have been at the center of several major theorizations of Caribbean colonialism. In *Black Skins, White Masks* (1952), Fanon begins his exploration of colonial psychology from the question of language, and addresses multilingualism extensively. Fanon argues that colonization has produced a pathological, hierarchical relationship between the languages of the colonizer and the colonized. He writes, “All colonized people—in other words, people in whom an inferiority complex has taken root, whose local cultural originality has been committed to the grave—position themselves in relation to the civilizing language: i.e., the metropolitan culture” (2). Fanon’s explanation of the black Antillean’s relationship to Creole and French demonstrates the ineffectiveness of analyzing these languages through the paradigm of local and foreign language offered by many critics of literary multilingualism. In France, Creole is not simply a foreign language, comparable to Russian or German. Likewise, in Martinique, the social positions of French and Creole cannot be captured through a national framework. The hierarchical relationships that are secondary to national frameworks of multilingualism are central to this colonial linguistic relationship.

Fanon demonstrates the difference between national and colonial frameworks of multilingualism by contrasting his observations of how Parisians treat multilingual foreigners depending on their race. He critiques the practice of speaking to black

Antilleans and Africans in an approximation of pidgin. In contrast, he writes, “When I meet a German or a Russian speaking bad French . . . I am careful not to forget that he has a language of his own, a country, and that perhaps he is a lawyer or an engineer back home . . . There is nothing comparable with the black man. He has no culture, no civilization, and no ‘long historical past’” (17). Fanon’s writing illustrates the impossibility of approaching colonial multilingualism through a framework that assumes relatively equal prestige among languages. From a decolonial perspective, linguistic hierarchies are crucial for understanding of linguistic difference.

When coloniality informs a reading of literary multilingualism, possibilities for this literary strategy emerge beyond the straightforward promotion of hybridity. Walter D. Mignolo's model for multilingual practice demonstrates the potential of attending to colonial linguistic relationships in readings of multilingualism. Mignolo considers bilanguaging, or operating in the space between languages, as an active process of social transformation (*Local Histories* 265). He writes that bilanguaging “is not a grammatical but a political concern as far as the focus of bilanguaging itself is redressing the asymmetry of languages and denouncing the coloniality of power and knowledge” (231). Bilanguaging actively engages the linguistic hierarchies that Yildiz’s analysis cannot fully address. Therefore, rather than prioritizing the opposition of monolingualism as the ultimate goal of literary multilingualism, Mignolo, like other decolonial theorists of multilingualism, focuses on uses of language that intervene into colonial linguistic relationships.

In addition to Mignolo’s broad perspective on the colonial Americas, Caribbean thinkers offer further insight into how writers from the region use multilingualism to

negotiate colonial linguistic and literary traditions. For example, Silvio Torres-Saillant analyzes the linguistic diversity of the Caribbean both within and across its linguistic blocs as a central component of the region's literature. Within this framework of linguistic difference, he argues for the importance of the "nativization of language" or innovation with language that confronts the alienation that Fanon describes as inherent in the Caribbean's colonial linguistic histories (*Caribbean Poetics* 77). Nativization does not set up an opposition between monolingualism and multilingualism, but it does counter the monolingual paradigm, which assumes a natural, unproblematic relationship with the mother tongue or native language. Torres-Saillant views nativization as an active process of negotiating linguistic power structures to develop local forms of literary language. Nativization encompasses a broad range of literary practices, many of which operate at the borders between internal linguistic variation and strictly defined multilingualism. Torres-Saillant highlights literary multilingualism as a tool for confronting colonial linguistic alienation and also innovating within a local literary tradition, two aims which are intertwined in the works of the literary writers I examine in the dissertation. Like Mignolo and Torres-Saillant, I am less interested in how multilingual literary practices contest monolingualism writ large and more concerned with how writers engage particular language conflicts in order to question linguistic hierarchies and assert the creative potential of marginalized linguistic practices.

In addition to questioning the history and national focus of scholars of literary multilingualism, a decolonial focus on marginalized linguistic production from the Caribbean calls into question the coherence of literary multilingualism as an area of inquiry. In its most basic definition, literary multilingualism consists of the representation

of more than one language in a single literary text. However, continued debates in the Caribbean about the status of Creole languages and their relationships with related European languages draw attention to the instability of the borders between languages and by extension the tenuous nature of identifying multilingualism or a lack thereof. Torres-Saillant's focus on nativization as a process that considers linguistic difference within and across the units commonly defined as languages demonstrates the uncertainty of these categories. While critics from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds have raised questions about the borders between languages, debates about creolization make these questions particularly relevant in the case of Caribbean multilingualism.⁸ Although I recognize the constructed nature of considering languages as discrete units, this realization does not make the framework of multilingualism irrelevant, but rather more interesting, because it is open to continual debate and transformation.

Literary Theorizations of Multilingualism

Within these intellectual debates surrounding multilingualism, the literary works I consider do not simply illustrate the theoretical issues discussed above. Instead, literary writers, particularly those representing marginalized languages, actively contribute to changing understandings of the Caribbean's linguistic structures. When writers like Juan Bosch, Ina Césaire, and NourbeSe Philip write multilingually, they do not simply represent the spoken linguistic diversity of the region, but rather reimagine linguistic conflicts through innovative representations of the relationships between languages and their speakers. There is a substantial tradition in decolonial thought of reading literature

⁸ For example, Naoki Sakai, who I will address at length in chapter one critiques the tenuous nature of establishing borders between languages. Furthermore, Robert Young recently critiqued “that which is casually called a language,” reminding us that “It was not simply that particular languages were engineered, largely for political purposes, but that in order to represent the nation, the concept of a language had to be dreamt up as well. The idea of a language as a discrete entity was a concept devised by European philologists” (1208).

as theory, since valuing literary thought often incorporates voices that have been absent from academic debates. As Barbara Christian argues, our definitions of the boundaries of theoretical production have historically excluded the theory produced by people of color. She writes, “For people of color have always theorized – but in forms quite different from the Western form of abstract logic. And I am inclined to say that our theorizing... is often in narrative forms” (281). Considering the theoretical contributions of narrative forms requires a shift in how scholars relate to literature. Mignolo, who also argues for reading literature as theory, proposes “a frame in which literary practice will not be conceived as an object of study (aesthetic, linguistic, or sociological) but as a production of theoretical knowledge; not as “representation” of something, society or ideas, but as a reflection in its own way about issues of human and historical concern” (*Local Histories* 223).⁹ Following Christian and Mignolo, my readings of multilingual literature will prioritize how literary works engage with and theorize, rather than simply represent, the linguistic history of the Caribbean.

Sylvia Wynter takes this claim for literature as theory one step further. She uses insights from neurobiology to argue that literature institutes self-perpetuating belief systems about who does or does not occupy the category of the human. She writes, “The higher level of knowledge afforded by fiction, as indeed by religious ritual, myths of origin, etc., in effect provides access precisely to knowledge of those modes of rhetorical speech on whose basis all human orders are discursively erected” (“Disenchanted Discourse” 241). Therefore, systems like anti-black racism can be challenged and ultimately replaced in the realm of literature and literary criticism. She argues that writers

⁹ Mignolo critiques scholarly norms “based on the belief that literature is fine, but doesn't constitute serious knowledge” (*Local Histories* 222).

and thinkers who occupy liminal positions in the current organization of knowledge and power, like women and people of color, possess a unique perspective on these structures of power. Liminal subjects are able to reveal and transform these structures that are often invisible to those that comfortably inhabit them (236). Wynter highlights close reading as a particularly useful tool for understanding both how literature strengthens existing power structures and how it can question these structures. She emphasizes the impact of close reading on her own intellectual development and says of this strategy, “It enabled me to see what texts do!” (Scott 127). By analyzing what texts do, instead of simply what they mean or represent, Wynter not only recognizes literary contributions to theoretical debates but also argues for an expanded vision of the way that literature shapes interpersonal relationships at the global scale.

Building on the work of Wynter, Christian, and Mignolo, my dissertation considers literary works as equal participants in theoretical debates about multilingualism. Each of the dissertation’s four chapters will center on close readings of literary works that include more than one language. By considering texts from different genres including anthologies, poetry, narrative, and theater, I attend to the history of literary multilingualism across genres. In my analysis of these literary texts, I turn again to the tradition of self-reflective, decolonial comparative reading. Although Mignolo's intellectual projects emerge from reading across languages, he proposes a delinking from several elements of comparative methodology.¹⁰ He offers relation as a decolonial

¹⁰ Dominguez, Saussy, and Villanueva note that as the concept of decoloniality gradually occupies a greater role in Mignolo's thought, references to comparativism in general and comparative literature in particular progressively disappear (45). Although Mignolo's intellectual priorities shift away from the field of comparative literature, I am interested in how his attention to the space between languages from a decolonial perspective continues to speak to similar questions about linguistic difference and creative expression.

alternative to comparison, writing “My argument is built on unveiling the entanglements rather than on comparing the untangled entities” (“On Comparison” 110). This focus on unveiling entanglements guides my approach to the literary works I consider. Rather than comparing the many differences between multilingual works situated in the Anglophone, Francophone, and Hispanic Caribbean, I focus on how the relationships between these texts offer new possibilities for conceptualizing multilingualism.

In Édouard Glissant's theorization of relation, he writes, “Relation is learning more and more to go beyond judgments into the unexpected dark of art's upsurging. Its beauty springs from the stable and the unstable, from the deviance of many particular poetics and the clairvoyance of a relational poetics” (*Poetics of Relation* 138). The relational space of literary works offers a site for asking the questions that Abraham Acosta identifies as the foundations of Critical Multilingualism Studies, and which intersect productively with decolonial inquiry, “What counts as speech, Who counts as a speaking being, and On what grounds?” (Acosta 35). Given Wynter's attention to how creative practice factors into the politics of knowledge production, or what she calls “reality-creation,” I approach the literary works I consider not only as sites for asking these questions, but also for reimagining alternative answers (“Unsettling” 273). I argue that multilingualism in Caribbean literature offers a way to critique the region's linguistic history and also to enact the type of liberatory linguistic diversity imagined by Glissant.

Chapter One: **Defining Radical Translation** approaches multilingualism through the related topic of translation. I compare two translation anthologies, *Multiples* and *Palabras de una isla/ Paroles d'une île*, both of which claim radical status, and I consider these claims in the context of increasingly metaphorical uses of the term “translation” in

comparative literature. The editor of *Multiples*, Adam Thirlwell, relies on a metaphorical definition of translation that overlaps with adaptation. While Thirlwell emphasizes the great number of languages included in his project, I critique the volume's lack of attention to the particular languages included or the hierarchical relationships between them. By placing Thirlwell's work in conversation with translation studies scholars, I argue that concrete definitions of translation, like Naoki Sakai's call for an analytic of bordering, illuminate alternative visions of radical translation that challenge colonial linguistic hierarchies.

Using this alternative framework of radical translation grounded in a decolonial approach, I analyze the Dominican-Haitian translation anthology *Palabras/Paroles*. I consider the editors' attention to the border and their desire to intervene in a violent linguistic relationship as a model of a decolonial approach to radical literary translation. In particular, the anthology's representation of the Haitian-Dominican poet Jacques Viau demonstrates how translation can be used to complicate the borders between languages. While my reading of *Palabras/Paroles* is informed by decolonial theory, I also use the specific strategies of the anthology to propose increased attention to the differences between various frameworks of decolonial language practice, particularly the divergent social organizations suggested by Walter D. Mignolo's bilingual border thinking and double translation. Despite the volume's dialogue with certain aspects of decolonial theory, I question its bilingual focus on Spanish and French as the only relevant languages for reading the poetic traditions of Hispaniola. By considering the role of Haitian Creole in the anthology, I argue that a decolonial approach to translation allows us to continually

ask how colonial linguistic hierarchies shape literary works and how literary projects can engage in decolonial aims of social transformation.

Chapter Two: **Literary Creation Between Languages** explores the variety of language conflicts that are not fully addressed in *Palabras/Paroles*. If the standard model of Dominican literature focuses monolingually on Spanish and the translation perspective offered by the editors of *Palabras/Paroles* suggests that this Spanish literary tradition is mediated by French, I propose an analytic of bordering that attends to multiple linguistic boundaries. By focusing on linguistic conflict within Spanish as well as between Spanish, Haitian Creole, and English, I consider how attention to additional languages improves our ability to critically address colonial linguistic hierarchies while also problematizing the divisions between these languages.

In this chapter, I consider three literary works that innovate with the space between languages in ways that challenge monolingual nationalism. The first two: Pedro Antonio Valdez's young adult novel *Palomos* and Josefina Báez's theatrical prose work *Levente no. Yolayorkdominicanyork* focus on highly fluent, artistic characters whose ability to strategically move between languages differentiates them from their peers. Their linguistic proficiency allows them to refine their critical perspectives as they mature both personally and artistically. Although these characters differ in terms of the scope of their linguistic critique, they both demonstrate the critical and creative potential of working between languages. I compare these texts by Valdez and Báez with Juan Bosch's earlier short story "Luis Pie" in order to question fluency as a model of decolonial language practice. Although Luis Pie experiences the space between languages not as a zone of creativity but rather as a site of danger, I argue that his attempts to

negotiate multiple languages also offers a valuable source of decolonial critique. By contrasting fluent and non-fluent attempts to move between languages, I aim to expand Mignolo's categories of decolonial linguistic practice to include additional modes of marginalized language production.

Chapter Three: **Creole Code-Switching** continues my analysis of difference between and within languages by focusing on the contentious linguistic status of Caribbean Creoles. I argue that the debates surrounding Caribbean Creoles and their relationships with European languages highlights the role that literary writers play in establishing or questioning the boundaries between languages. Furthermore, approaching multilingualism as a literary strategy rather than as a given fact allows for a critical appreciation of the linguistic work done by writers of marginalized languages. While the previous chapter focuses on texts that blur linguistic borders, this chapter considers language alternation strategies that establish clear boundaries between Caribbean Creoles and European languages in order to explore how characters switch between these languages.

I analyze two plays that employ language alternation strategies: “*Mémoires d’île*” by Ina Césaire and “*Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine*” produced collaboratively by Patricia Cumper, Honor Ford-Smith, Carol Lawes, and others. While comparing the use of Creole languages between Anglophone and Francophone contexts is complicated by the differing status of Creole languages across the region, the striking similarities between these two plays allows for fertile comparison. Both plays feature a pair of elderly women who occupy different racial and class positions. These women negotiate their conflicts by strategically moving between Creoles and European languages in order

to approach or create distance from one another depending on their particular objectives. I argue that these women's linguistic practices offer a mode of imagining community across racial and class divisions while still recognizing how language use is shaped by these differences.

Chapter Four: **Ethics of Opacity** shifts the focus from the strategies employed by the author of the multilingual text to readers' experiences of negotiating multilingualism. I consider Édouard Glissant's opacity as a model for reading difficult multilingual Caribbean texts from a position that engages with the challenging aspects of the text without striving for transparency or complete understanding. I argue that opacity should not be read as a static condition of the text, like untranslatability, but rather as a relationship between the reader and the text that can approximate the interpersonal work imagined by decolonial theorists of translation.

I analyze two literary texts that use opaque multilingualism to explore histories of colonialism and forced labor: M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!* and Harold Sonny Ladoo's *No Pain Like This Body*. Both texts provide partial tools for interpretation like glossaries and other paratextual materials that draw the reader into the process of interpretation. Nevertheless, they employ strategies that prohibit total access to the voices and historical events they seek to represent. Both writers construct their works in ways that make the language that does appear on the page difficult to access and also draw attention to speech that is not represented and therefore inaccessible. I argue that Philip's and Ladoo's construction of opacity calls the reader to a mode of close reading that is not fully captured by some of the dominant paradigms in comparative literature which emphasize mastery of the text. Instead, these opaque texts offer a model for decolonial reading in

which creative, active engagement with the text can produce solidarity without requiring complete transparency.

In the dissertation's **Conclusion**, I return to theoretical questions about the relationship between translation, world literature, and decolonial theory raised in the first and fourth chapters. After analyzing various works of multilingual Caribbean literature, I consider the linguistic techniques of these texts with an attention to the interpersonal dimension of literary multilingualism. I argue that this focus on personal relationships allows for a productive comparative reading of literary representations of linguistic conflict within and across the linguistic blocs of the Caribbean. Approaching questions of multilingual interpersonal relationships from the perspective of decolonial theorizing allows me to consider not only the sociopolitical but also the ethical and epistemic dimensions of this literary strategy.

Chapter One: Defining Radical Translation

I have tried to imagine a program for a new comparative literature using translation as a fulcrum. (Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone* 243)

The aim is to activate untranslatability as a theoretical fulcrum of comparative literature. (Apter, *Against World Literature* 3)

As a discipline located in the spaces between national literatures, comparative literature shares common concerns with the field of translation studies and has recently been a productive site for theorizing translation. However, the relationship between comparative literature and translation is contested, as recent publications by the prominent comparatist Emily Apter demonstrate. In *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (2006), Apter encourages comparatists to consider translation as a fulcrum to guide the work of comparison, a strong pro-translation stance. Less than a decade later, in *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (2013), Apter urges us to consider untranslatability, rather than translation, as a disciplinary fulcrum, which is the apparent opposite of her previous claim. These seemingly contradictory statements are indicative of a broader lack of consensus about the role that translation should play in comparative literary criticism.

Although Apter's work usefully draws attention to the idea of translation, her texts rarely address translation directly. Instead, both books rely on a metaphorical use of translation to represent a range of linguistic issues such as international English, hybridity, globalization, and programming languages. Apter's work may offer a dramatic example of broad definitions of translation, but similarly metaphorical uses of the term are widespread across the humanities. Doris Bachmann-Medick argues that an overly-expansive definition of translation is one of the primary dangers of the recent

“translational turn” over the past decade, during which scholars from various humanities and social science fields have considered interdisciplinary connections with translation studies (2).¹¹ Apter's work is paradigmatic of this translational turn. While her books have been well received in comparative literature circles, their expansive use of the term translation has been criticized by prominent figures in translation studies. For example, in a review of *The Translation Zone*, Anthony Pym critiques Apter's lack of engagement with translation studies scholarship.¹² Furthermore, he questions her expansive use of translation. He argues that although Apter connects her vision of translation to radical, progressive politics, her definition could just as easily serve an anti-translation agenda (Pym, “*Translation Zone*” 182). In other words, Apter's definition of translation obscures the links between the linguistic practice of translation and the theorization of linguistic difference.

The problematic nature of linking translation practice to theories of linguistic difference is evident in Apter's engagement with the translation of Arabic in both volumes. In *The Translation Zone*, she critiques the failure of the U.S. government and military to adequately translate Arabic, among other languages, during the early stages of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and argues that this translation failure is emblematic of war itself. She writes, “War *is*, in other words, a condition of nontranslatability or

¹¹ Likewise, Anthony Pym connects his critique of Apter to this broader trend, writing, “Some American literary scholars, with international extensions, are using the term 'translation' to refer to far more than translations. Sometimes this gives results that are simply embarrassing; while the next page might bring a truly useful phrase. What are we to make of this?” (Pym “*Translation Zone*” 181).

¹² David Bellos makes a similar critique about *Against World Literature*, highlighting the fact that Apter's use of “untranslatable” to mean a lack of one-to-one equivalencies between words has been widely discredited in translation studies (110). Furthermore, David Damrosch critiques Apter's selective bibliography of translation studies scholars, noting the relative absence of any work produced in the decade prior to *Against World Literature*'s publication as well as the over-representation of Derrida (Damrosch “*Against*” 507-8).

translation failure at its most violent peak” (*Zone* 16). In this context, Apter promotes translation both as a potential solution to violent failures of communication and as a model for literary comparison. Several years later in *Against World Literature*, Apter embraces untranslatability as an approach to Arabic, fulfilling Pym's predictions about *The Translation Zone*. In her later volume, Apter views Arabic through a framework of “linguistic monotheism,” within a larger framework of “theologies of untranslatability” in which religious discourse prohibits translation (*Against* 260). She draws on the Moroccan writer Abdelfattah Kilito’s call “Thou shalt not translate me” and suggests that the work of comparative literature is to resist translation by focusing on those aspects of a text that are lost in translation (*Against* 253).¹³ My interest in comparing these passages is not to promote either one of these perspectives but rather to suggest that both translation and nontranslation offer insights into questions of linguistic difference. However, Apter's loose definition of translation often obscures the relationship between translation or nontranslation and her political critique.

In contrast to the metaphorical use of translation offered by Apter and others who work to make translation a relevant paradigm in comparative literature, my project focuses on more standard practices of translation between languages. Roman Jakobson's classic distinction between interlingual translation and a broader range of language issues continues to offer a relevant entry point into debates about metaphorical and concrete

¹³ Ironically, Apter seems to be working with both English and French translations of this lecture delivered in Arabic, a fact which she does not analyze at length, but which problematizes her argument about respecting the call not to translate by working with this translated lecture in multiple languages. Likewise, Kilito’s position as an author who has written widely in French as well as Arabic deserves more extensive attention before using his work for a broader valorization of nontranslation.

approaches to translation.¹⁴ Jakobson recognizes various linguistic practices that often fall under the umbrella term of translation, and within this range, he defines “interlingual translation or *translation proper*” as “an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language” (145).¹⁵ Although the boundaries of interlingual translation are by no means concrete, Jakobson's distinction between interlingual translation and a broader theoretical use of translation as a reflection on language, communication, and cultural difference continues to serve as a useful heuristic for how theorists and literary writers engage the concept of translation. Differing from the expansive definition of translation common in the translational turn and particularly in the work of Apter, my project focuses on the less metaphorical, more concrete definition of translation offered by Jakobson. In that sense, I aim to reconsider translation as a textual practice and paradigm in comparative literature, while also addressing issues about the verticality of languages, an effort that connects my work with postcolonial and decolonial theorizing. Since Apter's work demonstrates how an expansive, metaphorical definition of translation can be used to support a broad spectrum of positions, ranging from the pro-translation enthusiasm of *The Translation Zone* to the anti-translation critique of *Against World Literature*, both of which are situated as radical approaches to comparative literature, I ask: what vision of comparative literature and translation emerges from a focus on Jakobson's more concrete definition of translation? I argue that this concrete definition allows for the prioritization

¹⁴ Jakobson's use of the term “interlingual” to describe the movement from one language to another is distinct from Juan Bruce-Novoa's use of “interlingual” to describe the literary production of writers who write bilingually in the space between languages. While I will address Bruce-Novoa at length in the next chapter, his use of the term interlingual is unrelated to Jakobson's.

¹⁵ While Jakobson's definition of interlingual translation has been complicated by more recent translation theory, especially regarding the unclear nature of drawing borders between distinct languages, his definition continues to provide a useful counterpoint to metaphorical approaches to translation (Munday 6). Therefore, I use Jakobson's framework as a starting point for identifying concrete practices of translation, rather than as a definitive explanation of literary translation.

of specific linguistic conflicts, an issue which is often obscured in metaphorical discussions of translation.

The lack of attention to specific linguistic conflicts is not only an issue in the comparative literature approaches to translation studies, but also in the related field of literary multilingualism. Literary multilingualism is the conflict and coexistence of more than one language in a single text. When scholars of literary multilingualism outline the radical potential of this literary strategy, they often struggle to address specific language conflicts, largely due to debates between metaphorical and concrete definitions of multilingualism. For example, on the metaphorical side, critics like Elke Sturm-Trigonakis use a broad, thematic definition which includes “metamultilingualism” or “speaking about languages in the broadest sense” such as the narrator of a monolingual English text referencing the fact that a particular conversation between characters takes place in a language other than English (85). On the concrete side, critics like Brian Lennon and Yasemin Yildiz prioritize a definition of literary multilingualism that requires the formal representation of different languages, however that may be defined, on the same page. Despite these fundamental disagreements, scholars of literary multilingualism concur that multilingualism is a literary strategy with radical potential to critique the modern nation-state and its efforts to naturalize monolingualism.

However, when these writers critique monolingualism, they often treat the term as an abstract category in contrast to an equally abstract multilingualism. These categories are complicated by literary creation as well as everyday life, where readers, writers, and speakers do not encounter monolingualism or multilingualism per se, but rather one or more particular languages. Multilingualism is necessarily filtered through specific

language conflicts inscribed in global linguistic hierarchies. Critics like Yildiz are aware of how particular language conflicts shape the experience of multilingualism both in their close readings and their observations of popular debates about linguistic multiplicity. Yildiz even coins the term “selective multilingualism” to note a social preference for learning new languages that increase relative social capital and discontinuing the use of those that decrease it (209). While this attention to differentiated experiences of linguistic multiplicity is markedly absent from Yildiz's and other critics' general theorizations of multilingualism, the specific language conflicts between hierarchically-related languages are central to understanding how multilingualism does or does not question nationalist narratives. When considering claims for the radical nature of multilingual literary practice or translation, increased attention to specific linguistic conflicts offers a compelling alternative to metaphorical definitions of translation and multilingualism.

Although several prominent comparative literature perspectives on translation and literary multilingualism do not prioritize the analysis of linguistic hierarchies, scholars working at the intersection of decolonial theory and translation studies have investigated the connection between linguistic hierarchy and translation practice. Scholars like Tejaswini Niranjana, Gayatri Spivak, and Walter D. Mignolo consider translation in the context of colonialism, providing a nuanced analysis of how hierarchical relationships between languages shape the literary practices that occur at their borders. The work of Naoki Sakai provides particular insight into the question of the borders between languages. Sakai begins his analysis of translation from a question: “Is language a countable, just like an apple and an orange and unlike water?” (73). He argues that although language is an uncountable entity, like water, we tend to treat it as countable.

We customarily speak of languages as unified objects with more-or-less defined borders despite the fact that the division between languages cannot be verified empirically (73). Sakai calls for de-naturalizing the divisions between countable languages through an “analytic of bordering” that draws attention both to boundaries, in this case between languages, and to the act of drawing these boundaries, particularly through translation (71). He considers translation not so much as the bridging of an existing gap between two languages, but rather as an integral part of establishing that gap by dividing audiences into homogenous language communities. Sakai's critique calls for a consideration of translation as a “locale of social transformation where new power relations are produced” and therefore posits the study of translation as a mode of critiquing linguistic relationships (87). Translation, then, is inseparable from conflicts between specific languages and the people who speak them.

Despite the inherent linguistic multiplicity involved in translating a text, translation is not usually considered through the framework of literary multilingualism, because the reader normally encounters translations in a primarily monolingual format that does not disturb the assumed monolingualism of the nation-state that Yildiz describes. Departing from this tendency, I examine translation as it occurs in multilingual texts. I consider two literary projects that engage the critical perspective of literary multiplicity from positions that are simultaneously multilingual and translated. These literary projects allow me to explore not only the linkages between translation and multilingualism but also the relevance of decolonial critiques of translation to the field of literary multilingualism. The larger goal is to shed light on how comparative literature

can approach the space between languages with an attention to the colonality of language.

The two literary projects I analyze, *Multiples* (2013), edited by Adam Thirlwell, and *Palabras de una isla/ Paroles d'une île* [Words of an Island] (2012), edited by Basilio Belliard and Gahston Saint-Fleur, offer divergent visions of translation. Both projects are multilingual translation anthologies, which is to say that they feature translated texts by various authors in multiple languages. Most of the translations printed in these anthologies are individually more or less monolingual, but the juxtaposition of translations in various languages makes each anthology as a whole multilingual. While both anthologies either explicitly or implicitly claim that their projects are “radical”, the editors of these anthologies do not share a definition of radical literary practice. In their divergence from mainstream monolingual translation, these experimental anthologies counter the assumption of monolingualism that scholars like Yildiz critique. However, the question remains of how exactly these anthologies address multilingualism and how their use of translation and multilingualism represent and shape linguistic conflicts.

When multiple languages are juxtaposed in a translation anthology, these languages' textual relationship cannot avoid engaging the conflict between these languages and their speakers beyond the world of the text. At the same time, anthologies do not simply reflect global linguistic hierarchies. In multilingual anthologies, “translation serves as a mechanism in the negotiation of symbolic capital among various languages, and becomes an ideological site where languages struggle for visibility and prestige” (Lee 443).¹⁶ Although linguistic conflict is unavoidable in a multilingual

¹⁶ Lee uses the term “heterolingual” to describe anthologies that involve translations from multiple languages to a single language, for example an English-language anthology of works translated from

anthology, editors can either invite an analysis of these linguistic conflicts, or obscure tensions, depending on how they frame their project. When comparing *Multiples* and *Palabras/Paroles*, particularly the anthologies' structures and their editors' statements in the introductions, clear differences emerge in the editors' approaches to multilingualism. The comparative critical analysis of these anthologies demonstrates the importance of addressing global linguistic hierarchies, a practice that is often absent or peripheral in theoretical paradigms that claim to harness the destabilizing potential of linguistic multiplicity.

Contrasting Visions of Translation

While *Multiples* and *Palabras/Paroles* are both multilingual translation anthologies, they differ substantially in terms of their scopes and their structures. *Multiples*, which was originally published in *McSweeney's Quarterly Concern* and later printed in book form, features short stories from around the world in a serial translation structure. Each story passes through a series of different translators. For example, one story originally written in Arabic goes through the following transformations: first to English, then to French, then back to English, then to Italian, and finally to English again. The reader traces a process of distortion and creative invention by this series of translators who differ widely in their translation methodologies, but these translations are unified under Thirlwell's project of stylistic experimentation.

The other anthology, *Palabras/Paroles*, emerges from an institutional context that differs greatly from that of Thirlwell's project. This volume, published by the Dominican Ministry of Culture and edited by the Dominican academic Basilio Belliard and the Haitian-Dominican poet Gahston Saint-Fleur, is subtitled "Primera antología poética de

many languages, as well as those that represent multiple languages, which I call multilingual.

República Dominicana y Haití” [The First Poetry Anthology of the Dominican Republic and Haiti]. Rather than the global perspective proposed by Thirlwell, Belliard and Saint-Fleur focus on a specific linguistic conflict: the interaction between Spanish and French in Hispaniola. The anthology features a crossed-translation structure, which divides the text in two halves: Spanish translations of Haitian poetry and French translations of Dominican poetry.¹⁷ When these two anthologies are considered from the analytic of bordering that Sakai suggests, they reveal distinct perspectives towards linguistic relationships which shape their proposals for radical translation projects.

While Sakai questions whether languages are countable, Thirlwell's project takes the countable nature of languages for granted and centers around the inclusion of a large number of languages. The subtitle of *Multiples*, “12 Stories in 18 Languages by 61 Authors,” literally counts languages to point to the global scope of the project. Thirlwell's earlier theoretical work *The Delighted States* (2007) uses a similar tactic with the subtitle “A Book of Novels, Romances, & Their Unknown Translators, Containing Ten Languages, Set on Four Continents, & Accompanied by Maps, Portraits, Squiggles, Illustrations & a Variety of Helpful Indexes.” These subtitles effectively demonstrate the broad scope of both projects, but they leave the reader with little concrete information about the specific places these texts represent. The focus is rather on the multiplicity of countable languages. Space is relevant to Thirlwell's project only as an abstract concept, which depends on the suppression of the specific locations involved in the anthology. Without an attention to particular places and languages, *Multiples* ignores the bordering work that Sakai advocates.

¹⁷ The editors of *Palabras/Paroles* focus on French, rather than Creole, as the language of Haiti. I will address their treatment of Creole below.

The volume's vague sense of geography is not simply an issue of framing but rather shapes the way the reader encounters particular short stories within the volume. At the end of the book, Thirlwell provides endnotes with information about the authors of the original stories. Some of these notes provide useful biographical information that situates the author geographically and temporally. For example, the note on writer Daniil Kharms mentions specific times and places, informing the reader that “Kharms was born in 1905 in St. Petersburg. He died in the same city, in 1942,” while Youssef Habchi El-Achkar’s note provides no temporal or geographical context, and simply reads that “El-Achkar, until now, has yet to be translated into a foreign language” (*Multiples* 372). This uneven use of contextual material is typical of the project, and Thirlwell's lack of attention to the particular languages and locations represented by the original stories shapes the translation methodologies employed in the volume.

Thirlwell's turn away from geographical specificity is tied to his contradictory stance towards literary translators. He argues that translation is widely under-appreciated, writing: “The general bookstore mode is to treat translations as so many transparencies, so many invisibilities. We hardly mention their presence at all” (2). The premise of *Multiples* is to counter this invisibility. However, Thirlwell does not seriously address the role of literary translators. He tends to describe translation as a depersonalized process, emphasizing the agency of the texts, rather than the translators. He writes about “the strange way so many stories’ forms or styles ebbed and flowed, impervious to the series of singular stylists who rewrote them” (7). Statements like this obscure the work of literary translators.¹⁸ Furthermore, Thirlwell chooses novelists instead of experienced

¹⁸ Here, Thirlwell's approach to literary translators overlaps with that of Emily Apter. Although Apter claims that her project is partially inspired by a desire to contest the marginal role of literary translator,

translators, or short story writers for that matter, to translate these stories, claiming that novelists are experts in style. Although many novelists might be excellent translators, Thirlwell's distancing of the project from professional translators and theorists of translation ignores the contributions that experienced translators could bring to the project. In fact, the few novelists in *Multiples* with extensive translation experience contribute some of the clearest assessments of the limitations of the collection. For example, Francesco Pacifico, who I will address at length below, highlights how the suppression of place constrains literary translators' ability to make informed stylistic decisions. By minimizing the work of translators, Thirlwell misses the opportunity to engage with an extensive body of work about style in translation, a corpus that speaks directly to his primary concerns.

Although Thirlwell argues that the volume represents an experiment in the style of literary translation, his use of the term "style" is unclear. He never provides a direct definition of what he means by style. Instead, he focuses on its opposite, critiquing the prevalence of poor style in translation, further minimizing the skills of translators. Thirlwell's critique seems to align with a popular understanding of "translateese" as a synonym for poorly-written or non-native sounding prose produced by translations that follow the grammatical conventions of the source language. As an alternative to translateese, translation studies scholars typically promote clear writing that follows the grammatical conventions of the target language.¹⁹ While Thirlwell's work circles around this debate, he does not engage it directly.

which she terms a "class inequality," she features relatively few translators in her two volumes on the topic (*Translation Zone* 10).

¹⁹ Lawrence Venuti refers to this style of translation as "fluent translation" (14).

His broad dismissal of style in translation allies him more closely with an anti-translation public opinion than with practicing translators and translation studies scholars. The clearest description of style that Thirlwell provides is by contrasting the term with geographical specificity. In the introduction to *Multiples*, he writes that a novel “is an airplane. Its style is entirely transportable” (2). This claim echoes his earlier assertion in *The Delighted States* that, “Style is timeless and placeless” (31). While the introduction of *Multiples* is full of such assertions, it remains unclear to the reader of *Multiples*, or of *The Delighted States*, what exactly Thirlwell means by style, beyond the separation of the text from its geographical and temporal context.²⁰ Perhaps Thirlwell's definition of style shares common assumptions with David Damrosch's definition of world literature, which considers “literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin,” in which case, Thirlwell's project would be open to many of the critiques of world literature approaches (4). In fact, Thirlwell's approach to the connection between the political and aesthetic realms parallels claims made by Pascale Casanova. Casanova argues for the existence of a literature-world “a literary universe relatively independent of the everyday world and its political divisions” (xii). Thirlwell imagines his project as existing outside of global political structures, yet, like Casanova, he often reproduces in his work the same hierarchical linguistic relationships he hopes to transcend.²¹

²⁰ Part of the challenge of determining how Thirlwell defines style comes from the irony and deliberate contradictions in his writing, which make it difficult to argue with any particular statement in the introduction. However, Thirlwell consistently distinguishes between style and place, which suggests that is a fundamental assumption of the volume, and therefore open to serious critique.

²¹ For example, Debjani Ganguly argues that Casanova's call to analyze a global literary sphere that is more-or-less autonomous of the political sphere reproduces the very political hierarchies it seeks to question by moving to the literary sphere. Ganguly states that Casanova's focuses on Paris as the arbiter of literary value, as well as her overarching argument, “is, thus, resolutely Eurocentric in the classic sense of the term and appears to have no engagement with postcolonial and post-Soviet modalities of provincialising/re-situating Europe in the global scheme of things” (251). Likewise, Thirlwell's move to

Thirlwell's lack of attention to issues of gender in his project further reveals the limitations of his attempts to locate his project in an independent literary realm. In an interview, Thirlwell responds to the question of why there are relatively few female translators in the project by saying, "I hate that there aren't enough women in [the book]! Which was partly that, just freakishly, of the people who in the end didn't have time to do it, more were women than men. And also some women said no because they had scruples about their language ability—but I don't think that higher moral precision was necessarily because they were women" (Riddle, n.p.). While I question Thirlwell's assumption that gender was not a factor in who decided to translate from languages in which they were not fluent, I am more interested in what Thirlwell does not mention in this response. He never addresses the fact that all of the short stories he included in the volume were written by men, despite the fact that he could have, presumably, included as many female authors as he liked. Although Thirlwell represents his project as a utopian one, the underrepresentation of women as translators, and especially as short story authors, suggests that his project is less egalitarian than he imagines. Locating his project in an independent literary realm, therefore, allows Thirlwell to theoretically promote border-crossing and utopian interpersonal relationships. However, Thirlwell's lack of interest in the particular linguistic borders of his project makes the alternative modes of interpersonal relation he imagines ultimately impossible.

Saint-Fleur and Belliard's project, on the other hand, is centered on one particular border: the division between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The volume's extensive introductory material investigates the relationship between the border and the poetry

the global literary sphere fails to engage critically with the position of Europe in the literary or political realms.

included in the volume. On the first page of his introduction, Basilio Belliard outlines major historical events including the colonization of Hispaniola, Haiti's independence, the Haitian occupation of the Dominican Republic, Dominican independence, and Trujillo's 1937 massacre of Haitians (13). By placing this violent history at the outset of the volume, Belliard suggests that this translation project derives its force from specific geopolitical relationships. In a second introduction, Gahston Saint-Fleur discusses routes of cultural influence between Haiti and the Dominican Republic (29). This attention to literary history also characterizes Samuel Grégoire's introduction to the Haitian poets and Soledad Álvarez's introduction to the Dominican section. Furthermore, each poet's work is introduced with a brief description that includes basic biographical details and descriptions of the poet's literary production. The volume's abundant contextual information encourages the reader to engage with translation as it relates to a particular linguistic relationship.

The contribution of *Palabras/Paroles* goes beyond describing the border in order to theorize an intervention in the current relationship between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Both Saint-Fleur and Belliard refer to a moment of cooperation between the two countries in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti and consider the volume as a contribution to improving communication and intercultural understanding. While this project is grounded in literary terms, the editors draw frequent parallels between increased literary exchange and stronger interpersonal relationships. Belliard describes the anthology as “una iniciativa editorial que nos uniera o, al menos, nos aproximara, en las letras y la creación poética” [an editorial initiative to unify us, or at least bring us closer, in literature and poetic creation] (14). This vision of translation suggests that

literary projects can strategically engage linguistic divisions in an effort to overcome them.

When comparing *Multiples* and *Palabras/Paroles*, the structural differences between the two volumes reveal divergent visions of translation. In particular, the editors' distinct approaches to borders suggests that *Palabras/Paroles* is more attentive to issues of linguistic conflict than *Multiples* and therefore potentially offers a model of radical translation practice that attends to issues of selective multilingualism. However, a closer examination of the literary works included in each anthology demonstrates how the practice of translation complicates the projects proposed by these anthologies' editors. Approaching these literary texts from an analytic of bordering shows that both anthologies have substantial blind spots around issues of selective multilingualism.

Shifting Place Names in *Multiples*

The translations included in *Multiples* are difficult to categorize. They range from extremely literal interpretations, especially those done with the aid of Google Translate, to original stories that are only tangentially related to the source text. Some translators even employ a different genre than the source text's (i.e. substituting poetry for prose), marking a dramatic departure from the source text's style. While Thirlwell frames these inconsistencies in terms of stylistic playfulness, some translators' dramatic stylistic changes reveal the limitations of the volume's lack of attention to place. Many of the translators who are least attentive to the context of a literary work produce translations that do not playfully reinvent but rather actively disregard the styles of the source texts.

A story by Youssef Habchi El-Achkar, one of the narratives that undergoes the greatest transformation between its first and final versions, demonstrates the problematic nature of place in the anthology. Rawi Hage's first translation of "The Four Seasons,

Without a Summer,” which stands in for the Arabic original that the reader of *Multiples* cannot access, chronicles the struggles of a journalist who seeks to represent the violence of the Lebanese Civil War. The final version, translated into English by Vendela Vida centers on a grieving American woman who travels to Sweden in order to visit former friends and lovers of her recently deceased mother. It is difficult to imagine a situation in which the final version could be called a translation of the original short story. However, rather than immediately dismissing Vida’s translation for not representing the plot of the original, I consider the various versions of El-Achkar’s story through the framework of style that Thirlwell proposes. In particular, several translators’ decisions to change place names are dramatic stylistic choices that highlight the stakes of the relationship between style and geographical specificity.

The strategy of changing place names is fairly common in *Multiples*. For example, translators of Daniil Kharms’ story “Symphony no. 2” change its location from Russia to Poland, Argentina, and the Netherlands, among other sites. Despite these frequent changes in place names, most translations of the story maintain stylistic continuities with the first version.²² Since Kharms’ story is characterized by surrealist techniques including rapid shifts between topics, each of which is only partially narrated, these dramatic changes of place can be read as a translation technique that responds to Kharms’ style. The problem with Thirlwell’s formulation of style, however, is that he considers style and context as inherently opposed. While Kharms’ style may welcome

²² One of the later translations, by Ivan Vladislavic does diverge stylistically by engaging in an explicit allegory that contradicts surrealist techniques in early versions. It is notable however, that dramatic shifts in setting do not produce stylistic discontinuities. Also, the first version of the story, translated by Gary Shteyngart uses dates and cultural references that are anachronistic with Kharms’ life. However, due to the design of *Multiples*, we are unable to assess the extent of Shteyngart’s alterations to the text.

changes of place, El-Achkar's story demonstrates a deep contextualization that is central to its style.

In Hage's translation of El-Achkar's story, El-Achkar's attention to time and place is linked to the contested nature of truth during wartime. The story opens with a detailed description of the setting, the inside of a cafe. Then, Hage situates the narrative temporally, writing, "Today, the fifth of January, 1975, the first Sunday of the last quarter of the twentieth century" (166). El-Achkar's story insists on the specificity of this day as well as its connection to larger time scales, a strategy that situates the narrative with respect to historical time. This claim for a historical relationship with the world is significant, because of the way that El-Achkar represents the conflict surrounding the representation of the war, especially between official narratives and lived experiences of violence. Conflicting radio reports claim to narrate the truth about the war, but the reader, like the story's characters, struggles to understand the war's narrative. The narrator, a disenchanted writer, observes the world through the cafe window and says, "I described what I saw in the reflections of the conniving window, and then abandoned my pen and notebook with these words: *People are hungry*" (166). The writer takes on a journalistic role, reporting what he observes on the streets. The detail of widespread hunger that he chooses contrasts with the radio reports that inadequately explain the war, because the narrator highlights human suffering, and asserts pain as the overriding truth of the war. Near the end of the story, he asserts, "I testify against the killers. I damn this war, I scribble curses to defeat them" (178-179). Here, the narrator's function as writer has progressed from testifying about human suffering to explicitly denouncing the war. The focus on testimony and curses suggests that this writing has a certain power against the

war. The writer, then, is intimately linked to his world, which he seeks both to accurately represent and to change. Given the relationship between writing and denouncing war, an attempt to locate the story in a politically, temporally, and geographically neutral space undermines El-Achkar's style.

Although Thirlwell does not engage with contemporary translation theory, translation theorists have written extensively about the importance of a literary work's context to translation methodology in general and style in particular. For example, Gayatri Spivak, whose work as a translator influences her literary criticism, argues that the translator's ability to attend to the text's style depends on deep contextual knowledge of the literary work, which she calls intimacy. In her description of intimacy, she highlights the importance of the translator's familiarity with a writer's literary environment as well as his or her historical time and place. She writes, "The translator from a Third World language should be sufficiently in touch with what is going on in literary production in that language to be capable of distinguishing between good and bad writing by women, resistant and conformist writing by women" ("Politics" 404). By juxtaposing good and bad with resistant and conformist, Spivak calls for holistic reading practices. For Spivak, the work of the translator is inherently bound to a literary work's position in the world beyond the text.

While Spivak and Thirlwell seem to have opposite concerns, both are interested in how to produce stylistically pleasing translations. Spivak argues that a lack of intimacy with a literary work prevents stylistic translations. She writes that decontextualized translations, regardless of their source language, tend to share a "translatese" style in English translation, the same awkward style that Thirlwell hopes to counteract with the

experimental structure of his anthology (Spivak, “Politics” 400). According to Spivak, the challenge of context is most urgent when translating from languages with which a monolingual English-language reader might be particularly unfamiliar. Readers do not encounter texts in politically neutral space, so the translator must communicate the work’s context.²³ Spivak’s perspective provides a caution to the “pure international” approach to literature that Thirlwell advocates (*Multiples* 8). Following Spivak, I argue that ignoring literary context does not produce free, international exchange, but rather assimilation and stylistic inconsistency.

Given the centrality of deep contextualization to El-Achkar's style, Spivak's focus on intimacy is particularly relevant to his work. However, his translators vary widely in how they incorporate place into their translation methodologies. The first translator in the series, Rawi Hage, emphasizes the relationship between style and place both in his translation of El-Achkar's story and in his translator's note. His note includes detailed biographical information about El-Achkar, which contrasts with *Multiples*' minimal endnote on the author. Furthermore, Hage situates El-Achkar in a literary context, not just a historical one.²⁴ In his comprehensive analysis of El-Achkar, Hage demonstrates the interaction between intimacy and style that Spivak promotes. In later translations of El-Achkar's story, however, this intimacy disappears. The loss of intimacy can be traced through the substitution of El-Achkar's place names for others which emphasize a global

²³ Anthony Appiah makes a similar argument for the need for “thick” translation that situates a text in its historical and literary context. He writes, “it seems to me that such 'academic' translation, translation that seeks with its annotations and its accompanying glosses to locate the text in a rich cultural and linguistic context, is eminently worth doing” (817).

²⁴ Hage writes, “Youssef Habchi El-Achkar could well be considered a *kateeb moukhdram*—a term that has existed in Arabic for centuries . . . referring to writers of the in-between whether of generations, civilizations, languages, or movements” (203). Using this framework from Arabic literary criticism, Hage explains how El-Achkar falls between poetic and prose-dominated eras, as well as between periods marking Koranic and Western influences on Arabic literature.

perspective. As this text's locations are transformed in serial translation, its style becomes less and less recognizable, culminating in Vida's final translation, a somewhat lighthearted story set in Sweden. Frequent changes in place names mark the ways in which a translator distances the new version of the story from the previous story's setting. This change provides a window into the ways in which *Multiples* neutralizes place.

The decision to depart from El-Achkar's context likely relates to translators' lack of knowledge about his context. By Thirlwell's design, the other translators did not have access to the original version of the text. Furthermore, due to the limited information available about El-Achkar in English and other languages besides Arabic, later translators were incapable of approaching the text with Hage's intimacy.²⁵ As a result of their distance, the translators often chose to change the setting of the text in ways that dramatically altered the style and politics of El-Achkar's text. One notable exception is Tristan Garcia's French translation, which immediately follows Hage's translation, appearing as the second version in the series. Garcia condenses Hage's prose to occupy two fewer pages. However, he does not change any place names or major details in the text, and also does not contribute a translator's note, so it is difficult to analyze his methodology. After Garcia's translation, however, subsequent versions diverge from El-Achkar's contextualized specificity.

The third version, Joe Dunthorne's English translation, departs dramatically from Hage's and Garcia's versions by transplanting the story from Lebanon to London. Dunthorne maintains the immediate setting of a cafe and he creates a tenuous connection to the story's original setting through televisions. He writes, "This would be my favorite

²⁵ The volume's structural distancing from the original operates differently for translators of canonical Western writers like Kafka and Kierkegaard who include outside knowledge of the writers in their practice, even if they do not have access to information about the specific text they are translating.

cafe-bar if the televisions were off. One shows Iranian soap operas and the other, Arabic news” (182). The only connection to the deeply contextualized spaces of El-Achkar’s story is through a loose, televised association with the Middle East. Television coverage fictionalizes and trivializes elements that emphasized reality in Hage’s translation. The final, haunting image in Hage’s version of fingernail-scratches on the face of the narrator’s dead ex-wife reappears in Dunthorne’s version as a melodramatic scene in a soap opera: “Her nails are all broken. She has scratches on her cheeks. There has been some kind of accident” (192). This image which was tragic in Hage’s version becomes trite. Although Dunthorne briefly employs television’s documentary possibility through references to news coverage of the 2010 revolution in Tunisia, he interrupts this connection to real violence when the narrator turns off the coverage of the revolution. Ultimately, the context of war, which was concrete in Hage’s version, becomes abstracted in Dunthorne’s televised representation of conflict.

The reader is further distanced from the context of El-Achkar’s story through references to additional geographic locations. Dunthorne writes, “I have come to Hebden Bridge. The buildings here are made of stone the color of a smoker’s teeth. My phone has not heard of Hebden Bridge and assumes I am thinking of Hebron, south of Jerusalem. I send this text to my mother who lives in Switzerland” (188). This list of locations, mediated by the map on the narrator’s phone, is disconnected from the events of war. Furthermore, the shuttling between Hebden Bridge, Hebron, and Switzerland, like Thirlwell’s claim of “12 stories in 18 languages by 61 authors,” emphasizes broad geographic scope over specificity. Given the importance of setting in Hage’s version,

Dunthorne's version of the story represents a departure in terms of content, style, and politics.

Dunthorne's narration raises questions about the lines between translation, mistranslation, adaptation, and the composition of an entirely new piece of literature. In his translator's note, Dunthorne writes, "I can only speak a tiny bit of French and I can't read it" (205). After describing his failure to translate using an online translator, he explains that he abandoned the idea of faithfulness, and proceeded to make dramatic changes. He writes, "Lebanon became London. The only things I kept were: a cafe with a girl, broken fingernails, civil war in the Middle East, and the structure . . . I hope that, despite all this, there's still a strong relationship between my version and the two that precede it" (205). When considering the translator's lack of understanding of the original text, it becomes difficult to read Dunthorne's text as a translation. In addition to lacking the various levels of intimacy that Spivak advocates, Dunthorne's narrative demonstrates a lack of basic reading comprehension. As a consequence, his text utilizes some of the imagery of the original, but completely misses the political and ethical orientation of the work.

After a narrative that practiced such drastic changes, Francesco Pacifico's faithful Italian translation poses a different kind of challenge for the reader. Overall, Pacifico's translation corresponds closely to Dunthorne's text, and in particular does not change any place names. One interesting alteration that he makes is beginning the story with the one-word sentence, "Londra" (183). By centering London as not only the setting of the narration, but also its topic, Pacifico's translation demonstrates the extent to which the text has traveled from original context, although he does return the reader to the idea that

place matters. In his translator's note, Pacifico highlights the contradictory nature of working with such a decontextualized piece of writing. He says, "I was given this with no context. It seemingly conveyed important secret information that had gotten more and more warped as different undercover spies passed it on from hand to hand. I've worked as a translator for nine years, and I know that books contain messages for foreign secret services that you shouldn't try to mess up" (205). Pacifico's note emphasizes his difference from Dunthorne's methodology, notably his emphasis on fidelity. He does not conceive of his project in terms of the idealization and exact replication of Dunthorne's version. However, he is concerned with not distorting the entirety of the text. His prior translation experience informs this perspective, which reminds the reader of the value that experienced translators could bring to a project like *Multiples*. Pacifico identifies lack of context as a limitation of his translation. While he recognizes that the messages of the text have been morphed in some way, Pacifico is unable to recover these meanings. His strategy, instead, consists of trying not to further alter the text. As a result, his translation closely resembles Dunthorne's, but fidelity does not emerge as a viable tool to recreate intimacy with the text. Dunthorne's and Pacifico's clashing translation methodologies further demonstrate the contradictions of the project.

Pacifico's faithful translation is followed by a revisionist translation by Vendela Vida. She changes the first word announcing the story's setting from London to "Stockholm," signaling a dramatic shift in place (195). The story references a variety of locations including Turkey, London, Washington, D.C., and Hailey, Idaho, some of which are described in detail, but most of which are not. The television that had aired the revolution in Dunthorne's and Pacifico's translations instead broadcasts a report about the

birthday of the crown princess Victoria. Vida's version no longer has even the most tangential connection to Lebanon or a war. While Dunthorne's version neutralized El-Achkar's politics, Vida's translation departs completely from the concerns of El-Achkar's story. Perhaps the strangest alteration that arises in Vida's story is the comforting use of death. The story ends with a character describing to the narrator a use of interior design that soothes the dying. Vida writes, "She gets out her sketchbook, and uses an eraserless pencil to illustrate for me the perfect room—'the ultimate room,' she calls it—in which a person should die" (201). This final image of the story transforms violent death during wartime in the Lebanon into a peaceful experience of palliative care in Sweden. This version of the text is incomparable to Dunthorne's and Pacifico's versions, and much less to Hage's and Garcia's translations.

Vida's translator's note exposes her deliberate distancing from translation. Like Dunthorne, she admits limited knowledge of the language from which she translates, but based on her own assessment, her Italian seems stronger than Dunthorne's French. While she is able to translate the previous story word for word, after preparing a draft, she chose to write a new story in her own voice, "one that was very much inspired by the story I had translated word for word" (207). When she describes this relationship of inspiration she, like Dunthorne, focuses on image. She writes, "Certain images swirled in my head—a haircut, a bar with mirrors, a TV that goes on and off, bats, girls in violet blouses and pleated skirts, a foreign city, a meditation on time, a device that can change what people see, movement, an ending involving death" (207). Interestingly, the majority of these images originate in Dunthorne's version, and they do not correspond to the images that Dunthorne identified from Garcia's translation. While translation theorists disagree over

what element of the source text translators should prioritize (sound, style, content, tone, etc.) few would argue for the primacy of image in prose writing. By anchoring her translation in decontextualized images, Vida produces a narrative that is unconvincing as a translation of the previous story.

It is important to note that these transformations of place mark a gradual transition of the story from a Middle-Eastern war zone to a comfortable scene in a Nordic cafe. These places cannot be innocently viewed as two points in the pure international. Instead, the transformation between these places demonstrates the appropriation of a politically engaged Lebanese story to a neutralized American and Western European context. By viewing these specific translation events in a broader history of translation, we can see the stakes of this transformation. According to Thirlwell, excessive reverence towards the category of “the original” is the most problematic aspect of translation (*Multiples* 5). However, critics writing from the intersections of translation studies and coloniality argue that a more urgent problem is the historical complicity between methods of literary translation and colonial administration.

For example, Tejaswini Niranjana argues that translation studies is predicated on the ignorance of asymmetrical power relations between languages and cultures.²⁶ She notes that translation has often been considered “the quintessential humanistic enterprise” due to simplistic connections between translation and intercultural communication (47). However, she critiques this assumption by pointing out the historical connection between colonial translators of non-Western texts and colonial projects of defining the human (47-

²⁶ This has changed since the publication of Niranjana’s text in 1992. See Tymoczko, Maria and Edwin Gentzler, eds. *Translation and Power*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002 and Bassnett, Susan and Harish Trivedi, eds. *Post-colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge, 1999 for subsequent investigations of the relationship between translation and colonization.

48). As a result of this link between translation and colonial administration, she argues that the translation of non-Western texts tends to reinforce “hegemonic versions of the colonized” (3). Niranjana’s critical perspective on the power asymmetries of translation helps the reader question the relationship between Thirlwell’s project and a conventional understanding of translation. Based on Niranjana’s critique, *Multiples* does not address a major weakness of translation, but rather exacerbates a historical ignorance of colonial relationships in translation by further obscuring the linguistic hierarchies that inform the project.

While a colonial perspective on translation reveals commonalities between Thirlwell's project and other translations that suppress linguistic conflict, the dramatic transformations of stories by El-Achkar and other writers suggests that *Multiples* often goes beyond the alterations normally produced in the process of translation. In fact, many of the texts in *Multiples* are more easily recognizable as adaptations than translations. The adaptation critic Julie Sanders defines an adaptation as a work that seeks to extend the pleasure of the experience of reading the original text (24). Given that Thirlwell repeatedly invokes pleasure as a central motivation for *Multiples*, and especially as a justification for suppressing place, this framework provides a convincing explanation of the project. Thirlwell cites from a cookbook to explain this relationship between pleasure and decontextualization: “We feel authorized to make dishes outside our families’ ethnic traditions, and we freely mix different cultures’ ingredients and techniques, because we like to eat delicious food, wherever it comes from” (8). By using food as an analogy, Thirlwell encourages a simple relationship of consumption between the reader and the

text. This statement suggests that adaptation serves as a productive framework for understanding *Multiples*.

Seriously engaging *Multiples* from the perspective of adaptation would raise new questions, including those that Sanders considers about the relationship between adaptation and appropriation or plagiarism. For example, Sanders explains how the audience's familiarity with the source text is a key aspect of experiencing an adaptation as such rather than as an isolated work (22). If a text provides inadequate acknowledgment of its source material, and particularly if the audience is unaware of this connection, that text is often read through the frameworks of appropriation or plagiarism (35). An adaptation perspective would allow for an analysis of how *Multiples* creates connections between the source material and new versions of a text as well as whether these transformations create pleasure for the reader.²⁷ While these questions that emerge about adaptation provide useful insight into the volume, the overarching issue is the fact that Thirlwell positions *Multiples* as a radical translation project rather than as a conventional adaptation project.

This blurring of translation and adaptation under the heading of translation is not unique to Thirlwell, but rather indicative of a larger trend in experimental translation projects. Thirlwell's project resonates with the work of translators Sharmila Cohen and Paul Legault, founders of the press Telephone Books. Their web page describes their project simply: "Telephone books publishes works of radical translation" (Cohen and Legault n.p.). However, upon closer examination of their writings, their definition of

²⁷ There is a predictable lack of consensus among reviewers about which stories in *Multiples* produce pleasure for the reader and which stories evoke ethical reactions as a result of appropriation. One reviewer remarks "Only two of the stories in the collection are enjoyably readable in English," mentioning Zadie Smith's and David Mitchell's contributions as particularly unsatisfying (Abell n.p.). Another reviewer cites those two stories as the highlights of the volume (Robinson n.p.).

radical translation tends to overlap with a conventional understanding of adaptation. Cohen and Legault's "Manifesto of the New Translation," which playfully echoes the surrealist manifesto, lists a series of tenants of their approach to translation. Although there are some references to interlingual translation, most of the text focuses on newness, rather than linguistic difference. The manifesto repeatedly references new audiences, but it emphasizes bringing old art forms to younger, contemporary audiences as opposed to translating literature from one language to another, which suggests that adaptation is a better framework than translation to understand the proposed intervention.

This conflict between translation and adaptation or updating is evident in the press' publications. Telephone Books publishes journals which print interlingual translations, but the press' first book-length publication, entitled *The Sonnets: Translating and Rewriting Shakespeare*, consists of experimental English-to-English "translations" of Shakespeare.²⁸ Cohen and Legault contrast their work with translations of Shakespeare into modern English, which focus on accessibility to contemporary audiences. Instead, they write, "our hope was that the contributors would approach the original texts from their multitude of vantage points, that they would board the ship, loot and pillage, break things down, and reconstruct it all in a fashion that would allow us to view multiple dimensions of the original work in a new light, as a new structure" (*The Sonnets* i). Cohen and Legault are clearly advocating a mode of rewriting that diverges from standard literary translation, and the projects' contributors vary widely in their rewritings of Shakespeare, employing strategies like free verse, Twitter posts, and collages of newspaper articles. However, the question remains of why they chose translation rather

²⁸ Legault also published *The Emily Dickinson Reader*, a collection of one-line adaptations of each of Emily Dickinson's poems with McSweeney's, the same press that published the first version of *Multiples*.

than adaptation as their framework for this project and the work of the press as a whole. Niranjana's analysis of the assumed connection between translation and humanistic ideals of increased communication offers a potential explanation of why the label of translation is attractive. However, her argument also signals the limitations of invoking translation to explain adaptations, since translation projects often reproduce colonial linguistic hierarchies. By invoking an optimistic model of translation as increased communication, Cohen and Legault, like Thirlwell, avoid engaging with issues of linguistic conflict.

The contrast between adaptation and translation offers possibilities for rethinking metaphorical definitions of translation from the perspective of linguistic conflict. Thirlwell, Cohen, and Legault, like Emily Apter and other theorists operating with expansive definitions of translation, often miss the opportunity to engage with debates in decolonial translation studies that are relevant to the stated goals of their projects. For example, by claiming the category of radical for his translation project, Thirlwell distances his project from a traditional sense of translation without addressing contemporary translation theorists' more sophisticated theorizations of linguistic borders. In this context, Thirlwell's work does not push translation forward, but rather refuses to engage with past developments in translation studies that question the terms of his project. Work by theorists like Spivak, Niranjana, and Sakai who attend to the colonial history of translation suggests an alternative definition of radical translation. From their perspective, a radical translation project would not be one that ignores linguistic borders, but rather one that focuses on these borders in order to imagine new possibilities for intercultural communication.

Local Linguistic Conflict in *Palabras/Paroles*

Due to its focus on borders, *Palabras/Paroles* offers a possible model of translation as communication. Theorists who attend to colonality offer insight into the role that communication, or lack thereof, plays in translation projects. In particular, decolonial theorists, who situate themselves in a history of anti-colonial thought and resistance from the Americas, consider how translation can serve both as a tool of colonial administration and as a framework for decolonial action. These writers' perspectives reveal both the promise and limitations of *Palabras/Paroles'* vision of translation.

While decolonial theorists, like postcolonial theorists including Spivak and Niranjana, critique the ways that translation can reinforce colonial difference, they also see the potential for translation as a facet of interpersonal political negotiation. In his discussion of intercultural translation, Boaventura de Sousa Santos writes, “It is imperative to distinguish between intellectual and political motivations” (220). According to Santos, successful translation incorporates both of these sources of motivation. While considering the link between intellectual and political motivations, Santos writes, “In order to bear fruit, translation must be the crossing of converging motivations that have their origins in different cultures” (220). According to Santos, the progressive political motivations of a translation project are irrelevant if they are not intercultural in nature.

Walter Mignolo frames this issue in terms of directionality. Like Spivak and Niranjana, Mignolo argues that translation has historically fallen short of the humanistic ideal of intercultural communication due to its uni-directional focus. He argues that during Spanish colonization of the Americas, translators did not mediate between cultural contexts in a reciprocal manner. Whether colonial translators were translating from an

indigenous language to Spanish or vice versa, Mignolo writes that most translations were ideologically uni-directional, working from a Spanish perspective (*Western Modernity* 219). In contrast to this uni-directional, colonial translation framework, Mignolo proposes an alternative: decolonial double translation. He focuses on the processes of intercultural communication that inform the radical political action of the Zapatistas. The process through which speakers of Spanish and indigenous languages negotiate their distinct languages and epistemologies in order to further a common political goal is “at risk and bi-directional” (*Western Modernity* 219).²⁹ Bi-directional, at risk translation differs from uni-directional translation by exposing both parties to change through contact with other languages and epistemologies.³⁰ Building on the work of Santos and Mignolo, I define decolonial translation as a multi-directional process of meaning-making across languages and cultures that seeks to transform linguistic hierarchies through shared political and literary aims. Although Mignolo describes interpersonal interactions rather than a print literary project, his perspective allows for an examination of the different social organizations imagined by translation projects like *Multiples* and *Palabras/Paroles*.

Since *Multiples* and *Palabras/Paroles* differ greatly in the number of languages they include, directionality offers a lens to compare the projects. The structure of *Multiples* emphasizes serial translation, so it is not purely uni-directional. However, throughout the series, each translation moves further away from the original text. Even

²⁹ Mignolo's focus on the political goals of translation corresponds to Santos' distinction between the intellectual and political motivations of translation projects.

³⁰ The multilingual literary text, like Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* enacts this process of multi-directional change that can occur when various epistemologies come into contact. I will address Anzaldúa's project more fully below, with an attention to how its multilingualism expands the definition of decolonial translation.

though multiple participants are involved in this translation project, transformation of the text seems to exacerbate the uni-directional tendencies of translation. Furthermore, the fact that translations alternate between English and other languages demonstrates the way that the text, while deeply multilingual, still caters to a monolingual English readership.³¹ While a reader who knows multiple languages can understand more of the text, a monolingual English reader can access the paratexts, all of which are written in English, and half of the translations in each series. A reader of any of the other languages that appear in the volume could not meaningfully engage with the text from a monolingual position. *Palabras/Paroles*, however, welcomes multiple audiences. A monolingual Spanish reader could read the introductions and the Haitian poetry, while a monolingual French reader could access the introductions and the Dominican poetry. While each monolingual reading would only include half of the text, the inclusion of introductory materials in both languages demonstrates a commitment to two distinct monolingual audiences as well as a multilingual readership. By structuring the anthology in clearly-defined Haitian and Dominican sections, Saint-Fleur and Belliard engage to some extent in the reinforcement of distinct language communities that Sakai critiques, which can be read as an inherent limitation of the project. However, this structural choice can also be read as a strategic decision that uses multi-directional translation to encourage interaction between linguistic groups, an interaction that is absent from the linguistic experimentation of *Multiples*. Saint-Fleur and Belliard's multi-directional approach to

³¹ Dipesh Chakrabarty's description of barter as a potential model for translation, in which terms from non-European languages and systems of thought can engage directly with one another without mediation by a third, European language, provides insight into what is lost by repeated translation through English (85).

translation allows for a critical examination of how linguistic borders can be transgressed in the service of both literary understanding and political organization.

Saint-Fleur and Belliard's focus on the Haitian-Dominican poet Jacques Viau Renaud demonstrates the editors' commitment to troubling the strict borders that govern the project. While all of the other poets in the volume are confined to one half of the anthology, Viau's poetry appears in both the Haitian and Dominican sections of the book, demonstrating the overlap between these linguistic communities and poetic traditions. Viau, who was born in Haiti and migrated to the Dominican Republic as a child, was killed in 1965 at the age of twenty-three, while opposing the U.S. occupation in the Dominican Republic. Viau's poetry appears prominently at the end of both the Spanish and French sections, diverging from the chronological organization of the rest of the section. By including Viau in both sections, Saint-Fleur and Belliard claim him as both Haitian and Dominican poet, blurring the structural clarity of the rest of the volume.

Viau's inclusion in both section also obscures the distinction between original and translated texts. The biographical descriptions of Viau that appear in both the Spanish and French sections of the text are nearly identical, but they do not provide information about the texts' language of original publication. Upon further investigation, the reader can easily learn that Viau wrote his poetry in Spanish. However, by withholding this information, the editors allow for potential confusion between source text and translation. The selection of poems further contributes to this confusion. In the Spanish-language Haitian section of the text, three of Viau's poems are printed: "II," "Alto torreón," and "Será preciso." In the French-language Dominican section, a single untitled poem is printed. This information available in the table of contents gives the impression that four

different poems appear. However, the untitled French poem is actually the translation of the poem numbered “II” in the Spanish section. The fact that Spanish language original poems by Viau are printed alongside Spanish translations of French poetry in the Haitian section of the anthology complicates the language communities in the text. The editors' lack of clarity about the linguistic relationship between Viau's works in both sections is notable since the rest of the anthology is transparent about these issues. Viau's prominent location at the end of each half of the text suggests that the editors prioritize his role destabilizing the borders between the two sections of the anthology.

The editors' multilingual representation of Viau's poetry presents the space between Haiti and the Dominican Republic as a zone for imagining alternative political futures. Gloria Anzaldúa's groundbreaking work on thinking from the border demonstrates the value of this in-between space. She valorizes the U.S.-Mexico borderlands as a site of linguistic, cultural, and theoretical production, writing “The new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity . . . she operates in a pluralistic mode—nothing is thrust out” (79). Since Anzaldúa situates the border subject of the mestiza as a negotiator of contradictions and ambiguity, this figure offers a model for the role that Viau's poetry serves in the anthology. Viau's ambiguous position in the text allows for an expanded reading of his poetry. While the poetry by Viau that appears in the anthology largely addresses Dominican political resistance in the 1960's, the framing of Viau's poetry encourages connections to the contemporary relationship between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Viau's concern for human suffering resonates with the anthology's attention to post-earthquake Haiti. When Viau asks a question like, “¿Cómo reconquistar la vida para el hombre?” [How to

reconquer life for mankind?], his critical voice applies not only to his immediate context but also to the conflict between Haiti and the Dominican Republic (198).

Viau's bicultural status has made him a popular figure for imagining new political and interpersonal relationships between Haitians and Dominicans. While Saint-Fleur and Belliard make these connections after the 2010 earthquake, other scholars have turned to Viau in the wake of the Dominican Constitutional Tribunal's 2013 ruling that effectively denationalized Dominicans born to immigrant parents and especially affected the children and grandchildren of Haitian immigrants. Raj Chetty and Amaury Rodríguez point to Viau's poetry and the larger movement of 1960s anti-imperialist struggle as a framework for understanding Dominican blackness in conversation with Haiti, while at the same time remaining critical of how Viau's poetry is utilized by government entities such as the Dominican Ministry of Culture, which published *Palabras/Paroles*.

Translation figures centrally in the genealogy Chetty and Rodríguez propose. They point to the importance of translations of Haitian poetry printed in the surrealist journal *La poesía sorprendida* and argue that these translations were particularly significant in the February 1944 issue, which was printed under Trujillo's regime and during the month of the centenary of Dominican independence from Haitian occupation, an unlikely occasion to promote Haitian literature (6). Chetty and Rodríguez's analysis helps connect *Palabras/Paroles* not only to a shared poetic tradition between the Dominican Republic and Haiti but also to a tradition of translation. Chetty and Rodríguez extend this work in *The Black Scholar* with an English-language translation of a poem by Jacques Viau. Viau's poetry continues to serve as a touchstone for the practice of blackness in the Dominican Republic, whether in translation or in Spanish. For example,

Chetty described the experience of attending an event at the National Library honoring Viau's poetry in June of 2015. This event, held just days after the deadline for Dominicans of immigrant descent to register under the Constitutional Tribunal's ruling, took place in the Aída Cartagena Portalatín room of the library. Chetty argued that this combination of Cartagena Portalatín, a poet affiliated with the surrealist, anti-xenophobic, and translational movement of *La poesía sorprendida*, and the Haitian-Dominican Viau offers an example of practices of blackness that contrast with the dominant U.S. narrative about race in the Dominican Republic (Chetty). Chetty's examples demonstrate that Viau resonates as a bicultural figure in broad discussions of literary and cultural history. This analysis allows for a reading of *Palabras/Paroles* as a radical translation project that builds on a history of resistant literary and translation projects.

While decolonial theory provides a framework for situating *Palabras/Paroles* in a broader tradition of double translation, this perspective also provides valuable insight into what is missing from this volume, namely an attention to the internal linguistic diversity of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. In particular, the marginalization of Haitian Creole in the volume demonstrates the colonial relationship between national language and territory. Although the anthology is officially structured around the Spanish-French bilingualism of Hispaniola, the editorial materials repeatedly refer to Creole and the fact that many of the Haitian poets in the anthology, as well as others who are not included, produce some or all of their poetry in this language. However, the anthology does not seriously address Creole as a language of literary or cultural production. The colonial implications of the exclusive focus on Spanish and French is demonstrated by Belliard's assertion in the introduction, also featured on the book's back cover, that the languages of

Cervantes and Victor Hugo intersect in the volume (15). Belliard explicitly connects the Haitian and Dominican poetry in the volume to European literary traditions, a focus which both defers to colonial literary history and excludes Creole language and literature.

While Creole is absent from the structural organization of the text, it does appear within some of the poems. In particular, the work of Felix Morisseau-Leroy, who was active in the literary promotion of Creole, demonstrates this presence (156). When his poems are translated into Spanish, some of them include italicized words in Creole. For example, the poem “Cuando pase el cometa en el año 2062” [“When the Comet Passes in the Year 2062”], which describes the practice of Vodou, uses multiple italicized words in Creole to name musical instruments, participants in the ceremony, and particular aspects of religious practice, including *hunsis*, *asotor*, and *vêvê* (169). From the perspective of literary multilingualism, this is a fairly conventional strategy to demonstrate cultural authenticity through a limited amount of foreign language vocabulary.³² However, in the context of *Palabras/Paroles*, these words point to a larger tension in the project between various languages of literary and cultural production.

When applying these questions about the presence of Haitian Creole to the volume as a whole, it becomes evident that although *Palabras/Paroles* pursues a political commitment to increased cultural interaction between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, it does so at the expense of a fuller attention to the linguistic tensions within Haiti. A decolonial perspective on translation and multilingualism allows the reader to analyze the linguistic conflicts that this project investigates and those that it suppresses. This example also demonstrates the distinction between the terms multilingualism and bilingualism.

³² Brian Lennon writes that foreign language words are normally “contained – confined to single words, phrases, or brief exchanges of spoken dialogue, as touches of cultural verisimilitude (or its simulation) that ‘season’ the text ever so lightly with the foreign” (10).

While bilingualism offers a useful lens to approach linguistic conflicts between two languages, in this case Spanish and French, the binary focus can obscure additional languages, particularly marginalized ones. Using a framework of multilingualism, rather than bilingualism, calls for greater sensitivity to the multiplicity of languages that are active in a particular text. In the case of *Palabras/Paroles*, a focus on multilingualism allows the reader to see the ways in which the text's vision of intercultural communication fails to engage the linguistic diversity of Hispaniola beyond European languages.

The absence of Creole in this project is particularly striking given the history of Creole as a generative concept for rethinking translation and multilingualism in the Caribbean. Although *Palabras/Paroles* generally emphasizes literary, historical, and political context, the editors fail to engage explicitly with a Caribbean-centric body of work on language contact that could enrich their project with an expanded vision of the languages and literatures of Hispaniola. The volume's exclusion of Creole continues the colonial history of translation outlined by Niranjana, Mignolo, and others. While *Palabras/Paroles* addresses linguistic borders that *Multiples* suppresses, its vision of intercultural communication is limited by the fact that it excludes the first language of 95% of Haitians. From a decolonial perspective on translation, both an engagement with Creole as the language of the masses and creolization as a theoretical paradigm are necessary to imagine translation as a tool for intercultural communication in *Palabras/Paroles*.

Multilingualism and Decolonial Translation

Although *Palabras/Paroles* does not fully enact the promise of decolonial translation defined as a multi-directional process of negotiating the space between

languages in order to transform linguistic relationships, the volume's use of both translation and multilingual strategies can illuminate the different linguistic frameworks used by decolonial theorists. Although both translation and multilingualism have been generative concepts for decolonial thought, there has been little work to engage with the differences between these two types of linguistic interaction. Mignolo, for example, has used both terms at different moments of his career. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* (2011) imagines intercultural communication through the Zapatista's double translation while *Local Histories/Global Designs* (2001) focuses on the multilingualism of individuals who inhabit the space in between languages and cultures. In each text, Mignolo develops these concepts in opposition to uni-directional colonial translation, and he explicitly connects them when he writes that double translation “is an enactment of border thinking” (*Western Modernity* 225). However, he does not fully address the differences between translation and multilingualism. This tension in Mignolo’s work reveals a broader tension among thinkers working at the intersection of translation theory and coloniality.

Since *Palabras/Paroles* features both translation and multilingualism, the anthology can serve as a tool to consider the different social frameworks that decolonial thinkers use to approach these two types of linguistic multiplicity. Mignolo’s work on bilingualism focuses on a single writer: a border thinker, such as Anzaldúa, Michelle Cliff, or José María Arguedas, who negotiates linguistic and cultural asymmetries of power from a space between languages and cultures. Jacques Viau's position in *Palabras/Paroles* fits this model of decolonial language practice. Mignolo’s analysis of double translation, on the other hand, features two main political actors as protagonists:

the indigenous leader Old Man Antonio and the Marxist Subcomandante Marcos. While Mignolo could have read Subcomandante Marcos as an individual bilingual border thinker, his shift to double translation allows for the analysis of multiple social actors. This broader context of double translation encourages us to examine how the border thinker interacts with different interlocutors. While Mignolo does not explicitly address the divergence between bilingual border thinking and double translation, the differences in the two social frameworks are telling. Drawing attention to the social organization of decolonial perspectives on multilingualism is not meant to suggest that one model is superior to the other. In fact, both frameworks are central to the project of *Palabras/Paroles*, and while its dominant lens is double translation, the project would be enriched with a greater attention to bilingual Creole-French poets as border thinkers who are currently under-analyzed in the anthology. A greater attention to the social organization of decolonial theories of language demonstrates how these theories contribute to debates about the radical potential of literary multilingualism.

Both bilingual border thinking and double translation imagine transformational communication through a critique of the naturalized relationship between national language and nation-state. Mignolo argues for a critical approach towards national languages, and writes, “Maintaining the links between language, literature, culture, and territory implies reproducing the imperial allocations of cultural configuration” (*Local Histories* 235). Here, Mignolo’s perspective overlaps with that of scholars of literary multilingualism like Yasemin Yildiz who question the link between monolingualism and the nation-state. Yildiz, along with other scholars like Brian Lennon and Leonard Forster, demonstrates that the naturalization of the connection between language and nation does

not accurately describe human linguistic experience either historically or in the contemporary moment. Therefore, these scholars consider multilingualism as a potentially radical critique of monolingual nationalism. However, their frameworks do not fully consider global linguistic hierarchies, as is evident from the peripheral role of the issue of selective multilingualism in Yildiz's analysis. Decolonial theorizations of multilingualism offer an important contrast to this work. In Mignolo's critique of naturalizing the link between language and territory, he does not frame the issue in the terms of hypothetical local and foreign languages, but rather in terms of global colonial structures of language. By shifting emphasis from national languages to colonial languages, Mignolo highlights the colonial roots of national languages, especially in the context of multilingual postcolonial societies. This focus on coloniality is not only necessary when considering multilingual literature from the Caribbean and other currently or formerly colonized locations, but also when reading multilingual writing from current and former colonial metropolises. The shared blind spots regarding marginalized languages in both *Multiples* and *Palabras/Paroles* reveal the widespread need for a decolonial approach to linguistic multiplicity.

This decolonial approach to multilingualism intersects with questions raised by Emily Apter about how comparative literature can negotiate the space between languages. While Apter's volumes suggest that comparative literature is caught between allying itself with translation or untranslatability as potential fulcrums for literary study across national boundaries, a decolonial perspective suggests alternative possibilities. In Mignolo's exploration of the way that decolonial thought shifts the priorities of comparison, he writes, "My argument is built on unveiling the entanglements rather than on comparing

the untangled entities” (“On Comparison” 110). This focus on entanglements allies with Sakai's call for an “analytic of bordering” that de-naturalizes the divisions between languages, especially when considering translations that present these division as stable and natural (71). Comparative literature, therefore, need not promote either translation or untranslatability as a rule. Instead, comparative literary approaches informed by decolonial theory can provide a critical perspective on the ways in which literary production establishes or suppresses linguistic difference at the unstable borders between languages, especially as these borders relate to colonial linguistic hierarchies. Decoloniality, then, provides an alternative fulcrum for comparative literary study, in which an attention to linguistic borders, whether in moments of translation or nontranslation, counters the naturalization or linguistic hierarchies, among other dimensions of coloniality. Ultimately, this decolonial perspective serves not only as a site of critique but also as a framework for recognizing how literary projects transform linguistic hierarchies and for challenging these projects to push further in their visions for linguistic relationships.

Chapter Two: Literary Creation Between Languages

In the previous chapter, I used a translation perspective to demonstrate that, while *Palabras/Paroles* illuminates a history of literary contact between Haiti and the Dominican Republic and calls for increased intercultural understanding, it misses the opportunity to engage fully with the linguistic multiplicity of Hispaniola. The editors' exclusive focus on Spanish as the language of the Dominican Republic and French as the language of Haiti is a limitation that undermines the volume's attempts to promote intercultural communication and understanding. While the anthology's representation of Jacques Viau signals the possibility of moving beyond the division of the island into monolingual halves, the reader of the anthology rarely encounters multiple languages in close contact. In this chapter, I consider how multilingual literary texts can explore complex interactions between languages that complicate clear linguistic boundaries. Although *Palabras/Paroles* divides Hispaniola into two largely monolingual national literary traditions, the literary production of both Haiti and the Dominican Republic demonstrates multilingual, not simply bilingual, patterns of influence. In this chapter, I focus on literary multilingualism in three Dominican texts in order to argue for greater critical attention to the linguistic variety within the Dominican Republic as well as the Caribbean as a region.

By considering multiple linguistic conflicts simultaneously, multilingual criticism can avoid the potential pitfall of reifying the very linguistic divisions it seeks to critique. Decolonial linguistic approaches can be enriched by an attention to how particular languages are always implicated in multiple linguistic conflicts. In other words, I consider how concepts like Mignolo's bilingual border thinker change when there is more

than one relevant border and linguistic conflict. In my efforts to move beyond the framework of monolingual nationalism both for Dominican literature as well as for Caribbean literature more generally, I rely on Francesca Orsini's articulation of the multilingual local. In her analysis of the multilingual region of Awad in northern India during the early modern period, Orsini demonstrates how attention to multiple linguistic conflicts can both de-center Europe in the history of multilingual literary production as well as complicate our categories for analyzing this literary production.

A multilingual local perspective on Dominican literature suggests that the monolingual Spanish narrative proposed by the editors of *Palabras/Paroles*, or even their bilingual narrative of Spanish and French interaction, is incomplete. Orsini calls for approaches to literature that “explore the pluralities of space and time, hold together local and wider perspectives, work multilingually, and take in hierarchies of language and literary value but are not blinded by them” (351). Orsini's focus on time as well as space promotes a literary history that recognizes the shifting influences of a variety of languages on Dominican literary production. These influences include but are not limited to official and popular versions of Dominican Spanish, peninsular Spanish, other Caribbean Spanishes, Haitian Creole, Haitian French, U.S. English, Caribbean Englishes, and Caribbean English Creoles. As Orsini notes, a particular language's position in global and local linguistic hierarchies necessarily shapes its literary use. Therefore, an analysis of the languages of Dominican literature must take into account the relative status of English, Spanish, French, and Haitian Creole given both U.S. neocolonial influence on the island as well as economic, racial, and political tensions between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. However, these hierarchies are inflected differently in particular

times, places, and literary projects. In order to not be, in Orsini's words, “blinded” by the general outline of these hierarchies, I focus on three particular, localized moments in a much broader history of linguistic conflict in Dominican literary production in order to highlight how writers can creatively use language to question these hierarchies (351).

The literary works I consider each address different aspects of the linguistic conflicts that shape Dominican literature and society. I begin by considering two contemporary works that were published within a few years of *Palabras/Paroles*. Pedro Antonio Valdez's young adult novel *Palomos* (2009), set in an urban neighborhood in the Dominican Republic, explores the relationship between Spanish and English through the lens of youth culture in general, and more specifically reggaeton. Josefina Báez's theatrical prose work *Levente no. Yolayorkdominicanyork* (2012), which takes place primarily in New York with important scenes in Santo Domingo, explores interactions between Spanish, English, French, and Haitian Creole through the interpersonal relationships of immigrant women with a range of linguistic proficiencies. I begin with these two early twenty-first century texts, which are roughly contemporary with Walter Dignolo's work on decolonial approaches to multilingualism in *Local Histories, Global Designs* (2001) and *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* (2011), because they elucidate the figure of the bilingual border thinker and therefore provide a compelling alternative to the linguistic framework adopted in *Palabras/Paroles*. After analyzing these contemporary texts, I turn to a classic mid-twentieth century text, Juan Bosch's “Luis Pie” (originally written in 1941). This break in chronology serves two main purposes. First of all, while much of the scholarship on literary multilingualism focuses on the recent explosion of deeply multilingual texts, both in the Caribbean and worldwide, the return to

Bosch reminds us that multilingualism is not a new literary phenomenon in the region. Furthermore, the particular ways in which Bosch uses multilingualism challenge the figure of the highly fluent, bilingual artist employed by Mignolo, Valdez, and Báez. Reading Bosch after these contemporary writers disrupts a narrative of progress in multilingual literature that often elides the contributions of earlier writers. Instead, I consider Bosch's perspective as a reminder of the limitations of focusing on the bilingual border thinker as the primary model of decolonial multilingual practice. Taken together, these three literary works demonstrate a variety of approaches for questioning a monolingual, national literary perspective.

In analyzing the limitations of monolingual readings, I draw on the two primary theoretical paradigms that inform my project: literary multilingualism and decolonial theory. While these frameworks diverge considerably in their primary concerns and their objects of analysis, they share a common critique of monolingual nationalism as a framework for understanding literary production. Critics of literary multilingualism like Yasemin Yildiz and Brian Lennon argue that multilingual writing can resist monolingual nationalism by representing linguistic diversity. Decolonial theorists like Walter Mignolo take this claim a step further by arguing that multilingual writers who innovate in the spaces between hierarchical, colonial linguistic relationships can actively transform these colonial hierarchies. Both of these theoretical perspectives work to make visible the fraught nature of the boundaries between language in order to analyze the literary experimentation and social transformation that can occur along these boundaries.

While the literary works by Valdez, Báez, and Bosch represent the boundaries between national languages like English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole, they devote much

of their attention to linguistic multiplicity at a more granular level. Rather than prioritizing a single linguistic boundary, such as the one between a unitary sense of Spanish and English, they also investigate conflicts within a single language, like the interaction between the Spanish of reggaeton and Dominican nationalist discourse. While scholars of literary multilingualism generally prioritize difference across languages rather than within languages, I argue that the linguistic multiplicity within a particular language is a central component of multilingual literary creation.

The work of Mikhail Bakhtin offers a model for this layered reading of linguistic difference. Although Bakhtin himself writes neither from the field of multilingualism or decoloniality, his perspective has been broadly influential for scholars in both of these areas and offers useful vocabulary for exploring connections between them. While contemporary critics have employed a variety of Bakhtin's terms including dialogism, hybridity, and polyphony, I focus on heteroglossia as a term that elucidates the differences within and between languages.³³ When Bakhtin argues, "Language- like the living concrete environment in which the consciousness of the verbal artist lives- is never unitary," he recognizes both the pressure that other national languages as well as internal linguistic variations exert on the abstractions that we conventionally consider as unified

³³ For a standard multilingual perspective on Bakhtin, see Sturm-Trigonakis' use of hybridity (2) and polyphony (6). For postcolonial perspectives on Bakhtin, see Homi Bhabha's use of heteroglossia and dialogism (26) as well as Paul Bandia's discussion of heteroglossia in translating postcolonial texts (426). From a decolonial perspective, Gabriella Veronelli argues that Bakhtin's concept of dialogism does not accurately describe language use under conditions of coloniality because dialogism depends on the speaker's understanding that he or she will be heard, which cannot be assumed in a colonial context (409). Due to the sheer volume of criticism about Bakhtin as well as Veronelli's caution about dialogism, I focus specifically on Bakhtin's writing about heteroglossia rather than his work as a whole.

languages (288).³⁴ He writes, “At any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form” (291). By pointing toward the fractures within any national language, Bakhtin's work demonstrates the limitation of analyzing multilingual literature through the framework of a bilingual encounter between unitary languages. Since languages necessarily come into contact only through the specific registers employed by particular characters or narrative voices, the linguistic conflicts within languages offer insight into conflicts between languages.

The intersection between these two types of linguistic multiplicity is central to the work of the three writers I consider in this chapter. At first glance, the works of Valdez, Báez, and Bosch represent linguistic conflicts between English, Spanish, French, and Haitian Creole. However, an attention to internal linguistic diversity reveals additional sites of linguistic conflict. Following Bakhtin, I read this creative engagement with linguistic multiplicity, whether within or beyond the unit of a national language, not as a peripheral issue but rather as a central feature of the work of a literary writer (292). In the work of Valdez, Báez, and Bosch, linguistic multiplicity within a single language as well as between languages contributes to the characters' fluency or lack thereof. By representing characters with a range of linguistic mastery, Valdez, Báez, and Bosch critique monolingual nationalism while also revealing the limits of multilingual fluency as a model for intercultural communication.

³⁴ Mignolo also notes the pressure placed on standardized forms of a language by competing dialects, referring to this type of linguistic multiplicity as “fractures within languages” which he contrasts with “fractures between languages,” or conflicts between national languages (*Local Histories* 227).

Musical Multilingualism in *Palomos*

When analyzing literary multilingualism, most critics focus on the author as the unit of analysis. For example, Bakhtin writes that various languages, whether they be national, professional, or generational, “all may be juxtaposed to one another, mutually supplement one another, contradict one another and be interrelated dialogically. As such they encounter one another and co-exist in the consciousness of real people—first and foremost, in the creative consciousness of people who write novels” (292). While the multilingualism of literary works by Valdez and Báez can be read through the framework of the author, it is also possible to consider multilingualism at the level of the characters' speech. Both texts include a multilingual protagonist who negotiates between competing languages. These protagonists serve as doubles for the author, since they are creative figures whose facility with language distinguishes them from other characters in the texts. However, focusing on the characters' multilingualism or lack thereof rather than the author's multilingual proficiency allows for comparison between the various characters represented in each work. Both texts center on coming-of-age stories in which a protagonist hones his or her multilingual practice as part of a larger process of developing a critical voice. Analyzing how these protagonists' multilingualism changes over time as well as how their linguistic practices differ from other characters offers insight into the oppositional potential of multilingualism.

In Pedro Antonio Valdez's young adult novel *Palomos*, the protagonist Antonio, a young aspiring reggaeton performer, uses his multilingualism to distinguish himself as an artist. Over the course of the novel, Antonio and his friends imagine futures for themselves as a famous reggaeton group, yet they spend little time working on their music and primarily imitate older neighborhood gangs by occupying their street corner,

selling household chemicals to be used as drugs, and visiting prostitutes. Antonio initially enjoys his participation in this group and embraces their anti-authority approach, rebelling at school and at home. However, as the group becomes involved in increasingly violent activities, Antonio separates himself from these friends and adopts a critical lens that relies less on aggressive masculinity. Antonio's gradually increasing ability to decipher and critique the various codes he encounters in music, school, and his interactions with peers and adults parallels his artistic development. His superior multilingual proficiency serves as a central tool for him to critically analyze the world around him and to develop his artistic skills as a reggaeton writer.

While Antonio's multilingualism changes in interesting ways over the course of the novel, reading this text exclusively in terms of national languages, as is common in literary multilingualism scholarship, obscures these changes. From the perspective of national language, the relevant units of analysis in *Palomos* are Spanish and English. According to a critic like Brian Lennon, Valdez's text would not represent a particularly interesting example of literary multilingualism. The novel is primarily written in Spanish with occasional words and phrases in English, and it complies with standard publishing strategies to minimize the disruption caused by the inclusion of a foreign language. For instance, English words and phrases are generally italicized, and therefore marked as different from the dominant language of the text. Furthermore, the relatively limited quantity of English ensures that the novel is comprehensible even to a Spanish language reader with limited or nonexistent knowledge of English. Lennon argues that these conventions of multilingual writing are tools for “managing” multilingualism by keeping it “contained – confined to single words, phrases, or brief exchanges of spoken dialogue,

as touches of cultural verisimilitude (or its simulation) that ‘season’ the text ever so lightly with the foreign” (10). As a result, Valdez's novel could be categorized under Lennon's concept of “weak” multilingualism as opposed to “strong” multilingualism due to both the limited quantity of English text and the use of italicization to manage this multilingualism (17). However, this perspective is limited by its assumption that English and Spanish are the only relevant units of analysis when considering the text's multilingualism. Bakhtin's focus on linguistic register offers a useful critical strategy for investigating how Valdez's experimentation with language goes beyond a monolithic conflict between English and Spanish. Since Valdez negotiates the relationship between English and Spanish through the specific registers employed in reggaeton and hip-hop, his characters' debates about reggaeton reveal multilayered conflicts between normative and non-normative linguistic practices.

Although the novel's italicization of English proposes a bilingual division between English and Spanish, Valdez's use of reggaeton troubles this clear division. The book is structurally organized as a mix CD, in which each chapter corresponds to a reggaeton track, and song lyrics permeate the novel, usually appearing within quotations marked by a musical note symbol. These song titles and lyrics, which reference English, Spanish, and bilingual songs, point towards the transnational and multilingual dimensions of reggaeton. Wayne Marshall traces an origin story of reggaeton that prominently features Jamaica, Panama, New York, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic as foundational spaces in the development of the genre. He writes, “Depending on the particular sociocultural context and historical moment, reggaeton may be heard, embraced, and projected as representing any or all of these people and places, with significant

implications for local cultural politics” (“Música Negra” 60). The songs referenced throughout the book reveal this international pattern of musical influence, evoking U.S., Jamaican, Puerto Rican, and Dominican artists. This multi-genre multilingualism is a useful reminder that multilingual creativity is not exclusively the province of elite literary publication.³⁵

While the majority of the lyrics that appear in the novel are either entirely or primarily in Spanish, the close proximity of English and Spanish within the particular registers used in reggaeton lyrics suggests alternative ways to frame the novel's linguistic conflicts. Throughout the novel, vocabulary related to reggaeton in particular and music in general is often difficult to mark as inside or outside of Spanish. In particular, artistic names like “Toxic Crow,” “MC Yo,” “el Writer,” and “los Fox Billy Games” are not distinguished as English words through italicization. Although there is clearly a trend towards adopting stage names that incorporate English, these names are utilized with Spanish articles or are composed of Spanish and English, as in the case of Antonio’s penname “MC Yo.” By undermining divisions between national languages, reggaeton emerges as a potential space for contesting a particular register of Dominican Spanish linked to national identity.

Throughout *Palomos*, authority figures including parents, school administrators, and psychologists advocate a standardized Spanish that coincides with nationalist discourse. The director of Antonio's school, whom Antonio mocks for her constant appeals to “la Patria,” [the fatherland] is particularly explicit in her support of a preferred register of Spanish. In a speech to the students, she says, “Un estudiante en este colegio nunca dice ‘tíguere’, ‘carajo’ ni ‘montro’, sino caballero... Nunca dice ‘jeva’, sino

³⁵ See Brian Lennon's discussion of the limited readership of strong plurilingual literature (24).

muchacha....” [A student at this school never says ‘tíguere,’ ‘carajo,’ or ‘montro,’ but rather caballero.... He never says ‘jeva’ but rather muchacha] and she continues this list at length (59). The director's list of undesirable vocabulary, which she associates with reggaeton, includes English-influenced colloquial speech like “hanguear” and “blimblín,” yet words not derived from English are equally threatening to the register of Spanish she promotes (59). This passage marks undesirable speech like ‘tíguere’ and ‘jeva’ with quotation marks, while the standard words the director references, such as caballero and muchacha are unmarked. This strategy parallels the text's italicization of English words to mark them as separate from Spanish. By marking non-standard Spanish in this particular context, Valdez suggests that Bakhtin's perspective on the multilingual encounters produced by differences within languages is necessary to understand the novel's linguistic conflicts.

The adolescent characters in the novel reject the standardized, national Spanish by embracing the multiple registers and languages involved in reggaeton. Many of the characters use English to counter authority without consequences, since even educated adults like the school's English teacher have an inferior command of the language. For example, during Antonio's school-mandated therapy sessions, he frequently insults his psychiatrist in English, because she does not understand the language although she claims to have studied it for several years. Many of his insults are taken from song lyrics, but not all of them. The novel's adolescent characters use English in creative ways that extend beyond its roles as the language of U.S. power or as a language of musical influence. However, adolescents also resist nationalist discourse by using other registers of Spanish. In response to the director's speech, a student, named only by his school identification

number as Número 15, whispers to those around him, “Un estudiante de este colegio nunca dice ‘fornicar’, sino singar....,” [A student from this school never says 'fornicar,' but rather singar....] and he continues with a list of his own, countering standard Spanish vocabulary with colloquial Dominican profanities, much to the amusement of his fellow students (59). Although Número 15's alternative vocabulary does not cross national boundaries, it produces a heteroglossic encounter of distinct languages and worldviews. A focus on this internal linguistic variation does not discount the particular effect produced by multilingualism, but rather suggests that a greater attention to register within multilingual criticism offers a more nuanced perspective on how linguistic multiplicity questions nationalist constructions of language.

Therefore, the influence of English represents only a portion of reggaeton's disruption of nationalist discourse. Throughout the novel, nationalist discourse frequently clashes with youth culture. For example, during a school event, Antonio accidentally acquires a reputation for being well-behaved, and the director compares him to a national hero, calling him “el Prócer.” His classmates use this name to tease him, and reaffirm these characters' distance from the director's nationalist narrative. Antonio then uses his position of trust with the school's administration to enter the director's office and replace the national anthem CD with a reggaeton disc, so that the lines from Guanábos “Pa'l carajo la mente sana, yo lo que quiero es mariguana” [To hell with the healthy mind, what I want is marijuana] are played in front of the school during an assembly (60). This substitution makes explicit the contrast between reggaeton and the official language of nationalism, while also suggesting reggaeton as an alternative frame for imagining community. Throughout the novel, reggaeton appears as an artistic form which speaks

particularly to young people. Valdez says of his decision to write a novel that incorporates reggaeton, “Me di cuenta de que esta música expresaba a la juventud; que le daba para pensar y a la vez partía del pensamiento de los jóvenes” [I realized that this music expressed youth; that it made them think and at the same time it came from young people's thinking] (“Pedro, el musical” 315). After Antonio claims responsibility for this incident, his fellow students begin calling him “el Prócer” out of respect rather than disdain. The text represents reggaeton not only in contradiction with a certain adult-defined middle class version of the nation, but also as an artistic form with potential for broad community formation.

Although the adolescent characters see reggaeton as distinct from nationalist discourse, these two registers occasionally overlap, particularly in their appeals to masculinity. Wayne Marshall argues that the masculine subjectivity of reggaeton has developed various connotations as the genre has changed. Shabba Ranks’ foundational 1991 recording of “Dem Bow” began as a chant of postcolonial resistance, which in early reggaeton in Puerto Rico developed into an explicit alignment of blackness, class status, and youth. In more recent, commercially successful versions of reggaeton, Marshall writes that the rhythm of Shabba Ranks’ recording “now says ‘bailando sexy’ more than anything else” (“Dem Bow” 150). Despite these changes, he writes, “machismo – the construction of a powerful male subject – remains at the center” (149). Throughout the novel, adolescent characters claim these various iterations of reggaeton masculinity, ranging from the revolutionary to the hypersexual, in order to cope with difficult situations. For example, after Antonio sees the body of a murder victim, he consoles himself with reggaeton. He repeats lyrics by Vakeró, and says, “Me repito esos versos

para sentirme fuerte” [I repeat these verses to feel strong] (43). When considering reggaeton masculinity in a contemporary Dominican context, however, this masculinity cannot be divorced from political discourse. Maja Horn's writing about the aggressive sexuality of the Trujillo regime illuminates potential connections between nationalist and reggaeton discourses in the novel. Horn argues that although Trujillo made claims to Dominican tradition, his construction of masculinity was enabled by the U.S. imperial presence on the island (16). According to Horn, the aggressive masculinity of the Trujillo regime and its legacies in contemporary politics cannot be fully disentangled from international, multilingual sources of influence. Likewise, reggaeton masculinity incorporates elements from Spanish and English via locations like Puerto Rico, Jamaica, and New York, as well as the Dominican nationalist discourse that the adolescent characters see themselves confronting with reggaeton lyrics. These connections demonstrate the dangers of celebrating multilingual influence as somehow inherently resistant to nationalism. Instead, it is necessary to consider the critiques posed by particular language practices.

In his use of reggaeton and English, Antonio demonstrates a broader interest in subversive language practices, which is evident in his interest in graffiti. The urban space of the novel is so extensively covered in graffiti that Antonio reads it not as isolated markings but as a text that covers the walls of his neighborhood. In particular, he is interested in graffiti that subverts previous signs. These rewritings can contest official discourses of authority. For example, he observes a sign “Abajo la droga!” [Down with drugs!] which has been altered with the addition of “Firma: El Sótano” [Signed: The Basement] (129). However, they can also contest the messages of commercial interests

like the cigarette industry. Antonio mentions that his favorite graffiti is a sign advertising “El cigarillo que nos refina” [The cigarette that refines us] to which someone added “Hasta volvemos esqueletos” [Until we turn into skeletons] (130). By reading these opposing graffiti statements, Antonio expresses an appreciation for the subversive power of language without distinguishing between these types of resistance. This amorphous blending of various types of resistance is characteristic of much of the novel. However, towards the end of the novel, Antonio develops a more nuanced outlook towards the critical power of language.

As Antonio develops a subtler critical approach, he begins to distance himself from certain aspects of the language of reggaeton. After a visit to Antonio's school by a poet and historian who rejects unqualified praise of the nation and encourages examining its failures, Antonio decides to use his music to pursue social critique rather than complete rejection of authority. He brings this plan to the other members of his group, but the group's leader Lacacho opposes this plan and claims they should focus on the sexually explicit, violent content that is commercially successful. Their discussion reveals the competing definitions of reggaeton Marshall addresses when he argues that the genre can entail either anti-colonial critique or excessive consumption. As Antonio distances himself from the group and embraces a critical approach to reggaeton, he identifies as the solo artist “MC Yo,” highlighting the centrality of bilingualism to his artistic project. In this name, the originally English music term “MC” and the Spanish pronoun “yo” are not represented as in tension, as these languages often are throughout the novel, but rather they are both crucial parts of Antonio's reggaeton persona. Antonio's ability to use Spanish and English is an important component of his ability to employ language on a

variety of levels including the profane, the colloquial, the musical, and the literary. By moving between and often combining these distinct codes with greater facility than his peers, Antonio establishes his particular voice as an intellectual and critical reggaeton artist. However, it is important to note that masculinity remains at the center of his project. Antonio says of his separation from the group, “Tampoco me interesa volver a su grupo . . . Yo apuesto a mí” [I’m not interested in returning to their group either... I bet on myself] (194). While Antonio’s version of reggaeton critiques some aspects of nationalist discourse, notably its insistence on monolingualism, he does not seriously engage with nationalist or reggaeton constructions of gender. Nevertheless, his construction of himself as a bilingual, solo artist offers possibilities for imagining alternative futures.

By the end of the novel, Antonio’s view of reggaeton as a literary form parallels Frances Negrón-Muntaner’s description of the poetics of Calle 13, a reggaeton duo that Valdez references frequently. Negrón-Muntaner writes that Calle 13 differs from other artists by employing “la poesía de porquería” [poetry of filth], an aesthetic which “redifine al poeta urbano como una nueva figura intelectual cuyo aporte principal es renovar y radicalizar la porquería de los espacios corporales, políticos y mediáticos” [redefines the urban poet as a new intellectual figure whose primary contribution is the renewal and radicalization of the filth of bodily, political, and media spaces] (1100). Antonio articulates a similar project, when he says, “He decidido escribir unas canciones sobre este universo podrido en que vivo” [I have decided to write songs about this rotten universe I live in] (Valdez, *Palomos* 104). He imagines turning his urban reality into the subject of music and claims, “Toda esta basura barrial, adecuadamente sublimada, puede elevarse a la cima del universo” [All of this neighborhood filth, adequately sublimated,

can be elevated to the peak of the universe] (106). Like Calle 13, Antonio incorporates filth as a crucial part of his artistic project, which is central both to its aesthetics and its power as social critique. Negrón-Muntaner writes, “En términos formales, el reguetón se caracteriza por una extravagante ‘poeticidad’, es decir, por una gran fe en la palabra y en su capacidad de inventar espacios sociales alternos a través de la rima, la repetición y la aliteración” [In formal terms, reggaeton is characterized by an extravagant poeticism, that is to say, by a great faith in the word and its capacity to invent alternative social spaces through rhyme, repetition, and alliteration] (1095-1096). For Antonio, like for Calle 13, reggaeton is not only a tool for resisting authority but also for creating alternative realities through poetic imagination.

The question that remains is what kind of future Antonio's bilingual critique allows him to imagine. According to Mignolo's decolonial perspective, the bilingual border thinker has the capacity to operate in the space between languages and transform the relationship between these languages through the active process he calls “bilanguaging” (*Local Histories* 265). He argues that by writing between languages, and particularly from and about the zones of linguistic asymmetries that define colonial power, multilingual writers can unsettle “the links between language, literature, culture, and territory” that reproduce imperial power (*Local Histories* 235). Valdez's use of English clearly unsettles the link between language, culture, and territory in the Dominican Republic by using English alongside colloquial Spanish to destabilize and critique monolingual nationalist discourse. However, Valdez does not engage explicitly with the linguistic hierarchies between English and Spanish in the United States and the Dominican Republic. While Antonio has a more nuanced perspective on U.S. power than

his peers, his nascent critical perspective does not yet incorporate the challenge to colonial linguistic asymmetries that decolonial critics like Mignolo imagine.

Nevertheless, Antonio's mastery of a variety of registers in both English and Spanish allows him to begin the process of expanding from his critique of monolingual nationalism towards a broader critical perspective on global linguistic hierarchies.

Migratory Multilingualism in *Levente no. Yolayorkdominicanyork*

While Valdez approaches Spanish-English bilingualism entirely within the space of the Dominican Republic, Josefina Báez shifts between the island and the United States. In this text, which considers similar topics to Báez's earlier influential solo performance piece *Dominicanish*, she focuses on an apartment building in New York City inhabited primarily by Dominican women. In contrast to Valdez's lack of attention to the gendered dimension of monolingual nationalism, Báez considers how her female characters' gender shapes their multilingual critique of the nation-state. She suggests that the marginal social position of her immigrant characters is compounded by their gender. The building these women inhabit, which is ironically titled “el Ni e” [not even], is described as a non-space that makes concrete the gap between languages and cultures.³⁶ This marginal position, however, provides these female characters, and particularly Kay, a unique critical perspective on the monolingualism of the nation-state. In Báez's text, this critical perspective is experienced as a creative potential. Báez further describes the building in epic language like “nuestro edificio-barrio-pueblo-país-isla-continente-mundo” [our building-neighborhood-town-country-island-continent-world] that emphasizes the creative dimensions of this space (184). Through a series of micronarratives, Báez chronicles these women's linguistic practices, ranging from

³⁶ The building's name also has sexual connotations, referring to a part of the male anatomy, which contrasts with the female-dominated nature of the space.

English monolingualism to Spanish monolingualism and including a variety of multilingual practices. The protagonist Kay, who was conceived in the Dominican Republic but born in New York City and moves between the two spaces, inhabits the gap between these two places by combining Spanish and English more skillfully than other characters.³⁷ Like Valdez's protagonist, Kay is fluent in a variety of registers, and this fluency allows her to perceive and critique the limitations of the monolingual communities she encounters.

The narrative begins by asserting the oppositional potential of Kay's multilingualism. The text opens with two pages of Spanish narration by a narrator who introduces Kay, “Quizás se llama Jahaira, Jessica, Yesenia, Jennifer, Isha . . . Uno de esos nombres de las niñas de la migración” [Maybe her name is Jahaira, Jessica, Yesenia, Jennifer, Isha... One of those names of the daughters of migration] (3). Kay then interjects in a combination of English and Spanish “¡Whatever! But in terms of my name... none of the above ‘mija. I am pure history. Mira. Seat. Seat and listen” (3). By interjecting English into a previously monolingual Spanish text, Kay disrupts the narrative. However, upon closer inspection, her language does not merely contrast monolingual Spanish narration with monolingual English. Instead, her language shifts between the two and notably plays with the boundaries between them by combining Spanish punctuation norms like two exclamation points and English vocabulary. Furthermore, her repetition of “seat” uses a Standard English word to evoke a Spanish-inflected pronunciation of another Standard English word, “sit.” In Frances Aparicio's analysis of U.S. Latino writing in English, she considers the phonetic representation of accent as a subversive

³⁷ Kay's name is short for Quisqueya Amada Taína Altagracia Indiga, but it also resonates with the English name as well as the Spanish interrogative “qué,” signaling the character's location between languages.

strategy for engaging dominant cultural representations of Latinos as Others (203).

Rather than representing the Spanish influence in Kay's English speech as dis-fluency, Báez utilizes language interaction as a source of Kay's power as a storyteller.

Furthermore, Kay's direct address of the reader in this multilingual passage demands that the reader, like Kay, approach meaning multilingually. Juan Bruce-Novoa's definition of interlingual texts illuminates how this style of writing differs from that of Valdez, who largely maintains the boundaries between the various languages used. Bruce-Novoa writes that interlingual texts “are pieces written in a blend of English and Spanish. They are not bilingual in that, in the best examples, they do not attempt to maintain the two codes separate, but exploit and create the potential junctures of interconnection. This results in a different code, one in which neither monolingual code can stand alone and relate the same meaning” (49).³⁸ By consistently troubling the boundaries between English and Spanish, Báez requires the reader not only to comprehend both languages but to engage with meanings that emerge from the creative contact between them. This level of multilingual engagement, which goes beyond the standard strategies of multilingual literary works that cater to a monolingual readership, shifts the definition of the ideal reader to a multilingual one (Aparicio 206). The reader, like Kay, must operate in an uncomfortable space outside of monolingual nationalism in order to appreciate the text.

Kay's movement between languages is linked to Báez's broader interest in the oppositional power of language. In addition to blending languages, Báez diverges from standard editorial conventions in ways that challenge the reader's comprehension. In a note at the end of the text, Báez outlines her departure from standard editorial,

³⁸ Bruce-Novoa's use of “interlingual” to describe literary creation between languages is distinct from Jakobson's use of the term to discuss translations that move from one language to another.

orthographical, and grammatical practices.³⁹ She writes, “Uso de puntuación solo para ritmo-no siguiendo las reglas. Muchas palabras no tienen tilde. Y no hay numeros en las paginas” [I use punctuation only for rhythm-not following the rules. Many words don't have accents. And there are no page numbers.] (289).⁴⁰ Báez's refusal to employ standard editorial conventions mirrors her protagonist's oppositional relationship with multilingualism. Throughout the text, Kay uses creative multilingualism as a critical practice that reveals the limitations of various monolingual perspectives. Like in Valdez's text, Kay's critiques begin from a broad anti-authority position, but over the course of the narrative, she develops a more nuanced critical perspective. By contrasting the voice of adult Kay with that of her younger self and those of other characters, Báez represents the mature Kay as an idealized multilingual subject who actively occupies the space between languages as a site of critique as well as creativity.

Báez's narration of Kay's younger adolescence highlights how her critical perspective develops out of her experiences of exclusion from a variety of different communities. As a student, Kay feels othered when she participates in a primarily white program for gifted students. She says, “They were taking a lotta' pictures like I was from out of space or something” (5). As a result of this exclusion, Kay leaves the program, saying, “I quitted a gifted program shit” (5). The nonstandard grammar of this statement emphasizes how Kay distances herself from the Standard English used in this social context. Ana Celia Zentella's linguistic overview of bilingual language practices provides

³⁹ Brian Lennon explains how editorial norms are a primary tool to create comfort for a monolingual reader in a multilingual text, and comments that literature that defies these conventions tends to be published by small presses if it is published at all. Báez's text fits this pattern, as it was independently published through the press associated with her theater company.

⁴⁰ The page numbers used in this chapter are based on my own numbering for the purposes of this project. In my reading, I follow Báez's conventions for spelling and punctuation, so accents are frequently missing from citations.

insight into how Kay's speech claims or rejects particular communities throughout the narrative. In an ethnographic study of bilingual Puerto Rican children in New York, Zentella discusses navigating bilingualism as a negotiation of power. She identifies the unequal symbolic power of English and Spanish in New York as an important factor in bilingual practice, and she writes that bilingual children may sometimes engage these symbolic values, but they do not form a clear dichotomy between a language of power and a language of solidarity. She writes, "Many factors beyond their control shaped the children's linguistic output, but ultimately each one's code switching was her own creation" (114). For Kay, her bilingual practice is shaped by her experiences of alienation from Standard English, and she responds by rejecting this register of English in favor of non-standard varieties. However, by distancing herself from the use of Standard English and the access to privilege it affords her, Kay does not find acceptance in monolingual Spanish use. Instead, she is further isolated from the Dominican women in her building. Her mother expresses her disappointment by saying, "ahora es que tú y yo vamos a hablar inglés" [Now, you and I are going to speak English] (7). This simultaneous alienation from the mother and the mother tongue problematizes Kay's relationship with language. Kay's mother's refusal to speak Spanish to her signifies a separation that is distinct from but as total as the marginalization she experiences among her white classmates.

As a result of this distancing from both white U.S. American and the Dominican-American communities, Kay travels to the Dominican Republic in search of a sense of belonging. Upon arriving, Kay emphasizes her connection to the island. In between paragraphs in Spanish, she says, "I love this town. My mom was born here . . . Love this town. I was conceived here" (12). Briefly, Kay experiences the kind of non-problematic

link with community and territory that Yildiz describes as central to the monolingual paradigm (2). However, the fact that these sentences are in English signals that Kay's relationship with the Dominican Republic is more complicated than the immediate sensation of welcoming that she experiences upon her arrival. Nevertheless, over the course of her visit, Kay begins to embody her partial outsider status as a powerful critical position.

She develops this critical position through her use of code-switching, or changing languages within a single conversational turn (Zentella 82). Upon arriving in the Dominican Republic, Kay becomes involved with a man who the reader quickly notes is primarily interested in her relative wealth and U.S. passport, a fact that Kay tries to ignore, avoiding the experience of not fully belonging. However, during a conflict, she utilizes her outsider status as a strategic tool. When, in the context of an entirely Spanish conversation, the man says, "Eso es lo que todas ustedes siempre dicen," [That's what all of you always say.] Kay interjects, "¿Ustedes? That's plural honey. A lot of people involved. I don't do trios . . . I ain't no swinger" (15). The man responds to both the English language of Kay's speech and her confrontational tone by saying, "Ya salió la dominicanyork" [Here comes the dominicanyork] (15). This statement is intended to exclude Kay, since, as Silvio Torres-Saillant notes, the national belonging of Dominicans who reside in New York is the subject of controversy on the island (*Retorno* 113). Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel further notes how the alterity of Dominicanyorks on the island mirrors their outsider position in the US (*Caribe Two Ways* 274-275). However, Kay uses English to assert her position as an outsider and ultimately separate from this

man. In this context, Kay begins to use her multilingualism to differentiate herself from characters with less linguistic proficiency.

Throughout the novel, Kay's multilingualism allows her to strategically differentiate herself from monolingual characters. Discussing her job in a supermarket, Kay says, “Los boses son Dominicanos también. Creen que están allá. Miseriosos y mandones. Si me descuido también me lo meten. [The bosses are Dominicans, too. They think they're there. Miserable and bossy. If I'm not careful they'll screw me.] But I am the only American USA-usa born. And the only one who knows English in this place. So vendors and inspectors must talk to me, instead of the owner or his coge-cupones mi-no-inglis wife [coupon-clipping, me-no-English wife]” (4). In this context, Kay's ability to speak English allows her to express a certain level of belonging as she affirms “American USA,” although Báez problematizes this belonging throughout the novel. Furthermore, Kay's language skills allow her to avoid the sexual threat of her male managers and even experience a position of power as she interacts with English-speaking officials like inspectors. In addition to mocking monolingual Spanish characters, Báez ironically represents monolingual English speakers as well, especially the monolingual English children of the monolingual Spanish speaker. She writes of the mother, “Oye a esa cabeza de pollo, orgullosa que sus hijos solo hablan ‘su ingles’. Ella no sabe ni decir yes” [Listen to this chicken-head, proud that her children only speak 'their English.' She doesn't even know how to say yes] (97). Báez mocks the monolingualism, both Spanish and English, that keeps the members of this family from being able to communicate among themselves, a situation that demonstrates the stakes of monolingualism as a limit to understanding others.

In contrast to these parodic monolingual voices, Kay skillfully code switches, which allows her to move between languages whose speakers consistently misunderstand one another in the text. According to Bakhtin, the role of the novelist is to expose this mutual non-understanding between distinct languages, but in Báez's text, the character of Kay plays an important role in revealing this non-understanding. Bilanguaging characters like Kay and Antonio embody this narrative function that Bakhtin ascribes to the author and they offer an alternative to this mutual non-understanding in their own multilingual practice. Furthermore, as Mignolo argues, the ability to move between languages not only reveals the limitations of a monolingual perspective, it can also contest colonial linguistic hierarchies. He writes that bilanguaging “is not a grammatical but a political concern as far as the focus of bilanguaging itself is redressing the asymmetry of languages and denouncing the colonality of power and knowledge” (231). Kay's linguistic creativity serves as a tool to exert influence, particularly over men who might otherwise find themselves in a dominant position, including her lover and her boss at the supermarket. As a result, Kay's use of multilingualism gestures towards destabilizing the hierarchical relationship between English and Spanish as well as additional linguistic hierarchies.

Although Kay's multilingualism centers around the conflict between English and Spanish, Báez also addresses the relationship between Dominican Spanish and Haitian Creole. At the end of the text, which is also referenced at its opening, Kay is married to Pierre-Lui Alcántara, a Haitian-Dominican man who lives in New York, and they are about to have their first child. Pierre-Lui's double migration and multilingual proficiency in Spanish, English, French, Creole, and even German marks Báez's commitment to multilingualism as a tool for questioning linguistic hierarchies. She repeatedly denounces

the current state of linguistic and political conflict between the Dominican Republic and Haiti (68). Furthermore, she emphasizes Pierre-Lui's citizenship status. Despite living in the Dominican Republic for twenty-seven years, Pierre-Lui is stateless. He says of this experience that “él es su propio país. Porque en ningún lugar lo respetan; que en ningún lugar lo quieren” [he is his own country. Because they don't respect him anywhere; they don't want him anywhere.] (269).⁴¹ In Báez's representation of Pierre-Lui, she signals the reparative function of multilingualism for imagining new forms of social organization in which bilanguaging subjects do not experience non-belonging as exclusion but rather assert their multilingualism as a creative position, in addition to being a critical one.

At the end of the narrative, Báez emphasizes the creative potential of multilingualism, especially to facilitate love. Initially, this move may seem to contradict the critical aims of Kay's multilingualism. However, Mignolo's description of the role of love in bilanguaging highlights the connections between these two aims. He writes that bilanguaging love is “love for being between languages, love for the disarticulation of the colonial language and for the subaltern ones, love for the impurity of national languages, and love as the necessary corrective to the 'generosity' of hegemonic power that institutionalizes violence” (*Local Histories* 274).⁴² This focus on love demonstrates the importance of interpersonal relationships to the process of bilanguaging. In the previous chapter, I noted that Mignolo frames his concept of the bilingual border thinker through the figure of the individual, unlike the always interpersonal process of double translation.

⁴¹ Báez's focus on the country as portable is an extension of her earlier work on the portable nature of the home, which she locates alternatively in the body and the theater (Durán-Almarza 80).

⁴² I read Mignolo's emphasis on bilanguaging love as in dialogue with Chela Sandoval's formulation of decolonial love “as a hermeneutic, a set of practices and procedures that can transit all citizen-subjects, regardless of social class, toward a differential mode of consciousness and its accompanying technologies of method and social movement” (140). I see bilanguaging love as the linguistic dimension of these broader movements for social transformation through a hermeneutic of love.

Nevertheless, there is a social component to bilanguaging, which Mignolo writes, depends on “a dialogical, ethic, aesthetic, and political process of social transformation rather than *energeia* emanating from an isolated speaker” (265). While much of Báez's text focuses on Kay as an isolated multilingual prodigy, Kay's relationship with Pierre-Lui allows the reader to see a model of bilanguaging beyond the individual subject. As Kay speaks about her relationship with Pierre-Lui, she lists expressions of love in multiple languages: “Yo su chula. Su derriengue. Su consentida. Su chula na’ bulé, Bien Ameé. Mon cherié. Xoxo, Mon Die!” (270-271). In contrast with the wide range of disfluency represented in the novel, including the monolingual Spanish-speakers or English-speakers who cannot communicate with their own relatives, Kay and Pierre-Lui’s multilingual relationship allows them both to take ownership of their linguistic practice and to communicate with others.

For Báez, like for Valdez, tensions between Spanish and English are not the result of a singular conflict between national languages but rather of a multidimensional contestation of language, both within and across languages. By considering how these texts negotiate the space between so-called national languages and employ a variety of registers within and across these languages, I argue that both writers represent multilingualism as an important component of the broader artistic capacity to creatively utilize language and critically analyze the world. While Valdez's protagonist Antonio targets his critique at monolingual Dominican nationalism, he does not fully address the broader linguistic hierarchies between English and Spanish, much less the hierarchical relationship between Spanish and Haitian Creole. These omissions limit the critical potential of his perspective. In contrast, Kay's focus on Haitian Creole connects the

marginalized position of Haitians in the Dominican Republic with that of Dominicans in the United States in order to denounce these linguistic hierarchies and imagine creative multilingual practice as a tool to foster communication and even love. Despite the differences in Valdez's and Báez's projects, both writers focus on highly fluent characters to articulate the importance of a multilingual perspective. By contrasting Antonio and Kay with characters who do not dominate multiple languages or even a single language across a broad range of registers, Valdez and Báez risk ignoring the contributions of less fluent characters to multilingual critiques. A reading that focuses exclusively on highly fluent characters has the danger of restricting the liberatory, creative experience of bilanguaging to a relatively privileged sector.

Multilingual Misunderstanding in “Luis Pie”

In order to consider the limitations of a model of multilingual criticism that focuses on fluency, I turn to a literary work that predates Valdez's and Baez's literary works as well as Mignolo's theorizations of bilanguaging and double translation. Reading these works out of chronological order avoids the narrative of progress that is common in multilingual scholarship, which assumes that more recent literary works which include greater volumes of multilingual content are inherently more critical of monolingual nationalism than earlier texts that feature less multilingualism.⁴³ Instead, I contend that Juan Bosch's short story “Luis Pie” reveals blind spots of the highly fluent model of multilingual critique shared by Mignolo, Valdez, and Báez. By critiquing the linguistic relationship between Haiti and the Dominican Republic through a protagonist who struggles to communicate across languages, Bosch offers an alternative critical model

⁴³ See, for example, Elke Sturm-Trigonakis' focus on the “new world literature” of globalization (5).

that can contribute to contemporary decolonial debates about destabilizing linguistic hierarchies.

The non-fluent bilanguaging exhibited by Bosch's protagonist challenges the reader to struggle with the space between languages without the guide of a multilingual protagonist in a context where the characters do not understand one another. The narrative dramatizes the failure to communicate through a plot of unjust accusation. A rich man driving past a cane field lights a cigarette and throws his match, inadvertently starting a fire. The protagonist Luis Pie, a Haitian migrant to the Dominican Republic, is suffering from an earlier work injury and slowly walking through the cane to return home to his children. When the fire begins, he exits the cane field and is immediately suspected by Dominican witnesses of starting the fire. Luis Pie's partial comprehension of Spanish prevents him from explaining his innocence, and ultimately causes him to admit guilt. While Luis Pie occupies the space between Spanish and Haitian Creole, the reader does not experience his speech as linguistic creativity, but rather as linguistic failure. Nevertheless, Bosch as the author is clearly innovating with the boundaries of these languages, and his characters' failure to communicate offers a valuable, alternative model for the critique of monolingual nationalism and the imagination of alternative futures.

Bosch's narration of this story highlights how miscommunication influences Luis Pie's exclusion from Dominican society. While most of the story is narrated in Spanish, Luis Pie's speech appears as a hybrid of Haitian Creole and Spanish that uses Dominican Spanish phonetic spelling. For example, Pie says, “eperán” instead of the standard “esperando” [waiting] (Bosch 45). Here, his speech represents both non-native speech and also colloquial Dominican pronunciation. Non-standard Spanish plays an important

role in Bosch's writing more broadly. In other stories in the same volume, like “Los amos” and “En un bohío,” Bosch represents non-standard Spanish spoken by rural Dominicans as a marker for social marginalization. Furthermore, the Spanish represented in “Luis Pie” reveals changes to Dominican Spanish over Bosch's lifetime. The version of the story published in 1947 was largely written in *cibaeño*, the dialect of Dominican Spanish spoken and written in the rural Cibao region. When Bosch revised the story for publication in his 1962 collection *Cuentos escritos en el exilio* [Stories written in exile], he made substantial changes so that the text's language more closely resembled *capitaleño*, or the version of Dominican Spanish spoken in the capital of Santo Domingo (Fernández Olmos 79). As these linguistic variations between different regions of the country became less distinct over time, Bosch re-edited many of his stories to make them more accessible to a broader audience (Fernández Olmos 172). Therefore, Pie's non-native use of Spanish interacts with other non-standard forms of Spanish in the story. This linguistic variation within Dominican Spanish reminds the reader that the boundaries of Spanish, and consequently its relationship with Haitian Creole, are flexible.

Bosch's representation of Haitian Creole likewise bridges linguistic gaps for the reader. In addition to speaking non-standard Spanish, Pie speaks Haitian Creole several times throughout the story. Bosch represents this Creole through repeated, easily recognized vocabulary, especially “Bonyé” [God] and “mué,” a Spanish phonetic representation of *mwen*, [I or me]. Written Haitian Creole was not standardized when Bosch was writing, so it should be noted that Bosch's representation of this language is a creative endeavor that draws on existing norms but also innovates with the language in order to render its sounds in written form. Bosch's representation of Creole, rather than

emphasizing its proximity to French, renders the language in terms of Spanish phonetic spelling. Therefore, Pie's speech, while not necessarily familiar to a monolingual Spanish reader, is not completely inaccessible. The reader's phonetic engagement with Pie's speech, whether in non-native Spanish, Haitian Creole, or a combination of the two, is constructed to emphasize the tragedy of Pie's inability to communicate with the Dominican characters in the story.

As Naoki Sakai notes, the divisions between languages are rarely as total as we imagine (73). This observation is particularly relevant to the division between Haitian Creole and Dominican Spanish, which has been an important, yet unstable, marker of national borders. In the Trujillo regime's 1937 massacre along the Haitian-Dominican border, linguistic difference, and particularly the pronunciation of the Spanish word “*perejil*” [parsley], was utilized to distinguish between Haitians and Dominicans in order to justify the murder of Haitians. Although pronunciation was used as if it were an objective marker of ethnic and national belonging, the problematic nature of this division has been widely noted, particularly considering the porous nature of Haitian-Dominican borderlands prior to the massacre. Lucía Suárez writes, “In linguistic terms, the pronunciation of *perejil* as a litmus test of national belonging is emphatically artificial” (15). She points to the language use of third-generation Haitian-Dominicans whose language would not differ from their ethnically Dominican neighbors as well as the varied pronunciation of the letter *r* in Dominican Spanish in order to highlight the impossibility of using language, or much less a single word, to determine national belonging, particularly when there are violent consequences for exclusion from this group. Since Bosch writes “Luis Pie” in 1941, just a few years after this event, his limited

experimentation with the space between Spanish and Creole is significant. By slightly blurring linguistic divisions, Bosch calls for greater engagement with Luis Pie and his suffering.

Boch's focus on Haitian suffering was unique at the moment of the story's composition. Marcio Veloz Maggiolo identifies Bosch's story as a turning point in the history of the representation of Haitians in Dominican literature, emerging in part out of the response to the 1937 massacre. Veloz Maggiolo contrasts Bosch's story to a literary tradition dating from the Dominican struggle for independence from Haiti that employs racial prejudices in order to demonize Haitians as military aggressors or to primitivize them (105). Bosch's story "Luis Pie" marks one of the foundational narratives of a new mode of literary representation of Haitians that sympathizes with the suffering experienced by Haitians living in the Dominican Republic (109).⁴⁴ Veloz Maggiolo writes that in Bosch's work "el haitiano es un ser que lucha por integrarse a la sociedad dominicana. Circundado por los prejuicios, se descabeza buscando una salida" [The Haitian is a being who fights to integrate in Dominican society. Surrounded by prejudices, he racks his brain looking for an exit.] (109). By focusing on the Haitian migrant's struggle to integrate in Dominican society, Bosch seeks to draw attention to similarities between his Haitian and Dominican characters that are obscured by nationalist perspectives.

Bosch highlights issues of class in order to expose connections across national boundaries. In Bosch's non-fiction writing, he makes his focus on the marginalized

⁴⁴ Eugenio Matibag also notes how this sympathy for Haitian characters in literature embraces the perspectives of "liberal middle-class Dominican youths: those whose sympathy with the Haitians went arm-in-arm with their denunciation of the U.S. invasion of 1916 and with their enthusiasm for the Russian revolution of 1917" (166).

explicitly transnational. In 1943, shortly after writing “Luis Pie,” Bosch composed a letter to the writers Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi, Héctor Incháustegui, and Ramón Marrero Aristay advocating for a more compassionate perspective on the suffering of Haitians living both in the Dominican Republic and Haiti. In this letter, which like “Luis Pie” was composed in Cuba as Bosch's political thought was developing, he writes, “El pueblo dominicano y el pueblo haitiano han vivido desde el Descubrimiento hasta hoy – o desde que se formaron hasta la fecha – igualmente sometidos en términos generales” [The Dominican people and the Haitian people have lived since the discovery until today – or since their formation until now – equally oppressed in general terms] (*Para la historia*, 5). Bosch argues that national divisions are less important than class differences, writing, “No hay diferencia fundamental entre los dominicanos y los haitianos de la clase dominante . . . Engañan ambos a los pueblos con el espejismo de un nacionalismo intransigente que no es amor a la propia tierra sino odio a la extraña, y sobre todo, apetencia del poder total” [There is not a fundamental difference between Dominicans and Haitians of the dominant classes . . . They both deceive the people with the illusion of an unyielding nationalism which is not love for one's own land but rather hate for the foreign and, above all, an appetite for complete power] (*Para la historia*, 5-6). For Bosch, then, an emphasis on national difference is a tool of the dominant classes to obscure, and ultimately maintain, their privilege by scapegoating foreigners. However, by focusing on the shared suffering of the marginalized, Bosch sees possibilities for social transformation. He writes, “Pero el porvenir ha de vernos un día abrazados, en medio de un mundo libre de opresores y de prejuicios, un mundo en que quepan los haitianos y los dominicanos, y en el que todos los que tenemos el deber de ser mejores estaremos

luchando juntos contra la miseria y la ignorancia de todos los hombres de la tierra” [But the future has to see us one day arm in arm, in the midst of a world free of oppressors and prejudices, a world which fits both Haitians and Dominicans, and in which all of us who have the right to be better are fighting together against the misery and ignorance of all the men on earth.] (*Para la historia* 8). While Bosch worked towards this vision in various realms including his theoretical writing and his political practice, his fiction forms an important contribution to this project.⁴⁵ By juxtaposing the suffering of a Haitian migrant in “Luis Pie” alongside other stories like “Los amos” and “En un bohío” that represent the oppression of rural Dominicans, Bosch offers an opportunity for his reader to build the transnational consciousness of solidarity that he advocates in his theoretical writings.⁴⁶

While a Dominican reader can engage both with Pie’s speech and with his experience of suffering, the Dominican characters are unable and unwilling to make meaning multilingually in order to communicate with Pie. When Pie emerges from the burning cane field, the bystanders interpret Pie as a suspect rather than a victim of the carelessness of the wealthy landowner who actually caused the fire. The bystanders approach Pie, who the narrator reminds us hardly understands their language, and they threaten to kill him immediately. Pie, still seeking help for his earlier injury and unsure of

⁴⁵ Bosch’s broader political trajectory, including his presidency of the Dominican Republic in 1963 before being deposed by a military coup as well as his leadership roles in the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD) and the Dominican Liberation Party (PLD), invariably complicate the goals he outlines in this letter. Rather than focusing on Bosch’s entire political career, I am most interested in his critical role writing in exile in the 1940s.

⁴⁶ Beatriz Carolina Peña points to “Los amos,” “En un bohío,” and “Luis Pie” as part of a larger group of stories in *Cuentos escritos en el exilio* that center on stories of persecution in order to dramatize the plight of the campesino and evoke solidarity (119). Ángel Villarini Jusino argues that focus on solidarity makes Bosch’s short stories tools for ethical and political conscientization. He writes that these stories encourage the reader to negotiate the conflict between the authoritarianism generated by the Trujillo regime and possible solidarity with the campesino (69).

what the men are saying to him, calls out in Creole “Dominiquén bon” [Good Dominican] and begs someone to take him home to his children (49). Nevertheless, these men begin attacking him. When someone finally asks him if he lit a match, Pie understands enough Spanish to affirm in Creole, “Uí, uí” [Yes, Yes], but is unable to explain that although he did light a match to inspect his injury, this match did not start the fire (50). The characters are ultimately unable to overcome their linguistic differences in order to communicate with one another. Although Pie repeatedly attempts to make himself understood, the Dominican characters refuse to engage with the space between languages. Multilingualism critic Abraham Acosta writes, “unintelligibility, incommensurability, noise: these are concepts that do not signal a failure to understand, but a wielding of power over the other that comes with the pronouncement of not needing to understand” (35). The hierarchical relationship between Haitian Creole and Spanish makes it possible for these Dominican characters to ignore Pie's speech.

At the end of the story, the characters' inability and unwillingness to communicate extends beyond speech to the realm of physical contact. After Pie returns home to ensure that his sick child has recovered and expresses gratitude to God for the child's safety, the soldiers separate him from his children and prepare to beat him. However, one soldier refrains because, Bosch writes, “comprendió que, por duro que le pegara, Luis Pie no se daría cuenta de ello” [He understood that, no matter how hard he hit him, Luis Pie wouldn't notice it.] (52). The story concludes with Pie wandering away, looking towards the sky and smiling in an apparent display of madness that could also be read as relief that his children are safe. In this moment, the separation between the Dominican soldiers

and Pie is so complete that they cannot understand each other's language, gestures or even physical violence.

However, this continual misunderstanding between the characters invites the reader to make meaning from the text multilingually. Bakhtin calls this feature of a multilingual text double-languedness, and writes, "It is this quality that determines the distinctiveness of novelistic dialogues, which push to the limit the mutual nonunderstanding represented by people *who speak in different languages*" (356).⁴⁷ By representing mutual nonunderstanding between characters who speak different languages, writers make visible conflicting languages and world views. Bakhtin writes, "Languages of heteroglossia, like mirrors that face each other, each reflecting in its own way a piece, a tiny corner of the world, force us to guess at and grasp for a world behind their mutually reflecting aspects that is broader, more multi-leveled, containing more and varied horizons than would be available to a single language or a single mirror" (415). Through this image of mirrors at different angles, Bakhtin articulates the challenge that literary multilingualism poses to readers, forcing them to encounter both linguistic practices and worldviews that question their understanding of the world. Bosch's juxtaposition of languages demonstrates this mutual nonunderstanding. Although Pie is partly able to transcend linguistic difference in order to comprehend the speech of others, he is unable to make himself understood by Spanish-speaking characters. However, the reader can move between these languages more easily than the characters. Because of the context provided by the narrator, even a monolingual Spanish reader can understand much of Pie's speech. By allowing the reader to partially comprehend Pie, Bosch invites

⁴⁷ According to Bakhtin, double-languedness can occur even in texts that most critics of multilingualism, myself included, would generally consider monolingual. Nevertheless, his observation is particularly relevant when considering multilingual texts.

the reader to see beyond a monolingual perspective in order to consider alternative linguistic practices as well as worldviews.

In the reader's attempts to negotiate the gap between Pie and the Dominican characters who do not understand him, a young black girl who appears at the end of the narrative offers a potential sign of interaction between Dominican and Haitian characters. This twelve-year-old girl stands near Pie's children and observes his final confrontation with the soldiers, serving as the conscience of the narrative. Bosch suggests that, although she is a child herself, she might care for or comfort Pie's significantly younger children. Furthermore, as she closes her eyes against the violence the soldiers display towards Pie, she enacts the reader's discomfort with his abuse. Bosch provides no information to suggest whether this character is Dominican, Haitian, or both (Fernández Olmos 146). Veloz Maggiolo argues that Bosch and Dominican writers who sympathize with Haitian suffering reveal “una temática olvidada a propósito: la del apareamiento entre dominicanos y haitianos. La de la mezcla física, genética de ambos pueblos” [A theme forgotten on purpose: that of reproduction between Dominicans and Haitians. That of the physical, genetic mix of both peoples.] (110). By chronicling Haitian characters' exclusion from Dominican society while simultaneously pointing to mixing between Haitians and Dominicans, writers in this mode evoke sympathy for Haitian characters while reminding the reader of their centrality to Dominican society.⁴⁸ Furthermore, since this girl is described so that her national background is not hybrid, but rather indeterminable, she temporarily collapses the space between the Haitian and Dominican characters in the story. However, the final lack of connection between Pie and the

⁴⁸ Writing more recently, in 2014, Diógenes Abréu argues that Haitians have played a central role in the formation of Dominican society, yet this influence is systematically silenced, particularly in the Dominican education system (17).

soldiers, as well as his impending execution, restores this distance at the end of the narrative.

By emphasizing misunderstanding, Bosch offers an alternative model of literary multilingualism. Valdez and Báez critique monolingual nationalism through their protagonists who successfully innovate with the space between languages as a zone of creative and critical potential. Luis Pie, however, does not dominate the space between languages, despite the fact that he, like Antonio and Kay, creatively innovates with multiple languages in an attempt to communicate. For Pie, the space between languages is a dangerous zone of misunderstanding in which his non-fluency threatens his safety. The failure of Bosch's characters to enact Mignolo's vision of bilanguaging, and much less his vision of bilanguaging love, can be attributed to several factors including Pie's lack of education, the social distance between Dominican Spanish and Haitian Creole in the story's context, and the Dominican characters' unfounded suspicion of Pie and unwillingness to engage with his non-standard language. The fundamental problem in the Bosch's story is not Pie's linguistic difference, but the way that other characters respond to that difference. However, the story is constructed in such a way that the reader, even the completely monolingual one, can inhabit to some extent the space between Dominican Spanish and Haitian Creole. As Bakhtin argues, the ability to understand the language of two characters who cannot understand one another shifts the reader's perspective on linguistic difference. Although the multilingualism of Valdez and Báez is more dramatic than that of Bosch, I argue that Luis Pie's non-fluency reveals the limitations of monolingual nationalism just as Antonio's and Kay's hyper-fluency does

and that this nonfluent multilingualism has been underappreciated as a critical tool.⁴⁹

Nonfluent multilingualism challenges the reader to work outside the paradigm of monolingualism in order to bridge the perspectives of characters who cannot communicate with each other.

This non-fluent approach to literary multilingualism also allows for a reconsideration of the broader definition of multilingualism. Édouard Glissant offers the following definition:

[Multilingualism] is not only the ability to speak several languages, which is often not the case in our region where we sometimes cannot even speak our oppressed mother tongue. Multilingualism is the passionate desire to accept and understand our neighbor's language and to confront the massive leveling force of language continuously imposed by the West . . . with a multiplicity of languages and their mutual comprehension. (*Caribbean Discourse* 249)

Glissant argues that fluency and comprehension do not necessarily define multilingualism. It is the desire to understand, rather than actual comprehension, that characterizes the force of multilingualism. While the plot of "Luis Pie" offers little hope for the "passionate desire to accept and understand," the reader engages this desire to understand that most of the characters ignore. Furthermore, Glissant's definition allows for a reading of multilingualism that is attentive to the specific linguistic history of the Caribbean. By acknowledging how the colonial presence marginalized vernacular languages in the region and inhibited communication between Caribbean languages,

⁴⁹ One notable exception is Doris Sommer, who has considered the literary role of linguistic failure. She focuses on the mistakes of limited language proficiency as a source of creativity, and encourages people to make mistakes in the space between languages, writing, "Even embarrassing mistakes shouldn't stop you. Most of us make them and they're part of the fun" (xii). Although Sommer acknowledges elsewhere that bilingualism tends to be seen as an advantage for the rich and a disadvantage for the poor, her discussion of linguistic failure prioritizes the perspective of the privileged language learner. Her encouragement to make mistakes does not capture Luis Pie's situation in which multilingual mistakes are dangerous.

Glissant valorizes linguistic multiplicity, as a response not simply to monolingualism in the abstract sense, but rather to colonial language politics.

From this perspective, literary representations of fluent and nonfluent multilingualism both play a role in broader projects of valorizing linguistic multiplicity as a vehicle for imagining increased communication. Literary texts by Valdez, Báez, and Bosch all use multilingualism to counter nationalist monolingualism by expressing the marginalized perspectives it obscures. However, their texts differ in which perspectives they elucidate. Valdez critiques Dominican nationalism by focusing on the musical consumption and production of multilingual urban youth, yet his protagonist fails to critically engage the masculinity of his multilingual practice or its relationship to transnational linguistic hierarchies. Báez's critique of nationalism, on the other hand, centers on issues of gender and international linguistic hierarchies through her focus on the language practices of immigrant women. However, her critical perspective on monolingual migrant women suggests that nonfluency is an under-utilized resource in her text. In contrast, Bosch uses a protagonist with limited fluency, whose native language occupies the lowest position in the local linguistic hierarchy, in order to expose the failures of monolingual Dominican nationalism. Rather than targeting his critique to Pie's limited proficiency in Spanish, Bosch directs his critique outward towards the other characters' limited desire to understand and accept his linguistic difference or even his presence in their community. The fact that a female character offers the only possible signal for bridging the miscommunication between Pie and the Dominican crowd suggests that Bosch, like Báez, is attentive to the gendered dimensions of monolingual

nationalism. Each of these three texts offers a potential entry into a multilingual local perspective on Dominican literature.⁵⁰

Viewing these multiple linguistic conflicts in conversation suggests that although literary production is shaped by the shifting linguistic hierarchies that govern Dominican society, literary writers like Valdez, Báez, and Bosch can also respond to and influence these linguistic relationships. Decolonial theorists like Walter Mignolo have offered various models for approaching multilingual communication's potential to critique and transform the world including the bilingual border thinker and double translation. I previously considered these models' distinct social frameworks of an individual occupying the space between languages and cultures or of multiple actors occupying this space through a process of conversation and mutual transformation. The literary works in this chapter provide further insight into these categories. In the Valdez's work, Antonio functions exclusively as a bilingual border thinker. In Báez's text, Kay primarily occupies the role of the bilingual border thinker, but she also participates in double translation with her husband Pierre-Lui. In Bosch's text, however, neither of Mignolo's categories fully explains the powerful critique that emerges from Luis Pie's failure to communicate across languages and cultures.

Glissant's call for new definitions of multilingualism offers a potential framework for attending to non-fluency, particularly among speakers of marginalized vernacular languages in the Caribbean. When Glissant's perspective on non-fluency is juxtaposed with Bakhtin's perspective on the critical and creative potential of literary representations

⁵⁰ A multilingual local reading of Dominican literature could be further expanded by considering works that explore the influence of the English used by immigrants from the Anglophone Caribbean such as Avelino Stanley's novel *Tiempo muerto* (1998) or works that highlight contemporary contact between Haitian Creole and Dominican Spanish in urban settings such as Leticia Tonos's film *Cristo Rey* (2013).

of nonunderstanding, texts like Bosch's, which represent failures of communication, emerge as an under-utilized resource in both the theorization of decolonial linguistic practice as well as multilingual literary critique. More importantly, by seriously considering the contribution of linguistic failure to the decolonial and literary multilingual projects of imagining alternatives to global colonial linguistic hierarchies and their local inscription in the monolingual nation-state, we can recognize decolonial critique not only from the highly multilingual border thinker but also from the speakers of marginalized languages who create and communicate in the space between languages without fully dominating multiple languages. Attending to the variety of ways that characters move between languages or expose difference within a single language demonstrates that quantity of multilingualism is not the only relevant feature when critiquing the monolingual paradigm. Taken together, these literary texts demonstrate how attention to multiple linguistic conflicts can reveal additional sites for critiquing colonial hierarchies of language and ultimately imagining new linguistic relationships.

Chapter Three: Creole Code-Switching

Both of the preceding chapters addressed how Caribbean Creoles complicate standard narratives of literary multilingualism. In the first chapter, the suppression of Haitian Creole in *Palabras/Paroles* demonstrates the limitations of conceptualizing Hispaniola through the bilingual framework of Spanish and French as the national languages of the Dominican Republic and Haiti. The second chapter considers how Haitian Creole, alongside English, functions as a language of literary multilingualism in Dominican literature. In this chapter, I explore the literary use of Caribbean Creoles more closely. While the terms creole and creolization have been widely utilized in Caribbean literary studies, Creole languages are rarely treated from the perspective of literary multilingualism. By considering Caribbean English Creoles and Caribbean French Creoles in conversation with one another as well as with Standard English and Standard French, I argue that Creole literary practice demonstrates the broader principle that literature constructs, rather than simply reflects, linguistic difference.

The border between any two languages is, as Naoki Sakai asserts, “a regulative idea. It organizes knowledge but is not empirically verifiable” (73). By this, Sakai means that our customary understanding of languages depends on a level of separation in which some utterances constitute English, for example, while others are clearly marked as French. However, when we try to examine the boundaries between languages, their separation becomes unstable, and the divisions between languages cannot therefore be proven empirically. The degree of uncertainty surrounding these boundaries between languages varies depending on the specific historical relationships between languages and their speakers as well as how they are represented in particular texts. For example,

Palabras/Paroles creates clear boundaries between Spanish and French. Likewise, *Multiples* clearly distinguishes the various languages that appear in the anthology. However, in texts like *Levente no. Yolayorkdominicanyork*, *Palomos*, and “Luis Pie,” the boundaries between languages are much less clear. This uncertainty becomes particularly contentious when considering the connection between Caribbean Creoles and closely related standard European languages. Due to the large amount of shared vocabulary between Creoles and European languages as well as the hierarchical positions of power these groups of languages occupy in the literary, social, and political realms, the boundaries between these languages have been subject to intense debate. This contentious linguistic relationship offers insight into broader questions of linguistic boundaries in the study of literary multilingualism.

This problematic relationship is inherent to the definition of Caribbean Creoles. Dating from the second half of the sixteenth century, the terms “crioulo” and “criollo” were originally used to describe people, and later plants and animals, of Old World origin who became native to the Americas (Palmié 9). Since the early colonial period, the meaning of the word “creole” has shifted continuously both within and beyond the Caribbean, particularly regarding its racial connotations.⁵¹ Setting aside temporarily the term's broader range of meanings, its specific linguistic definition is also controversial. From a linguistic perspective, a Caribbean Creole is a contact language that developed through the Atlantic slave trade and Caribbean plantation system as a result of the interaction of European languages and African languages, with additional lexical influences from indigenous Caribbean and Asian languages. While there is considerable

⁵¹ See Palmié for a more extensive discussion of the evolving meanings of “creole.”

debate among linguists about how creoles form, the standard view is that creole formation is distinguished from other kinds of linguistic change because a creole develops out of a pidgin language, or a contact language that emerges for communication between groups that do not share a common language. Over time, this pidgin develops into a creole as its grammar is more fully elaborated and it becomes the native language of a speech community (Kouwenberg and Singler 8-9)⁵² This basic definition is disputed both within and beyond linguistics, in large part due to the problematic nature of defining the relationship between Caribbean Creoles and related standard European languages, both as they have been used historically and as they continue to be used in the region.

Historically, the similarities between Caribbean Creoles and European languages have led Caribbean Creoles to be ignored. Often, these languages were considered deformations of standard European languages, either “bad English” or “bad French.” While academic attitudes have largely shifted to recognize Caribbean Creoles as languages in their own right, governed by unique grammatical structures, the linguistic status of creoles continues to be contested in the public sphere, particularly in the Anglophone Caribbean. Linguist Silvia Kouwenberg describes the contentious debate about the relationship between Jamaican Creole, also known as Patwa (alternately spelled Patois or Patwah), and English that emerged in *The Jamaica Gleaner* in 2008.⁵³ Kouwenberg wrote a letter to the editor in which she defended a controversial project to translate the Bible into Patwa by arguing the Patwa is a language. In response, she

⁵² Kouwenberg and Singler note that the heuristic division into pidgin and creole is not total, and that many scholars propose divisions within these categories or situate linguistic phenomena between the two categories (8). However, for the purposes of this chapter, the idea of a division between pidgins and creoles informs popular and scholarly debates about these languages outside of the field of linguistics.

⁵³ Kouwenberg notes that this debate resurfaces periodically in major publications every few years (“Linguistics in the Caribbean” 390).

received numerous emotionally-charged letters disputing Patwa's status, referring to the language as "baby talk" or "our bilious so-called 'language,' patois" ("Linguistics in the Caribbean" 395). The emotional charge of these letters demonstrates the continued power of the belief that speech in a Caribbean Creole represents the failure to acquire a European language rather than the use of a distinct language.

Furthermore, many linguists who affirm the status of Caribbean Creoles as languages dispute the category of creole and especially the negative prestige associated with the term. Michel DeGraff critiques the racist and colonialist basis of creolistics as a linguistic field.⁵⁴ He analyzes definitions of creoles from the seventeenth through nineteenth century which assumed that creole languages and their speakers were both racially and linguistically inferior (393). Although the field has developed considerably in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, DeGraff argues that belief in the inferiority of creoles still infuses the field. The prominent Trinidadian linguist Mervyn Alleyne provides an alternative perspective on this problem by analyzing how we name Caribbean Creoles. In an interview, Alleyne says:

It's clear that naming is a problem. We've tried our best to address and capture a certain phenomenon that is of interest to us, by changing names and titles. We started with *Creole English*, then we moved to *English Creole*, then to *English-based Creole*. And finally we've used *English-lexifier Creoles*. And I'm not happy with the last one, either. So what if a language is lexified by English? Who cares? English is not a French-lexified something (laughing), English is *English*, the language of the people of England and it has the majority of its words from French. I myself speak Trinidadian. I, emphatically, do not, by any means, speak 'creole,' or worse yet 'a creole,' whatever that may mean. (Walicek 117)

Alleyne's critique of creole centers on the question of the relationship between Caribbean Creoles and European languages. Despite repeated shifts in the terminology for

⁵⁴ George Lang also asserts that the nineteenth century philologists who studied creoles were "de facto agents of imperialism," although he claims that the field of creolistics later attracted social activists (*Entwisted Tongues* 6).

describing creoles, naming practices still suggest a secondary position for Caribbean Creoles in relation to European languages. Alleyne's assertion that no one would refer to English as a "French-lexified something" emphasizes the linguistic hierarchies that are inherent to the study of creoles. Alleyne and others propose names like "Trinidadian" and "Jamaican" which describe local linguistic forms without gesturing towards European languages. However, the question of how to consider these Caribbean languages as a category remains unanswered. Therefore, while keeping Alleyne's critique in mind, I use the term creole alongside often local names such as Patwa in Jamaica, which are often equally contentious, in order to analyze the connections between these languages.

These popular and linguistic critiques of creole as a linguistic category differ greatly in their assessments of Caribbean Creole language practice, but they share a focus on the negative prestige of these languages. However, dismissing "creole" as a derogatory term prevents conversation with theoretical debates about creolization that formulate creole as a productive category of linguistic and cultural innovation (Siegel 158). Since the 1980's, theorists like Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant, Édouard Glissant, Kamau Brathwaite, and Stuart Hall have considered the linguistic formation of creole languages as part of broader processes of creolization in which African, European, American, and Asian cultural elements come into contact and are restructured as part of the continual development of Caribbean languages and cultures. Many writers, most notably Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant, have used this historical process of cultural formation, and particularly their focus on creole languages, to develop aesthetic programs.⁵⁵ While the nuances of the theoretical debates about creolization are beyond

⁵⁵ Stuart Hall also traces creolization as an aesthetic program in the Anglophone Caribbean in the work of Kamau Brathwaite and in the Hispanic Caribbean in the work of Antonio Benítez Rojo (36).

the scope of this chapter, these debates signal a shift in the prestige associated with the term. This shift is perhaps most evident in the edited volume *The Creolization of Theory*, in which Shu-mei Shih and Françoise Lionnet argue that creolization exhibits many of the features associated with postmodernity, although it predates the postmodern considerably (11). By considering Caribbean Creoles in conversation with theoretical interest in creolization, the positive connotations of creole languages can be considered alongside the previously mentioned negative ones.

Relating Caribbean Creoles to creolization also allows for further insight into the question of the colonial history of creolistics raised by DeGraff. Michel-Rolph Trouillot considers the popularity of creolistics as related to the study of other cultural processes of creolization. He argues that Afro-Caribbean culture was generally ignored as a subject of academic analysis. However, Caribbean Creoles attracted the attention of linguists because the existence of these languages was difficult to ignore. Furthermore, “Language was politically safe — or thought to be so. It was thought to be amenable to study without long encounters with a mass of natives. It was one of the few products of creolization least likely to engage the scholar in immediate political controversies about the people who had been creolized” (12). As contemporary linguistic debates demonstrate, the study of these languages is no longer thought to be politically neutral. Scholars working within and outside linguistics have acknowledged that Caribbean Creole language development is inextricably bound to sociocultural processes of creolization and therefore connected to political debates about creolization in Caribbean societies.

Understanding the linguistic status of Caribbean Creoles is further complicated by differences in public and academic discourse between the Anglophone and Francophone

Caribbean. In the Francophone context, French and Caribbean French Creole are generally understood as two distinct linguistic systems. Due to their long-term coexistence in the Caribbean, these languages are clearly in contact, and linguistic practices exist that operate between the two, analogous to the Spanish-English or Spanish-Haitian Creole bilanguaging discussed in Chapter Two. Nevertheless, the predominant mode for understanding the relationship between Standard French and any particular Caribbean French Creole is a two-systems model. In the Anglophone Caribbean, however, the two-systems model exists in tension with a one-system model (Deuber 8). This one-system model, known as the continuum model, focuses on the multiple levels of interaction between Standard English and any particular Caribbean English Creole. There is little consensus on whether or not clear boundaries exist at the different points on this continuum, which ranges from basilect, or the version of a creole language most distant from the European standard, to acrolect, or the version of speech that most closely approximates the standard language, with the mesolect between the two.⁵⁶ This discussion is further complicated by differences among Caribbean English Creoles, because a basilectal form of creole exists in Jamaica, while the creole of Trinidad is considered mesolectal (Deuber 23).

Although debates persist about the usefulness of a one-system versus a two-system model in the linguistic sphere, the perspective of literary multilingualism allows us to see how similar questions can be raised about the relationships between languages whose level of distinction is normally taken for granted, such as English and Spanish. As Sakai notes, even these boundaries are tenuous when subject to closer examination.

⁵⁶ Kenneth Ramchand's critique of Beryl Loftman Bailey in which he asserts the continuum model demonstrates the contentious nature of this debate both as it affects the linguistic and literary spheres (92).

Therefore, a lack of agreement about the presence of multilingualism in the Anglophone Caribbean does not prevent multilingual writing or multilingual reading. In fact, from the linguistic perspective, Christian Mair argues that although the framework of diglossia, a two-systems approach to the use of multiple languages by a linguistic community, fails to explain the relationship between Jamaican English and Patwa as they are spoken, diglossia does provide insight into the way these languages are used in writing (66).⁵⁷ Therefore, my bilingual reading of Caribbean English Creoles and Standard English is not meant to suggest that these languages can be clearly delimited nor that they are always experienced bilingually. Instead, this multilingual perspective highlights the ways in which writing can serve as a tool to articulate linguistic difference.

Literary multilingualism provides a framework to understand how Caribbean writers negotiate the uncertain relationships between Caribbean Creoles and European languages. In this chapter, I analyze two theatrical works that feature language contact: “Memoires d’île,” written by the Martinican anthropologist and playwright Ina Césaire (first performed in 1983) and “Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine” which was produced collaboratively at the Jamaica School of Drama by Patricia Cumper, Honor Ford-Smith, Carol Lawes, and others (first performed in 1987). While comparing the use of Caribbean Creoles between Anglophone and Francophone contexts is complicated by the differing status of Creole languages across the region, the striking similarities between these two plays allow for fertile comparison. Both plays feature two older women who share certain lifelong experiences of marginalization, yet both sets of women clash and their conflicts are informed by racial and class hierarchies. In these

⁵⁷ Deuber makes a similar argument, but he claims that continuum-like writing practices are becoming more common when writing for email, internet forums, and other informal electronic settings (18).

productions, bilingualism emerges as a tool to negotiate racial and class conflict, since these women can choose to employ standard European languages and Caribbean Creoles strategically in order to position themselves in particular relationships to other characters. By analyzing the ways that these playwrights employ multilingual strategies like italicization and code switching, or shifting between languages within a single conversational turn, I argue that the literary creation of boundaries between Caribbean Creoles and European languages harnesses linguistic conflict as a creative and critical tool. In establishing defined boundaries between Caribbean Creoles and European languages, literary writers strategically employ these boundaries in order to explore community formations that attend to racial, class, and linguistic differences.

Multilingual Creole Literary History

In order to analyze the multilingual strategies employed in these theatrical works, I consider them from the perspective of Creole literary history, which traces the development of literary representations of Creole languages over time. The study of Creole literature is an area of interest not only for literary scholars but also for linguists. Since most Creole languages remain nonstandardized, linguists use both historical and contemporary literary writing in Creole as a tool for analyzing linguistic practices and norms.⁵⁸ Likewise, linguistics offers valuable insight into Creole literature by contextualizing writers' strategies within changing discussions about the social status of Creole languages. While my interest in the two dramatic works is primarily literary, the previously mentioned linguistic debates about creoles demonstrate the contentious nature of the relationship between Caribbean Creoles and European languages.

⁵⁸ For example, Louise Bennett's work has been foundational source for linguists attempting to codify Patwa as well as for later literary writers experimenting with how to represent the language (Mühleisen *Creole Discourse* 192).

Creole literary history, a fertile area of collaboration between linguistics and literature, demonstrates how literary works enter into debates about the status of Caribbean Creoles. While Creole literary history as an area of research has not received widespread attention in theoretical conversations surrounding creolization, it has been a major preoccupation of several prominent theorists of creolization. In fact, it is a crucial element of theories of creolization as an aesthetic program. For example, Brathwaite's *History of the Voice* ends with an extensive bibliography of nation language literature, which incorporates Creole literature.⁵⁹ Likewise, after writing "Éloge de la Créolité," Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant publish *Lettres créoles*, a history of Caribbean French Creole literature. Although Brathwaite, Chamoiseau, and Confiant are primarily interested in outlining an aesthetic program for how literary works should, to some degree, utilize Creole linguistic elements to represent the realities of Caribbean creolization, the bibliographic dimension of their works reveals the importance of understanding how literary uses of Creole languages have changed over time.

Scholars of Creole literary history trace the development of written creole languages from their earliest uses by non-native speakers to their contemporary range of uses by native and non-native speakers. In the Francophone Caribbean, Chamoiseau and Confiant as well as Maryse Romanos have detailed a long history of Creole literary production, including milestones such as the publication of early Creole poetry in the mid-eighteenth century, the first Caribbean French Creole novel *Attipa* by Alfred Parérou in 1885, and the explosion of Creole poetic production in the 1960s and 1970s. In the

⁵⁹ While Brathwaite emphasizes the African dimensions of these linguistic elements, his work corresponds to larger regional conversations about Creole linguistic practices. Given the fact that Brathwaite is from Barbados, an island whose vernacular speech is mesolectal rather than basilectal, the term "nation language" allows him to highlight African dimensions of language that might otherwise be considered on the English rather than Creole side of a continuum.

Anglophone Caribbean, scholars like Susanne Mühleisen, Barbara Lalla, Lise Winer, and Mary Rimmer trace the development of written Caribbean English Creole from its use in the Saint Thomas slave letters in the mid-eighteenth century and in novelistic dialogue as early as the mid-nineteenth century to its broad range of uses in contemporary literary production (Mühleisen, “Introduction” 1, Winer and Rimmer 226). While most scholars of Creole literary history focus on either the Francophone or Anglophone context, recent scholarship by critics like the literary scholar Helène Buzelin and the linguist Lise Winer has considered these bodies of writing from a comparative perspective. The work of George Lang further broadens the scope of comparison by considering Caribbean Creole literatures such as Papiamentu and Sranan as well as Creole literatures from other regions of the world including Capeverdean Crioulo and Sierra Leone Krio.⁶⁰ These comparative perspectives draw attention to the wealth of Creole literary production across the region.

While I will address the substantial differences between Creole writing in the Francophone and Anglophone Caribbean contexts at length elsewhere, their similarities first merit further attention. In both areas of the region, literary uses of Creole expanded substantially in the mid-twentieth century, partially as a result of movements for decolonization in the region. Changes were particularly dramatic in the area of multilingual texts that employed both Caribbean Creoles and Standard European languages and were written for a mixed local and foreign audience. Most narrative literature in Creole languages utilizes this multilingual format, while many poetic works appear monolingually in Creole languages. Some theorists prioritize these monolingual Creole texts, searching for what Lang calls a “literary basilect” or the form of Creole that

⁶⁰ Roberto Strongman also discusses Papiamentu writing in a comparative context with Caribbean English Creole and Caribbean French Creole.

diverges most dramatically from a standard European language, and is therefore most independent. Proponents of this form of writing in Creole hope “to recover a sense of authentic speech, or at least such debris of deep creole as remain” (Lang, “Basilects” 94).⁶¹ However, the creation of monolingual Creole literature is complicated by the fact that writers of Creole languages are almost all bilingual as a result of being educated in either English or French.⁶² Even the famous *Attipa*, composed entirely in French Creole, has always circulated in bilingual editions (Lang, *Entwisted Tongues* 263). As a result, multilingual narrative texts that engage both Standard European and Creole languages are central to an analysis of literary Creole. Furthermore, these multilingual texts offer insight into changing attitudes towards the relationship between Caribbean Creoles and European languages.

While literary writing in Creole has a long history in the Caribbean, the representation of Creole was confined to a limited role until the mid-twentieth century. In narrative writing, Caribbean Creoles primarily appeared in dialogue, surrounded by Standard English or French as the language of narration. These early literary uses of Caribbean Creoles tended to serve realist functions like signaling local authenticity or differentiating between the speech of different characters based on their racial and class positions, a strategy which to some extent corresponded to trends of representing British dialects in eighteenth and nineteenth century English literature (Winer and Rimmer 232). Winer and Rimmer’s work on early Trinidadian novels and Lalla’s analysis of Jamaican

⁶¹ Maryse Condé, who argues that Creole literature includes works shaped by Caribbean Creole cultural experiences, regardless of the language in which they are written, occupies the other extreme in this debate (109)

⁶² In contrast, Creole speakers who are not literate can be monolingual. However, some level of bilingualism in one or more Caribbean Creoles and standard European languages is more common (Lang, *Entwisted Tongues* 287).

novels demonstrate that the mid-nineteenth to early-twentieth century was a period of great innovation in the literary representation of Caribbean English Creoles. For example, Lalla analyzes the shift from comic to serious representation of Creole by the early twentieth century. However, she writes, “the Creole remains *functionally* separate from English in the literature and fixed in association with the social class of characters who speak it - diglossic on a number of levels” (63). In the Francophone context, early twentieth century literary movements like Haitian indigenism and Martinican and Guadeloupean doudouisme likewise confined Creole writing to limited representation of speech or citations of proverbs or songs (Buzelin and Winer 642). Given the consistently diglossic nature of early literary representations of Creole languages, diglossia has been the primary critical framework for understanding how Creole literary use has changed over the twentieth century. Diglossia's connotations of division, both in terms of linguistic boundaries as well as clear differences in the purposes and prestige of the languages used, signals the limitations of these literary strategies. Despite the range of linguistic practices presented, these multilingual strategies generally do not question the social and linguistic hierarchies of the societies they represent.

In the mid-twentieth century, more writers began to experiment with the literary use of Caribbean Creoles beyond the strict diglossic functions Lalla describes. While diglossia remained the norm, writers like Sam Selvon began to experiment with bringing Creole language features into the narration of the text. Early innovators like Selvon, the Martinican writer Joseph Zobel, and the Haitian writer Jacques Roumain incorporated features of Creole oral literature such as calypso or the storytelling formulation “Cric? Crac!” into their novels (Buzelin and Winer 645). Many twentieth century writers,

whether they primarily used French or Caribbean French Creole, invoked the tension between written and oral language as a creative strategy to approach linguistic conflict in literature (Jonaissant 42, Jermann 97). By blurring the divisions between oral and written, these writers problematized the diglossic division between Creoles as languages of speech and English and French as languages of serious literary production. Other experiments with literary Creole, such as those of Caribbean French Creole writers in the 1970s, emphasized opacity between Caribbean Creoles and European languages (Buzelin and Winer 652). These works posit a greater linguistic difference between languages than early diglossic works, but they do not correspond to diglossic texts' separation of dialogue and narration.

As the literary use of Caribbean Creoles expanded beyond its initial diglossic role, the need arose for new critical vocabulary to analyze Creole literary practice. Much of the proposed terminology centers on the relationship that texts posit between Caribbean Creoles and European languages. In the Jamaican context, Barbara Lalla proposes the terms "Alternation Phase" and "Expansion Phase" to mark these divergent strategies, which she considers as distinct stages of literary development. In the Alternation Phase, from the 1960s to 1980s, Creole features occupy more extensive portions of dialogue and Creole interacts more frequently with Standard English, signaling a limited type of competition between the codes (66). In the Expansion Phase, from the 1980s to the present, Creole features affect even more of the text, but "this expansion does not necessarily mean 'more Creole'; it means a fluid, often unflagged movement between Creole, local Standard, and intermediate varieties" (67). Lalla's historical analysis

privileges those literary texts that signal mixture between Creole languages and Standard English.

Other critics consider these two methods of negotiating relationships between Caribbean Creoles and European languages not as historical periods but rather as strategies that can coexist. Buzelin and Winer propose the labels of diglossia and *métissage* to describe these strategies. They consider as diglossic texts that maintain clear divisions between Caribbean Creoles and European languages, while *métissage* refers to text that mix Creole vocabulary, idioms, spelling, and syntactic features with the English or French text. While Buzelin and Winer's terms indicate less of a preference towards mixture than Lalla's historical formulation, the writers recognize the attractiveness of the *métissage* category. This attractiveness is partially due to their word choice in defining these categories. The term Buzelin and Winer use to denote strong bordering between Caribbean Creoles and European languages, diglossia, is linked to the aforementioned history of a circumscribed literary role for Creole languages. The term *métissage* on the other hand, resonates with theoretical discussions about creolization as a productive category of creative mixture as well as with the aesthetic preferences of postmodernism. Buzelin and Winer analyze the relationship between the two terms, writing, "*métissage* appears as a highly sophisticated multilingual literary practice, produced by/for highly sophisticated multilingual writers/readers. From another perspective, unlike diglossia, *métissage* appears as an aesthetic of compromise" (657). While these scholars recognize a potential drawback to *métissage*, they do not seriously consider the potential advantages of what they call diglossia. Buzelin and Winer, like Lalla, undervalue the creative

potential of literary strategies that maintain a sharp division between Caribbean Creoles and European languages.

In contrast to the historical turn away from these strong bilingual strategies as earlier, outdated methods, I consider their unique effects. Building on the insights of Lalla, Buzelin, and Winer, I use the terms language alternation and *métissage* to compare these literary strategies. In contrast to the pairings offered by Lalla and Buzelin and Winer, language alternation with expansion and diglossia with *métissage*, respectively, the pairing of language alternation and *métissage* allows for a comparison of these strategies that does not inherently value linguistic mixture for its own sake. Since language alternation strategies share certain features with limited, diglossic representations of Creole from earlier historical periods, the range of contemporary language alternation has largely been ignored by literary critics. However, language alternation is a strategy that is not restricted to a particular historical moment, but rather can be employed in contemporary literary works. I read the maintenance of linguistic boundaries as a contemporary literary strategy that serves a distinct purpose from *métissage*, and is particularly relevant to the aforementioned linguistic and policy debates about the relationships between Caribbean Creoles and European languages.

In order to examine literary works of linguistic alternation, I turn to theater, an area that has not been fully considered by Creole literary history, yet which operates as an important realm of Creole linguistic practice. For example, Kamau Brathwaite argues that theater is one of the only domains where “nation language,” which overlaps meaningfully with Creole, is heard publicly in the Anglophone Caribbean, because “in drama it is necessary to bring forward the language of the people” (Brathwaite and Glissant 290).

Since accounts of Creole literary history primarily focus on the written, rather than the oral, the strong oral component of theater complicates its relationship to narratives that emphasize the novel, and to a lesser extent poetry. In particular, the prevalence of dialogue in theatrical works complicates our narratives of Creole literary developments. In a novel, since dialogue is usually mediated through the authoritative voice of the narrator, confining a Caribbean Creole to dialogue marks a division between Creole as the language of speech and English or French as the language of thought, a widely-critiqued form of diglossia. In a theatrical work, however, dialogue can serve a more central role. The elements outside of dialogue, such as introductory materials and stage directions, mediate the reader's experience of the work's dialogue, but they do so to a lesser extent than the narrative of a novel. Therefore, while the same critique of diglossia could be applied to theatrical works that only utilize Caribbean Creoles in their dialogue, this critique can obscure the linguistic variation within the dialogue, which is, in fact, the only language that the live audience of a theatrical work encounters. By focusing on language alternation within the dialogue of theatrical works, the value of this strategy emerges both for theater and for other genres.

The turn to theater is also useful for examining Creole literary history because of the link between theater and popular culture. Given the vibrant history of Creole linguistic practice in oral traditions such as storytelling, the oral dimension of theatrical expression offers a valuable medium for exploration of the relationship between Caribbean Creoles and European languages. According to Édouard Glissant, theatrical expression serves as an important bridge to oral popular traditions without reducing these traditions to neutralized folklore. He argues that theatrical expression is necessary for two

reasons. Firstly, “In its critical dimension: in order to help destroy alienated forms of representation” and secondly, “In its dynamic dimension: in order to contribute to the basic process whereby a people escapes the limitation of folkloric expression to which it has been reduced” (*Caribbean Discourse* 209). For Glissant, theater allows these popular art forms to experience their fullest expression, rather than limiting them to touristic displays of the past. He calls this truly popular vision of art, “an art capable, because of the way it is incorporated of changing this reality: of contributing to historical revaluation” (*Caribbean Discourse* 217). In the theatrical works that I consider, I argue that language alternation serves as a critical element of historical revaluation through theater. By staging conflicts between Caribbean Creoles and European languages, these playwrights and other “cultural workers” reevaluate linguistic conflicts in light of larger projects of historical investigation (Ford-Smith, “New Aesthetic” 27). Reading Ford-Smith and Glissant together, then, theatrical perspectives on linguistic conflict utilize marginalized forms of language in order to challenge not only linguistic hierarchies but coloniality more broadly.

In my reading of theatrical works by Ina Césaire and by the collaboration of Patricia Cumper, Honor Ford-Smith, Carol Lawes, Hertencer Lindsay, and Eugene Williams, I analyze how these works create strict boundaries between Caribbean Creoles and European languages as a central dimension of the historical explorations enacted by both works. As the previously mentioned debates about the meaning of Creole language practices and cultural creolization indicate, the status of Caribbean Creoles has major implications in the literary, linguistic, educational, and political realms. By taking language alternation seriously as a conscious literary strategy, a body of critical thought

about the relationship between Caribbean Creoles and related European languages emerges. Writers who use language alternation strategies activate linguistic conflict between these languages in order to engage with characters' shifting positions along persistent racial and class hierarchies. In the context of discussions about creolization that often emphasize mixture, the maintenance of conflict serves a critical function that allows for community-building without minimizing difference.

In particular, I focus on the strategic dimension of language alternation, both at the level of the playwright and at the level of the characters' individual alternations between languages. In her analysis of women's negotiation of Creoles and European languages, Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel offers the figure of the “strategic mulata”, originally proposed by Marisa Belausteguigoitia, to understand female characters' language practice. Rather than a “tragic mulata” figure linked to a biological model of understanding the problematic nature of cultural mixture in postcolonial Caribbean societies, Martínez-San Miguel proposes reading the mulata as a strategic position for cultivating identification. She focuses on characters in literary works by Ana Lydia Vega, Michelle Cliff, and Gisèle Pineau, “whose linguistic practices suggest a form of cultural and national belonging based on forms of contact, interaction, and exchange that go beyond the limits of biology, race, and genetics to reside in practice and performance” (*Coloniality of Diasporas* 160). While Martínez-San Miguel explores this strategic position with regards to individual characters, the plays I explore each feature two women disputing the space between languages as they vie for narrative control. When these characters alternate between languages, they position themselves not only with regards to monolingual Creole or European language use, but also in relationship to

another bilingual figure with a distinct racial and class position. By opening up the category of the strategic mulata to explore the conflict within that position, I argue that the performance of language alternation allows characters to articulate their difference from one another while still asserting a shared participation in a creolized society.

Negotiating Relationships in “Mémoires d’île”

Ina Césaire’s theatrical work “Mémoires d’île” could be easily read within the framework of diglossic writing in Creole languages. All of the play’s introductory material and stage directions as well as the majority of the dialogue is written in French, while portions of the dialogue, especially proverbs and songs, are written in Martinican Creole. However, reading this play’s multilingualism as diglossia limits Césaire’s use of Creole to an essentially secondary role, an approach that misses the complexity of language in the play. “Mémoires d’île” has a deceptively simple premise: two elderly Martinican women, Aure and her half-sister Hermance, sit outside a wedding reception and reflect on their personal histories. The two women share certain experiences of marginalization due to their age, gender, and colonial status. Much of the conversation centers around the women’s common experiences of marriage, childbearing, the loss of children, illness, and old age. However, Aure, a light-skinned school teacher, and Hermance, a working-class black woman, experience their gender and colonial status differently due to their distinct racial and class positions. Throughout their conversation, multilingualism allows the women to negotiate the similarities and differences of their life experiences. Reading the multilingualism of “Mémoires d’île” as language alternation instead of diglossia highlights the creativity of the women’s use of language. Frequent alternation between French and Creole allows the play’s characters to approach or create

distance from one another, and this linguistic conflict maintains the differences between the characters even as they develop their relationship over the course of the play.

Language alternation in “*Mémoires d’île*” is a social process, reflecting the extensive collaboration that informed the play’s production. “*Mémoires d’île*,” like most of Ina Césaire’s fictional and theatrical writing, grows directly out of her ethnographic work. The eldest daughter of Aimé Césaire and Suzanne Roussi, Ina Césaire was trained as an Africanist ethnographer under the surrealist Michel Leiris. After studying the Wodaabe people of Niger, Césaire shifted her focus to Martinique, focusing on oral traditions such as music, folktales, and oral history (Makward, “Staging” 173). “*Mémoires d’île*” began as an oral history project in which Césaire collected testimonies from Martinican women covering almost a hundred years of personal memories of the island’s history. From its earliest inception, the play is marked by this multiplicity of women’s voices. After Césaire met the French director Jean-Claude Penchenat, the two decided to collaborate to develop the project for the stage.

Within the context of Penchenat’s democratic Théâtre du Campagnol, additional voices were incorporated into the production. Césaire interviewed her own grandmothers, “Mama F.” and “Mama N.” who are referenced in the play’s subtitle and became the templates for the protagonists Aure and Hermance. However, Césaire’s paternal grandmother was older than her maternal grandmother at the time, and was not able to provide enough material to fully create the character of Hermance. Therefore, the actresses, Myrrha Donzenac and Mariann Mathéus interviewed additional Caribbean women living in France, as well as their own grandmothers in order to further develop Hermance’s character (Sahakian 77). The actresses also contributed to the work’s

development by contributing dialogue, especially through improvisation, as well as by suggesting the creation of the play's prologue, a playful dialogue between two costumed she-devils, dancing for Carnival. The collaborative creation of this production is integral to its multi-vocal treatment of language.

The entire production history of "Mémoires d'île" has been shaped by another level of dialogue: that of a local and foreign audience. "Mémoires d'île" was first performed in Bagneux, south of Paris in 1983. As a state-aided dramatic center, Théâtre du Campagnol worked to attract an audience from the community, especially people of Caribbean origin affected by mass migration in the 1950s and 1960s (Jones 228). However, the production also attracted a non-Caribbean audience. Emily Sahakian convincingly argues that the production should be analyzed in terms of its relationship to these distinct audiences (75). After being performed in Bagneux, the play moved to Martinique in the summer of 1983 and to another location in Paris in the fall. It was then performed in Guadeloupe in the summer of 1984. An English version of the play, by Judith Miller and Christiane Makward was produced for the Ubu Repertory Theatre in New York City in 1991 (Miyasaki 44). The production was later revived in 1998 in Paris and in 2008 in Fort-de-France (Makward, "Ensouché fond" 17). The mix of a local audience in the Caribbean and the diaspora as well as a foreign audience has shaped the reception of "Mémoires d'île." In particular, Césaire's use of language produces a different experience for these two audiences. Unlike the multilingual texts discussed in the following chapter, which remain partially opaque even to a local audience, Césaire's use of Creole is easily comprehensible to a Creoleophone audience, yet poses significant challenges for non-Creole speakers. Despite differences in the audience members' ability

to understand the language of the play, they share the common experience of encountering the conflict between Creole and French. Here, an important difference between the performed play and the printed script must be noted. The performed version of the play includes some context clues that would allow non-Creoleophone audience members to comprehend certain sections of speech in Creole. However, there would not be any consistent internal translation or other strategies to clarify the meaning of Creole phrases. The published script, on the other hand, includes French translations of Creole phrases in footnotes. As a result, the non-Creoleophone reader of the play does not experience the same opacity as the viewer of the performance. However, regardless of whether the audience encounters the play's Creole language in printed or spoken form, similar questions of linguistic conflict emerge.

While the body of the play dramatizes the tensions between French and Creole, Césaire's prologue represents the languages in a playful context. The prologue consists of a conversation between two Carnival she-devils, played by the same actresses as Aure and Hermance, before they are costumed as elderly women. In the printed version of the script, the she-devils switch between Creole and French as they dance the vidé and discuss the passage of time. Their conversation signals the shifting role of Creole in the play. In the first instance of Creole use, the first she-devil speaks in Creole, “Pa kité nwè fèmen nou ma koumè” [Let’s not the night catch us, my friend!]⁶³ while the second replies in French, “La nuit est encore loin, commère!” [The night’s still very far away my friend!] (200-201). Although these two languages are graphically represented as extremely distinct, the she-devils’ easy alternation between the two suggests a close relationship between the two languages. In the next encounter, the characters’ roles

⁶³ All translations from Makward and Miller's translation “Island Memories” unless otherwise indicated.

reverse and the second she-devil speaks Creole and the first responds in French. The fact that no one character is more clearly aligned with Creole or French than the other cautions the reader against assigning a straightforward relationship between a character and a language in the body of the play. While it would be simple to associate Creole with Hermance and French with Aure based on race and class divisions, the prologue demonstrates how each character is able to shift roles in regard to language use.

Throughout the play, Aure and Hermance use shifts in language in order to create distance or intimacy with each other. The women's tense discussions of their familial connections mark the fraught nature of their relationship. As the two women sit outside of a wedding ceremony, Aure references the recent marriage between the women's relatives as the strengthening of pre-existing family ties with Hermance, her half sister. She says, "C'est amusant: la nièce de votre mari qui épouse le fils de mon petit frère ! Nous voilà encore plus de la même famille!" [It sure is funny: your husband's niece marrying my brother's son. Now we're even more family than ever!] (203). While Aure claims two family connections with Hermance, Hermance refuses this relation on the basis of their class differences, saying, "Moi-même? Je ne suis pas de grande famille, moi!" [You speaking about me? I'm not from one of your best families] (203). Hermance rejects Aure's claims to humble origins and points out that their father married Aure's mother rather than Hermance's because of racial and class differences. Aure responds by trying to shift attention away from the past, "Ça, c'était en temps-longtemps, Hermance, et les préjugés sont si ... regrettables. Le passé ne doit pas courir devant nous!" [Oh, that was such a long time ago, Hermance, and prejudice is so ... regrettable ... The past shouldn't run in front of the future] (203). This opening exchange demonstrates the way

in which these women's relationship is shaped by their distinct positions in the island's historical racial and class hierarchy. Throughout the play, the characters' appeals to racial and class status create distance between the women, while references to gender, age, and colonial status generally emphasize commonalities.

In the context of these characters' tense relationship, their bilingualism serves as a tool to either emphasize common experiences or social distance, depending on how the women invoke a linguistic shift. Much of the linguistic research about Creole-English or Creole-French bilingualism points to the symbolic value of Creole languages in multilingual Caribbean societies for establishing trustworthiness and group membership (Deuber 34). In "Mémoires d'île," code-switching from French to Creole often serves this community-building function. When Aure recalls the colonial education practice of singing about falling snow as a schoolgirl, she laughs. Hermance responds in Creole, "Eti ou wè la nèj tonbé pa isiya?" [Ever see any snow fall around here?] and both women laugh together (205). Hermance's Creole speech engages the distinct symbolic associations of French and Creole to humorous effect, a strategy that establishes similarities between the two women. Like humor, music is another form of Creole language practice that highlights commonalities between the two sisters. The longest single passage in Creole is a quotation from a song that Hermance sings (218). At another point in the play, Aure begins the refrain of a song in Creole and Hermance joins her, with both sisters singing together (215).

These moments of the play draw attention to the power of Creole as the first language of both of the protagonists. Aure, who elsewhere is associated with grammatically-correct French, describes the bewilderment of arriving at school as a

monolingual Creole speaker. She says, “J’avais sept ans et je n’avais jamais prononcé un seul mot de français. Je ne parlais que le créole” [I was seven and had never spoken a word of French. I didn’t speak anything but Creole] Hermance responds, partially in Creole, partially in French “Débrouya pa péche! On ne savait pas rouler la langue comme à present” [Getting by is not a sin! We didn’t know how to work the language like we do now]⁶⁴ (212). Hermance’s response uses Creole here to engage its value as mother tongue, yet she ends with French, pointing towards the eventual facility in the language developed by both women.

While Aure and Hermance both move fluidly between French and Creole, as do the she-devils in the prologue, there are noticeable stylistic differences in how they employ the languages. Aure tends to maintain more distance between her French and Creole speech and she generally includes fewer code-switches within a conversational turn. Hermance, on the other hand, occasionally shifts rapidly and repeatedly between Creole and French. When discussing her husband Ferdinand’s infidelity, Hermance begins in Creole before switching to French, “An jou, man ka sonjé, Marièt té tou piti, pòv ich! Elle avait... cinq... six ans...” [One day, I remember, Mariette was real little, poor kid. She was five, maybe six] (221). After this initial code-switch from Creole to French, she continues in French briefly, until the climax of the story, which she narrates shifting between the two languages: “Ma propre commère! Elle avait porté mon enfante et i té ka fè sa épi Ferdinand! Et cet homme-la ne craignait pas de laisser son chapeau là pour que la petite puisse le voir et venir me raconter ça! J’ai couru chez la femme! Je lui ai foutu une vollé ... Il fallait voir ça! Man fouté-i! Féfé a pris aussi!” [My own friend! My daughter’s godmother! She had held my child, and now she was doing it with

⁶⁴ My translation.

Ferdinand! And he was leaving his hat right there, so the child would see it and could come tell me! Well! I trounced her good and clean! You should have seen it! I let her have it! Ferdinand got it, too!]

(221). This dramatic language alternation demonstrates the variety of roles that Creole can serve in Hermance's primarily-French dialogue. She uses Creole to begin a narrative, to express extreme emotion, and to communicate force. For Hermance, these rapid alternations between French and Creole are a source of linguistic creativity.

For Aure, however, there is a greater separation between Creole and French. In particular, she discourages the use of Creole in official contexts where French is used monolingually. When remembering her wedding day, she says, “Et voilà qu’au beau milieu d’un discours, mon grand-père prend la mouche. Il se lève en disant: ‘Yo ka palé fransé, man pa ka palé fransé! Au revoir, la mariée!’ Et puis, il et parti. Il aurait pu attendre, quand même! J’étais tellement gênée” [All of a sudden, in the middle of a speech, my grandfather gets up and says: ‘They’re speaking French. I don’t speak French! So, goodbye, lady bride.’ And he leaves! He could have waited, really! I was so embarrassed!]

(223). Although Aure’s grandfather uses Creole to rejects the use of French, he switches to French to say goodbye to Aure, signaling that even the most assertively monolingual figure in the play uses both French and Creole to accomplish particular objectives. While in other contexts the use of Creole invokes feelings of community and family in Aure, in the formal French-language setting of her wedding, her grandfather’s Creole speech, and his renunciation of French, causes her embarrassment. This anecdote reveals how Aure’s race and class position influence her prescriptive attitude towards Creole use.

Aure's and Hermance's divergent attitudes towards the relationship between Creole and French is a source of conflict between the women. Hermance's French is influenced by her Creole, while Aure utilizes a more standard form of French (Sahakian 81). Occasionally, Hermance does not use Standard French vocabulary in her French speech. For example, when describing a supernatural experience, she says, "Je n'avais plus les pieds sur terre. Je marchais en l'air. (*Geste.*) Comme ça..." [My feet weren't touching the earth. I was walking like this, way up in the air.] (213). Aure interjects, in order to provide the correct French vocabulary: "Je crois qu'on appelle ça de la lé-vi-tation." [I think that is called le-vi-ta-tion]⁶⁵ (213). However, Hermance is uninterested in Aure's vocabulary prescriptions, and responds, "Je ne sais pas comment on appelle ça, mais je n'ai fait ni une ni deux" [I don't know what you call it, but I didn't do one or the other]⁶⁶ (213). Elsewhere, Hermance responds more forcefully to Aure's corrections. When Hermance is telling a story about how her mother assisted in the preparation of "la renonce" [Renunciation], Aure interrupts to correct her, saying, "La communion solennelle" [Holy Communion] (209). Hermance responds coldly in Creole, rejecting Aure's correction: "Man ka di 'la renonce!'" [Well, I say "Renunciation!"] (209). Hermance's replies successfully avoid any debates about correct language practice. While Aure, as a schoolteacher, acts as an authority on these matters, Hermance refuses Aure's input, asserting the validity of her own language use. Although Aure does not pursue these discussions further, her linguistic attitudes are not changed by these interactions either. These tense moments of language alternation reveal continued tension between the characters' bilingual practices.

⁶⁵ My translation.

⁶⁶ My translation.

Since Césaire maintains tension between the characters throughout the work, “*Mémoires d’île*” appears to demonstrate limited dramatic progress. While the characters’ reminiscing progresses through childhood, marriage, childbearing, and old age, the diegetic action of the play consists of the two women remaining stationary outside of the wedding reception. In terms of their discussion, the characters do not directly address the tensions of their relationship or engage deeply with one another’s stories. Instead, the dialogue consists mostly of overlapping monologues in which the characters share related stories from their own experiences. The primary dramatic action results from the passing of time, signaled by the references to death at the play’s conclusion. Aure comments, “*Il se fait tard, Hermance!*” [It’s getting late, Hermance!], alluding both to the end of the wedding party as well as the characters’ old age (228). The final stage directions further emphasize the women’s impending death. The song “*C’est Woy Madiana!*,” the traditional last dance song at Martinican weddings, plays while the spotlights suddenly go off. In the darkness, the audience hears nighttime animal noises, and then they too suddenly cease, leaving the stage in darkness and silence (228).

However, right before the final darkness of the play, an exchange between Aure and Hermance reveals a significant alteration between the beginning and the end of the production. As the two women see Hermance’s grandson, who will take them home from the wedding, in the distance off-stage, Aure says, “*Allons-y, ma soeur!*” [Let’s go, dear sister], here using the strongest claim to family ties in the play (228). Hermance, who earlier rejected Aure’s suggestion of kinship, responds in kind, “*Non! Attendons ici, ma soeur! C’est a eux de venir nous chercher!*” [No, dear sister, let’s wait for him here. Now it’s their duty to watch after us] (228). This final expression of community and family

connection between the two women is remarkable in that it coexists with the sharp contrasts between their lives established at the beginning of the work and maintained throughout. As the characters' use of language alternation demonstrates, their perspectives do not converge on a common experience or linguistic practice. Although both women code-switch between Creole and French, they employ distinct styles of language alternation informed by their racial and class positions. Nevertheless, the shared experience of multilingual remembering and storytelling allows the women to build community and even family relationships without erasing issues of race or class.

Taken in the context of theoretical discussions about creolization, Césaire's work in particular and language alternation more generally play an under-appreciated role. Métissage linguistic practice has been the dominant framework for understanding creative practices of creolization, particularly in the Francophone Caribbean. Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant, two of the authors of "Éloge de la Créolité" and arguably the most prominent literary promoters of creolization, advocate métissage as the predominant linguistic strategy for representing Creole language. While métissage strategies emphasize the combination of the various elements that compose Caribbean cultures, language alternation strategies highlight the continued conflicts that operate in these contexts. As Césaire's work demonstrates, focusing on linguistic, racial, and socioeconomic tensions does not preclude the creation of a strong sense of community. Instead, these strategies offer a different emphasis on how complex social processes of transformation are represented in literature. Given the dominance of a few male authors from Martinique in the analysis of Francophone Caribbean literary uses of Creole, this alternate perspective is welcome. Sam Haigh argues, "Not only has the complexity of

Césaire's work been eclipsed by the French and Francophone literary world's focus on the work of younger male writers like the créolistes but, perhaps more importantly, her status as a precursor for younger generations of Martinican women writers has also yet to be assessed" (85). By drawing out language alternation as a complex strategy for representing continued linguistic conflict, rather than as a remainder from an earlier historical era of diglossic Creole literature, we can consider a broader range of multilingual Creole literary practice. This expanded range contributes not only to Caribbean literary study, but also to the study of literary multilingualism beyond the region.

Focusing on language alternation as a strategy also highlights some of the previously mentioned differences between Caribbean French Creoles and Caribbean English Creoles. When "*Mémoires d'île*" was translated into English by Christiane Makward and Judith Miller to be performed in New York at the Ubu Repertory Theater, they did not reproduce Césaire's language alternation with similarly distinct linguistic codes. They translated both French and Creole into informal, Standard English, rather than utilizing a Caribbean English Creole. They do maintain a slightly more informal register for Creole phrases from the original. For example, they translate the Creole, "*Eti ou wè la nèj tonbé pa isiya?*" (205) colloquially as "Ever see any snow fall around here?" (54). However, their primary strategy for marking the difference between originally French and Creole parts of the text is through italicization of the Creole sections. Furthermore, their translation does not include many of the previously Creole phrases from the original, because the translators delete much of the back-and-forth conversation between the characters, opting to allow more of the characters' monologues to proceed

uninterrupted. As the translator and translation theorist Christine Raguet notes, Caribbean French Creoles and Caribbean English Creoles cannot be easily interchanged in translations, because Caribbean English Creoles are often more easily understood for a Standard English reader than Caribbean French Creoles are for a Standard French reader (38). This relationship is complicated by each writer's individual representation of a Creole language, which can increase or decrease the distance between the Caribbean Creole and European language. While the English translation of Césaire's work provides little insight into Anglophone-Francophone connections, turning to an original work of language alternation from the English Caribbean demonstrates the possibility of connections between these distinct linguistic contexts.

Occupying Space in “Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine”

While some critics of Creole language practice question the status of Caribbean English Creoles as true Creole languages, an examination of the bilingual literary use of these languages demonstrates important similarities with French and French Creole literary bilingualism. Literary works from the Anglophone Caribbean that employ language alternation, such as “Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine,” demonstrate the ways in which Standard English and Caribbean English Creoles can be utilized as distinct codes in continued conflict with one another. Despite the divergent public discourses surrounding bilingualism in Martinique and Jamaica, the literature shows similar innovation in bilingual literary representations.

“Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine,” created through the Groundwork Theater Company at the Jamaica School of Drama by Patricia Cumper, Honor Ford-Smith, Carol Lawes, Hertencer Lindsay, and Eugene Williams, shares remarkable similarities with “Mémoires d'île.” Like Césaire's play, this production features two

elderly women from distinct racial and class backgrounds. Katie, a white woman from a wealthy family, and Lettie, a black former domestic worker, both occupy marginal positions as a result of their age and gender. Furthermore, in their old age, both women find themselves poor and alone. Lettie has been occupying a dilapidated Kingston home which she claims was given to her by a former employer when Katie arrives and claims that her family once occupied the home and that she is its rightful owner. Over the course of the play, each woman fights for control of the house, which also serves as a symbol of postcolonial Jamaica, and racial differences occupy a central role in this struggle. Each woman uses a range of linguistic resources to assert her claim to ownership. The women actively move between Patwa and Standard English in order to accomplish particular strategic objectives. By alternating between languages, Katie and Lettie negotiate their divergent racial and class backgrounds and occupy a range of conversational roles in their attempts to secure control over a safe living space.

Like in “*Mémoires d’île*,” the language alternation of “*Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine*” was born out of a process of creative collaboration. The play’s title page first lists the five people most responsible for the text’s creation without differentiating between their roles. Then, the creators of the text are divided into cast, directors, and scriptwriter. Furthermore, the set designer and costumer are also mentioned. This dual approach both emphasizes the collaborative nature of the work and highlights important variations between the roles of the collaborators. In “*Towards a New Aesthetic*,” Honor Ford-Smith explains the relationship between the various roles involved in collaborative theatrical creation. She writes, “The role of the director has been inadequately theorized...Perhaps ‘facilitator’ would be a better term for the variety of skills needed”

(30-31). In her formulation, the director does not impose an artistic vision on the other participants, but instead negotiates the creative input of various creators and synthesizes their vision into a coherent whole. She argues collective creation is also undertheorized, “particularly considering how long it has been used to make dramas about hidden experiences or experiences outside of the so-called mainstream” (30). In the case of “Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine,” this collaborative creation is linked to the collection of oral histories of women from Kingston (Ford-Smith, “Playing Contrapuntally” 237). By connecting collective creation to marginalized experiences, Ford-Smith signals the value of collaborative theater for exploring marginalized linguistic practices.

One primary source of the theorization of collective theater has been the women's community theater group Sistren. While “Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine” was produced by the Groundwork Theater Collective, the participation of Honor Ford-Smith, founding artistic director of Sistren, links the two groups. Founded in 1977 in response to Michael Manley's government programs to decrease unemployment among women, Sistren began as a community theater group that worked to give voice to women's experiences. Through collaborative creation, the women explored their shared experiences of poverty, domestic abuse, and sexual violence. The group's productions were often linked to education and community organizing around issues of concern. Although Sistren has been widely criticized, especially for its increasingly international focus in the late 1980s, the collective has been fundamental in theorizing collaborative theater.⁶⁷ In particular, Sistren problematizes the relationship between oral and written

⁶⁷ Sharon Green and Karina Smith both argue that the group's need to obtain funding through international NGOs undermined its focus on the community. Green writes, “Striving to be both *oppositional* and

theatrical language in collaborative theater. Founding Sistren member Rebecca Knowles says “We perform our major productions two, three, four, five times before actually having a script. If we put issues in and they don’t work, then we have to go back to some of the improvs, extract and put something else in” (Di Cenzo and Bennett 88). While orality is central to Sistren’s creative process, written language serves an important role, especially in negotiating the relationship between English and Patwa. Sistren published *Lionheart Gal*, a collection of testimonials by Sistren members, in part to address the written dimension of this language conflict. In the introduction, Honor Ford-Smith writes, “In the main we hope *Lionheart Gal* makes a case for prose writing in Patwah or creole as the academics call it. Patwah/creole/dialect - the very confusion about what to call it reflects the national insecurity about the language issue” (xxviii). “Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine,” like the work of Sistren, links collaborative oral creation in Patwa to serious written production in the language.

The play’s scriptwriter Patricia Cumper shares this focus on written Patwa with Honor Ford-Smith. Cumper writes of her development as a playwright, “I had a concern that patois was seen as the language of comedy, of merry peasants and naive fools. I wanted to be one of those writers that used it to deal with weighty matters, philosophical questions, life crises, serious thought” (26). Cumper’s work on “Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine” is part of Cumper’s career-long dedication to developing her writing in Patwa in order to move beyond the types of Patwa speech that were regularly represented

sustainable has placed the function of grassroots theatre in a similar predicament, on a *knife edge between social praxis and cultural tourism*” (121, emphasis in the original). Smith argues that this shift in funding practices also led to an increasing reliance on middle-class theater spaces rather than working class community spaces in order to legitimize performances for international funders (248).

in writing. Taken together, the writings of Honor Ford-Smith and Patricia Cumper demonstrate a larger cultural movement of valorizing Patwa writing in Jamaica.

While the language of “Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine” includes substantially more Creole text than “Mémoires d’île” does, it still falls firmly within the category Lalla identifies as language alternation rather than métissage. The introductory material and stage directions are written entirely in standard English, while the body of the play contains Patwa speech. As a result, the text could be characterized as diglossic, but the body of the work reveals linguistic complexities that move beyond the limitations of diglossia, a strategy which inherently posits European languages as the site of literary creation and serious thought, while Caribbean Creoles are restricted to an anthropological role as markers of local culture. While Patwa only appears in dialogue in “Fallen Angel,” the characters’ sophisticated use of the language reveals it as a site of linguistic creativity as well as serious reflection. As a work of language alternation, “Fallen Angel” stages linguistic conflict between Patwa and standard English as the characters continually shift between the two languages in order to claim authority over the space of the house, and by extension of the nation.

The characters’ language use is a central component of a broader conflict to dominate the disputed space of the house. Rex Nettleford’s work on occupying space as a mode of resisting colonial power is instructive here. Writing from the perspective of his dance background, Nettleford argues that the colonized subject must continually claim outer and inner space in order to confront experiences of marginalization. He writes, “music and dance provide the Caribbean with two of the most effective weapons in the battle for space. Sound and movement are the life-making abstractions beyond the reach

of external domination” (86). In “Fallen Angel,” movement is a crucial element of the characters' struggle to assert dignity in their current conditions of poverty and isolation. The stage is comprised of three rooms: Lettie's and Katie's bedrooms on either side of the stage and a common area in between. Each woman retreats into her own room when threatened, seeks to dominate the common area, and occasionally enters into the other woman's room in order to search for information or food. The characters' movement between these spaces are frantic at times and each attempts to occupy space by using props like the two-by-four wood plank Lettie uses to threaten Katie. Nettleford claims that this desire to assert control over interior and exterior space is linked to the negotiation of histories of colonial dispossession. Therefore, the women's physical and linguistic battles for space operate on two levels: their conflict over the space of the house as well as their attempts to assert dignity as older women in a formerly colonized context.

Language alternation allows the women to negotiate the space because each character has access to a broad range of linguistic resources and the ability to move between these languages. Katie, the white creole character, opens the play by employing a formal register of Standard English to compose a letter to her brother. As she writes, she says aloud, “Dear Lawrence... If the truth be told, I can no longer pretend that your indifference... and neglect... is of no consequence. It is nothing but cruel hypocrisy” (243). The ellipses mark pauses which signal the careful way in which Katie crafts her language in order to claim this particular register. A few moments later, when Lettie confronts Katie, questioning her presence in the house, Katie responds in Patwa, shouting, “Yuh damn right smaddy in yah, and if yuh nuh move yuh stinkin self from

round mi door, yuh a go dead today! Yuh fi stop molest old people! Go home to yuh Mumma, dutty bwoy, if yuh know who she be” (244). The distance between Katie's first and second lines mark the range possible in a single character's speech in this play. While Katie dominates formal Standard English more easily than Lettie does, both characters strategically move between Standard English and Patwa in order to achieve a variety of objectives including the appeal to legal authority, the threat of physical force, and the invocation of the spiritual world.

During the early part of the play, the Katie and Lettie frequently use Standard English as the language of official power. During arguments about who is the rightful owner of the house, both women refer to documents written in Standard English. Lettie refers to “DOCUMENTS! DOCUMENTS, MISTRESS FALLEN ANGEL... dat say dat dis premises and di contents thereof is di property of me and me alone until death do we part. Ergo and ad hoc. Pursuant unto di same, no renting, leasing, or tenanting of dis property shall take place at any time for whatsoever reason, quid pro quo” (249). Lettie's description of these documents signals a *métissage* strategy, by blending the Standard English and Latin of legal documents with Patwa features of her own speech. However, language alternation is the work's dominant mode of exploring linguistic conflict. Katie, like Lettie, turns to a Standard English document, a letter, in order to prove her claim to the house. Although the play's audience perceives the conflict between English and Patwa as oral, frequent references to documents signal the written dimension of this linguistic conflict. While the written nature of these documents provides their authority, the characters recite the formal language of these documents aloud in order to invoke this authority. Katie and Lettie do not participate in a conversation about these documents.

Instead, each woman attempts to read her document loudly enough to drown out the other woman's voice and her competing claim to ownership of the house. Lettie reads, "ERGO I HERETOFORE AND FORTHWITH DECLARE THAT SHE AND SHE ALONE SHALL BE RESIDENT AT SAID PREMISES," while Katie simultaneously reads, "YOU ARE THE ONLY HOPE I HAVE TO MAKE SURE THAT OUR HOME IS NOT TOTALLY DESTROYED BY THIS VIRAGO" (264). Here, the voice, and particularly the Standard English speaking voice serves as a tool in the women's battle for space. However, their strategies appear evenly matched, and neither woman succeeds in silencing the other.

While the women use English to claim a certain type of official power, the use of Patwa also allows the women to assert their claim to space. At two distinct moments in the play, the women's conflict over Standard English documents is interrupted by the offstage sounds of boys from the neighborhood, who throw objects at the house, attempting to vandalize it. In these moments, the women temporarily turn their aggression away from each other and towards the boys. Patwa, and particularly a register marked by vulgarity, allows for a similar claim for power in this distinct context. Katie shouts, "YUH TINK MI FRAID A YUH? EE? YUH TINK MI FRAID A YUH? OLE JAGABAT! GO FEEL UP YUH MUMMA AND LEAVE OLE PEOPLE ALONE!" (253). After Katie's outburst, the boys leave, marking a clear, if only temporary, success in the battle for space.

However, Katie's use of Patwa threatens the racial and class hierarchy that she tries to maintain at other moments in the play. Katie repeatedly claims a white, upper-class identity as a strategy to assert her claim to ownership of the house and her power

over Lettie, and she uses her superior command of Standard English as a primary marker of her racial and class status. After Katie's confrontation in Patwa with the boys, Lettie questions this language use. She says, "Katie! Hi, man! Yuh nuh know seh white people nuh fi gwaan soh?" (253). Lettie raises the question of whether or not Katie is allowed to access this form of language and suggests that perhaps Katie is unaware of the fact that social norms prohibit her from using Patwa in this way. However, the effectiveness of Katie's use of an aggressive, vulgar form of Patwa signals that she is capable of employing distinct languages depending on her desired effect. Although Lettie does not fully dominate Standard English, her speech reveals a similar linguistic range to Katie's. A language alternation perspective allows for an analysis of why the women engage a particular language and how they differentiate between the two.

The women's language alternation operates within a wider framework of linguistic creativity. In particular, storytelling and fantasy play an important role in how the women negotiate their relationship. Katie performs an elaborate fantasy of a meal with imagined wealthy guests. Throughout this scene, Katie refers to Lettie as her servant and scolds her for not serving food. On the one hand, this encounter reveals important information about Katie's connection to reality. Earlier, in an attempt to remember her full name, she says, "I just can't remember.... Lascelles... ahm... a blow to the head... a few years ago now... and I just can't" (247). However, Katie's fantasy also marks a strategic attempt to use storytelling in order to reconfigure her relationship to Lettie from one of dependence to dominance. Since she has no other access to food, Katie uses the narrative of the dinner party as an attempt to obtain a meal from Lettie who generally controls the food.

Lettie also engages in storytelling in an attempt to redefine her relationship with Katie. In order to contradict Katie's claims that Lettie is her servant, Lettie tells stories about her relationship with her former employer, Miss Delisser, in order to convince Katie she was the woman's friend rather than her servant. She recounts her travels to Italy with Miss Delisser, including a meeting with the pope and eating Italian food like Gungo pepperpot, goat curry, and green bananas. While Katie does not question these details, it is clear to the reader that Lettie is describing Jamaican, rather than Italian food. Likewise, Lettie says, "One time we did go pon one long trip to Merica. Months and months we were dere. We spend time a London, a New York. All over Merica" (261). Lettie's inaccurate geography reveals that her memories are as fantastical as Katie's. While these fantasies partially reflect the conflict between the two women as each attempts to assert dominance, they also signal a shared experience of storytelling. By sharing details about their lives, whether factual or imagined, the women engage in a process of community building with one another.

The women's fantasies eventually give way to storytelling about their personal experiences. In the final act, entitled "The Truth," official documents, the same tool that the women try to use to substantiate their claims for power, reveal each woman's experiences of suffering. Katie finds the birth certificate of Lettie's daughter and accuses her of having a bastard child. In Lettie's struggle to retrieve the document, she discovers a letter from Katie's brother disowning her for eloping with a black man and revealing the fact that Katie's son died in his infancy (271). These revelations lead the women to share more fully their experiences. Lettie discusses her rape by another of Miss Delisser's employees and how Miss Delisser kept her away from her child. Katie explains her

romance with a black childhood friend named Altamont, his presumed death at sea, and her abandonment both by Altamont's family and her own. These stories reveal the suffering behind the women's delusions of grandeur. Although the women's painful stories are shaped by their distinct racial and class positions, their stories reveal the shared suffering they experienced as young women in the racially stratified society of colonial Jamaica. These distinct stories of abandonment lead Katie and Lettie to their current shared experience of marginalization as poor, elderly women in the economically precarious society of postcolonial Jamaica.

The women's recognition of their common suffering leads them to shift from treating each other as adversaries to behaving as allies. At the end of the play, Katie says, “Yuh tink God figot bout we, Christie?” and Lettie replies, “At fi wi age, Lilly, we soon find out” (276). This exchange is significant because the characters begin using the pronoun “we,” signaling the development of their relationship. Furthermore, throughout the play, the women insist on using the names Katie and Lettie to refer to one another, despite the fact that Katie's real name is Lilian and Lettie's real name is Christie. Later, the audience learns that the names Katie and Lettie are in fact projections of other women from the characters' pasts. For example, Lettie is the name of Katie's husband's sister. At the end of the play, however, the women can truly recognize one another by their given names rather than as symbols of a white or black woman from the past. After this exchange, the women sit back to back thinking, a dramatic shift from the frantic battle for space that occupies most of the rest of the work. Then, the boys who previously attacked the house arrive again, and both women move off stage to fight the boys before finally returning to the stage. When they return, Katie says, “Mek dem come. We an dem!” and

Lettie replies, “We an dem” (276). Both by recognizing each other's given name and by working together in order to defend themselves from the boys, the characters demonstrate a dramatic change in their relationship from adversaries to allies.

While the play's ending invokes harmony between the two characters, the use of language alternation avoids an idealistic reading of these women's relationship. Despite their common purpose at the end of the play as well as their shared experiences of suffering that are revealed in the final act, Katie's and Lettie's distinct manners of alternating between Patwa and Standard English mark the continued differences between these characters' racial and class positions. Language alternation allows the characters to come to an agreement about how to share the space of the house, and by extension the space of the postcolonial nation, while still recognizing the profound differences in their histories.

By reading “Mémoires d'île” and “Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine” comparatively, the broad applicability of language alternation strategies emerges. Language alternation is an active strategy in which a writer establishes clear boundaries between languages and creates characters who can switch between these distinct codes with varying levels of facility. The conflicts between Hermance and Aure as well as Katie and Lettie allow for an analysis of the differences that can exist within the position of the strategic mulata offered by Martínez-San Miguel. Beyond her discussion of Creole language use, Martínez-San Miguel argues that pairs of sisters in Caribbean texts often represent the conflict between competing postcolonial projects (*Coloniality of Diasporas* 168). While the pairs of female characters in the novels Martínez-San Miguel addresses offer a choice between distinct national visions, the different visions of the pairs of

characters I address are able to coexist. By situating their pairs of sister or sister-like characters within the same zone of language alternation and negotiation, Césaire, Cumper, and their collaborators offer visions of broad forms of community formation that make space for these women's distinct experiences of race and class. Language alternation does not resolve these differences, but rather offers language as a space where women can strategically emphasize different aspects of their identity in order to carve out narrative space for themselves and their experiences.

These women's strategies of language alternation also remind the reader of the uncertain nature of the borders between languages. In contexts in which linguistic status of a Creole language is readily acknowledged, such as in Martinique, language alternation strategies that clearly mark linguistic difference are less notable. However, in contexts where the status of a Creole language is more controversial, language alternation makes a powerful claim for linguistic distinction. Nevertheless, whether the relationship between a Caribbean Creole and a standard European language is considered as a clear divide or as a continuum, the decisions that literary writers make play an important role in shaping how we understand these relationships. Bringing the perspective of literary multilingualism to the study of Creole language practice allows for an appreciation of language alternation as a vital contemporary literary strategy and as a mode of imagining difference beyond race. By representing language alternation, Césaire, Cumper, and their collaborators acknowledge the continued social stratification of Caribbean Creoles and European languages as well as the potential for individuals from distinct racial and class background to occupy a range of linguistic positions. Approaching multilingualism in these texts as a literary strategy rather than as a given fact allows for a critical

appreciation of the linguistic work done by writers of marginalized languages in
imagining alternative possibilities for linguistic practice and community formation.

Chapter Four: Ethics of Opacity

In the previous two chapters, I considered literary multilingualism primarily from the perspective of the strategies employed by creative writers. In this chapter, I analyze readers' experiences of literary multilingualism, and particularly the difficulty of multilingual texts. As Brian Lennon has established, much multilingual writing is presented to avoid significantly disrupting the monolingual reader's experience of the text (10). Strategies like italics, internal translation, and repetition allow multilingualism to gesture to the foreign while still allowing a monolingual reader to understand most of the text. When writers use multilingualism extensively without providing supports to monolingual readers, the texts they produce tend to only reach a limited readership (Lennon 24). In this chapter, I explore how readers respond to the challenge of multilingual texts that do not offer support to the monolingual reader. Lennon argues that strong plurilingualism, a term which he uses interchangeably with multilingualism, serves as an invitation to language learning. He writes, "Where it is refused, of course, strong plurilingualism's invitation to language learning . . . registers simply as noise" (159). Following Lennon, I consider how readers can engage with language they do not understand without experiencing the text as incomprehensible noise. However, I argue that language learning or fluency is not the only way to approach difficult multilingual texts. Édouard Glissant's writing on opacity offers insight into how readers can engage with a challenging text while acknowledging the limits of their knowledge.

Glissant argues that the literary text inherently creates an opposition between two types of opacity: "the irreducible opacity of the text" and "the always evolving opacity of the author or a reader" (*Poetics of Relation* 115). In this case, opacity is, to some extent,

an inherent condition of the text that intersects both with concerns of monolingual literary analysis, like the impossibility of accessing authorial intention, as well as those of multilingual literary analysis, such as the attempt to identify which texts or aspects of texts are untranslatable. Despite the fact that opacity is continually operating at every level of every literary text, Glissant notes that readers are not generally aware of the opposition between the text's opacity and the self's opacity. However, “Sometimes [the reader] becomes literally conscious of this opposition, in which case he describes the text as 'difficult'” (*Poetics of Relation* 115). This connection between difficulty and opacity problematizes the positions of the readers of a multilingual text.

While, according to Glissant, all texts are characterized by opacity, their difficulty is experienced differently by particular readers, based on factors such as a reader's distance from or familiarity with a particular text, its language, or its context. For many multilingual texts, then, readers' experiences of multilingual opacity are primarily a function of their fluency or lack thereof in the various languages represented in the text. For example, in the case of “*Mémoires d'île*,” monolingual French speakers in the audience would experience the play's use of Creole as opaque, while bilingual Creoleophone and Francophone audience members would experience the use of Creole, like the use of French, as more-or-less transparent.⁶⁸ In the case of these bilingual audience members, the use of multiple languages is not a barrier to comprehension, but rather a validation and creative exploration of lived experiences of multilingualism. In this instance, the text's difficulty for a particular reader, and consequently that reader's

⁶⁸ I mention the performance rather than the written play here, because the written text includes French translations of Creole dialogue in footnotes, while the performed play does not clarify Creole speech for the monolingual French viewer.

experience of multilingual opacity, is minimal if the reader is fluent in all of the languages represented in a particular text.⁶⁹

However, in other literary works, the use of multilingualism does not map as clearly onto a target, local, multilingual audience who experiences the text's languages as relatively transparent, and an external audience that experiences one or more of the text's languages as opaque. For example, Josefina Báez's use of nonstandard spelling, capitalization, and punctuation goes beyond the straightforward inclusion of English and Spanish in order to make her language challenging even for a fluent, bilingual reader. In this chapter, I consider two literary works characterized by this strong, multilingual opacity. M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!* (2008) and Harold Sonny Ladoo's *No Pain Like This Body* (1972) both imagine historical forms of multilingualism that do not entirely correspond to contemporary language communities, and they construct their texts' languages in ways that limit, to varying extents, all readers' access to these languages.⁷⁰ Philip focuses on the earlier historical moment, the 1781 massacre aboard the *Zong* slave ship, so I consider her text first. Then, I analyze Ladoo's novel, which explores the legacies of indentured labor in the language of an Indo-Trinidadian family at the turn of the twentieth century. Both writers use multilingualism to draw attention to histories of forced labor that can be obscured by monolingual perspectives. However, there is no ideal local audience for these texts that would have a relatively unproblematic

⁶⁹ This reader may still experience other aspects of the text as difficult, and, as Glissant notes, the text is always characterized by various degrees of opacity, but in this case the multiplicity of languages does not increase the opacity of the text for fluent readers.

⁷⁰ Both Philip, who was born in Tobago, and Ladoo, originally from Trinidad, write their texts after migrating to Canada. Therefore, these texts could be read from a diasporic perspective that would consider the state of multilingualism in Canada. However, I focus primarily on the Caribbean contexts the texts represent rather than the writers' biography, because both works center on earlier historical migrations to the Caribbean.

relationship with the text's language. This is especially true in the case of *Zong!* which represents a multilingualism beyond the scope of any individual polyglot. Furthermore, both writers combine their multilingualism with other strategies like drawing attention to languages and voices that are not present on the page in order to create opacity even for a hypothetical reader fluent in all of the forms of language that appear in these texts.

By drawing attention to the ways in which these texts pose difficulties for any reader, I do not mean to suggest that readers' distinct linguistic proficiencies and cultural knowledges are irrelevant to their reading experiences. Instead, I argue that these texts invite us to a deeper understanding of opacity as a relationship to the text. While a text's difficulty, and consequently its opacity, is experienced differently depending on a reader's distance from or proximity to the languages of a text, fluency does not resolve the problem of language or historical memory in these texts. Philip's and Ladoo's works ultimately require all readers to acknowledge the distinct limits of their comprehension of a text's language. While linguistic and cultural knowledge can help the reader approach the voices and historical experiences Philip and Ladoo explore, and both writers include paratextual materials that invite the reader into the process of learning about language and history, neither writer permits readers the illusion of transparency or mastery of the text. The question remains, however, of what type of reading methodology the strong, multilingual opacity of these texts demands.

It is important to note that the same fictional devices that create strong, multilingual opacity in these texts also call attention to colonial hierarchies. These texts' refusal to grant transparency dialogues productively with other decolonial perspectives on multilingualism that I have previously explored. For example, Fanon's insight into

differences between the French language's relationship with Creole and its relationship with German points to the asymmetrical nature of colonial linguistic relationships as opposed to the relatively horizontal relationships between local and foreign European languages. Furthermore, Silvio Torres-Saillant demonstrates that Caribbean literary multilingualism serves as a tool both for confronting linguistic alienation and for innovating within a local literary tradition. I consider the strong, multilingual opacity of Philip's and Ladoo's texts as an important dimension of this decolonial conversation surrounding asymmetrical, colonial linguistic relationships. By making their readers conscious of the gaps in their understanding of the texts and their languages, Philip and Ladoo signal that total comprehension is not a necessary component of exposing colonial linguistic hierarchies and calling for their transformation. Therefore, decoloniality is not dependent on transparency, even as decolonial thinkers continually call for the transformation of interpersonal relationships. In fact, as Glissant reminds us, it is impossible to create a relationship of complete transparency with the literary text, and attempts to do so threaten to reproduce the forms of knowledge that produce colonial linguistic hierarchies.

Strong, multilingual opacity offers alternative reading methodologies outside of the search for linguistic transparency, in which readers struggle productively with those elements of the text they find difficult without attempting to neutralize this difficulty through the illusion of transparency. Glissant argues that struggling with difficult writing can serve as a model for ethical relationships with others. This concept develops out of his critique of the way that Western thought demands transparency from the other. He writes, "In this version of understanding the verb to grasp contains the movement of

hands that grab their surroundings and bring them back to themselves. A gesture of enclosure if not appropriation” (*Poetics of Relation* 192). In contrast, he proposes opacity as the acceptance of the other’s difference. He writes, “I thus am able to conceive of the opacity of the other for me, without reproach for my opacity for him. To feel in solidarity with him or to build with him or to like what he does, it is not necessary for me to grasp him. It is not necessary to try to become the other (to become other) nor to ‘make’ him in my image” (*Poetics of Relation* 193). For Glissant, then, the lack of complete understanding creates alternative possibilities for relating to the other without attempting to dominate.

Glissant's writing on opacity offers a different perspective on those elements of Philip's and Ladoo's texts that produce difficulty for particular readers. While their multilingualism does impede easy comprehension, this strategy does not need to be read through Lennon's framework of readability, in which increasing opacity alienates potential readers. Instead, Glissant argues for the ethical value of confronting a text that cannot be easily grasped and accepting its difference without domination. By comparing multilingual strategies shared by Philip's and Ladoo's texts, I consider opacity as a mode of reading multilingual texts that attends to colonial history and its contemporary legacy, while also recognizing those aspects of the work that any particular reader cannot fully access. In this case, Philip's and Ladoo's strong multilingual opacity creates difficulty not only for monolingual readers working within the linguistic paradigms of the nation-state, but also for multilingual readers informed by decolonial perspectives. Despite important differences between these readers' experiences of the texts' multilingualism, a broad range of readers can productively harness opacity as a decolonial reading methodology

for adopting an ethical relationship with a text. Reading from opacity calls the reader to increasing engagement with, yet never total comprehension of, multilingual literary texts.

A Multivocal History of Slavery in *Zong!*

In her long poetic work *Zong!*, M. NourbeSe Philip uses multilingualism to question both the violence of the slave trade and the monolingual colonial discourse that enabled it. Her poems provide alternative perspectives that dispute the official colonial narrative of the 1781 massacre aboard the *Zong* slave ship. When the ship's captain got lost in the Caribbean and supplies, particularly water, were running low, the crew threw more than one hundred Africans overboard, so that the owners could file an insurance claim for loss of property. By using multilingualism to explore the massacre, Philip highlights the disjuncture between the multilingualism inherent in colonial administration and the monolingualism of colonial ideology. The text includes various components that represent a range of perspectives on the event. At the end of the text, Philip reproduces the monolingual legal decision regarding the insurance claim placed by the ship's owners. The body of the text consists of several sections of poetry composed by rearranging and breaking apart the words of the legal decision to form multilingual poems. Alongside the legal decision, the end of the text also includes a glossary as well as an essay by Philip about the text's composition, both of which serve as partial guides for approaching the poetry. In contrast to the monolingualism of colonial documents about the massacre, Philip offers chaotic multilingualism as a productive approach for engaging with the human suffering aboard the *Zong*.

By contrasting the legal document, *Gregson v. Gilbert*, with her multilingual poetry, Philip exposes the limitations of the legal document's colonial, monolingual perspective. An emphasis on monolingualism exposes the failure of this legal decision,

and the judicial system as a whole, to consider the voices of those who died in the massacre. While the justices who write the decision express disagreement surrounding various aspects of the case, these disagreements are at the superficial level of insurance law and do not address alternative voices that would question this narrow focus. The document's legal language allows the justices to avoid fundamental ethical questions about the massacre. Part of the decision reads, "It has been decided, whether wisely or unwisely is not now the question, that a portion of our fellow-creatures may become the subject of property. This, therefore, was a throwing overboard of goods" (211). Philip, who was originally trained as a lawyer before transitioning to her career as a poet, seeks to reveal the inadequacy of legal language to serve justice for the massacre. In the context of Philip's larger project, she suggests that multilingualism can offer alternative perspectives that better address the victims of the massacre.

As Philip breaks apart and reforms the words of the legal decision, her poetry gradually becomes more multilingual, more visually chaotic, and ultimately more difficult for readers. The volume begins with the section "Os" which consists of a series of monolingual poems that rearrange words from the legal decision. One poem juxtaposes phrases from the decisions like "the rest in lives/ drowned/ exist did not/ in themselves" in order to question the decision's assumptions about the slave trade (6).⁷¹ While this section is largely monolingual, multilingualism operates at its margins. Throughout this section, Philip prints a series of African names at the bottom of each page, to represent those thrown overboard. The names are listed under a single horizontal

⁷¹ My reading of the visual elements of *Zong'* is informed by Anjali Nerlekar's analysis of Arun Kolatkar's use of typography in his bilingual poetry.

line, which evokes the surface of the ocean.⁷² Below the previously cited poem, the names “Nobini Zesiro Yaa Isaa Kumbuji” appear (6).⁷³ Philip must invent these names, since no records were kept of the names of the Africans on the ship, and in order to do this, she moves outside of the monolingual legal document to represent possible names of the Africans on board.⁷⁴ In each subsequent section, multilingualism appears in the body of the poetry, which becomes progressively more multilingual. The final section “Ebora,” features distinct pages of poetry layered on top of one another in grayscale, rather than in black and white. Philip claims that this section is the result of an error of her printer, which superimposed the first pages of each section (206). As a result, “Ebora” takes the fracturing of language to an extreme in which the eye often struggles to identify the overlapping letters and syllables. The contrast between the first section “Os,” which is largely monolingual, and the final section “Ebora,” which is largely indecipherable, raises the question of how readers respond to the range of multilingualism represented in the text.

While “Os” and “Ebora” diverge dramatically, the sections between them gradually expose readers to increasing quantities of multilingualism. Throughout these intermediate sections, Philip introduces a variety of poetic voices that raise questions ignored by the legal decision, yet no section grants any reader easy or complete access to

⁷² These names' status as footnote also signals the Africans' positions in the legal decision not as “ratio” or the legal principle at the heart of the decision, but rather as the secondary “dicta” (Philip 199).

⁷³ When Philip performs the *Zong!* poems, she reads the names at the bottom of each page, interrupting the flow of the poetry. In this way, she challenges our understanding of the names' status as inside or outside the poetry (Beguiling Acronym).

⁷⁴ Veronica Austen describes the tension between the English language and African names in the text: “The traditions of the English language itself, namely what letters are most commonly combined to form English words, are shown to be inadequate for the representation of the humanity of these African men, women, and children. From what English word could an African name like Ibunkunle come? Or Mowunmi? Or Wamukota? (74).

these voices. By gradually increasing the multilingualism and typographical complexity of each section, Philip draws readers into engaging the difference of the voices she represents while accepting the impossibility of complete comprehension. “Ferrum,” the last section before “Ebora” in which the text’s multilingualism is taken to its most extreme while still being partially comprehensible, demonstrates the ethical possibilities that emerge from reading the text through a framework of opacity.

In “Ferrum,” Philip creates opacity by representing a variety of voices through multiple languages and distinct scripts. This section’s multilingualism unsettles the monolingual English narrative of *Gregson v. Gilbert* by troubling the boundaries between languages. *Zong!* frequently breaks down language into the units of syllables or individual phonemes, and “Ferrum,” in particular, often obscures these phonemes’ languages of origin. This strategy diverges from standard practices of multilingual literature. For example, Brian Lennon analyzes the typographic conventions of marking text in a second language as foreign and argues that most multilingual literature published in the United States employs standard conventions like italicization and internal translation as strategies for “managing multilingualism” for English-dominant readers (10). While Lennon points to italicization as a marker that makes multilingualism less threatening, “Ferrum” utilizes three scripts: roman, italicized, and cursive, which gesture to polyphony rather than a strict divide between the text’s dominant and foreign language. While English is the primary language of the text, the text’s other languages cannot be contained in a dominant, English-language narrative.

In fact, readers often cannot easily identify if particular syllables represent words from English, another language, or both. While *Gregson v. Gilbert* controls language by

maintaining a particular register of English, Philip's writing embraces the messy overlap between languages.⁷⁵ She situates these syllables in a web of poetic associations that allows them to simultaneously be empty and capable of a multiplicity of meanings. She writes, "*isola// i so la mi/ so la mi fa// so la so/ la this i// s how the so/ ng go/ es*" (135). Based on the immediate context of these lines, the phonemes "so la mi fa" simultaneously gesture to music as pure sonic expression as well as the Italian word for island "isola."⁷⁶ Other immediate associations include the English word "isolate," the Spanish word "sola," the first person pronoun "mi" which resonates in multiple languages, and "ifà" the Yoruba divination practice which is repeated throughout the poem and defined in the glossary. Other connections would arise based on the particular reader's language background. In Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant's manifesto "Éloge de la Créolité" [In Praise of Creoleness], these writers discuss how multilingualism can layer many meanings onto a single word. They write, "The interaction of many languages (the points where they meet and relate) is a polysonic vertigo. There, a single word is worth many" (901). While this statement intersects both with the multiplicity of Bakhtin's heteroglossia and the in-between status of Mignolo's bilanguaging, Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant's "polysonic vertigo" usefully highlights the unit of the individual word which can resonate multilingually. When Philip fractures words into their component parts and juxtaposes them with other languages, she allows individual words

⁷⁵ While the legal document does contain words and phrases in Latin, these inclusions do not undermine the monolingualism of the text. Since these Latin terms have been incorporated into official legal practice in English, they operate within Yildiz's outline of the monolingual paradigm. These Latin phrases serve as a useful reminder that the mere inclusion of words identified as foreign does not mark a deviation from colonial monolingualism.

⁷⁶ While "so la mi fa" gestures to music, rather than a particular language, these syllables are generally linked to European traditions of music education, although their origins are disputed.

or even syllables to take on an excess of meaning at the intersection of multiple languages.

Philip uses the interactions between languages to display contrasting perspectives beyond the limited conflict between the ship's owners and its insurers that was addressed in *Gregson v. Gilbert*. In one passage that voices the perspective of the owners, Philip uses other languages to raise the perspectives of the Africans on the ship. After the lines, "our fort/ unes are/ at s// take," Philip writes, "*les nègres/ sont gens pas//thin//gs pas co/ sa s pas pas*" (134). Rather than the process of clarifying the meaning of foreign-language words through the internal translation that Lennon describes, this phrase uses multilingual repetition for emphasis. Rendered entirely in English, this multilingual citation would read "the negroes/ are people not// thin// gs not th/ ing s not not." The Spanish word "cosas" does not clarify the word "things" through translation, because "things" was already written in the text's primary language. Instead, this statement gathers strength through repetition in other languages. Likewise, the double French negative "pas pas" at the end of the phrase does not produce additional meaning, but rather signals the narrative voice's outrage. By juxtaposing different languages and perspectives, the poetry interrogates ethical questions that are ignored by official colonial discourse in *Gregson v. Gilbert*.

Philip's use of multiple colonial, European languages in this passage is central to her critique of the monolingualism of *Gregson v. Gilbert*. The legal discourse of the document focuses narrowly on the specific case and deliberately sets aside judgment about the slave trade as a whole. While the justices try to pass judgment out of context, Philip does the opposite. Her inclusion of English, Spanish, and French calls readers'

attention to the linguistic structure of colonial power in the Caribbean. (Elsewhere she includes some Portuguese and Dutch as well.) A focus on colonial rather than national languages is relevant here. These languages resonate not only in a local Caribbean context but as global languages of colonial power. By invoking various colonial languages, Philip denounces not only the *Zong* massacre but also English, Spanish, and French participation in the slave trade. By repeatedly emphasizing the multilingual context of the slave trade, Philip connects the specificity of the *Zong* massacre with a broader history of violence across the Caribbean, and she critiques the legal document's attempt to obscure this history through a monolingualism that focuses narrowly on the case at hand.

The glossary at the end of the text, entitled “words and phrases overheard on board the *Zong*,” similarly uses linguistic multiplicity to offer a historical framework for approaching the event in a broader colonial context. This glossary demonstrates linguistic diversity by listing words in fourteen languages including Arabic, Dutch, French, Shona, Spanish, and Yoruba, among others. This representation of multilingualism offers an expansive vision of the actors involved in the events aboard the *Zong*, unlike the legal document, which prioritizes a monolingual English perspective. While *Gregson v. Gilbert* focused on a single, decontextualized incident, the multilingual glossary encourages connections with a larger history of colonialism and slavery. In this way, Philip's multilingualism provides a certain level of clarity that allows readers to analyze both the historical event and the literary text. However, the terms in the glossary do not correspond directly to the foreign language words in the text, and readers regularly encounter words in languages other than English that do not appear in the glossary. As a

result, the glossary is not an accurate tool for interpreting “Ferrum” or the other sections of the text. This tension between guiding readers' interpretation and creating barriers to interpretation characterizes Philip's project as a whole.

While the poetry's multilingualism draws attention to the Africans who were absent from *Gregson v. Gilbert, Zong!* does not present their voices to readers in an easy-to-assimilate way. In fact, much of the critical debate about *Zong!* centers on the question of whether or not the text represents the voices of Africans. For example, Sarah Dowling argues that while Philip gives readers access to the interiority of English speakers in the poem, her use of African languages does not offer similar interiority. She writes, “Rather than phrases that evoke psychic interiors, single words in Yoruba tend to be repeated over and over.” She calls these words “bodily emissions” rather than expressions of interiority (Dowling, n.p.). While this observation accurately describes the section entitled “Sal,” it does not explain “Ferrum,” in which African languages become entangled in phrases with European ones. Dowling rightly points out that since Philip includes limited fragments of the speech of Africans, she does not produce a reparative reading in which those voices silenced aboard the *Zong* fully reveal their perspectives. However, this difficulty does not signify an absence of African voices. Although African voices are difficult to access in the text, Philip includes important moments of the interiority of African characters and invites readers to engage with their use of language. The difficulty of these passages, however, is central to the ethical demands of Philip's project as a whole, because they remind readers of the effort required to engage with difference.

By making African voices difficult to access, yet providing some clues for interpretation, Philip encourages readers to work in order to search for meaning in the

poem multilingually. In one passage Philip writes, “me *o oni* // me be kin/ g me i // as/k you sp// are *iya omo* / me i / pa // y gui/ nea for *omo* me i sa // ve the / m” (134). This passage, which incorporates both European and African languages, demands significant interpretive effort, particularly on the part of readers unfamiliar with Yoruba. The English-dominant passage is interrupted with words in Yoruba that are necessary for comprehension. If a reader who lacks knowledge of Yoruba chooses not to consult the glossary, he or she will be unable to understand the passage monolingually. If this reader does consult the glossary, it will provide some directions for interpretation, including that “iya” could mean either mother or suffering based on the use of accents, which are not included in the body of the poem and that “omo” means child. The glossary encourages a decoding practice, which allows readers to emerge with a partial narrative involving a king’s attempt to purchase the freedom of a mother and child. However, the multiple meanings of “iya” and the absence of a definition of the word “oni” prevent a monolingual reader’s total comprehension of the passage. However, it is not only the monolingual English reader who cannot fully comprehend the passage. Even a reader fluent in Yoruba cannot fully access this voice or other African voices in the text due to the limited and fragmentary nature of Philip’s inclusion of Yoruba and other African languages. This limit to readers’ understanding is central to the ethics of multilingualism in the text. Philip repeatedly insists that the story of the *Zong* “cannot be told, yet must be told” (198). Her multilingual aesthetic encourages readers to try to decipher the poem, yet, regardless of their linguistic proficiencies, accept the ultimate impossibility of assigning a single interpretation to the work as a whole or even a short passage.

These limits to readers' comprehension offer insight into the literary dimensions of Glissant's thinking about opacity. While Glissant's theorization of opacity as interpersonal relation has been most influential, the idea has its roots in literary analysis. Neal Allar explains how Glissant first theorized opacity in a literary context through his readings of Faulkner's work, especially *Absalom, Absalom!*. Glissant was inspired by the ways in which Faulkner resisted transparency when narrating black characters, a move that called for alternative ways of relating to the literary text other than through identification (Allar 49). In *Zong!*, Philip's opaque multilingualism does not produce difficulty for its own sake, but rather a call for readers to occupy an uncomfortable relationship with the voices of the text. Veronica Austen writes, "It would be easy enough to conclude that the difficulty of Philip's text is meant to cause disorientation from which readers cannot escape . . . However, there is a danger in assuming that the difficulty of a text, its inaccessibility, is its meaning. Such an assumption lets readers be passive, if not lazy" (64-65). I agree with Austen's assessment that the difficulty of *Zong!* is at once a challenge and an invitation to readers. By gradually drawing readers into the text's opacity through sections of increasing complexity and providing partial tools for interpretation such as the glossary, Philip encourages readers to do the challenging work of engaging with multiple languages, complex poetic form, and the history of the slave trade. *Zong!* does not offer the satisfaction of "grasping" the poetic voices or the historical event; instead, it offers a model for building solidarity without complete information.

Crucially, the opaque literary work does not shut readers out of the text, but rather invites readers to a participatory experience. Allar highlights this openness in his

description of how opacity is more than the opposite of transparency. He writes, “opacity not only protects the subject from the invasive grasp of (neo)colonial thought but also, more affirmatively, invites readers to join the poet on equal footing in the process of sense-making. It is this kind of collective poetics, a collectivity created in opacity, that Glissant imagines in his broader world vision of Relation and Tout-Monde” (43). In *Zong!*, readers experience this invitation to sense-making through Philip’s reflection on the writing process that appears at the end of the book. She writes, “[I] find myself trying to find reason in the language that I myself have fractured and fragmented and yet being dissatisfied when the poem becomes too comprehensible . . . The ones I like best are those where the poem escapes the net of complete understanding - where the poem is shot through with glimmers of meaning” (192). Readers share with Philip the process of creating meaning within the fractured language of the poems, as well as the impossibility of settling on a single meaning.

Philip views this instability of language as a productive metaphor for the chaos of the slave trade. The orderly monolingualism of the legal document fails to confront the underlying history of the massacre. While Philip’s multilingual poems do not offer mastery, their instability provides a more productive framework for engaging with the human suffering aboard the *Zong*. Philip writes:

The ultimate question on board the *Zong* is what happened? Could it be that language happened? The same letters in the same order mean different things in different languages: *ague* and *ague* — the first English, the second Yoruba. The former meaning bodily shaking in illness, the latter, to fast. Take a letter away and a new word in a different language is born. Add a letter and the word loses meaning. The loss of language and meaning on board the *Zong* levels everyone to a place where there is, at times, no distinction between languages — everyone, European and African alike, has reverted, it appears, to a state of pre-literacy. (205-206)

The linguistic process Philip describes here gestures towards the linguistic conflict out of which pidgin and creole languages emerge, but she directs readers' attention to an earlier moment before the negotiation of creolization, when language is still incomprehensible. The process Philip describes here does not imagine monolingual subjects who cannot communicate with one another. It is not simply the language of the other that becomes opaque, but also each reader's own language or languages. The intersection of languages and syllables in *Zong!* does not attempt to clarify the linguistic confusion that Philip imagines on board the ship. Instead, Philip reproduces this confusion and encourages readers to work with opacity in order to confront both the *Zong* massacre and the broader history of the slave trade in the Caribbean.

By considering the relationship between multilingualism and opacity, literary multilingualism emerges not simply as an authorial strategy but also as an active mode of reading. By reading multilingually, the audience of *Zong!* can engage critically with the history of colonial multilingualism in the Caribbean, but this historical framework does not make the text clear. Even a hypothetical polyglot reader, fluent in all the languages represented in *Zong!*, would be unable to translate its multilingualism into a comprehensible form where its language can be grasped. All readers come to the text from a position of distance, which might vary based on their linguistic backgrounds, but cannot be overcome by linguistic knowledge or translation. The text's opacity then, is not a problem that can be resolved with language learning or translation, because this framework seeks to address failures of communication that go deeper than a question of clarity of meaning. Like in the decolonial translation perspectives discussed in chapter one, reading opacity calls not for minimizing difference by creating transparency, but

rather for engaging difference as a fundamental component of shared political and literary projects. These texts' opacity, then, creates an opportunity for readers to practice ethical engagement from a position that values difference instead of attempting to erase it.

Opaque Indo-Caribbean Multilingualism in *No Pain Like This Body*

Although Philip's text employs a uniquely high level of multilingualism, the active strategy of multilingual reading examined in the previous section can be extended to texts whose multilingualism is subtler. Harold Sonny Ladoo's *No Pain Like This Body*, which incorporates less linguistic multiplicity than *Zong!*, is not usually read through the framework of multilingualism. While many critics refer to language issues in passing, I consider the novel's multilingualism as a framework for approaching the text as a whole. By reading *No Pain Like This Body* alongside *Zong!*, I argue that opacity serves as a useful framework for reading Caribbean texts with a wide range of multilingual strategies.

Throughout *No Pain Like this Body*, the interior lives of Ladoo's characters are largely inaccessible. Part of this difficulty comes from the language of the text. The characters, an Indo-Trinidadian family at the turn of the twentieth century speak Hindi as well as a version of Creole that is constructed to emphasize its difference from Standard English. However, opacity in the text goes beyond the question of linguistic comprehension. Even the third-person narration, which voices the perspective of the children in a mostly Standard English, does not provide transparent access to these characters' interior lives. The novel details a litany of suffering in the lives of Ma and Pa and their children: Balraj, Sunaree, Rama, and Panday. The children experience violence at the hands of one another and their drunk, abusive father. When fleeing their father, the children are caught outside in a rainstorm. Rama subsequently falls ill, is bitten by a

poisonous scorpion, and ultimately dies in the hospital. Meanwhile, Pa prevents Ma from visiting her son. Ladoo's narration of these events situates readers in an uncomfortable territory of distance from the characters and their language. Each reader's task, then, becomes the negotiation of those aspects of the text's language that are accessible and those that are closed.

An attention to colonial history offers a potential framework for approaching the characters and their language, yet there is a disconnect between monolingual colonial history and the characters' multilingual lived experiences of suffering. The paratextual materials printed before the body of the novel situate the narrative in an official history that points to colonization. The narrative takes place in the small rural area of Tola Trace on Carib Island, a thinly fictionalized version of Trinidad, in August 1905. The introductory materials provide information about Carib Island's area, chief exports, and history: "Discovered by Columbus in 1498. Taken over by the British in 1797. East Indians came to Carib Island to work on the sugar plantations from 1845 to 1917" (2). The broad perspective and distant tone of this material contrasts with the following two pages which feature a detailed hand-drawn map of the area that highlights such personal landmarks as "House of Ma and Pa" as well as a rough sketch of a young boy, presumably the protagonist Rama (3-4). The disjuncture between these two sets of introductory material prepares readers to engage both of these distinct modes of understanding the characters' experiences.

The history of colonialism and indentured labor is often obscured throughout the novel, in which the intensity of the characters' suffering draws attention to the local and the present moment rather than to broad historical frameworks. However, their suffering

is linked to historical structures of colonization and indentured labor. Rates of violence, especially against women, were particularly high among indentured Indians in Trinidad and Guyana. This violence has been attributed a combination of factors including the brutality of plantation life and the relative scarcity of Indian women relative to men. While the rates of violence declined as Indians moved off plantations and settled in peasant communities, domestic violence continued to be widespread (Brereton 7).⁷⁷ The characters of Ladoo's novel, who live in a rural community near a plantation, but are not indentured at the time of the narrative, inherit this legacy. Pa's abuse of the children also relates to a pattern of severe corporal punishment linked to indenture. These patterns of domestic violence have been widely documented in Indo-Caribbean literature from the mid-twentieth century to the present (Morgan and Youssef 137). As a foundational text of this tradition, Ladoo's novel engages with the connection between individual experiences of violence and the historical context of indenture.

While this context is visible to readers, the characters are distanced from the way that indenture shapes their experiences. In fact, the characters cannot distinguish between the sources of their suffering, frequently blurring together Pa, God, spirits, violent weather, and dangerous animals into an amalgamation of powers beyond the children's control. Notably, none of these sources of suffering refer to the structures of indenture or colonization. Instead, the children experience a combination of divine power and Pa as the source of their pain. One of the children makes this connection explicit, when he says, "Pa stupid like God" (11). This futile protest against parental and divine authority shows

⁷⁷ Gaiutra Bahadur provides offers a similar assessment of the causes of violence against women that highlights the role of plantation violence, in contrast to colonial accounts that prioritized cultural and religious factors among Indians (123).

how the children are terrified by both of these forces, yet lack a means to contest their situation in life. While the novel often conflates the power of God and Pa, they are not indistinguishable. For example, Ma and the children often find themselves “looking and praying to God to keep Pa away from the house” (15). In this case, the children appeal to the power of God in order to protect themselves from the arbitrary power of Pa. However, God’s authority shows itself to be equally arbitrary. During a graphic scene of Pa’s abuse of Ma, Ladoo writes, “God was only watching with his big eyes from heaven; he was not even trying to help Ma a little” (14). The children’s frequent references to God’s location in the sky further allies God to other dangerous elements, particularly serious weather events. Bad things literally fall from the sky in this novel where rain, lightening, collapsing roofs, and falling scorpions exacerbate the family’s suffering as a result of poverty and domestic violence.

Under conditions of intense suffering, Ma and the children struggle to assign blame to the cause of their pain. Their inability to successfully assign blame is most tragic when Ma tries to confront Pa for his role in Rama’s death. Pa shifts the responsibility to God, responding, “I tell you God kill him” (63). However, when the community arrives for Rama’s funeral, Pa blames Ma for the child’s death: “Ma spoilt him. He got sick and died because he was too harden. The villagers drank rum and listened, and they felt sorry for him” (64). Throughout the duration of Rama’s funeral scene, which occupies most of the second half of the novel, Pa, who is the clearest perpetrator of violence in the novel, presents himself as a victim and enjoys the community’s support.

In this context where even the most concrete acts of violence evade recognition, the question remains of how to bridge the gap between the characters' immediate suffering and the historical context of indentured servitude. Perspectives from postcolonial trauma theory offer a potential approach to this question. Stef Craps calls for addressing the gap between trauma theory's traditional Eurocentric focus on particular events and their effects on individuals and a postcolonial perspective that "can account for and respond to collective, ongoing, everyday forms of traumatizing violence" (4).⁷⁸ Abigail Ward's reading of the novel through a trauma theory lens offers an example of these connections. She analyzes the novel's detached, child-like narrative voice as indicative of "a failure to grasp traumatic events as they unfold" (133). These traumas include both the characters' immediate experiences of domestic abuse as well as the broader legacies of the system of indentured servitude. By considering the ways in which Ladoo distances his characters from both their most immediate suffering as well as the history of indenture, I argue for the importance of pursuing the connections between these two layers of experience, even if they are unclear to the characters.

The novel's multilingualism offers a productive avenue for exploring the intersection between the specificity of the characters' suffering and the historical framework of indenture. The novel features multilingualism at two main levels: through individual words and phrases and through contrasts between the languages of dialogue and narration. Ladoo uses Creole as the language of dialogue, with an emphasis on the diverse linguistic origins of the characters' vocabulary. The dialogue contrasts with a more standardized form of English in the narration. The presence of Hindi further

⁷⁸ Irene Visser provides further insight into postcolonial critiques of trauma studies, highlighting the potential of trauma studies to dehistoricize and depoliticize experiences of trauma (106).

contributes to the novel's multilingualism.⁷⁹ While the multilingualism of *No Pain Like this Body* is not as extensive as that of *Zong!*, Ladoo's use of language reveals similar connections with the linguistic history of colonization. By approaching the text from a multilingual perspective, readers can see how the language that the characters experience as local, and often monolingual reveals a multilingual history of colonization.

The glossary of *No Pain Like This Body*, like the glossary of *Zong!*, highlights the historical dimension of language formation. The section of the introductory materials that outlines Carib Island's history ends with "Also see Glossary," which encourages a connection between the historical framework of indenture and the language used in the text (3). Unlike *Zong!*, *No Pain Like This Body* does not organize its glossary by language of origin. Instead, it provides several pages of terms with European, African, Indian, and Caribbean origins in a single list. Within many of the terms' definitions, however, Ladoo provides information about etymology that maps local language onto the historical context of colonization. In his discussion of place names in the novel, Sten Pultz Moslund argues that although the novel's place names gesture to Indian or European locations, for example "Sancho Estate" or "Rajput Road," the characters do not experience these places as a "there" of elsewhere, but rather as "here," or local space (200). In the glossary, Ladoo makes explicit the ways in which the local language of the characters points toward other locations that are necessary for understanding the characters' local context.

The glossary's explanations of different spirits illuminate the gap between the characters' suffering and their lack of historical awareness. Given the relatively short

⁷⁹ Ladoo identifies the Indian language spoken by his characters as Hindi. Linguist Lise Winer explains that recent research has revealed that indentured laborers in Trinidad primarily spoke Bhojpuri, a language that is closely related to Hindi ("Indic Lexicon" 7). However, since the language is locally known as Hindi, I follow both the literature and other researchers who continue to label the language as Hindi (Winer, "Standardization" 244).

length of the glossary, it includes a notable number of entries about spirits, one of the major sources of suffering for the young characters. Many of these glossary entries provide etymological as well as historical information, which gestures towards an intelligibility that is frustrated in other parts of the novel. For example, the entry for *jables* reads, “(corruption of the French term *diablesse*, or female devil). A witch or agent of the devil, who takes the shape of a beautiful woman” (128). Likewise, the entry for *lagahu* reads, “(corruption of the French term *loup garou*, or werewolf). A living person who has made contact with the devil” (128). These entries provide background information about the spirits, which is likely known by the characters, as well as the etymology of particularly local forms of speech, which is knowledge that the young narrators do not possess. Furthermore, the glossary provides information about place of origin for many other spirits, which, although not purely etymological, still gestures towards linguistic history. The glossary informs readers that the *duenne* is “a spirit of African origin” and the *churail* is “a spirit of purely Indian origin” (128, 127). The children, who are equally terrified of these spirits, seem unaware of their differing origins. By specifying the origins of these spirits, Ladoo allows readers to begin to disentangle the history behind the suffering that the characters experience as immediate and localized.

The glossary further emphasizes history by providing background information in the definitions of Hindi words. For example, the definition for *pandit* reads, “a Hindu priest. Only a Brahmin (one who belongs to the highest caste) can validly become a Hindu priest. During the period 1845 to 1917, very few Brahmins came to Carib Island from India. Many men of lower caste were known to go to other villages and set

themselves up as Brahmin priests, thereby escaping the hard work on the plantations” (129). By providing this context here and in the definitions of other words like “orhni” and “chamar,” Ladoo gives readers a historical framework to understand not only these individual terms, but also the work as a whole. These terms are not simply foreign language words that require translation for comprehension. Instead, local uses of language are inscribed in a history of violence that allows readers to center colonization and indenture in a work that otherwise obscures this context.

The glossary's references to the plantation serve a similar function. The sugar cane plantation is largely absent from the narrative as a whole, which takes place on small rice plots. However, the plantation permeates the definitions in the glossary. The definitions of terms that are obviously related to the plantation setting, like “cutlass,” as well as those that relate to an Indian context, like “pandit” and “chamar,” reference sugar cane production. These references suggest that sugar cane is necessary to understanding the text's language, even those terms that are not anchored to the plantation. By centering the plantation, the glossary points to the structural conditions that led to the formation of the characters' local forms of speech. The glossary's occasional references to the plantation, like the relatively limited quantity of multilingualism in the body of the text, effectively signal colonial histories that might otherwise be invisible.

By attending to the individual words featured in the glossary, I aim to highlight the potential value of what Brian Lennon calls “weak multilingualism.” Lennon refers to the use of occasional foreign-language words or phrases as “weak multilingualism” in contrast to a higher level of multilingual content, or “strong multilingualism” (17). This contrast between strong and weak suggests that multilingualism becomes more disruptive

as its amount increases. However, by comparing *Zong!* and *No Pain Like this Body*, I argue that although these texts differ dramatically in the quantity of their multilingualism, their distinct uses of multilingualism serve a similar purpose. While in *Zong!*, the monolingualism of official, colonial documents obscured colonial history, in *No Pain Like This Body*, this history is obscured by the speech of the characters, who experience their language as monolingual. On the one hand, this multilingualism could be considered particularly weak, since it can be experienced as monolingual. Foreign-language vocabulary is not italicized, and the words featured in the glossary are assimilated into the speech of the characters. On the other hand, the glossary allows readers to infuse multilingualism into seemingly monolingual moments. This use of the glossary employs what Naoki Sakai calls “an analytic of bordering” to draw attention to the unclear nature of the separations we draw between languages (71). By engaging this analytic of bordering in texts like *No Pain Like this Body* as well as in *Zong!*, multilingualism can provide a historical framework for analysis regardless of the quantity of multilingual vocabulary.

While the glossary allows readers a certain level of comprehension of the text, the other types of multilingualism in the novel create opacity. Like in *Zong!* the glossary of *No Pain Like This Body* is a partial tool, one which does not aim to create transparency for readers. Although the glossary can assist readers in interpreting particular words in the characters’ speech, much of Ladoo’s language is constructed in a way that deliberately distances any reader, although to differing degrees depending on a particular reader’s linguistic proficiency. Both by distinguishing his use of language from Standard English

and by occasionally not representing dialogue on the page, Ladoo, like Philip, challenges readers to engage with the text despite the impossibility of easy comprehension.

The primary way that Ladoo creates opacity is through the Creole speech of his characters. While I address the literary representation of Creole languages more fully in the previous chapter, “Creole Code-Switching,” in this reading, I focus on the strategies Ladoo uses in order to make his characters’ language opaque to readers. Trinidadian English Creole has never been formally standardized, and at the time Ladoo was writing, there were even fewer norms for its transcription. Furthermore, Ladoo’s novel represents an earlier historical moment, during a transformation from Trinidadian French Creole to Trinidadian English Creole, as well as a rural, Indian community comprised of many Hindi speakers (Winer, “Standardization” 244). Therefore, the speech of Ladoo’s characters would have differed substantially from later, more urbanized accounts of Trinidadian English Creole. While a comprehensive analysis of the literary representation of Trinidadian English Creole is beyond the scope of this project, my aim is to compare Ladoo with two of his major predecessors in Indo-Trinidadian literature, V.S. Naipaul and Sam Selvon. By examining how Ladoo’s Creole diverges from that of these earlier figures, I argue that Ladoo constructs a version of Creole that is particularly opaque to the Standard English reader. It is important to note here that the Standard English reader is not exclusively a foreign audience. Given the fact that the Trinidadian education system operates in English as well as the relatively limited number of texts representing Trinidadian Creole when Ladoo was writing in seventies, even Creoleophone Trinidadian readers have greater familiarity with Standard English texts than with Creole ones (Singh

93).⁸⁰ This is not to suggest that the differences between local and foreign audiences are irrelevant, but rather to draw attention to the ways in which opaque Creole writing problematizes comprehension for a range of audiences.

Since Creole languages were changing dramatically during the mid-twentieth century, Trinidadian writers of this time period varied widely in their representation of Trinidadian speech. There was no neutral or standardized representation of Creole. Instead, each writer developed a version that fit his or her project by theorizing diverse relationships between the language of their characters and Standard English.⁸¹ The representation of Creole was further complicated by the fact that Trinidadian English Creole has historically been considered as “broken English” rather than as a distinct language, an attitude which has only begun to shift towards the end of the twentieth century (Winer, “Standardization” 240). V.S. Naipaul and Sam Selvon, two of the most prominent early innovators of Trinidadian Creole, primarily signaled the difference between Creole and English through syntactic variation. For example, in *Miguel Street* (1959), Naipaul writes, “I said to my mother, ‘Let we go back to Port of Spain’” (222). In this novel, the speech of Naipaul’s characters differs from his Standard English narration through its syntax, while there is no orthographical difference between these forms of language. Likewise, in *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), Selvon relies mainly on syntactic

⁸⁰ George Lang reminds us that although monolingual speakers of Creole exist, readers and writers of Creole generally come to literacy through European languages (*Entwisted Tongues* 287). This observation suggests that opaque representations of Creole languages also create distance for Creole speakers, although to a different extent than for non Creoleophone readers.

⁸¹ Sam Selvon, whose representation of language differs substantially from spoken Trinidad English Creole, says in an interview that he used “a modified Trinidadian dialect.” He explains, “The modified version in which I write my dialect may be a manner of extending the language. It may be called artificial and fabricated. The way I treat the language is not the way it is spoken in Jamaica, or Barbados, or Trinidad either, for that matter” (Fabre 67). While other writers worked to represent Trinidadian speech more closely, they took part in a similar creative process to Selvon.

variation. Selvon, who uses creolized language both at the level of dialogue and narration, begins the novel: “One grim winter evening when it had a kind of unrealness about London, with a fog sleeping restlessly over the city and the lights showing in the blur as if is not London at all but some strange place on another planet, Moses Aloetta hop on a number 46 bus” (7).⁸² This introductory sentence, like the rest of the text, is easily intelligible to a reader who is unfamiliar with Creole. However, certain constructions deviate from Standard English. For example, Selvon uses the word “unrealness,” which, although it is not used in Standard English, is made up of morphemes familiar to a Standard English reader. Furthermore, his uses of “it had” instead of the Standard English “there was,” and the omission of the “it” in the phrase “as if is not” cause no major challenge for an outside reader. Syntactic creolization, rather than lexical or orthographical creolization, produces relatively easy accessibility for a non-Creoleophone reader (Buzelin, n.p.). These deviations, then, although they surprise a broader audience, are largely transparent to a non-Creoleophone reader.

Ladoo, on the other hand, represents Creole speech using distinct orthography, an aesthetic choice that produces greater opacity for a range of readers. A discussion between the siblings reads:

‘Sunaree I goin to kick you! Where de bag is?’
 ‘De bag in de wadder bredder.’
 ‘Wot it doin in de wadder?’
 ‘It not doin notten.’
 ‘Well pick up dat bag and open it.’
 ‘Oright.’ (6)

⁸² I say “creolized language” rather than Creole here, since Selvon’s language aims to be close to Standard English.

This passage features some syntactic elements of Creole speech, including the lack of the verb “to be” in the “de bag in de wadder.” However, the creolization is primarily phonetic, and therefore represented through orthography that differs from Standard English. Some of these examples are familiar to the Standard English reader, for example, the elision of *g* in “doin.” However, most of Ladoo’s orthographic choices are more dramatic. In this passage, he uses *d* or *dd* rather than *th* or *t* in words like “de” and “wadder.” In addition to these different representations of consonants, he also diverges from Standard English in his use of vowels, which can pose a greater challenge for a Standard English reader, such as in the case of “wot” and “bredder.” Ladoo’s use of divergent spellings not only creates difficulty for readers, particularly non-Creoleophone ones; it also theorizes a relationship between Creole and Standard English, highlighting sound as the primary way of understanding the difference between them.

Ladoo's focus on sound puts his work in conversation with debates about how to valorize Caribbean practices of orality both in written literary production and broader discussions about cultural production.⁸³ Kamau Brathwaite's *History of the Voice* reveals this two-pronged interest in oral expression. Brathwaite laments the inability of standard, written English to express Caribbean experience by focusing on sound, writing “We haven't got the syllables, the syllabic intelligence to describe the hurricane” (8). He proposes nation language, conceptualized through oral traditions such as the calypso, as an alternative to an individualistic model of reading (18).⁸⁴ Nevertheless, one of

⁸³ These discussions about the role of orality in literary study are not limited to the Caribbean. For example, Caroline Levine argues that world literature scholars' grounding in print-based institutions like publishing and the university have led scholars to ignore orality, even in texts that originally circulated as oral performances (217). Levine, among other scholars, argues for increased critical attention to oral creation.

⁸⁴ As discussed in the previous chapter, Brathwaite's definition of nation language is not synonymous

Brathwaite's primary interests remains how oral language is represented in written production. He writes, that it is “inconceivable that any Caribbean poet writing today is not going to be influenced by this submerged/emerging culture . . . [they] are recognizing that it is essential that they use the resources which have always been there, but which have been denied to them—and which they have sometimes themselves denied” (42). Therefore, Brathwaite does not conceive of orality as incompatible with written literary production but rather as a creative field to be valued both on its own terms and as a resource to be used in writing. Ladoo is clearly engaging in a similar project to that of Brathwaite as well as other writers like Selvon who diverge from the conventions of standard, written English in order to explore marginalized perspectives. What is interesting about Ladoo's work, particularly in its historical context, is how he engages orality as a source of opacity.

Nevertheless, the question of the role of this opacity remains. In *Zong!*, Philip's linguistic difficulty served to demand interpretive effort from readers to reckon with a traumatic history. While a similar demand also operates in *No Pain Like this Body*, this opacity serves an additional function. By emphasizing the differences between Creole and Standard English, Ladoo contributes to the preservation of Creole speech as distinct from the dominant language. Glissant, writing about the linguistic conflicts of the French Caribbean offers insight into the stakes of representing Creole speech as distinct from standard forms of the dominant European language. He writes, “From the perspective of the conflict between Creole and French, in which one has thus far evolved at the expense

with Creole, because it emphasizes African elements in language that might otherwise be considered closer to English than to Creole in a continuum model of linguistic difference. However, his interest in exploring linguistic difference in writing and speech that otherwise appears very close to Standard English offers valuable insight into Ladoo's use of language whether it is categorized as Creole or nation language.

of the other, we can state that the only possible strategy is to make them *opaque* to each other. To develop everywhere, in defiance of a universalizing and reductive humanism, the theory of specifically opaque structures” (*Caribbean Discourse* 133). In this context, the opacity of Ladoo’s language, like that of writers such as Ina Césaire and Patricia Cumper, can be read as a multilingual strategy that does not only challenge readers but also protects marginalized forms of language from being subsumed by the dominant language. Whereas Selvon's representation of Trinidadian speech allows for a seamless blending of Creole and English, Ladoo, like Cumper, affirms linguistic difference.

While Ladoo’s text creates opacity between the speech of his characters and standard English, the narrative voice problematizes a diglossic division between English and Creole. First of all, the simplicity of the narrative voice counters some of the distance between the two levels of the text. The narrator is never specified, but the voice corresponds to the collective consciousness of the children. The narration employs Standard English syntactical and orthographic conventions, but it does not represent an educated, formal voice like that of Naipaul’s narrator. Ladoo's narrator describes the characters: “Rama and Panday were eight years old. Twins. They were naked” (5). The brevity of these declarative sentences produces a unique narrative voice, which does not express mastery over the characters and their dialogue, but rather contributes to readers' experience of disorientation through sparse narration. Furthermore, the use of sentence fragments like “Twins” demonstrates that the narrative voice does not prioritize standardized style, but rather the rhythm of narration. The passage continues: “Both of them were running behind Sunaree. As they ran they kicked up water and soiled Sunaree’s dress. Sunaree turned around. She was vexed and her face looked like a rain

cloud” (5). Even these longer sentences maintain a sparse, declarative style. In addition, the rhythmic quality of this passage highlights the narrative voice’s oral dimension.

While texts like *Miguel Street* represent Creole as the language of speech and Standard English as the language of writing, *No Pain Like this Body* also uses oral strategies to represent both Creole and its more standardized English narration.

The pervasive use of onomatopoeia in the narration further emphasizes sound and strengthens the links between the novel’s English narration and Creole dialogue. Ladoo writes, “Balraj was afraid. He knew Pa was going to beat him real bad. *Crax crax cratax doom doommm doomed!* the thunder rolled (10). These onomatopoeias primarily describe natural phenomena and make visible the threat that dangerous weather poses for Ladoo’s vulnerable characters. Furthermore, these passages draw parallels between the violence of the thunder, and the violence of Pa who will beat Balraj. This is part of a larger narrative strategy to correlate human and natural violence, which emphasizes the various forms of suffering experienced by Ladoo’s characters. These onomatopoeias also extend Ladoo’s phonetic representation of Creole. For example, he writes, “His teeth were hitting each other as dry bamboo twigs *toorot toorot tat tat toorot*. He breathed *hoosh hash hoosh hash* as a carpenter’s saw” (19). In these passages, Ladoo combines words in different patterns to represent the distinct rhythms of these sounds, like “*Crax crax cratax doom doommm doomed!*” which represents the rising intensity of thunder and contrasts with the steady alternation of “*hoosh hash hoosh hash*” that represents the back-and-forth of a carpenter’s saw. Although these onomatopoeias fit the simple style of the narration and its often-straightforward similes, they show complex processes of phonetic representation that contribute to Ladoo’s sound-based representation of Creole.

While Ladoo's use of Creole and English play with readers' comprehension, alternating between deceptively transparent and more opaque, his use of Hindi often becomes completely inaccessible, not just for monolingual English readers, but for any reader. Throughout the text, Ladoo includes Hindi words that are integrated into the children's speech. Since these words are featured in the glossary, they are easily accessible to any reader. However, Ladoo also references the Hindi spoken by many adults in the community that the young narrators cannot fully understand. Ladoo writes, "Ma and Nanny began to speak in Hindi. Balraj, Sunaree, and Panday couldn't understand too well, but they knew what Ma and Nanny were talking about: they were talking about the rain and life; the rain and the thunder; the rain and the wind; the rain and the darkness; the rain and the past, and about the rain and the future; and about life and death" (37). While the Hindi is not visible on the page here, this extradiegetic multilingualism contributes to the novel's opacity. Readers shares the children's experiences of partial comprehension of this conversation. Even a reader fluent in Hindi cannot access what the characters are saying, because the Hindi speech is not reproduced on the page, but rather filtered through the children's partial understanding of the language. This passage signals linguistic difference in a way that diverges from more commonly analyzed thematic uses of multilingualism, like Elke Sturm-Trigonakis' "metamultilingualism," in which the author represents dialogue in the text's dominant language, but then notifies readers that the conversation takes place in another language (85). Ladoo's use of Hindi, however, disrupts the process of easy comprehension, perhaps even more fully than by reproducing Hindi speech, which some readers could access

fluently. By mixing deceptively simple narration with the inaccessibility of Hindi, Ladoo, like Philip, imposes a limit on the readers' comprehension of the text.

While Philip explicitly theorizes the ways her work resists comprehension, Ladoo's novel provides less of a guide about how to engage with its opacity. However, his work shares the tension between multilingualism that invites interpretation by signaling colonial history and multilingualism that distances readers through opaque or even inaccessible language. In Dionne Brand's introduction to Ladoo's novel, she calls it, "a novel that strips its reader of sentimentality of any kind – pity or superiority. It is a novel unconcerned with anything but truth-telling" (xx). Truth does not signal comprehension here. Instead, this "truth" forces readers into an uncomfortable relationship with the characters' pain. One of the most striking lines in the novel is when the children's grandfather Nanna consoles eight-year-old Panday after the death of his twin brother Rama by telling him "how dead people were the best people, because they couldn't harm anyone. But living people were worse than cats and dogs" (80). Coming from one of the most sympathetic characters in the text, this assertion is particularly unexpected. The child responds simply: "I know dat Nanna" (80). The multilingualism of the text offers a model for how to approach these characters and their pain. The novel's opacity encourages readers to work towards solidarity, informed by an attention to the history of colonization and indentured labor, but ultimately without the satisfaction of "grasping" the characters or their suffering. The novel calls for a reading methodology that engages opacity.

Reading from Opacity: Alternative Approaches to Literary Multilingualism

Glissant's perspective on reading from a position of opacity offers insight into debates in world literature and translation studies about how to approach texts

characterized by strong, multilingual opacity like Philip's and Ladoo's, as well as texts that are more broadly experienced as "difficult" by specific readers or groups of readers. In particular, a focus on opacity attends to those aspects of a text that deliberately close off readers. While other reading methodologies approach these difficult aspects of the text as problems to be solved, opacity allows for an appreciation of these aspects of the text as opportunities to develop new textual and interpersonal relationships.

The value of reading from a position of opacity is particularly apparent when it is considered alongside reading methodologies offered by prominent comparatists like David Damrosch and Emily Apter, who both advocate reading from a position of mastery. Perhaps the most compelling feature of opacity is that it does not require the critic to remain detached from a literary work and its context. In this way, opacity contrasts with David Damrosch's vision, which emphasizes the importance of reading from a critical distance. Damrosch writes, "A work of world literature has its fullest life, and its greatest power, when we can read it with a kind of *detached engagement*, informed but not confined by a knowledge of what the work would likely mean in its original time and place, even as we adapt it to our present context and purposes" (*What Is* 277). Damrosch argues that criticism of world literature is most effective when the critic is removed from text's initial context, and throughout his work, Damrosch consistently privileges analysis by the outside reader. He is particularly interested in the recoveries, often through European archaeological expeditions, of literary works that have not been read for thousands of years.⁸⁵ The ultimate goal of engaging with these texts appears to be literary analysis in the Western academy by a specialist with no personal attachment to the

⁸⁵ See, for example, his discussion of the "recovery" of *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (40).

material. While Damrosch advocates mastery of the text, Glissant's opacity offers a model of approaching the text from a position of distance that engages with not-understanding as a form of solidarity.

However, opacity is not reducible to a lack of understanding. Glissant's vision also contrasts with that of contemporary literary scholars who emphasize untranslatability, like Emily Apter. Apter often emphasizes non-communication by discussing the limits of translation and inter-linguistic communication. She sees untranslatability as a corrective to translations that assimilate and flatten difference, a symptom of the “grasping” Glissant describes, but she differs from Glissant in her proposed response to difference.⁸⁶ Apter considers “untranslatability as a theoretical fulcrum of comparative literature” (*Against* 3). In her formulation, comparative literature, or reading literature in its original language avoids the “grasping” inherent in assimilationist world literature readings. While Apter formulates her position in contrast with Damrosch, she shares with Damrosch the assumption that better information resolves the problem of approaching the other. She critiques the “ready meaning-exchange” of “border-crossing” employed by world literature scholars and encourages an attention to the original text and its context as a solution to this problem (*Against* 99). Her calls for a version of comparative literature that is “geopolitically case-sensitive and site-specific in ways that avoid reproducing neo-imperialist cartographies” suggest that a more-informed analysis of the original by comparative literature rather than world literature scholars remedies the problems she identifies with world literature's tendency to minimize difference (*Against* 42). However,

⁸⁶ While Apter claims that her work is inspired by the philosophy of Glissant, she invokes concepts like “tout-monde” without investigating the relationship between opacity and untranslatability (*Against World Literature* 3).

for Glissant, trying to understand the other can be as problematic in the source text as in the translated text. This distinction is important when approaching opaque, multilingual texts like *Zong!* and *No Pain Like This Body*. Unlike Apter's proposed solution of studying texts in the original, which seeks to minimize the gaps that appear in the process of translation, Glissant's model embraces the impossibility of total understanding while still calling for communication and solidarity.

A model for how to engage this methodology of reading from opacity can be found not in untranslatability, but rather in translation. Glissant's rejection of transparency resonates with previously mentioned critiques of colonial translation. H. Adlai Murdoch writes that for Glissant, "transparency is implicitly linked to, *inter alia*, colonialist and universalist practices that literally absorbed and transformed the other through sanctioned acts of appropriation and assimilation" (883). This description resonates with critiques of colonial translation by Niranjana and Mignolo that emphasize the link between transparency and assimilation. In contrast, opacity allows for solidarity without requiring sameness. Glissant's opacity, like Santos' intercultural translation and Mignolo's double translation, focuses on shared political projects rather than on the illusion of complete understanding. While opacity is sometimes read as a synonym for untranslatability, I argue that the links between opacity and decolonial approaches to translation are instructive.⁸⁷ Glissant's rejection of transparency does not signal a turn

⁸⁷ Other critics working outside of decolonial theory have considered Glissant's writing on opacity and relation as a potential translation methodology. Sandra Bermann connects Glissant's perspective on relation to a broad shift in translation studies from translation as equivalence to pragmatist approaches to translation as similarity or analogy. She writes that the ethics of translation as relation "would accept the 'opacity' of the source text, while not overwhelming it or pretending to fully comprehend and transparently restate it in an equivalent semantic and syntactic structure. Aspects of the source text would always remain unspoken in the new words of translation" (8). Therefore, while I focus on these questions of translation and opacity from a decolonial lens, similar conversations are occurring in various schools of translation studies.

away from the other. Instead, he challenges us to engage with, rather than assimilate, difference. Decolonial approaches to translation center on the process of engagement without domination that Glissant describes.

This decolonial vision for translation corresponds to the requirements of strong, multilingual opacity in texts from the Caribbean like *Zong!* and *No Pain Like This Body*. In her reading of other multilingual Caribbean texts, Kavita Ashana Singh makes this connection explicit and calls her approach to opaque multilingual Caribbean texts “translative.” She argues that a translative approach signifies “a continuous and active demand that the reader engages not only as a receiver of but also as a participant in the experience of meaning creation, a doubled experience proper to translation” (92). While I previously critiqued approaches to translation that adopted a metaphorical approach to linguistic difference, Singh’s proposal for a “translative” reading practice is compelling, because it acknowledges its metaphorical nature and directly addresses the ways in which reading multilingual texts converges and diverges with the process of translation rather than claiming the label of translation without reservation. Furthermore, Singh’s proposal prioritizes linguistic hierarchy, calling for attention to “a continuous and active interaction between languages that is rarely peaceful, harmonious dialogue but instead marks again and again the confrontation with a historically entrenched hierarchy” (92). While linguistic hierarchies are often overlooked by metaphorical approaches to translation, I concur with Singh that an attention to historical and contemporary linguistic hierarchies is crucial to the process of meaning creation that comes with translating or reading opaque multilingual texts.

The difficulty produced by these texts' opacity, then, does not represent a barrier to comprehension but rather an invitation to reimagining reading and interpersonal relationships. Singh argues that the difficulty of reading multilingual Caribbean texts creates the opportunity for different modes of approaching otherness. She writes, "the normalization of failure in the search for meaning makes possible the commitment to a practice of quiet presence, simultaneity, the simple fact of existing together, rather than in appropriative dominance" (Singh 106). By turning away from a mode of relating to the other through a framework of comprehension, mastery, and domination, Glissant destabilizes our customary categories of literary knowledge. As Sylvia Wynter points out, Glissant's categories of analysis "call into question and refute the premise of an acultural and absolute model of the human" (*Beyond* 645). Through his questioning of the dominant model of the human, Glissant demonstrates how a turn away from the search for mastery offers new possibilities for reading as well as for interpersonal relation.

Just as Glissant calls for a shift in our definition of the human, he also redefines the conventional use of the term multilingualism. He writes that multilingualism "is not only the ability to speak several languages, which is often not the case in our region where we sometimes cannot even speak our oppressed mother tongue. Multilingualism is the passionate desire to accept and understand our neighbor's language and to confront the massive leveling force of language continuously imposed by the West" (*Caribbean Discourse* 249). For Glissant, multilingualism is not synonymous with the comprehension of other languages and by extension texts in those languages, as it is in Damrosch's and Apter's models, but rather with the "desire to accept and understand." Glissant's formulation suggests a movement towards the other without the finality of

comprehension. This seemingly minor distinction marks a dramatic shift in emphasis away from academic mastery, taking both literature and translation beyond the ordinary scope of comparative literature. Rather than understanding and incorporating the Other into preexisting models of analysis, Glissant challenges readers to a deeper understanding of the incommensurability of human difference as well as to a position of solidarity that engages with and values this difference.

Philip's and Ladoo's use of opaque multilingualism calls readers into this mode of relationship to the text. These writers draw readers into the process of interpretation by providing paratextual materials like glossaries that encourage them to make meaning from difficult texts. However, both Philip and Ladoo impose an ultimate limit on any particular reader's comprehension of the text through opaque representations of language and an emphasis on those elements of language that are not represented on the page for interpretation such as Philip's attention to the names of those who died aboard the *Zong* and Ladoo's references to Hindi conversations that do not appear on the page. These writers force readers to occupy an in-between space, neither fully inside nor outside the world of their narrative voices. This position grants neither the comforts of insider status nor those of disengaged academic mastery. Instead, it invites readers to a new approach: the creative, active process of decolonial translation as a practice of reading and interpersonal communication.

The reading positions made possible by the opaque multilingualism of writers like Philip and Ladoo further demonstrate how a knowledge of colonial history can serve a decolonial reading. Glissant's opacity not only provides an approach to interpersonal relationships and literary texts but also to history. For Glissant, "History can never be

transparent; the psychological and cultural need to recover as much of it as possible has to be balanced against an acceptance of its 'opacity' – a realization that its unknowability does not diminish its importance for the present” (Britton 312). Philip and Ladoo likewise call for readers to engage with histories of colonization, slavery, and indenture without allowing for transparent comprehension. For both writers, multilingualism reveals colonial history, yet prevents an easy analysis of coloniality. Philip's and Ladoo's texts, therefore, offer colonial history not simply as an interpretive tool or background information that reveals, for example, the links between monolingualism and colonialism. Instead, they propose coloniality as a limit that interrupts the customary reading practices of literary analysis. In this way, decolonial perspectives on multilingualism do not simply provide different answers to the questions traditionally posed by critics of literary multilingualism from a comparative literature or world literature perspective, but rather decolonial thought transforms the questions and methodologies that we can bring to literary texts.

Conclusion

Thought of the Other is sterile without the other of Thought.

Thought of the Other is the moral generosity disposing me to accept the principle of alterity, to conceive of the world as not simple and straightforward, with only one truth—mine. But thought of the Other can dwell within me without making me alter course, without 'prizing me open,' without changing me within myself. An ethical principle, it is enough that I not violate it.

The other of Thought is precisely this altering. Then I have to act. That is the moment I change my thought, without renouncing its contribution. I change, and I exchange. (Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* 154)

The 1994 and 2006 reports on the state of comparative literature as a discipline, entitled *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism* and *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization* respectively, signal a desire to move beyond the discipline's foundation in European philology in order to consider a broader geographic and linguistic range of literary production (Bernheimer, Saussy).⁸⁸ Similar concerns animate the move for world literature approaches to writing that aspire to a more comprehensive approach to reading literature from outside of Europe. At the same time, there has been considerable critique of world literature by comparative literature scholars like Gayatri Spivak and Emily Apter, who argue that world literature critics' lack of attention to linguistic difference contributes to a problematic use of terms like "world" and "global" to produce sameness. Spivak, for example, argues that these categories fail to attend to the very difference they seek to analyze, and she proposes "planetarity" as an

⁸⁸ In his contribution to the 2014-2015 report, Michael Swacha points to these titles to note that the discipline "has now come to encompass an exponentially wider breadth than was institutionally legible only a few decades ago," yet he claims the methods of the discipline have not expanded at the same rate as its content (Swacha). However, it is important to note that Swacha published this critique in the 2014-2015 state of the discipline report, which offered a digital collection of essays under various categories including "Paradigms," "Practices," "Facts & Figures," "Ideas of the Decade," and "Futures." In contrast, the print volumes including the previous two reports which were organized into a group of essays offering the official "State of the Discipline" report and another group offering responses (Bernheimer, Saussy). In this context, the most recent report suggests a potential movement towards a decentralization of methods.

alternative framework that centers alterity (*Death of a Discipline* 73). Linguistic multiplicity, often framed as translation or interdisciplinary work across monolingual fields of literary study, has been a central component of these debates about how to expand the scope of comparative literature while maintaining and even strengthening a focus on linguistic and cultural difference.

Within this broader conversation surrounding linguistic multiplicity and comparative literature, I highlight how literary multilingualism, defined as the coexistence and conflict of multiple languages in a single literary work, can challenge critics to engage with literary works that have fallen outside of the traditional scope of European-based comparison. Even though working across languages is the fundamental strategy that distinguishes comparative literary study from the work of national language and literature departments, comparative literature research is generally framed in relationship to several monolingual fields, for example English and Spanish literature. Rather than working across these disciplines, scholars of literary multilingualism problematize both the space between monolingual fields of literary study and the marginalized linguistic practices within individual national literatures. As a project that considers literary production in English, Spanish, and French outside of a European context and alongside Caribbean Creole languages, *Translating Linguistic Conflicts* argues that multilingual Caribbean literature productively expands comparative literature's view of linguistic and literary conflict beyond a European framework while also troubling the monolingual categories of European literary analysis.

By representing multiple languages on the same page, especially if one or more of those languages occupies a marginalized position, multilingual writers give literary

expression to the linguistic experience of multilingual speakers, whose perspectives have generally been suppressed in disciplinary fields shaped by the assumption of the monolingual nation-state and, by extension, the monolingual citizen-subject. As I argued in chapter two, building on decolonial theorizations of multilingualism, speakers and writers who engage with the space between languages, and particularly languages shaped by colonial linguistic hierarchies, offer unique critical perspectives on both colonial structures of language and coloniality more broadly. Furthermore, literary creation between languages suggests that multilingualism is a creative resource as well as a critical one. While the validation of lived experiences of multilingualism is a central dimension of multilingual literary practice, it is important to note that these texts do not simply reproduce spoken multilingualism. Instead, individual writers make strategic decisions about how to represent various languages to readers with a range of fluencies in the languages of the text.

Taken together, the corpus of multilingual Caribbean writing I consider disrupts readers' attempts to comprehend the texts' languages. While particular multilingual readers may find their own linguistic practices represented in certain texts I analyzed, it would be a rare reader who fully dominates all of the languages at work in these texts. Moreover, texts like *Zong!* are constructed in ways that prohibit even the most multilingual of readers from approaching the text as a native reader. The struggle for comprehension is compounded for monolingual readers. When monolingual or multilingual readers encounter languages on the page that are opaque to them, they are made conscious of languages and world views that are partially or fully incomprehensible to them. In the words of Glissant, literary multilingualism produces the thought of the

Other. Glissant argues that thinking of the Other demands an attention to alterity, which he interprets as a call “to conceive of the world as not simple and straightforward, with only one truth—mine” (*Poetics of Relation* 154). In my analysis of language conflict and colonial linguistic hierarchies, I focus on how multilingual Caribbean literature represents alterity.

However, I also take seriously Glissant's caution about the limitations of thought of the Other. He writes, “But thought of the Other can dwell within me without making me alter course, without ‘prizing me open,’ without changing me within myself. An ethical principle, it is enough that I not violate it” (*Poetics of Relation* 154). While theorists like Spivak note the danger of analyzing the Other without attending to alterity, Glissant warns of the limitation of attending to the alterity of the Other without opening the self to change. Extended to the disciplinary context of comparative literature, Glissant's caution challenges the critic to shift focus from how the methods of comparative literature can address non-European literature to how non-European literature can transform the practice of comparative literature.

As a corollary to the thought of the Other, Glissant proposes “the other of Thought.” If the thought of the Other allows the self to remain un-altered, Glissant writes, “The other of Thought is precisely this altering. Then I have to act. That is the moment I change my thought, without renouncing its contribution. I change, and I exchange” (*Poetics of Relation* 154). My project aims to engage the other of Thought through its conversation with decolonial thinkers. At both the epistemic and the interpersonal level, decolonial theorists propose reading, writing, and thinking from a position of vulnerability and openness in which the role of the critic as well as disciplinary or

interdisciplinary methods are reimagined through processes of social transformation.

From the perspective of the other of Thought, then, multilingual literary creation offers not only an opportunity for asking comparative literature questions but also for questioning comparative literature.

Working between the thought of the Other and the other of Thought, my project pursues a conversation between comparative literature and decolonial theory in order to explore the range of challenges posed by multilingual Caribbean literature. This dissertation contributes to the existing literature on literary multilingualism by focusing on colonial linguistic hierarchies and the contestation of these hierarchies in literary works that include more than one language. Attention to linguistic hierarchies is particularly urgent in a theoretical discussion about literary multilingualism that often prioritizes an abstract opposition to monolingualism while ignoring the way that monolingualism and multilingualism are filtered through local and global experiences of language prestige. In order to focus on linguistic hierarchies, I bridge two areas of scholarship: I bring decolonial theory's focus on the colonality of language to comparative literature's interest in working across languages, and I place as comparative literature's focus on the literary text in conversation with decolonial theory's investigation of transformative linguistic practices.

I have aimed to center these linguistic hierarchies through close readings of literary texts, a strategy that forms the foundation of comparative literary practice and also has been generative for a number of decolonial thinkers including Walter D. Mignolo and Sylvia Wynter. Across the chapters, I juxtaposed literary works that revealed a range of linguistic conflicts within and across languages operating at units both smaller and

larger than the nation-state. These readings contribute to literary multilingualism studies' aim to problematize the assumption of monolingualism and highlight how the specific linguistic conditions of the Caribbean, namely the regional interaction of European and Creole linguistic practices, reveal the contested nature of the borders between languages. By reading writers who innovate along these borders, whether to blur them or to strategically define them, I have emphasized literary writers as active participants in debates about language politics. In particular, by analyzing how literary writers reproduce or challenge linguistic hierarchies, I have argued that multilingual literary creation serves as a productive site of critiquing colonial linguistic relationships and imagining new forms of communication and alternative futures.

In addition to highlighting colonial hierarchies, a focus on linguistic conflict also reveals the social dimension of literary multilingualism. If the first general contribution of my project is to critique the colonial foundation of the monolingual paradigm, the second is to problematize the social models of multilingual reading and writing. As comparative literature scholars have expanded their scope beyond the field's roots in European philology, concepts like translation and multilingualism have gained traction as ways of conceptualizing scholarship across languages. Similarly, decolonial thinkers like Mignolo and Santos have alternatively invoked translation and multilingualism to theorize writing and political action across languages and cultures. While writers from these distinct approaches often diverge in terms of their objects of analysis and their goals, I argue that both fields could benefit from increased attention to where translation and multilingualism overlap and where they diverge, particularly in terms of the social frameworks they imagine.

I pursue this critique of the social dimensions of multilingualism by placing the theoretical frameworks employed by decolonial theory and literary studies in conversation with the social situations depicted in literary texts. I aimed to draw attention to the differences between frameworks that imagine multilingualism through the speech of an individual, like Mignolo's bilingual border thinker, and those that imagine multilingualism through the conversation of various speakers, like Mignolo's double translation. In translation theorist Anthony Pym's analysis of language learning and translation as modes of communication in a multilingual society, he argues that the two strategies represent divergent visions of the length and intensity of interaction between speakers of different languages, and he advocates a combination of the two approaches ("Multilingual Democracy" 89). Turning to the literary realm then, I advocate disentangling these approaches to multilingualism in the text. Glissant writes that "The literary text plays the contradictory role of a producer of opacity" and that "Both learning a language and translation have in common the attempt to give 'some transparency' back to a text" (*Poetics of Relation* 115-116). I argue that while both multilingualism and translation offer possibilities for engaging with the opacity of a literary text, these two frameworks emphasize different social organizations. By asking who reads, writes, and speaks across languages both in theorizations of language and literary texts, we can engage with a broader range of political and aesthetic options beyond the mere opposition of monolingualism. Taken together, the dissertation's chapters demonstrate multiple angles from which Caribbean writers are reimagining colonial linguistic relationships through literature.

I began the first chapter with an analysis of how a decolonial, Caribbean

perspective contributes to discussions about radical definitions of translation. I proposed the multi-directional process of decolonial translation as a framework for grounding increasingly metaphorical approaches to translation in specific literary projects and the hierarchical linguistic conflicts they represent or ignore. In the second chapter, I turned to literary multilingualism as an alternative framework that problematizes the linguistic divisions often taken for granted in translation perspectives by exploring linguistic difference both within and between languages. The third chapter further troubled the space between languages by analyzing the debated relationships between Caribbean Creoles and European languages in order to consider literary writers as key figures in articulating the terms of these linguistic relationships. In this chapter, I argued that by creating opacity between Caribbean Creoles and European languages, literary writers affirm marginalized forms of language. In the final chapter, I further explored the role of opacity by analyzing literary texts that are particularly challenging for monolingual English readers but also pose difficulties for multilingual readers. I argued that opacity should not be read as a static condition of the text, like untranslatability, but rather as a relationship between the reader and the text that approximates the interpersonal work imagined by decolonial theorists of translation.

Towards the end of the project, I engage with debates about modes of reading in the fields of comparative and world literature. Moving forward, I see this line of inquiry expanding by pursuing connections between literary research and the literature classroom. This area of investigation is linked to my interest in identifying the various social actors identified by decolonial theorists. While debates about the readers of comparative literature tend to focus on scholars, they occasionally consider literature

students in the U.S. academy, customarily framing these students as monolingual, English-dominant readers. In my experience teaching in the Comparative Literature and Latino and Caribbean Studies units at Rutgers, my students bring a much wider range of linguistic and cultural knowledge to their readings. This diversity of reading perspectives has untapped potential both for theorizing Caribbean literary multilingualism and also for developing teaching methodologies to better serve our multilingual students.

Turning again to Glissant's call to pair the thought of the Other with the other of Thought, I have proposed a decolonial approach to Caribbean literary multilingualism as an intersection of these aims. If literary multilingualism gives us a critical vocabulary to ask questions like, "What counts as speech, Who counts as a speaking being, and On what grounds?" (Acosta 35), decolonial thinking allows for the recognition of how literary writers are actively changing the answers to these questions. Glissant writes, "thought of the Other can dwell within me without making me alter course, without 'prizing me open,' without changing me within myself" (*Poetics of Relation* 154). The use of multilingualism by writers like Juan Bosch, M. NourbeSe Philip, and Harold Sonny Ladoo serves as an invitation to their readers to be altered, prized open, and changed by the literary encounter. Accepting this invitation requires the reader to move beyond analysis as academic mastery. Sylvia Wynter proposes a "deciphering practice" that "seeks to interpret not what texts and their signifying practices can be interpreted to *mean*, but what they can be deciphered to *do*" ("Rethinking Aesthetics" 266). With Wynter's and Glissant's challenges in mind, the reader can join these literary and theoretical writers in the work of imagining and creating new linguistic relationships.

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