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Kiln of Cross-cultural Desire: How Maryse Conde's *Windward Heights* draws, and differs, from Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*

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Abstract: Maryse Conde's novel *Windward Heights*, a rewriting of *Wuthering Heights*, transports the colonial text from its cold Yorkshire environs to the warm clime of the Antilles. This spatial/temporal transposition is just the first of many, as Conde changes the dynamics of the source text to reveal the exigencies that face a society in the slipstream of abolition. When Heathcliff is described as "a dark-skinned gypsy in aspect", he is instantly positioned as a racial other, and eventually emerges as a kind of anti-hero. The present paper focuses on this depiction of Heathcliff as a starting point, then makes a study of the contrastive nature of both texts, foregrounding the race/class contrariety in *Windward Heights*, examines the similitude/difference of structure through a close reading of the texts, and also interrogates the filiations of the worldview in the narrative as it coheres and/or splits from the theorizations of Bakhtin and Glissant.

Keywords: Maryse Conde, Razye, Heathcliff, santeria, magic realism, polyphony, Caribbean, race, creolite

Introduction:

Maryse Conde's *Windward Heights* is a radical retelling of Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*. In order to better understand the filiation of the adaptation one should be familiar with the source text. When we read both side by side, differences and similarities of plot and structure jump out to claim our attention. On a close scrutiny of Bronte's masterpiece we see the threads picked up, and then embellished on, by Conde – themes of religion, superstition, the touch of the supernatural, as well as the very origin of the character of Heathcliff, without whom the originary text would not have gained its quiddity, for it is Heathcliff who lends the heft to *Wuthering Heights* – his being, purpose, goals and aims, dreams and their disappointment, the relations forged by him, his betrayals and his promise to avenge himself – the story's very crux and crucible is this man who comes from the outside to upset the balance of a certain household and this sets in motion the further destabilization in relations and groundings that occur from his point of entrance.

Maryse Conde purportedly read the novel at age fourteen (Wolff 1999) and this, she claims, left an indelible impression on her. Much later she decided to take on the task of writing back to it, in the tradition of Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*. In her rewriting she manages to add new layers to the story, fill in gaps that were left empty in the source, and portray a culture completely removed from the environs of Victorian England (and yet connected, because of the insidious touch of imperialism) – in the Caribbean context, in the islands of the Antilles, namely (in the region of the text) Cuba, Guadeloupe and Dominica. In Conde's tale there is a clash of class dynamics – it is a society grappling with change, right in the midst of post-abolition furore, where the aggregate of the community is made of white Creoles, mulattos, blacks and East Indians brought over by the coolie trade. What we witness, therefore, is a society underscored by racial and class divisions – each trying to make sense of their positionality vis-a-vis the remnants of the colonial framework, and how best to make use of their circumstances to project themselves up the rung of the social order, with the help of education and politics. Now, politics can be divisive and in the Caribbean text, its use is made of in some such way – to create rifts in

the fabric of the social order, so that the dominant class structure of the white Creole plantation system is unsettled and brought to the point of demolition by the resurgent class of former black slaves. This is the atmosphere of Conde's story and it is rippling with energy and moving with the times, of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This is in contrast to Bronte, where the story of the inhabitants of Gimmerton common (in the late eighteenth century) is caught in a time lock – little happens outside of the walls of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange – unless it takes place in the wild moorland of cold Yorkshire. The two tales overlap in that they deal with the same scenario of the doomed love of Catherine and Heathcliff (counterparts being Cathy and Razye), their set lore of trials and tribulations – but the side narrative, of the families involved (Linton and Earnshaw in *Wuthering Heights* and Gagneur and Linsseuil in *Windward Heights*), as also of the narrators themselves – this is changed up by Conde, because where Lockwood and Nelly Dean take on the narration for the benefit of the readers, Conde substitutes them with no less than thirteen different voices, each of them with a particular perspective of their own which lends to the adaptation a layer of constant innovation, of vim and vigour. Many among these thirteen voices are former slaves, who now work as servants for the household or work independent of Creole employment, by earning for themselves – but they are all mired in poverty and have not had the benefit of an education. But their pasts, the heritage of their line of African and Indian ancestors that they carry within themselves, give them their sense of place and identity, and bring them together in a fellow feeling of belonging.

There are few people better placed to chronicle the upheavals and motions of a society than the ones who are the fact and radix of that change – a people who have been exploited and ill treated for the treacherous gain of the colonial powers – the slaves whose lives had been plundered with cruelty. These narratives, therefore, assist the reader in gaining a foothold on the story, by scoring its many sides and facets. Also, a very important theme in *Windward Heights* is that of re-incarnation – this too is drawn from Bronte's novel, where if it is not so overtly delineated so that it may not shock contemporary Victorian readers, it is nonetheless very subtly present – enough to allow Conde to pick up on it and recast it in the mould of the Caribbean – in its

depiction of the religion of *santeria*. Also, the re-incarnation factor gives impetus to the use of magic realism, that is clearly made evident in certain portions of the story, and which this paper picks up on. In the sections following hereinafter the paper deals separately with all the themes, in subsequent segments, to show that the reworking of the colonial text is a tale that stands distinctively on its own strengths, in its portrayal of a people and clime in the throes of transmutation and alterity.

Similitude/Difference of Plot and Structure:

Heathcliff is, from the very start, positioned as an outsider – from the very moment of his introduction to the readers, through Lockwood and also from the moment of his inception into the Earnshaw family. Lockwood describes him as "as a dark-skinned gypsy in aspect" (Bronte 5), Mr. Earnshaw as "dark almost as if it came from the devil" (Bronte 29), Mrs. Linton as "scouring the country with a gypsy" (Bronte 40) and "A wicked boy … unfit for a decent house" (Bronte 40) among numerous other such examples. His very being is equated with devilry; he is a changeling gathered up from the roadside by the magnanimity of Mr. Earnshaw and on his assimilation into the family at the Heights he unsettles the bonds of kinship and familiarity that resided there previously. But in the way in which he is found lies a critique of imperialism – on a visit to Liverpool. Now, Liverpool was a major slaving port in the second half of the eighteenth century; many merchant ships originating from here dominated the transatlantic slave trade, "three quarters of all European slaving ships at this period left from Liverpool" (Liverpool n.d., n.p.). According to Maja-Lisa von Sneidern, the town of Liverpool had twice the number of vessels engaged in the triangular slave trade, than say, Bristol. Facts would give us that by the year 1804, merchants of Liverpool could be held responsible for more than eighty-four percent of the British transatlantic slave trade (von Sneidern 172). So it can be reasonably deducted that Heathcliff was a child off one of the ships, abandoned as a foundling when Earnshaw pere decides to bring him home (at the beginning of harvest in 1771). He is different from the others in his appearance, dark of skin, with black hair and strange manners, a very quiet aspect to his nature, but watchful always and quick to pick up on the affections of his guardian, which he did not hesitate to take advantage of when it suited

his needs. A quick friendship with Catherine and a further tilting away of the affections of Nelly Dean render a bonhomie to their mutual link, but this makes Hindley feel alienated, to feel that Heathcliff is an usurper, of his father's affections and later, as it will turn out, of his land and property (Eagleton 102). Never is he allowed to feel a part of the family, because Hindley always reminds him of his place, even when his father hopes and instructs the others that the fatherless wretched should be embraced by the close circle and made to feel welcome. When Heathcliff is so centered out for attention his status as an outsider is further thrown into relief, making him have to cope with his skin colour, his existence that has no social capital attached to it (Eagleton 103), as also his constructed place as 'other or alien'. This extra special favoring creates inequality in the family hierarchy, where Hindley feels his role as son completely subverted and obviated by Heathcliff, giving rise to his feeling of dissonance with fatherly ties. This essential 'othering' sets Heathcliff apart from the rest, especially more so when Catherine chooses to reject him because of his social inferiority – she rather wished to make a match with the Linton family so that she could fashion for herself a life full of luxury and pleasure, but she does aver that she could never entirely love Edgar with the same passion as she reserved for her childhood playmate – "Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same" (Bronte 63). The taint of class structure comes in, as it would 'degrade' Catherine to marry Heathcliff, even when it should be the most natural thing for her to do – natural as the eternal rocks beneath the earth to which she likens her love for Heathcliff (Bronte 64) - degrade her because of association with a darker skin tone, without economic stability, without the kind of education that could help him make his way up in the world.

In Conde's text, Razye, the counterpart for Heathcliff, becomes "a little black boy or Indian half-caste" (Conde 21) brought home by Mr. Gagneur, himself "a tallow coloured mulatto … inherited from his white Creole father … l'Engoulvent, an overseer's house" (Conde 18). Conde puts together a complex racial structure of the New World – amidst white Creoles, mulattoes and blacks. Her re-imagining is a time of social unrest in the Caribbean – through dates (sparely given) in the tale – one can go so far as to try and situate the time frame of the text. When the novel opens, the readers are told that the battleship *Maine* has

just set down anchor in Havana, Cuba. It is the time of the Spanish American War in 1898, because a little into the tale we learn that the battleship had exploded in the port of Havana. This is just after Razye has left Cuba to make his return to Guadeloupe, after having made his fortune in that land. Both in *Wuthering Heights* and in *Windward Heights*, the character of Heathcliff/Razye is absent for the duration of three years, in which time he makes his fortune. But Bronte doesn't tell us how Heathcliff comes about his money, the authorial lacuna of which is filled in the later text. These historical markers help us to gather that the time of Razye's leaving l'Engoulvent (on overhearing Cathy's acceptance of Aymeric's proposal) must have been 1895 – and such close scrutiny helps supply wherever Conde leaves the date unmentioned, as when Justin Gagneur says that "Cathy was married to Aymeric de Linsseuil on 13 April 18." Irmine, too, mentions that she marries Razye on January 1st, 1900. Further markers of date can be noted in the fact that when returning to Guadeloupe, Razye is reading *Bug-Jargal*, a book by Victor Hugo (tellingly about the Haitian Revolution), which was published in 1826. It can be no coincidence that Razye should be reading that particular book, which deals with the "only successful slave revolt in history, and the odds it had to overcome is evidence of the magnitude of the interests that were involved" (James ix). Such revolutionary reading must have gone a long way in informing the man who would later swear to "write revenge in capital letters in the sky of Guadeloupe" (Conde 121). Our situating of texts is further confirmed when a little later we come across "It's been almost fifty years since slavery's supposed to be over and yet the blacks only find misery at the bottom of life's bowl. Meantime the white Creoles are still parading around with the same wealth and haven't suffered one bit" (Conde 49). Slavery was finally abolished on the island of Guadeloupe on 28th May 1848 at the rescript of Victor Schoelcher. The white families were still coming to terms with the fact that their (quondam) slaves were now free to live their own lives according to their own terms and could actually rise up the social order to match the whites inch to inch in their endeavours. But what was still beyond the newly grounded free community was the fact of the acquisition of wealth – unless they were like the mulattoes who came into their inheritance to become wealthy. This society portrayed by Conde is one of

miscegenation – where intermarriage between the whites, mulattoes and even the blacks and East Indians was on the rise, and the diminishing number of the white population took this as a perceived threat to their communal harmony.

In *Wuthering Heights*, when Heathcliff learns that the Lintons have been invited over for the day, he wishes to make himself presentable so that it would please Catherine and leave an impression on the visiting party – "Nelly, make me decent, I'm going to be good" (Bronte 44). Even at such a young age, the fact of the colour of his skin is always on his mind, as also the unfortunate position of his being – he doesn't own anything, he is free of all ties, even any ties to/of property. He understands that his Cathy is more attracted towards Edgar because he has the dual advantage of being rich and cultured, as well as the greater one of possessing white skin. This awareness can be evidenced in – "I wish I had light hair and a fair skin, and was dressed and behaved as well, and had a chance of being as rich as he will be!" and later "I must wish for Edgar Linton's great blue eyes and even forehead" (Bronte 45). In *Windward Heights*, Razye says to Nelly Raboteur similarly – "If I was white everyone would respect me! Justin like all the rest!" (Conde 30). The Heathcliff of Victorian England does not spare any thought to his parentage, but the Razye of the Antilles, where always a gulf existed between the "almost-white, the mulatto and the nigger" (Fanon 83) does more than wonder about his past heritage – reflecting on the absence of a mother figure, "like all the other human beings" (Conde 38), if she too had landed off a slave ship in this land of exiles (Guadeloupe), if she were an Indian, or an African, or a mulatto, like Cathy torn between her claim on two races. Or the even bleaker and terrifying prospect: had his maman been raped and then come to despise her child as a human excrescence? (Razye must have known of the Gagneurs' origins – Hubert Gagneur's Creole father had forced himself on his black mother Josephine) – such worrisome contemplations did plague Razye. Also, that he should think of his fellow creatures in such a distant manner – as "all the other human beings" shows that the way he was brought up by Hubert, when he was treated as a mere plaything, encouraged to perform tricks to the "most obscene beguines" and allowed to imitate animal sounds – "squeal like a pig, bray like a donkey, cackle like a hen" (Conde 22) – "My papa was no good and an ignoramus. He turned

Razye into his plaything before Justin turned him into an animal" (Conde 93) – made him somehow associate himself with the class of animals, as somehow different from his fellows, because to his mind they were better endowed – they did have parents. Both Razye and Heathcliff had the fact of their blackness, their darkness, so inscribed into their psyche as to recall Frantz Fanon when he talks about the psychological effects of social indictment, of racism and dehumanization "not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man … The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man … His metaphysics, … his customs and the sources on which they were based, were wiped out because they were in conflict with a civilization that he did not know and that imposed itself on him" (Fanon 82-83). Nelly's assurance makes little headway in pacifying him, but what it does do is to further isolate Heathcliff/Razye: "You're fit for a prince in disguise. Who knows but your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen, each of them able to buy up, with one week's income, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange together?" (Bronte 45) and "You know you're handsome in your own way, with that Ashanti black skin … Perhaps your ancestors were princes and princesses?" (Conde 30). This, unlike what both Nellys might think, actually goes in further putting the character of the once-foundling apart from the rest – because if he is a prince in disguise then that too necessitates that he is different from the others round him, because he would actually need to go back to a past which is regal – and the others round him, (the Earnshaw and Gagneur clan) cannot share such an ancestry with him – so he is *contrastive* (emphasis added), unlike in form and nature to his playmates.

A further distinction between the two novels is in the character of Hareton Earnshaw (pere) and Hubert Gagneur – in Bronte, the aging patriarch is fond of his children, overly affectionate of Heathcliff and ever a staunch defender of his rights, and he also emphasizes the need to educate his children – he brings in the curate to teach Catherine and on the advice of the same decides to send Hindley to college. He is also stern with the children, and insists that they pray on time and be sincere in their prayers. This is sharply opposite to the mulatto Gagneur – who is said to have a bad reputation, having hurried his wife to the grave by

his irrepressible cruel behaviour, and who did not keep faith in God. He also has a mistress in La Pointe whom he goes to visit monthly under pretense of attending meetings. All of this can suitably be said to have put a poor example for his children, but this is not the extent of it – he would feign to swear in front of his children, and Justin especially, who reveres his father, picks up on his uncouth language and imitates him.

Another difference is in the conduct of the character of Nelly – whose narrative voice is divided up into many parts by Conde, as an ingenious device – her name in Conde is Nelly Raboteur, the last name could be a play on 'raconteur' – since she does relate her tale, and is the first in line to inaugurate the subsequent narrative voices. The space given to the character formation of each individual in the adaptation is far less than the buildup in Bronte – maybe, for Conde, because the figures were already formed with a particular background, she did not make any startling changes to them except for tinkering what was required to re-fashion the tale in her warm climate. So Nelly tries to dissuade Catherine in *Wuthering Heights* from marrying Edgar Linton, asking her multiple times if she is sure in her mind, firm in her belief that she could be happy with him, that with him was the kind of life she wanted to lead – it could not be a decision taken in isolation, because it would have far reaching consequences above and beyond its immediate remit. Catherine does express her doubt, and that too in no uncertain terms – she poetically renders her love for Heathcliff in words that have become legendary in literature – "If all else perished, and *he* remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the Universe would turn to a mighty stranger" (Bronte 64). But she does aver that she would risk being a pauper were she to marry Heathcliff. Even though Nelly tries to show her the selfishness of her mindset, Catherine refuses to see it, but Nelly does try. Whereas in Conde, Raboteur is rather surprised and then pleased that Cathy should have such good luck in inviting the affections and proposals of a rich white Creole, because it was not otherwise the fate of mulatto girls to end up as anything other than misused mistresses. In fact, instead of cautioning Cathy in her chosen path, she further pushes her down it when she says "Just think, if you marry Monsieur de Linsseuil you'll have everything you never had and more! You'll be the envy of Guadeloupe! (Conde 41). Her own greed comes to the surface, and

instead of being the balancing figure, which she ought to be, she tilts the scales in favour of Aymeric. And this, her aversion to Razye, is very profound throughout the text – she repeatedly calls him a 'repulsive animal' and wonders how a monster like him could appreciate the warmth and devotions of a beautiful creature like Cathy. This is authorial intervention, in her case because what sets the Nelly of *Wuthering Heights* apart from her is that she was given the chance to nurse Heathcliff once out of febrile discomfort and this must have, and indeed did, got away in sowing a deep bond between the two – Heathcliff always has time for, and is less gruff with, Mrs. Dean as the story unfolds in Yorkshire.

Class Politics:

Terry Eagleton writes that "what Heathcliff offers Cathy is a non- or pre-social relationship, as the only authentic form of living in a world of exploitation and inequality, a world where one must refuse to measure oneself by the criteria of the class-structure and so must appear inevitably subversive" (108). This is true not only of Wuthering Heights, where the Earnshaws are a farming family, who like to till their own land, and where work is coterminous with personal relations, in the creation and maintenance of social relationships, but also in the context of the Caribbean, especially during the time of upheaval that Conde portrays in her novel. It is a world where not only your bank balance matters, it matters more so if your colour is white. Cathy makes a favourable match with Aymeric because he is of the gentry, owner of a huge sugar plantation, Belles-Feuilles. The abolition of slavery affected their holdings very little as they continued employing more than a hundred negroes, in their various sugar mills, and almost as many farm workers in their latifundia, whose distance stretched the entire tract of the sugarcane basin of the Grand Terre region. Aymeric (an enlightened *colon*) fancies himself a good master, because he rings in changes on his plantations for the benefit of his workers, like new machinery, a water treatment plant, a new dispensary where his workers could get free treatment, a school and chapel, as well as regular disinfection of the latrines to halt the spread of diseases. He has been to France to complete his education, where he was an avid reader of Montesquieu and other philosophers that helped him acquire an egalitarian bent of mind, believing in the equality of all races. Infused

with these ideas, he wanted to transform his plantation into a model worthy of replication, where there would be no white Creoles, or blacks, or mulattos, but all equally free in the eyes of the law. And yet, despite all his good intentions, he is disliked by his men, because he is found to be too interfering in their mode of living. It is very facile of Aymeric to assume that he can undo years of wrong by his revisionist methods and buy back the affection of his employees, because the very fact of class and colour stratification acts as a disjoinder. What also sets him apart crucially is that he speaks elaborate French, but cannot manage a word of Creole. This, alongwith the impression among his men that he is somehow lilly-livered (in derision he was nicknamed 'heavenly cherub'), because from childhood he was brought up as a lone son among seven sisters, the center of his mother's adulation – all of this inform an opinion about him which his workers take askance. His will to work reform is eyed suspiciously, because he has such a spotless character and such noble intentions, and they have been more familiar with the harsh dictates of his father before him. If Edgar Linton is a passive character in Bronte, then Aymeric is a knee-jerk liberal who fails in spite of his good intent because he is, first and foremost, a man trapped in his society, class and ethnicity – a prisoner of his race. But Conde, in an interview (Wolff 1999), declares that she did mean to represent him as one such of the *beke* class (the white residents on the island, of pure European descent) who are looked on as negatively by the inhabitants of Guadeloupe. She sets up his character as effeminate, as opposed to the virile black man Razye – here she admits playing to stereotypes (Wolff 1999). From the very first, Razye's masculinity is upheld and foisted on the reader – "a dirty, repulsive, seven-or-eight year old, … *with a well developed sex*, believe me" (Conde 21), "thrusting forward *his sex* as he danced" (Conde 22), "he was a volcano, a hurricane, an earthquake, *a nigger stud with his iron spike pointing between his legs*" (Conde 72) (all emphasis added) – all of this masculine imagery is deliberately employed by Conde to bring out the latent sexuality in the text. Edgar/Aymeric's passivity is mocked by Razye/Heathcliff when he is called a lamb who threatens like a bull, meaning that he is quite incapable of taking decisive action when required, as happens later on in the text when his land is put to the torch and he has to sell all his holdings to pay off his massive debts. This

unassertive pliability is exploited by the socialists when they incite the black populace to set fire to the plantations.

In the Caribbean, after the abolition of slavery in 1848, a new class of citizens was born – the former slaves, who were now free men and women of colour. Victor Schoelcher's influence brought about a new republican political movement in the islands of the Antilles, especially in Guadeloupe and Martinique. The black populace produced their own leaders and politicians who went round the countryside giving hortatory speeches and exhorting people to take the initiative in creating a class balance, in believing in equality and racial justice. They could appoint their own mayors, senators and members of the assembly. But such speechifying could not go hand in hand with an improvement in the working/living conditions of the demographic. When the freed slaves could find little or no work in the towns, not enough remuneration to offset their labour, they returned home to hungry families, and discord. In such a climate a new political party, the Socialists, was founded and many joined it *en masse*. One of the main aims of the socialists was to try and wrest control of the dying plantation system from their white owners, so that the community could jointly own it. They went about it in their own way, by deciding to create a law and order situation by overturning systematic order: they attacked the very plantations which for centuries had borne their race such grief, by burning them at night. This could not entirely be accomplished without the help of insiders – which just goes to show the disillusionment among the workers, those who were still employed by the white Creoles. The torching of the plantations was done in a neatly methodical way – groups would scatter all over the huge tracts and commit their incendiary acts of destruction in clusters, so that it was difficult, once the alarum was raised, to catch and center in on the culprits, because nearly the whole of the area was alight.

What the reformists and the Socialists had in common was that both insisted on, and understood the importance of, education. Therefore in the story we read of the French Republic declaring education compulsory, and opening schools in town (Petit-Canal). We must also remember that Aymeric himself funds a school personally, so that the progeny of his workers could attend it. Now, Razye was never educated

at l'Engoulvent, as neither was Justin (their father could not be bothered about it). But Justin undid this when, after his father's death, he educated himself, so that, bestowed with a fairer skin tone as he was, his scholarship could also help him rise in society, which it did when he won the hand of a Creole heiress. So there is social mobility up the order, by the formation of mutual relations, first by marriage and then further propagated by blood. Razye makes use of his opportunity to study when he spends his three years of exile in Cuba – as he tells Jean-Hilaire Endomius, one of the leaders of the socialist movement. Here, in sharply veering away from Bronte's text, Razye is given a back-story about how he made his money – something that we do not learn when it comes to Heathcliff. We learn that he spent his time as a hired mercenary of the Spanish militants, fighting the Cuban Liberation Army led by the activist and philosopher Jose Marti. That he succumbed to murder and rapine, even of innocents, even when he knew that he was committing a great crime, or many great crimes. It was either that or his own demise, and he chose to save his life. By the dint of his toil, he made his money slowly but surely, by lending a hand to tobacco planters. But in Havana also he makes his first contact with the religion of *santeria* (discussion of which will be taken up later on in the paper). It is Endomius who impels his new recruit, who already has experience in bloodshed, to organize a band of men who would, at Razye's orders, take down the sugar mills and the new factories, like the Dargent and the Credit Foncier, with their bases in the continent. This impairment to the property of the whites would push up the cost of labour, so that the impoverished blacks could get the chance of earning a bigger share of wages. Razye is unmindful of any reason but what this chance opening has brought forth – it is the opportunity for seeking vengeance that he had been looking all the while, as when he tells Irmine "You and your child are the instruments of my revenge. For I shall take my revenge, … a devastating revenge, on what Heaven, in league with the white Creoles like yourself, has done to me" (Conde 106).

Race and Religion, the Supernatural and Magic Realism:

Preoccupations with race and religion are rampant in the text, and in spite of the structural hybridity of the story, the many attempts at crossing the racial barrier do not actually pose a threat to the hierarchy of white/black/mulatto/Indian racial dichotomies. Cathy, a mulatto girl,

marries Aymeric, a *beke*; his sister Irmine then ties the knot with Razye, a black man, origin unknown. But predispositions with blood, heritage and status mire the forging of relations – the white Creoles cannot forget, in spite of all Cathy's beauty, what her ancestors were, and they cannot forgive her for it (Conde 29). Cathy herself wishes to put as much distance between her person and her African heritage as is possible, so what in *Wuthering Heights* is just the crossing over for riches and ranking becomes here also the desire to acquire 'white' status. It is the very reason why Cathy rejects Razye in the first place:

> It would only be as if Cathy the reprobate existed, stepping straight off the slave-ship. Living with him would be like starting over as savages from Africa. (41)
> … two Cathys inside me … one Cathy who's come straight from Africa, vices and all. The other Cathy who is the very image of her white ancestor, pure, dutiful, fond of order and moderation. (40)

Cathy is seen by Razye as betraying her blood when she marries a Creole, and this essential emphasis on a physicality of race in which one always manages to feel entrapped, throws into light a fetish with seeking to chart a racial genealogy. She is acutely aware, in the opinion of her brother, about the transaction she chooses to establish when she marries into a prominent slave-owning family – "she waltzed with Aymeric over a floor that generations of slaves, her ancestors, had polished and the music sounded in her ears like the tears of a requiem" (Conde 50). This, whether the reader chooses to agree with Justin or not, is nonetheless a vatic utterance for it foreshadows the tragic events that follow.

Cathy, therefore, fails when she is asked to locate her loyalty with her African ancestry, but Razye more than steps up to it. So much so that he must with force of wilful assertion be put in his place – and what is that? He is likened to a runaway slave, a wild man of the forest – which brings to mind the condition of the maroons. Those slaves who refused to bear the yoke of inhuman servitude broke ranks and escaped to the woods and mountains to form their own band of people, who would neither submit to slavery nor give in to committing suicide. They

would build independent settlements and gather food for subsistence, and their wives and families would follow them once the encampments had been fortified. These runaway rebels usually appointed a chief round whom they gathered for direction and instruction, (one of the greatest of whom was Mackandal), and with the dint of their organizational capability and ferocity of purpose, posed a sterling challenge to the colonists (James 20). Much later on in the story, when the events have reached the lives of the next generation, Aymeric's daughter Catherine (herewith referred to as Cathy II, for purposes of swift identification) also bemoans her quick temper which she attributes to her mother's lineage (again a continuing obsession with genealogy/bloodline) – "Like a woman of the Maroons hacking with a cutlass at the master who had raped her" (Conde 262). But as Razye says, when Cathy accuses him of being the reason for her death, it is *she*, not *he*, who has betrayed her blood – she preferred white skin over her descent, not realising that it was the very core of her being she was repudiating – because despite all her efforts to the contrary "you can't lie to your own blood. You can't" (Conde 82).

In *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine tells Nelly that she felt herself not fit for heaven, because she would never belong there. It is from this chance remark that Conde takes up the thread to fashion the ideology of religion that surfaces in the mindsets of Razye and Cathy. They have, from childhood, equated Christianity with being partial to, and as carved out for the white folks, as can be sampled in –

> Razye: 'We hate you, sitting up there in Heaven. There is no justice in the way you share out colour, plantations and land. We shall never call you our father, cos you're not.' (Conde 118)
> …
> Cathy: '… ever since I was little I've wondered whether the Christian religion is not a white folks' religion made for white folks; whether its right for us who have African blood in our veins. Shouldn't there be a religion for every race, every people on this earth?' (Conde 81)

This is an unfair burden to bear, when even divine powers are not

on the side of the woefully wronged. This is why Razye finds an escape in seeking out the supernatural, which has echoes in its Victorian counterpart. This is when he finds solace in *santeria*, which he learnt about during his time in Cuba. But first, before Razye's motives are made clear, we should go back to Bronte to find the traces from which this bold derivation is drawn.

Heathcliff and Hindley both do not believe in God, do not go to church, and to all appearances, have become apostates. But Heathcliff from early childhood believed in the pagan elements, in ghosts and spirits. After Catherine's death he vehemently askes her to haunt him, if he is indeed, as she has accused him, her murderer –

> "May she wake in torment!'' he cried, with frightful vehemence, stamping his foot, and groaning in a sudden paroxysm of ungovernable passion. "Why, she's a liar to the end! Where is she? Not there—not in heaven—not perished—where? Oh! you said you cared nothing for my sufferings! And I pray one prayer—I repeat it till my tongue stiffens—Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest, as long as I am living! You said I killed you—*haunt me, then! The murdered do haunt their murderers, I believe—I know that ghosts have wandered on earth. Be with me always*—take any form—drive me mad! only do not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you! Oh, God! it is unutterable! I cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul!" (Bronte 130) (emphasis added)

Later on, at her wake, with the help of Nelly, he sneaks in and ties together a lock of his hair with that of his beloved. The same is done by Razye, who keeps the entwined locks always about his person. And Heathcliff, with such a stern admonition to Catherine to haunt him, always believes in his soul that she is with him, always. Such paroxysms of passion as he displays shocked readers of the day, who found it "rugged and contemptible" (*The Atlas*, among other journals). Even further, near the end of the book, when all his inherent superstitions tumble out, he confesses to Nelly:

> … she has disturbed me, night and day, through eighteen years—incessantly—remorselessly… You know, I was wild after she died, and eternally, from dawn to dawn, praying her to return to me—her spirit—*I have a strong faith in ghosts*; I have a conviction that *they can, and do exist*, among us. (Bronte 220) (emphasis added)

When we pay close attention to these credulous beliefs of Heathcliff, we find a ringing replica in *Windward Heights*: from when they were little, they (Razye and Cathy) took pleasure in playing near the tombs of the Gagneur ancestors; when Razye returns after his ill-fated meeting with Cathy II from the island of Marie-Galante (and whose singular resemblance to his own self finally convinces him, when no rumors could, that she is the lovechild of Cathy and himself) he is described as a "*soukougnan*, a bloodsucker" (Conde 268), the same imagery that Mrs. Dean uses for Heathcliff, calling him "a ghoul or vampire" (Bronte 252). The most telling feature, however, that ties the two books together is the theme of trans-animation: right at the end of *Wuthering Heights*, Lockwood is told of speculations made by the inhabitants of Gimmerton that the spirits of Heathcliff and Catherine, united after death, roam the heaths that were so beloved of them since childhood: "They's Heathcliff and a woman, yonder, under t' Nab" (Bronte 257). When Lockwood goes to investigate for himself, it is his lasting observation that ends the novel: "… and wondered how anyone could ever imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth" (Bronte 257). It might well have astounded Lockwood that anyone could envision such thoughts about the peacefully resting dead, but the question, and one which Conde takes up in her yarn, is: Were the dead really reunited? And did they really rest as peacefully as was/is assumed?

A resounding refutation is given to the above question by Cathy, when after her death, she rises to speak to the readers. This act of resurrection is in itself jarring: she is not resting, she is finally free to tell her own version of events, and unless she atones for her sins she knows that she will not find the peace she craves – "You must realize *we shall never see each other again*, for death is nothing but the night. It is a *migration of no return*" (Conde 59) (emphasis added). Conde,

with her power of authorial intervention, leaves an answer for discerning readers right in the dedication of the book, when she quotes from Simone de Beauvoir (*La Ceremonie des adieux*):

> Death has separated us.
> My death will not reunite us. (Conde iv)

By these very markers we might deduce that what Bronte wishes to achieve, namely the reunification of the star-crossed lovers, is completely negated in the text of the adaptation. Thoughts of a meeting in the afterlife were discussed by the young playmates, when Razye tried to convince Cathy that the secrets of the *kimbwaze* could help bring about metempsychosis, because these 'sorcerers' were always in touch with the invisible. And throughout his life, after the death of Cathy that is exactly what Razye sets out to do, it is the one chief purpose of his life, to establish contact with the soul/spirit of his venerated idol. The character of Heathcliff/Razye betrays a monomania for their departed paramour – a certain fugue state of mind bordering on an unhealthy cathexis. This cathexis is the compulsion to revenge in Heathcliff, as he tortures with barbaric deportment his own kith and kin, his own son Linton, when the boy wastes away from tuberculosis (then known as consumption), and it is the same invidious energy that impels the treatment of Razye II (or First-Born, the son of Razye and Irmine) and all else round him (his family, who he keeps in the most abject poverty, and his promiscuity that he imposes on his wife and the consciousness of his children, who grow to detest him for the very same).

In order to learn the secrets of the invisible world, Razye enlists the help of three different *kimbwaze*, the priests of *santeria*. We learn that these priests are also called, interchangeably, *babalawo* and *gadezafe*. They are namely Melchior, Cileas and Madhi. The meeting with Melchior is arranged in Cuba, which is before the death of Cathy. Razye has an unhealthy habit of seeking to learn the lore of the 'invisible', so much so that the *kimbwa* suspect that there secrets would not be safe in the hands of one such. Heathcliff's preoccupation with ghosts, which can be traced back to his 'gypsy' origins, is given full vein by Conde in the figure of Razye. Melchior's first impression of

Razye is that he resembles a spirit of the dead, or *egun*, but not just any of that lot, but rather an "*egun* prevented by an abominable crime from joining the other invisible spirits in the afterlife …" (Conde 8). As Razye has committed an untold number of murders, when working for the Spanish army, it is *a priori* to deduce that his soul is already damned. Melchior is impressed by Razye's strong willpower, and his persistent demand to get in touch with the souls of the departed ancestors, related either by blood or religious lineage, surcharges the very life of Melchior – he dies by the hand of a common criminal, but the gods that he worshipped did give him fair warning – in the form of a dream where he saw himself lying in his own pool of blood. Disregarding such an ominous portent, confident in his belief that no power of man could touch him till his time should come, he chooses to interpret the smile of the saint Santa Barbara as auspicious, and meets his death. Something similar happens later on to Cileas, who promises to capture the spirit of Cathy for Razye, so that he may always keep her entrapped by his side. All the signs are portentous, the dead will not be tethered to the living, especially for purposes as intended by Razye – they are not honourable intentions, he does not aim to pay obeisance to the dead, nor to esteem them – the use of the spirits of the *egun* ancestors, if Razye had his way, would only be for his selfish objectives. Such is the extent of his self service that he doesn't regret the deaths of the *kimbwa*, doesn't even care that they died for his cause – all he can spare a thought to is that the "invisible spirits were scorning him" (Conde 99).

Madhi - whose name means the "One Chosen By The Invisible" (Conde 216) – on the other hand, is the only *babalawo* who escapes death, because he, unlike his predecessors, makes clear to Razye that his hands are tied, that he cannot foreclose to him the secret knowledge which he so covets, because it is, as Madhi views it, beyond the realm of possible acquisition. This, the reader will conclude, is much the wiser action to take, seeing the fate that befell his antecedents who tried to do the very same thing, and paid with their lives. An understanding of the religion of *santeria* is integral to appreciate why a desperate Razye turns to it and why Conde deploys such a spiritual meter in her text. The signifier "*Santeria*" is a relative neologism – it did not exist a hundred years ago (Wirtz 29). It is a very important part of Caribbean culture,

where the idea exists that the people who are dead are still with you. *Santeria* emerged out of *brujeria* (witchcraft), which is linked to Afro-Cubans of Lucumi (or Yoruba) origin – a system of beliefs brought to the New World by slaves, a system for communicating with dead ancestors. *Santeria* is especially emblematic in Cuban culture, along with all its derivates of music, dance, folklore and iconography. It uses a semiotics of language that syncretizes Catholicism and Yoruba beliefs. *Santeria* is Afro-Cuban in the sense that it draws its roots from West African praxis and cosmogonies. It is also Afro-Cuban because its first practitioners were black, even though in modern times it has long since been practiced by racial groups spanning diverse social classes. "*Santeria* has traditionally been described as a syncretic amalgam of Catholicism and Yoruba orisha cults forged in the crucible of New World plantation slavery, a characterization with strong ideological connections to Cuba's national origin myth" (Wirtz 29). (Melchior, the first of the *kimbwas*, is Cuban). Razye's attempt to bring about a re-incarnation of his lost beloved is part of the Caribbean belief that when we walk on the earth, it is on the bones of the ancestors that we step (*egun*, in Yoruba dialect, means bones) (Egun n.d., n.p.). These ancestors can help us in our endeavours but we must also pay our respects to them or their help – by music, prayers, fasting and the setting up of altars. Razye does none of this, in fact he is furious at Melchior's death because he feels cheated that his childhood dream of communicating with the dead has been delayed, that he would have to wait to "refashion the world to his liking" (Conde 12). His thoughts, bent only on seeking redemption, are impure, admixed with a malignant, corrosive willpower. This is why he does not achieve success, it is as if the heavenly powers are decided on a course to thwart him – he will not be united with his Cathy, not even in the hereafter. This veers away from Bronte's conclusion – a decisive stroke of the retelling in establishing its haecceity.

There are instances in the novel where the use of magical realism has been used. The first example is when Cathy rises from the dead to speak to 'those who had ears to hear her" (Conde 90). Now that she is dead and has no more ties in the land of the living, with only unceasing eternity ahead of her, she takes her chance to narrate the chaos of her life from her own eyes. From beyond the line that demarcates the

natural and the supernatural, she has heard that Aymeric has chosen to bury her not in the Linsseuil family vault but in the graveyard at l'Engoulvent, so that she could be laid to rest beside her mother. She scoffs at this, saying "Only a living person could think that such a belated reunion would be of some use. We never knew each other, our hearts didn't have time to love one another. Our bones will crumble to dust beside each other" (Conde 95). This shows that she was still hovering between the two worlds, for if she were speaking as an emissary of the afterworld she could have known for certain whether her reunion with her mother could come about or not. She is not yet interred, but she ascertains that such interment as her husband plans will be of little use in restoring peace to the long dead. She has given up her life, but speaks as if still living, when she scours the room of her lying-in for a glimpse of Razye, "I don't see you in the crowd" (Conde 84). We must remember that this is *after* she has been declared deceased. I would like to lay particular emphasis on a phrase "By the *magic* of death" (Conde 84) (emphasis added) – by the magic of death then the colour of her skin darkens after her demise, 'flooding through her … thickened her facial features, distended her mouth, giving a mauve touch to her lips, and with the stroke of a pencil redefined the arch of her eyebrows" (Conde 84). It is as if the author is emphasizing that one cannot escape the colour of one's skin, however much one tries. In death, all pretensions to parity have been dissembled, even if such dissembling had to be done by extramundane happenings.

If magic realism is a state where the real and the fantastic can coexist in a state of balance, then we have another such example in Madhi's narrative – when he talks about an acquaintance of his (from whom he took much of his training as *gadezafe*) swimming in a pond naked, "his sex as long as a donkey lash wrapped around his waist" (Conde 216). This is quite extraordinary, for here we have the supernatural blending with the everyday, ordinary world – a forging of connections through the opening up of an interstitial space.

But the finest instance of this marvellous thaumaturgy is when Gengis, Razye's son, beholds the figure of his dead father sitting on his tomb. He even has a conversation with him, where his father tells him that he is tired of waiting all his life to meet with his goal, and even in

death – the great beyond, his wish has eluded him, and that he will continue to be a tortured soul because he sees an eternity of waiting that lies ahead of him "Now I'm here and I don't even know any longer why I'm waiting. I can see a path stretching out in front of me … What am I going to do with all this time on my hands?" (Conde 287). What is an especially distinguishing feature in the fact that Gengis knows what he is experiencing is not a dream – he knows that in front of him he has the phantasmagoric figure of his father, and this does not scare him, for he feels that his father's insults and blows can no longer touch him – he is in the beyond – which just indisputably shows that a ghostly, spectral figure has been crafted. This is an example of the marvellous, of the strange, something that exists by eluding established norms (Carpentier 101). All of the above examples show aplenty a kind of mutation, a metamorphosis almost – something that refuses to be contained within established modes of what we might consider the border/periphery, or even the center. The magic makes its presence felt by disrupting the fabric of everyday reality, with an interpolation of the fantastic, the inexplicable, and the *unreal*. Maryse Conde feels that if you belong to the Caribbean, you have a lot of influences in you, and that a faith in magic realism is also a faith in social realism (Wolff 1999). Therefore, in *Windward Heights*, narrative and representation, culture, identity and history is interweaved with the mythical and the fabulous, to further exert what Homi Bhabha says of magic realism, that it is "the literary language of the emergent post-colonial world" (Bhabha 7).

The Use of Polyphony:

Mikhail Bakhtin developed his concept of 'polyphony' in a discussion of Dostoevsky's works. For him, polyphony – a term borrowed from music, where many parts help in forming an individual melody, as well as harmonizing with each other – meant multiple voices, which cannot be merged together into a singular perspective, say of the author. What polyphony does is to create its own voice that can carry the weight of narrative in a story, quite apart from the voice of the author. When in a book we encounter multiple narrative voices, we are confronted with a view that does not see reality just from the author's constructed consciousness, but rather from what is called a "plurality of consciousness" that hold their validity by bearing out an ideology different from that of the writer, which is more discursive,

more contrastive, by dint of the power to carry autonomous, objective meaning in its many strands. "A character's word about himself and his world is just as fully weighted as the author's word usually is … It possesses extraordinary independence in the structure of the work … nor does it serve as a mouthpiece for the author's voice, it sounds, as it were, alongside the author's word and in a special way combines both with it and with the full and equally valid voices of other characters" (Bakhtin 7). Therefore, if consciousness, if Bakhtin is read aright, is an amalgam of responsive interactions; then it cannot exist by itself, in isolation. It must continuously interact, because then we could really arrive at the truth – because the quality of discreteness which a multiplicity of voices generate can equate more with truth, rather than one single meaning found in the authorial voice. Simultaneity produces a multitude of contesting, ever-changing meaning – and this dialogue, this aural connect of divergent polyphonous voices is very much evident in Conde's adaptation, because she breaks up the dual voice of Nelly Dean/Lockwood into thirteen voices, of which I will concentrate on the servant and outsider (the fisherman and the fishwife) narrations.

What these individual accounts maintain is not just the hegemony of the standard storyline, but also a little bit of their own history, how they came to be in the part of the world where they find themselves, doing what they are doing. Lucinda Lucius, who works as the servant of the Linsseuils, mentions that her ancestry can be traced back to the Bambara people, who hailed mainly from the West African mainland. Lucinda's whole life has been passed in servitude, as had the lives of her mother and grandmother before her. One of her earliest ancestors was captured and sold as part of the slave trade, from Cap-Vert in Senegal, and then the fateful passage in a slave ship brought her to the Antilles. She confesses to know little about her forebears except that they toiled and suffered by working on the sugar plantations. She sounds a hopeless note when she says "For my generation the end of slavery means nothing. It's the same sadness, the same wretchedness…" (Conde 67).

Mabo Julie is the one who brings up both Irmine and her children, especially Razye II. She is old enough to have lived during the time of slavery and so recollects memories of how both the men in her life were

cruelly murdered, one by a foreman, and the other hanged, after being punished with lashes. She is dedicated to her white masters, but alongside this exists a bitterness and resentment at the yoke she has to bear because of racial inequality. A similar course is in the tale of *mabo* Sandrine, who nurses the second Cathy. She is a register of her times, for she was born in the month of the abolition of slavery. Her father deserted their family when she was young on receiving news that the black people were free finally, and it was thus that her mother came under the employment of the Linsseuils. She frankly confesses a dislike of Aymeric, even when he has ensured that all who work under him get a fair chance at education. This must come from the fact that they are now free, that they are their own people, and that Aymeric, the forward-looking master who hopes by his tinkering of the system to flatten the discords of communal disharmony, is battling against a vain superciliousness. He is a privileged person of his own class and however much he tries he can never break the barriers that years of oppression have put in place. Sandrine therefore supports the marauding henchmen of the socialists, led by Razye, supports the burning of the plantations which would hurt Aymeric economically because the cruelties of property and privilege are always, always more heinous, even when compared with the drastic, ferocious revenges of poverty (James 103) – revenge as embodied by Razye. But then Razye destroys not only the interests of the *beke* population, but also his own family.

A specific mention of date is made when Sanjita relates that her father left the port of Calcutta for Guadeloupe on 21st December 1867, in the *Allahabad*. A mythical tale of how he drew his parentage from a Brahmin who seduced his mother is something that her father would have his children believe, but as Sanjita acutely questions, if he were indeed of such noble birth, how was it that they came to find themselves in immiseration and exile in the plantations of Guadeloupe? (Conde 155-156) She deduces that her parents were, in all likelihood, poor peasants in the Bengal countryside, who must have come to the city looking for work as seasonal migrants. But instead they got contracted into service – which brings us to the coolie trade. Just prior to the abolition of slavery, many regions of the erstwhile Empire took to the importation of contract workers to supply a cheap source of manpower for cotton, sugar, and coffee plantations. When the slave trade was

abolished in 1807, a severe shortage of labour confronted the colonists. Indentured labourers from the Indian sub-continent and South China were brought to the plantations. A connection between the Indian emigration overseas and the Atlantic slave trade was the British abolition movement. Contract migration from India was purportedly given guarantees of travel by the Imperial Crown (Boogart and Emmer 9). This guarantee was given so as to avoid the abuses, which happened in the case of the Chinese indentured to Spanish occupied Cuba (Boogart and Emmer 9). This source of free labour was certainly less expensive than to employ in large numbers (for plantations were labour-intensive industries) the newly freed class of black people. Most of the Indians migrated from the Indo-Gangetic plains, as also from the southern parts of the country. This is evidenced in the text because Sanjita marries Apu, whose family hails from the south of India. Distinctions of class, caste and colour are comingled even here, because initially her parents refused the suit, as Apu's skin colour was as dark as the autochthonous denizens of the Caribbean. But because they converted to Christianity, the marriage agreement eventually falls into place.

In the narratives of Romaine, who lives and works for Cathy II in Marie-Galante, and in that of Roro, the fisherman and friend of Razye II, who brings him over to Dominica, where he seeks work, and that of Ada the fishwife – we understand the curves of their life: that the island of Marie-Galante more than any of the others, where the plantation of sugarcane arrived late, is one mired in extreme poverty, where the soil is mere scrub on which little grows, which is known in passing parlance as "the island that's dying", where the "*razye* scrub and Dominican acacias … quickly become a scourge for the planters" (Conde 224). Here the inhabitants make their living by cutting and selling logwood, and it is here, by permission of the colonial authorities, that Cathy II opens up a little school. It is her fate to cross paths with First-Born, who masquerades his identity from her, both because he knows she would never accept him if he revealed his identity (she detests the man who is responsible for taking away the land and property of her father, in the process hastening his death) and also as he himself is in hiding from the wrath of his father. It is Ada, the fishwife resolute in her independence, who proudly supports her own family, who helps Cathy II in her time of

confinement, and acts as midwife during her parturition. Ada narrates that Razye II had not been a very supportive partner, though he tried to do his best by her. After her death, he takes a firm decision to do his best by Anthuria, their daughter. He must return to Guadeloupe to claim his inheritance, not so much for himself as to secure the future of his child. For in this birth of Anthuria, who will continue the third generation of the story, we can find no parallel in *Wuthering Heights*. Anthuria's past, her genealogy, cannot be traced back – because her father throws away the diary which his wife had kept, which could possibly unfold the secrets of their relationship – that they were actually related, brother and sister. If Anthuria, when she grows up, cannot find the links to her racial lineage, it would at least go some way in safeguarding her from the obsession that tormented her mother and grandmother before her. But Anthuria's father, Razye II, is haunted by the graveyard where 'The letters intertwined in stone – CATHY DE LINSSEUIL – RAZYE – had given him the proof he had been looking for" (Conde 347) – thoughts of their incestuous union will beleaguer him for as long as *he* lives, even if he has tried to ensure his daughter never finds out about it. The last line of the book – "Such a lovely child could not be cursed" (Conde 348) – shows that Conde leaves her book open-ended, full of hope, where a new generation could have the possibility of starting fresh, with no burden of the past attached.

A Note on *Creolite*:

If the concept of Negritude as propounded by Aime Cesaire meant a return to a shared African past, a shared rejection of French hegemony and culture, in order to establish an idea of an undivided Africa, an Africa united as one idea – then the movement of *Creolite* decided to put a distance between its own thematics and the thematics of Cesaire et al. The founders – Patrick Chamoiseau, Rafael Confiant and Jean Bernabe – argue against what they consider a single, monolithic view – an inadequacy – that the negritude movement imposed on Creoles, especially of the French Caribbean. "Negritude imposed itself then as a stubborn will of resistance trying quite plainly to embed our identity" (888) and "Creoleness is the interactional or trans-actional aggregate of Caribbean, European, African, Asian, and Levantine cultural elements, united on the same soil by the yoke of history … real forges of a new humanity, where languages, races, religions, customs, ways of being

from all over the world were brutally uprooted and transplanted in an environment where they had to reinvent life" (891-892). In Conde's novel, the two Cathys both struggle to come to terms with their ancestral heritage and their present selves. The mother commits an act of *mauvaise foi* (Eagleton 101) – where under pressure from societal forces she chooses to adopt false values, to "whiten" herself by marrying a *beke*, with a complete rejection of her own cultural roots – just so she could acquire "acres of cane-fields, a sugar plantation, a bank account and horses in a stable" (Conde 200). The daughter ascribes her sullen moods, her livid temper to her mother (who was a mulatto) – so much so that she wishes, evident when she tells her friend Ada, that she were born of a stout womb, for her mother had her head filled with "dreams and longings" (Conde 326). Razye commits a similar act by marrying a white woman, so that he could wreak his vengeance on the white planter class and escape a fate of being merely inducted into the *embourgeoisement*. Sanjita lives her life in the islands by rejecting her Indian past, by converting to Christianity and she is happy to do it – she is forging a life of her own – where she feels confident enough to turn her back on Indian gods like Kali, Vinayagar and Hanuman. The conception of these characters in accordance to their location/culture may be substantiated by what Edouard Glissant calls the cultural fragmentation of the Caribbean. He rejects Negritude as 'fake universality' and instead, drawing on Deleuze/Guattari, propounds a consciousness based not on 'root' identity but a 'rhizome' driven one. Because the rhizome grows without fixed roots, as it were, and so is global. In Conde's novel we find manifestations of irreducible cultural and societal differences – 'relations', as Glissant would call them.

> The root is unique, a stock taking all upon itself and killing all around it. In opposition to this they propose the rhizome, an enmeshed root system, a network spreading either in the ground or in the air, with no predatory rootstock taking over permanently. The notion of the rhizome maintains, therefore, the idea of rootedness but challenges that of a totalitarian root. Rhizomatic thought is the principle behind what is I call the Poetics of Relation, in which each and every identity

> is extended through a relationship with the Other. (Glissant 34)

Sanjita, a fair-skinned woman from Calcutta, who may never have been able to marry Apu had she lived in India because of divisive caste/class politics, finds it is something she can do in the Antilles, where she must also make her living in a land of people who themselves form a *chaos-monde* (Glissant 156) – an intermixing of race, culture, colour, nationality, *metissage*. So *antillanite* does maintain the fact of rootedness but completely rejects any pretensions to a totalitarian root. It is, as Cathy says, 'a migration of no return" (Conde 91).

Conclusion:

The remit of this paper has tried to show how in Maryse Conde's novel there is a tying together of many aural narrations. She borrows the framework of her story from Victorian England but transfuses it with a distinctly Caribbean atmosphere of problematization – of a society caught in the slipstream of abolition; a place where the specter of a mixed racial parentage haunts the psyche of the characters; where there is a criss-crossing network of supernatural elements, (both in the parent and source text), elements that are capable of channelling relations and messages across a spatio-temporal territory – what might be called a traverse over the Atlantic – "the Caribbean, island after island, lying beneath me like a willing female with its hills and lush valleys green with sugar-cane" (Conde 217); where, against the cult of re-incarnation, men and women toil to unite beyond the realm of the pale, yet fail to do so; where a world of whiteness is blown apart by racial conflagrations and social upheavals, but where the aggregate community does manage to come together to keep their heads above the deluge of transitional ethos facing them. This, when set in contradistinction to Emily Bronte's text, helps us demarcate the very contrastive nature of both the expositions – where Heathcliff is just the one man intent on destroying the scions of two families against whom he bears a grudge, his counterpart (who draws his name from the Creole for the barren heaths and cliffs, where he is found – '*razye*') rather chooses to vex his anger against an entire community – stratified into Indians, Creoles, mulattos and blacks – an entire canvas of reprisal against the dominant class structure.

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