

*Registering Woman:
Senior's Zig-zag Discourse and
Code-switching in Jamaican Narrative*

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THE TRAUMATIC PROCESS of becoming a woman, in the setting of a brown, rural, middle-class Jamaican family is a dominant factor in shaping the language of Olive Senior's short story "Zig-zag," in *Discerner of Hearts*. Jamaican Creole, Standard English, and intermediate varieties of these comprise Jamaican discourse, and "Zig-zag" shifts between the codes and intersects scribal discourse with suggestions of orality. Through these shifts, "Zig-zag" traces the emotional upheavals of its central character, Sadie, one of two daughters in a household fraught with tensions about mixed roots.

Sadie's sister, Muffet, is older, fairer, better behaved, admired, and inevitably politely spoken. Her father is withdrawn, obsessed with mysterious, apparently intellectual work that no one can actually define but that we naturally associate with written and therefore Standard English. The household reflects the language continuum of the larger society. Her mother clings anxiously to the acrolect, harassed by every threat of social betrayal, hedged in by the very boundaries she lays down for the protection of the family—social boundaries with linguistic dimensions. The mother is nervous about the future of the girls and the education on which this depends—an education that displays itself through language which is a dimension of the behavior that she assesses. She is anxious about how they will turn out, frantic lest Sadie "turn-down."

A maid, Desrine, has parallel concerns about her children, especially Manuela, whom Sadie meets at Desrine's house and later at her own. Desrine, whose language is firmly located in the Creole, is not occupied by implications of code choice.

However, she is anxious enough about her daughter's education to suppress the girl's speech. Manuela's language behaviour involves significant silences. When Sadie meets her on the road to Desrine's house, Manuela is silent to the children of her own community. At Sadie's home, she suppresses her socially stigmatized speech unless alone with Sadie.

Sadie is torn between the varying form and content of conflicting codes. She is fascinated by the folk wisdom and African background of Desrine, and by the physical vitality of Manuela that contrasts with the intellectual development expected of Sadie herself. However, their communication is cut short once Manuela becomes pregnant. This break in communication does not resolve the linguistic complexities of Sadie's situation. Muffet leaves for an education in town. Desrine prepares to leave the job so that she can care for Manuela's child, even as Desrine's mother cared for Desrine's children. Sadie is left to consider her options for development. The shifting experiences and perspectives of the child protagonist emerge through a multifaceted and shifting discourse. One dimension of complexity in the language situation of these characters is that of confrontation between codes; another related dimension is that of confrontation between oral and scribal discourse, the oral discourse utilizing a structure governed by the operation of memory.

The short story is framed as a recollection of developing feminine consciousness, as a resurfacing of intimate experiences from the past, with all the immediacy with which these experiences flash into the mind. The delivery of these recollections is characterized by orality. Mary Chamberlain tells us that "oral sources are different from conventional sources precisely because they deal with perception and subjectivity" and she suggests that this is not a limitation but achieves a "different credibility" (95). Chamberlain associates the definition of the individual with properties of memory, and indeed Sadie's view of herself is based on her recollections of her experiences—recollections that are her own construction. At the same time, Chamberlain notes that memory manifests elements of shared consciousness and is also associated with a process of social production, so memory is both subjective and collective (96,

101). A further insight of Chamberlain, relevant to the account of Sadie's development, is that memory is multi-layered and multifaceted, for memories change and distort under social and cultural influences (106). The narrator of "Zig-Zag" recollects the developing consciousness of the girl in a voice that echoes the girl's voice. Literary, scribal usage blurs into the style of an oral delivery.

Gordon Rohlehr has described the language situation in which Caribbean writers currently operate as an *oral/scribal continuum*,¹ and this is a helpful concept to apply to any analysis of Senior's language. Also useful is Edward Kamau Brathwaite's concept of *nation language*, a dimension of Caribbean language especially allied to the African aspect of Caribbean experience, associated with folk culture and derived, originally, as a strategy for survival and for preservation of culture (21-25; see also Torres-Saillant 129-31). However, Senior's writing profits best from a combination of these concepts, a vision of *nation language* that embraces not only the Creole but the local versions of Standard English that continually interface with the Creole. "Zig-zag" presents a situation in which the girl's life-as-it-should-be is laid out before her like a text already written, but in which life-as-it-is surfaces and interrupts this text, like a subtext in which the Creole setting intercepts the official and standard one. In a sense Sadie's inquisitive and incorrigible view continually rewrites the text that has been prepared for her. This effect is largely achieved by movement between codes, between the official language and the Creole.

Another dimension to the structure of the tale lies in the fact that even as the text unfolds, intercepted by subtext, this unfolding is the subject of recollection. The narrator looks back at events moving forward, events not presented in chronological order but in an order based on causal relationships between the events and the development of an adolescent feminine consciousness. The brown girl becomes increasingly aware of tangled roots, conveyed in the entanglement of language codes, and through metaphor—the stubborn roots of the water hyacinth and the dangerously curly strands of her own hair. Through recurrent combing and plaiting, her mother and others about

her struggle to bring these roots under control, to repress the wildness inherent in Sadie and burgeoning in sexual curiosity. As the narrative shifts between Standard English and Creole, the dialectic of plaiting and loosening hair parallels a dialectic of repressed sexuality and self-expression:

Then she realised her hair was loose and she had to plait it back.

But when she touched it, she found that her hair was totally out of control now, had turned into a wild animal. A *leggo beas!* (214)

The time frame of the narrative is complex for a number of reasons. The time of narration (the point from which the narrator recalls events, retrospectively) is located well beyond the story and is stable. However, the time of the narrated (the movement of events forward, prospectively) is discontinuous. The inherent retrospectivity of the narration surfaces from time to time through the prospectivity of the time movement to hint at disturbing events already past but not yet revealed. Embedded in the main third-person narrative is one in first person, Sadie's embedded story of a journey to Desrine's house. This embedded narrative implicates a psychological journey to a more African past than Sadie is allowed to articulate. In a sense, the embedded story parallels Sadie's dream at the end of the tale—with a crucial difference. In her dream, Sadie is no longer the centre of attention to the other participants, but has become invisible and peripheral.

The tools for accomplishing such effects of intersecting retrospectivity and prospectivity are tense (which is concerned with location in time of the event) and aspect (which is non-deictic, involving distribution of time within the event). However, in Caribbean literary discourse, switches between Standard English and Creole (which mark tense and aspect quite differently) interrupt retrospectivity. The switch to the Creole unmarked verb (which is Past and Perfective²) facilitates parallel but contrasting time references, for this unmarked form in the Creole is identical to the Narrative Present of Standard English discourse. Sadie's account of her journey has all the immediacy of an oral performance because of a shift to first person and to present tense in Standard English discourse. At the same time retrospectivity is not lost, because of the significance of the unmarked verb

in the Creole voice: "From they scream out, 'Mama come!' the children, except for Manuela, never say another word" (165).

It is essential to note that the movement between codes is a fundamental aspect of the Caribbean setting and of Caribbean characterization. Code switching in Caribbean literary discourse is an essential strategy for perspectival shift on the ideological plane. In Olive Senior's fiction, political implications of code shifting include those of gender. Senior conveys the subtle changes in the developing girl child by exploiting the complex language situation of the Caribbean in which language codes of different status (for example, Standard English and Creole) coexist with each other and with a range of intermediate varieties.

Perspective, or point-of-view, may be perceptual or conceptual. Spatio-temporal perspective is essentially perceptual. It is equivalent, as Fowler points out, to viewing position in the visual arts, an angle from which the object of representation is seen (127). Ideological perspective involves a mental rather than physical stance, an attitude to the object represented. Senior's narrative conveys an inside view hinged to the mental stance of a developing girl child in rural Jamaica—a child whose family situation prescribes the use of Standard English but demands full comprehension and inevitable use, at times, of Jamaican Creole. The dialogue varies widely between a Jamaican variety of Standard English and the Jamaican Creole.

Sadie's narrative is, for the most part, Standard English, but is colloquial. The opening sentence is passive, a structure not marked in the Creole, but progresses toward the colloquial phrasal verb *dressed up*, then to the yet more informal *mashed up*. Standard English word choice and morphology persist however in terms like *imprinted*. The orality of the narrative is marked by merged and fragmented sentences, comma splices, abbreviations, and informal phrasal verbs like *knocking about*. Orality is further marked by creole intrusions ("Sadie . . . faasing in everything" 155). These are brief but effective, sometimes conveying phonological differences from the official language but, more often, marking lexical or syntactic differences without losing the comprehension of the non-creole reader, for Senior installs such

terms in a context that illuminates them, or installs them close to Standard English near-synonyms. The fact is that the central consciousness controls the full and fluid continuum not only between Standard and Creole but between formal (literary) language of the educated and the oral tradition to which she is exposed. Indeed, she is particularly exposed to the oral tradition as a girl closely tied to domestic affairs of the house and to the maid, Desrine.

Sadie's speech is counter discursive, often questioning rather than declarative and, especially, questioning the definitions of others:

"What's a queendom?"

"A country ruled over by a queen." (158)

Indeed Senior conveys Sadie's perspective through a wide range of syntactic choices, for example, by thematic adjustments like passivization. Passivization (as in the example above) effects focus on the action rather than the agent and reflects the speaker's weighting of events. Senior manifests Sadie's perspective on the ideological plane through other categories such as transitivity (indicating the nature of her participation in the process that the clause expresses) and modality (indicating, for example, the girls's commitment to the truth of the utterance):³

Muffet said no, they had to choose a foreign name. Why? Asked Sadie.

Because foreign is elegant and written about in books, said Muffet. (157)

Muffet articulates the prescribed view, marking obligation and coercion by the phrase *had to*. Sadie questions this prescription and Muffet responds with the passive, *is written about*, that establishes an action for which no agent is necessary, a universe in which the predominance of *foreign* is established and self-evident.

In addition to manipulating the sentence structure of Standard English, Senior poignantly conveys ideological perspective through the selection of a code not traditionally associated with literary discourse. Code-switching from Standard to Creole effects perspectival shift by highlighting points of view traditionally

regarded as peripheral. Sadie, marginalized at home, becomes central at Desrine's house, as "bakra pickney," and Desrine's daughter, Manuela, is mainly responsible for this, because association with Sadie raises Manuela's status. At Desrine's house, when Sadie is not visiting, Manuela is central as the fairest. Yet Manuela marginalizes Sadie at Sadie's own home if Muffet is with them, because Muffet is fairer than Sadie and committed to acceptable behavior. Language is a significant aspect of behavior in the developing girls.

The complex linguistic background is a crucial dimension of Senior's Caribbean setting and of her characterization. The subdued, refined voices confront loud undisciplined outbursts. Muffet sneers politely,

Who ever heard of a granadilla? I have! Sadie shouted. . . .

Heh heh heh! She would cackle, as loud and careless as a market woman. (157-58)

Sadie's loudness is associated by others with the vulgarity of a Creole speaker, even when she does not actually produce Creole speech. In any case, she is frequently associated with unmentionable creole terms, like *baggy*, whether she actually articulates them or whether they occur as part of the narrative that conveys her perspective. Sadie moves with awkward enthusiasm through a setting fissured by communication gulfs of various dimensions.

Senior recognizes communication gulfs based on spatial and ideological dimensions. She reflects, in Desrine's complaint, the gulf between those "clear slap a England" and those in rural Jamaica. But this spatial gulf is mirrored by a social gulf between the educated and the uneducated—a gulf widened or narrowed by racial features:

Backra pickney can stay in school for them parents can afford it. Stay as long as they like. Till them all grow beard. But is not so for black people. . . . Well, me can't quarrel with King or Queen as the case may be, for is clear a England them live so them can't know how hard nayga have fe work out them soul-case so find food for pickney here, much less find school fee. Clear slap a England, you nuh see it, Sadie? Bucknam Palace. So how them must know what a gwan here? Governor na send and tell them. Governor na send and tell them one living thing. You nuh see it? (176)

The creole setting is one of zig-zag paths to avoid these chasms, the route between Sadie's and Desrine's house, the boundary between classes and races, the unspoken routes through Sadie's sociohistorical background, the shameful roots of her too curly hair. (Her comb is of metaphorical significance to her mother; it is the key to the future.) Sadie's colloquial Standard English speech, intercepted by Creole outbursts is yet another zig-zag path between the gulfs.

In selecting codes for her particular purposes, the author reflects attitudes to language which have changed considerably in the Caribbean over the past two centuries. As a result, code-shifting has increased in ease, frequency, and acceptability, raising the issue of what narratologists term *legibility*, the degree to which a text can be read with comprehension (Prince, *Narratology* 132-43). A conspicuous achievement of Senior is the legibility of her texts for a wide and varied readership, despite the prominence of orality in her delivery. For early writers, who included Creole to indicate the distance of their subjects and the incomprehensibility of their setting, legibility was not so important a requirement.⁴ However, for writers who code-shift in order to signal a perspectival shift, legibility is crucial. Many of Senior's readers are not Creole speakers in the first place, and their involvement with these texts places them in what might loosely be compared to a type of contact situation. The Caribbean writer must therefore take steps to preserve intelligibility while shifting perspective in this way.

The Caribbean writer must balance the demands of authenticity (what Toolan calls the "faithful record effect" [31]) against the need to preserve universal comprehension. Senior's writing addresses this need: in representing a centre of consciousness who is a bilingual Creole and Standard English speaker, she chooses Sadie, the child in between.

The girl protagonist departs from established language attitudes in "Zig-zag." Sadie's place (in terms of class, race, and gender) is rigidly defined. Her problem is partially summed up in Muffet's rebuke: "Have you ever seen a princess with a natty head?" (159) Her assumption of a higher class is play-acting, and she gets tired of playing the lady, a role tied to affectation of formal Standard English:

Sometimes, though, Sadie got tired of being a princess and all the pretending, of the speaky-spokey life it entailed, for Muffet said princesses had to speak properly at all times. (161)

Sadie injects Creole into her dialogue sometimes for shock value, sometimes to establish expertise in local mysteries. Gradually the view of real women as princesses is exploded to a view of princesses as unreal. Reality lies in the domestic world that real people inhabit, the world steeped in African survivals that are "true-true." Senior conveys Sadie's double vision through co-existing codes that are associated with different registers. The movement between codes reflects the growing girl's shifting perspective.

The Standard English/Creole relationship is both subtle and complex in the discourse of "Zig-Zag." The lexis is distinctively Caribbean although the vast majority of Caribbean English/Creole words are derived from English. Senior interferes little with Standard spelling. However, one process of lexical development in the Caribbean has been phonological change radical enough to make many creole words of English origin unrecognizable to the non-creole speaker. In many cases, this allows both a Standard and Creole *reading* of the same word. By rendering a Creole sentence in Standard English orthography, Senior presents an easily digestible Standard vocabulary leaving the Standard English reader who knows little or no Creole to deal more easily with the unfamiliar syntax ("Is look a look down"). But the Creole speaker naturally retains oral (creole) pronunciation, pronouncing *worse* as [wus] in the sentence, "Desrine's mouth would long out worse than ever." Similarly, processes known in Standard English but more frequent in Creole, like reduplication, produce Creole words or phrases composed of parts familiar in the Standard. ("How she can get through her business if him a call-call her all the time?") Additionally, the Creole voice emerges through lexical preferences, like *lick* for *blow*. (Manuela would "rub wherever it was that the lick fell.")

Legibility also rests on the ability of Creole words to shift word class and to function in a wider variety of ways than in the Standard. Thus Sadie is referred to as *fausing* in everything.⁵ This multifunctionality is closely linked to the flexionless patterns of

characteristically analytic Creole sentence structure. This too has contributed to the expansion of Creole lexicon by freeing words to operate in sentence positions and with syntactic functions that are closed to them in the international language. Again, Senior exploits this characteristically Creole process to produce the faithful record effect—the impression of Creole speech based on a few features. Her Creole is representational enough to produce the impression, but not consistent enough to threaten comprehension. (See Slembrouck 109-19 on verbatim records.) By rearranging words familiar in Standard English, and recategorizing them to function differently in the sentence, she distinguishes the Creole from International English within the literary discourse without rendering the discourse unintelligible to non-Creole speakers: “the bolder ones would malice her off for being bad-minded and poor-show-great” (167). The movement between codes reflects an alternation of world views that becomes explicit in references to language attitudes. Language attitudes that emerge in the novel are gender related, because the cultivation of a lady is associated with the encouragement of Standard English usage rather than Creole. Particularly discouraged would be those elements in which the African element is most obvious, like *yabba*, *guzu*, *duppy*, and *su-su*.

Words of non-English origin are relatively few in the Creole in any case. They are rare in Senior's text. Indeed, these tend not to be recognized as real words, associated as they are with the African cultural past. This in turn is dismissed as “wickedness of heathenism” (177)—a type of knowledge that is improper in a developing lady. Sadie's “boldness” shocks the girls she is supposed to mix with in school rather than the “natty-head children.” The “natty-head children” are cursed by everyone (including Desrine) because their parents are “bungo people with no ambition” (162), and because they are children who behave “as if they [are] the worst kind of cuftee” (168).

These are the children who are expected to grow into *ol' nayga*. Far more familiar than words of non-English origin are non-English phrases composed of English components. Not every term in the Creole has an identifiable corresponding term in Standard English (anisomorphism), and in Senior's discourse,

the term *ol' nayga* has no corresponding Standard English term, although both *old* and *negro* are English words. The term is located in the same semantic field as *worthless*, and is not the sum of *old* and *of African descent*. In some texts, the semantic reinterpretation of such terms is open-ended. Winkler's *The Painted Canoe* reflects amelioration of the term, *old negar*, first used traditionally, as a term of abuse. The phrase eventually becomes a slogan of solidarity in the novel. Zachariah embraces it in an effort to preserve identity by affirming self-worth. The phrase becomes a watch word and at last a recurrent battle-cry, "Old negar not easy to kill."

The amelioration of such terms comes about through socio-historical forces. Most recently, boundaries of acceptability have blurred not only with growing nationalism but with the widening attraction of black youth culture, which has focused on the ghetto experience. In specific contexts, Black English *nigger* has become an address for signifying intimacy, or at least common ground, but the provision is that part of this commonality must be racial. (*Nigger* is *not* a form of address that can be safely and generally employed by white speakers to black addressees.) This semantic transformation is by no means complete or universal. The choice between acceptance and non-acceptance is situationally constrained. In *The Painted Canoe* Zachariah accepts as positive the designation of *negar* when he returns to land, but his wife, Carina, resents it (224). Their situations differ in the separate experiences that constitute different contexts and impose separate meaning on the term for different characters. In "Zig-zag," there is no amelioration of *ol' nayga*. The setting of a brown middle class household in the early to mid-twentieth century does not accommodate this type of semantic change, especially where a developing girl is concerned. Attitudes associated with *ol' nayga* are gender sensitive.

Language attitudes in "Zig-zag," as in other Caribbean texts, are important to the underlying propositions of the text that together compose the Caribbean setting.⁶ The Caribbean setting is denied by Muffet, who dismisses it as unreal. Real language, like real hyacinths, comes from England. Sadie favors shared terms (like *pastures*) rather than terms that have little local cur-

rency (like *meadows*). Sadie's selection of the regional variant of international English or of the Creole is situationally constrained. At times, she violates these constraints with the impropriety of certain outbursts, the counter-discourse of a rebellious girl child. At other times the counter-discourse is not articulated by the character but is implicated through code-switching by the narrative voice that transmits her thoughts and the thoughts of others with whom she communicates closely. Several of these take the form of proverbs, of shared, inherited wisdom framed in conventional formulae: "Duppy know who to frighten" (167); "Water more than flour" (169, 75); "What is fe you can't be un-fe you" (170); "Cockroach have no business inna fowl roos" (182).

Yet even in these essentially Creole utterances, Standard English features intrude. Nation language must encompass other codes besides the Creole to facilitate the code-switching necessary to perspectival shift in this central consciousness. Sadie's situation demonstrates the pressure of a textualized language on an essentially oral language. "Foreign is elegant and written about in books," insists Muffet (157). So the presentation of Sadie's development is conveyed by Senior in Rohlehr's oral/ scribal continuum.

Sadie's discourse is heterogeneous because it permits and at times demands Creole even as it continues to require Standard English competence. The mixing that occurs is neither random nor unchecked, as this would eventually result in an undifferentiated medium (see *Devonish*). Undifferentiation would suit no one, as it would merely deplete the total richness of a discourse with so much potential for sensitive manipulation of codes. Between the options available, writers make choices linked to a number of factors, including internal setting but also constrained by external factors such as the writer's dependence on cross-cultural readership.

The heterogeneity of Caribbean language separates its literary discourse from other literature in English, and helps to undermine presuppositions of established British texts. Nevertheless, the creole consciousness not only reflects the postcolonial Caribbean but fosters the intertextuality of Caribbean and "imperial" texts. The discourse structure of the postcolonial text facilitates

subtexts that convey alternative, conflicting or outlandish visions as aspects of characterization in the developing girl. Sadie's point of view anchors the discourse in a local creole consciousness but it also establishes the ideological dislocation of this central consciousness. Senior manipulates Sadie's heterogeneous discourse in such a way as to represent (legibly) codes which are so different as to be mutually unintelligible to the uninitiated.

Senior's literary discourse prompts a different approach to what critics have understood as *nation language*, for Caribbean literary critics have used the phrase to refer almost exclusively to a code that is obviously Creole. However, *nation language* must—in an unprejudiced view—include discourse other than Creole. It must also cover discourse in which lexical items that are (deceptively) identical in form to English convey indigenous epistemes. This is of course especially true where the similarity exists only in writing, where any creole speaker *mentally* pronounces the word so differently from its international counterpart as to render the Creole unintelligible to the non-Creole speaker. The literary discourse in this way becomes a form of Caribbean language which empowers the Creole by controlling the imperial, written code even as it implicitly conveys the sound and meaning of oral Creole. Indeed, part of *nation language* must surely be this secret encoding of Creole epistemes under guise of conformity and with all the advantages of International comprehensibility.⁷

In "Zig-zag," such linguistic transgression constitutes a resistance not only to inhibitions of class and of race but of gender. A major distinction between Sadie and Muffet is Sadie's *faasness* set against Muffet's *shame*. Sadie's boldness demonstrates itself in aspects of her language—stridency, volubility, lack of inhibition regarding topic or word choice, and Creole preferences. As the narrator retells the events of a period in Sadie's life (retrospective discourse), the narrative reveals this period as one in which Sadie begins to plot her life—to rediscover her background and to speculate on her future—even as events unfold about her (prospective discourse). In the process she represses and then recalls uncomfortable incidents, recollections by Sadie partly encoded in Creole, embedded within the stream of recollections that is the narrative.

The language of memory, Chamberlain reminds us, is “the means by which tradition is transmitted, the means by which structure and values are internalized, passed on and inherited” (108). Sadie’s memories become shaped by the anxieties and memories of her mother and Desrine. This is the period in which Sadie first becomes aware of essential criteria for her development, and it is the period in which she finds conflicting influences confronting each other. She is torn between foreign and local values, between the security of straight hair and the threat of *natty* hair. She must develop the *speakey/spokey* voice of a woman with social ambitions or articulate her own local composite of English and Creole. She must integrate the enlightenment associated with a sound British-based education with the earthy folk-wisdom tested by experience among women like Desrine. She must express or repress her developing sexual awareness by cultivating an attitude of *faasness* or of *shame*. Senior constructs the developing girl’s counter-discourse out of an interplay between the codes as Sadie’s expression forces its way through repression.

Sadie must choose between a reality that has been artificially constructed for her to grow towards and a reality that *is* real, but that has been dismissed as illusion. She must choose first between the princess and the woman who has to live in a Caribbean society. She chooses the woman, but this woman may be constructed in a number of ways. One option is Muffet’s choice—wife, mother, and professional, on the *foreign* model—speakey/spokey. Another option is the sterile educated woman imaged in one of her teachers, whom the children dismiss as a mule. A final option appears to be what members of Sadie’s class would dismiss as *ol’nayga*. Black women like Desrine struggle forward with their own pretensions and ambitions, mainly for their children, but they are caught in the vicious circle of work and reproduction. For them, the only way out seems to be through camouflage (hand-me-down dresses and hair-straight) or by frustrating their capacities to give life. The question of woman’s power over her own body is raised by Desrine: “you want me was to dash them weh before they born and turn my body into graveyard?” (196). However, the only alternative she seems able to put forward

denies her power, leaving her trapped in a cycle of child-bearing and drudgery. This is the attitude associated with *ol' nayga*.

Senior characterizes the developing middle-class girl in the rural Caribbean essentially through her language behavior, which is counter-discursive and transgressive: "How can I send you to you Aunt Min with you hair looking like bush? . . . You don't practise speaking properly" (216). The threat of entrapment by the suppressed African side of her background is conveyed by meshing the metaphor of hair with references to Creole usage—an entanglement of twisted roots that separate her both from her sexually precocious black playmate and from the prim, tightly plaited, and somehow sterile propriety of society's ideal girl. Sadie must choose between *shame* and *faasness*. Senior conveys the language behaviour of the transgressive brown girl mainly through oral features in the narrative—a code-shifting that now lies at the heart of nation language in literary discourse.⁸

NOTES

- 1 "A continuum exists between a living oral tradition, and a growing scribal one in the West Indies. It relates to the continuum which exists between the various West Indian Creoles and Standard English. Most West Indian writers seem to enter this continuum at several points" (68).
- 2 The verb phrase in Caribbean English-based Creole has been extensively discussed; for a thorough treatment of this, see Winford 65.
- 3 Simpson discusses and builds on models by Fowler and others (46-118).
- 4 Representative writing of eighteenth- to nineteenth-century British authors who selected Caribbean settings is accessible in D'Costa and Lalla.
- 5 Accompanying shifts of meaning frequently occur but because the resulting word resembles a known word in the official language, in both form and meaning, the sense of familiarity is preserved and legibility (real or apparent) is maintained.
- 6 Prince defines setting in terms of underlying propositions (*Narratology* 73).
- 7 Lalla 1996 explores the emergence of a national literary discourse.
- 8 This article is a revised version of a paper presented at the International Conference of Caribbean Women Writers and Scholars, Florida International University, 26-27 Apr. 1996.

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