"*Qu'on entende la langue officielle*": Translation and Self-Translation of the French-based Creole of Saint Lucia

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Abstract: This essay will analyse the several stages of translation and self-translation that are implied in the plays by the Caribbean author Derek Walcott with particular attention to the issue of translating passages written in the French-based Creole of Saint Lucia, into French and into English. By looking at these instances of self-translation, we will see how the authority of the author over his own text allows him to make choices in self-translations of his own words which would almost surely be condemned if it were the work of another translator.

Introduction

This article will analyse the several stages of translation and self-translation that are implied in Derek Walcott's plays and, in particular, the issue of translating passages written in the French-based Creole of Saint Lucia, into French and into English. If the latter can tell us how Walcott has translated himself, the former is particularly interesting because these translations entail a passage towards a language which shares its history with the source language. This could be an advantage, as Christine Raguet argues, when she writes:

> Nous avons la chance, nous francophones, d'avoir à notre disposition une variété de langues parlées dans toutes les régions francophones de l'espace caraïbe – créoles et variantes françaises parlées par les îliens. (…) Nos difficultés ne seront jamais comparables à celles rencontrées dans d'autres langues, comme l'italien créolisé, par exemple, dans lesquelles il n'existe aucune forme d'italien puisqu'aucune île de la Caraïbe n'est italianophone, et qui n'a donc pas tous les points de référence que nous trouvons en

> français. Dans ces cas, les choix de traduction sont nécessairement d'un autre ordre. (Raguet 2010: 72-73)

This is certainly true, because in the case of French in the Antilles, and in the case of other languages which have been subjected to a process of creolization, different versions of French can be used in the translation, but what must also be remarked is that dealing with a language that has "Creole variations" can also engender different problems, since it is not always easy to distinguish between the French-based Creole, and the French in the translation, as we will see.

Self-translation

Derek Walcott made a broad use of self-translation, especially in his plays. Self-translation, or auto-translation, was defined by Anton Popovič as "the translation of an original work into another language by the author himself" (Popovič 1976: 19). When the concepts of "self-translation" and "auto-translation" are discussed in translation studies, they thus refer to something which would not apply to the corpus of Derek Walcott, since he has never translated a full work of his own into another language. However, Rainier Grutman and Trish Van Bolderen indicate that "like translation in general, self-translation can be viewed both in a narrow sense and from a much broader, even metaphorical, perspective" (Grutman, Van Bolderen 2014: 323), and it would be limiting to consider self-translation only as the translation of a full work, since – obviously taking proportion into account – even the translation of shorter passages or of excerpts of a work does entail some of the same problems, challenges and possibilities involved in translating a full work.

What really defines self-translation is not the length or completeness of the work translated, but rather the "self", the fact that the author is his own translator, therefore I will use this term to refer to passages of different length (a word, a line, a full song) which appear together in the texts of Walcott's drama in two different languages. Before I begin to analyse the texts, however, I need to clarify that the simple use of words and expressions in another language can obvious-

ly not be defined as a self-translation, but rather needs to be pointed out as an example of the very common linguistic hybridity of most postcolonial writing, and indeed of much postmodern and contemporary writing. I will therefore not study simple cases of linguistic hybridity, in which words in languages different from the main language of the work appear in the text, but only those passages in which actual translations of words and expressions that appear in the text are given, implicitly or explicitly, in the same work.

The different positioning of the self-translator in the passage which takes the text from the author to the reader, through the translator, obviously carries many implications: first of all, self-translation could solve the problem of interpretation of the author's intention, cultural background and intertextuality, as: "self-translators can access their original intention and the original cultural context or literary intertext of their original work better than ordinary translators" (Jung 2002: 30). According to Helena Tanqueiro: "no matter how close the author-translator relationship may be in conventional translations and no matter how much the translator strives to reach the 'real intentions' of the author, there are always elements coloured by the subjectivity of that other party to the process: i.e., the translator" (Tanqueiro 2000: 55). However, though self-translation could solve a few problems, as already noted, this does not mean that this practice solves these problems completely, as the self-translator might deal with very similar issues to those encountered by any other translator. There is in fact one aspect which is usually underestimated in analysing self-translations: having a single person embodying both roles, author and translator, does not mean that these two roles cannot be differentiated, as Grutman and Van Bolderen aptly point out:

> The authors of both versions are the same physical person. Which is not to say that these authors are absolutely identical: the self-translating persona often appears later on in a writer's career (Vladimir Nabokov being one of many examples), and some bilingual writers even choose to differentiate between their respective personae in each language (think of Karen Blixen/Isak Dinesen in Denmark, Jean Ray/John Flanders in Belgium, or Julien/Julian Green in France). (Grutman, Van Bolderen 2014: 323-324)

The degree of distance between the author and the self-translating persona is decisive for the latter to interpret faithfully the words he or she has written as author, and in extreme cases one could go as far as to say that the self-translating persona could be further distanced from the author than another translator.

This is not the case for the self-translations I will analyse, which were almost always carried out at the same time as the writing, but this differentiation must be kept in mind to avoid any oversimplification of the implications of this process. What is interesting about self-translations is that the author-translator has much more authority than a simple translator, which grants him different possibilities while working on his own writings rather than on somebody else's texts. Grutman confirms this, by saying that: "what is ultimately at stake here is the old notion of authority, of which original authors traditionally have lots and translators none" (Grutman 1998: 257). While critics of translations are always ready to attack a translator's work because of its supposed unfaithfulness to the original, in fact, they seem much more reluctant to do so when the translator is the author himself, even though self-translations are at times very distant from their respective originals, and could very easily be defined as new versions of a work, rather than actual translations.

Furthermore, the practice of self-translation is not disconnected from the reality of the colonial and (especially) of the postcolonial era, with the dissolving of the colonial empires and the formation of new nations, which caused a double binding to the languages and the cultures of the colonising state and to those of the newly-independent nations, as in the case of Walcott. Jan Walsh Hokenson and Marcella Munson suggest in fact in their work on the history and theory of literary self-translation that it is this peculiar cultural and political situation of living between languages to have given rise again to the practice of self-translation, which was already very fruitful in early modern Europe:

> Self-translation was a common practice in the ambient translingual world of early modern Europe, when bilingualism was the norm, and writers increasingly translated between Latin and vernaculars. While persisting

> among cultured elites, literary bilinguality and self-translation diminished during the consolidation of the nation-states. That historical reduction in the verbal compass is a familiar story. Yet even that narrative neglects the translative practice of explorers and colonizers encountering Asia and the Americas and translating their European texts for indigenous peoples or, conversely, their travel journals for readers in Europe. In the past century as well, wars and deportations propelled writers into new languages where many flourished as self-translators. More recently many post-colonials have challenged the dissymmetry of native and colonial languages by writing and translating in both, not unlike medievals addressing both Latin and vernacular audiences in the dual text. (Walsh Hokenson, Munson 2007: 2)

This practice is therefore crucial for an understanding of postcolonial writing in general, also because most postcolonial writing has been largely considered as a form of translation, though in different ways: on the one hand, because – as in the cases we will analyse here – actual translations coexist on the same page with the respective original words in another language, or because the authors have offered versions of their works in more than one language, and on the other hand, because even the simple act of writing, in a culture that involves a double linguistic and cultural belonging, is often considered as a process entailing translation. In fact, as Paul Bandia has written, referring to African writings in European languages, with words that could apply just as well to Caribbean writings in European languages: "as a postcolonial text, Euro-African writing is characterized by a form of linguistic and cultural hybridity that is achieved, for the most part, through specific translation practices. It has been said that postcolonial texts are themselves translations often based on multiple linguistic and cultural systems" (Bandia 2003: 129).

Though I believe that describing any text written in the postcolonial context as a translation is too generalising, and would not help us to analyse the instances in which translation is directly present, we must certainly keep these words in mind while analysing self-translations by Walcott, which could thus be considered as a retranslation of words that they already had to translate from Creole into English, or the opposite.

We must also remember, however, that we are dealing with an author for whom English has never been a foreign tongue, nor a secondary one in respect to Creole, but rather the chosen language of expression.

Self-Translation and Translation in Derek Walcott's Plays

I will now analyse one of the most interesting aspects of Walcott's self-translation, which is the use of variation instead of repetition when the same passage is translated several times in the same context. The first example I will analyse comes from a song from *Moon-Child*, where the Creole and the English texts are mixed:

> Imps: *Voyez de l'eau ba moin*
> *Moin ka brulé.*
> SEE HOW I TURNING, TURNING
> I HOT YES, I BURNING, BURNING (…)
> *Voyez de l'eau ba moin*
> *Moin ka brulé!*
> *Voyez de l'eau ba moin*
> *Moin ka brulé.*
> THROW WATER ON ME
> I'M BURNING (*MC* 83-84)

If we look at the two different ways in which Walcott has translated the passage in Creole "*Voyez de l'eau ba moin / Moin ka brulé*", we can see that the second occurrence offers a translation that is lexically closer to the original, "THROW WATER ON ME / I'M BURNING", while the first occurrence was rendered by "SEE HOW I TURNING, TURNING / I HOT YES, I BURNING, BURNING". This first translation, however, allowed Walcott to add an end rhyme to the passage in English, which recovered the double internal rhyme of the original: '*voyez-brulé*' and '*moin-moin*' that was lost in the second translation. The double translation therefore functions in this case as a possibility for the author-translator of giving both the literal meaning and a re-interpretation recovering some of the rhythmic aspects of the original.

Another song in *The Haytian Earth*, dedicated to the story of Ogé and Chavannes, the leaders of the mulatto revolution that anticipated

the slave revolt in Haiti, shows us a process that is probably closer to rewriting than to translation:

I	I
C'était bel jour comme 'jourd'hui.	*It was a lovely day*
Eux prendre les deux mulattres:	*A day just like this one.*
Ogé avec Chavannes.	*They took the two mulattos*
Eux 'taient aller Paris	*Named Ogé and Chavannes*
En culottes et cravats	*And stretched them in the sun.*
Eux pas 'taient Nègre savannes	*The two, they went to Paris*
Pour demander leur droit,	*In trousers and in ties*
Leur droit, leur droit, mulattres.	*To plead the mulattos' cause*
Before the French Assembly,	
And what they did to them	
You will see, you will see!	
II	II
Mais mulattres trop couillons,	*These two men they were fools*
Pis eux ni grands cabanes.	*Because they had good beds.*
Eux croient eux c'est gens blanc	*They thought that they were free,*
Et, Nègres ka rester cabrits	*They had a right to ask it,*
Z'animaux et moutons,	*Brotherhood, liberty.*
Alors jourd'hui, jourd'hui	*They learnt good French in schools*
Bon Dieu fait eux pardon	*But what was in their heads*
Eux prend Ogé ec Chavannes	*Will roll into a basket.*
Pour faire crucifixion.	
III	III
Bon Dieu, toute moune c'est même	*God, all men are one race*
Mulattres, bechés et Nègres,	*But men are deaf and blind,*
Mais nous sourds, nous aveugles,	*They pleaded for their case*
Tout n'omme eux c'est une race	*But now their plea is wind,*
Messieurs bi-dim, bam-bam	*Wind in the marketplace.*
La guerre kai commencer	*And Justice, she so blind!*
A'nous aller la place	*And Justice, she so blind!*
A'nous La Place des Armes. (*HE* 310-312)	

It is quite evident, in reading the poem in its Creole and English versions, that they are about the same story, but that they tell it quite differently. Although the first lines could in fact make us think of a simple translation, there are differences both in the events described, and in the ways they are described. The structure of the stanzas changes from the original Creole to the English translation, but it is not regular in either of the two versions, whether it be in Creole (with the first and last stanza composed of eight lines, and the second of nine lines), or in English (with stanzas of eleven, eight and seven lines respectively). The rhyme structures of both versions are also irregular, though both present several end rhymes, and in one case Walcott chooses the same rhyme in Creole and English, the rhyme 'race-place / *race-place*' in "*Tout n'omme eux c'est une race / (…) A'nous aller la place*" and "*God, all men are one race / (…) Wind in the marketplace*".

In the first stanza, the English version adds that who took Ogé and Chavannes "stretched them in the sun", and announces that we will see "what they did to them", but the second stanza is even more significant since it translates: "*Eux croient eux c'est gens blanc*" (meaning, 'they thought that they were whites') with: "They thought that they were free". The passage that says: "*Nègres ka rester cabrits / Z'animaux et moutons*", comparing black people to goats, animals and sheep, is not translated at all, while the English version tells us about the reason for which they feel they have a right to ask for their freedom: "*They had a right to ask it, / Brotherhood, liberty. / They learnt good French in schools*", something the Creole version does not do. Something very similar happens in the third stanza, when "*Bon Dieu, toute moune c'est même / Mulattres, bechés et Nègres, / (…) Tout n'omme eux c'est une race*" is translated simply with "God, all men are one race", which avoids mentioning the different racial groups of the colonial system.[1] The English version erases therefore the whole racial question, and the matter is quite crucial since the failure of the mulatto revolt was also due to the fact that the mulattos were not supported by either side, the white French colonials or the enslaved black Haitians. This is certainly a case in which the authority of the self-translator over his translation is fundamental, since such a powerful alteration on such a delicate subject in the work of any oth-

er translator would be strongly criticized, and the translator would not only be accused of a simple translation mistake, but his or her integrity would certainly be questioned as well.

The last verses of the second stanza and the last verses of the third stanza also present us with very different versions of the events: in the second stanza, in fact, we are told of a different death for Ogé and Chavannes, crucifixion in the Creole version and beheading in the English translation, and interestingly, neither of the two seems to be the actual reason for the death of the real Ogé and Chavannes.[2] In the third stanza, while the Creole version called to arms, to a war at its beginning and the people congregating at the *Place des armes*, the English translation limits itself to a complaint against the blindness of justice (and of the people enacting it), with: "*And Justice, she so blind! And Justice, she so blind!*" replacing "*Messieurs bi-dim, bam-bam / La guerre kai commencer / A'nous aller la place / A'nous La Place des Armes*".

Another interesting song from Walcott's *The Haytian Earth* is the one in which Pompey sings for his wife and for his country:

> *Alors, Yette 'trappait morceau terre,*
> *Et i' commencait planter,*
> *Eux deux, yeux c'est même couleur,*
> *Terre-a, et jamette shabine,*
> *Et pour lui-même, moi ka chanter*
> *Et pour Christophe, Dessalines…*
> (*Other* PEASANTS *lead by* POMPEY *join her and cross the stage with forks, sacks, scythes.*)
> *So Yette find a piece of land*
> *Where she teach herself how to plant,*
> *Her skin the same shade as the ground,*
> *And you'll see why I sing this chant*
> *For her, my rose and my queen*
> *And for Christophe and Dessalines.* (*HE* 333-334)

The translation into English keeps a similar rhyme scheme to the original, with two major endings for the end rhymes, if we consider half-rhymes, going from the original AAABAB scheme to AAAABB, and because, as I observed for the previous song about Ogé and Cha-

vannes, in four cases out of six, the rhyming words are the same in Creole and in English: "*terre*-land", "*planter*-plant", "*chanter*-chant" (although the grammatical category here is different), and obviously "Dessalines". This shows once more that keeping the same rhyme as in the original is a choice Walcott makes willingly, whenever possible, whether rhyme concerns words with the same meaning, the same ending, or both at the same time.

The choice of keeping the rhymes as often as possible, however, forces Walcott in this case to make different lexical choices, losing a few very Creole terms. In particular, in the passage "*Eux deux, yeux c'est même couleur, / Terre-a, et jamette shabine*", which is rendered as: "*Her skin the same shade as the ground*". The second verse of the Creole describes in fact Yette as a "*jamette shabine*". Both these words are not translated into English, and both of them carry quite important meanings in the Caribbean context. Lise Winer writes in her definition of *jamette* that the word is "widely supposed" to derive from the French "*diametre* 'diameter', i.e. outside the boundary of social respectability", but might also derive from Wolof, "*jam* 'slave' + Fr[ench] *–ette* 'female'" (Winer 2008: 460). If the Wolof derivation would seem to indicate a female slave, the word is in fact most commonly believed to derive from the French word "*diameter"* to indicate anybody below the "line", the "diameter" of acceptable and respectable social behaviour, it is strictly connected to the evolution of Carnival in Trinidad,[3] and has with time acquired the meaning of "prostitute". "*Shabine*" is instead the word used to indicate "a person with a light or red complexion, curly often reddish hair, 'Negro' features; often with freckles and light-coloured eyes. (…) mulatto of fair complexion with reddish negroid hair" (Winer 2008: 805), as Winer writes, or "Métis de Noir et de Blanc à la peau, aux yeux et aux cheveux généralement clairs, ces derniers étant frisés ou crépus" (Confiant 2007: 259), as Confiant writes in his *Dictionnaire créole martiniquais-français*. Although Pompey's use of the term "*jamette*" for his wife is not to be taken as an insult, it is certainly not the same as the English version we find a few verses later, "*my rose and my queen*", meant to rhyme with "Dessalines", as "*shabine*" did in Creole.

While in most cases the English translation follows the Creole, in some cases in *Moon-Child* we can see that the opposite is happening, but this obviously does not change the fact that the repetition is there to give both the Creole and its English translation, and in general, as we have seen, the author does not seem to have departed much from the original, which also suggests a repetition that is not relevant to the text, if not to translate the meaning of the words in Creole for the Anglophone reader. We can speak in these cases of a "translation couplet", defined by Newmark as "literal translation or translation label plus transcription" (Newmark 1981: 32). This very common technique used in translation has in fact the same words coexist in two different languages, right beside each other, to convey at the same time the original form of the term and its meaning. And it is certainly significant for an understanding of Walcott's relationship with translation to remark that he uses in his own writing a strategy which belongs to translation theory and practice.

There are other cases in which Walcott translates the same word in two different ways, offering a double translation. Here are some examples:

> The loup-garou: (*Seated at a table*): Waiter! Over here!
> Maman de l'eau : Waiter! *Garçon!*
> The white owl: Boy!
> The planter: That would be you. (*MC* 36)

Here "*garçon*" is both preceded and followed by a translation, the first one being "waiter" and the second one being "boy". This double translation serves to reveal two different meanings of the same word, since "*garçon*" could be translated either way into English, and thus it gives us a wider definition of the term.[4] The same happens with the order of the demon in *Ti-Jean and his Brothers*:

> Demon's voice: *Faire ca mwen di ous!*
> (Do what I commanded!) (…)
> *Bolom, faire tout* ça *mwen dire ous!*
> (Child, do all that I ordered you!) (*TJ* 97)

The same sentence is translated differently in the same context, since "*faire ca mwen di ous*" and "*faire (…) ça mwen dire ous*" – though not spelled in the same way – use exactly the same words to convey exactly the same meaning, but they are translated differently, with "I commanded!" translating the first occurrence, and "I ordered you!" translating the second. Both the verbs used to translate "*di/dire*" convey a stronger meaning than the one implied in the Creole verb "*dire*", but they are synonymous, which means that Walcott is not giving completely different translations, but rather offering a simple lexical variation of the same translation.

Another example of this process comes from *Ti-Jean* again:

> Devil: *Bai Diable-là manger un 'ti mamaille!*
> (Give the Devil a child for dinner!)
> Devils: *Un, deux, trois 'ti mamaille!*
> (One, two, three little children!) (*TJ* 89)

> Devils' voices off: *Bai Diable-là manger un 'ti mamaille!*
> *Un, deux, trois 'ti mamaille!*
> *Bai Diable-là manger un 'ti mamaille!*
> *Un,*
> *deux,*
> *trois…*
> (Give the Devil a child for dinner!
> One, two, three little children!
> Give the Devil a child for dinner!
> One,
> two,
> three…) (*TJ* 100-101)

> Devils' voices off: *Bai Diable-là manger un 'ti mamaille!*
> *Un, deux, trois 'ti mamaille!*
> *Bai Diable-là manger un 'ti mamaille!*
> *Un, deux, trois 'ti mamaille!*
> Old Man: Aie! Feed the Devil the third, feed the Devil the third. (*TJ* 131)

The same sentence "*Bai* (…) *manger*", which is present five times here, is in fact translated three times as "Give (…) for dinner", as it is also translated twice in *Moon-Child* (*MC* 45, 59), but in the last two occurrences it is translated as "feed", an equivalent of the previous translations, which however offers once again a variation.

This play was also translated into French in 1997, by Paol Keineg, with the title *Ti-Jean et ses frères* (*TJ-FR*). This translation is particularly interesting for the wide presence of the French-based Saint Lucian Creole and of the subsequent English translation by Walcott in the source text. The Saint Lucian Creole is certainly easier to understand for a French or Francophone reader than for any other non-Caribbean reader, since the Creole is at times very close to the French.

Keineg chooses to translate all the Creole passages into French, by using Walcott's own translations into English as the basis for his own translation, but with one difference: Walcott, as we have said, often uses variation in the translations of his own words, while Keineg removes this variation. If we look at another translation of the same play, the Italian one translated by Annuska Palme Sanavio for Adelphi, we can see that the translator in this case follows Walcott and thus introduces a similar variation in her Italian version of the English translations by Walcott of the passages in Creole. The reason is very probably to be seen in the fact that the French translator had a direct contact with the Creole, because he could understand it quite easily through his French, while the contact of the Italian translator with the Creole occurs mostly through Walcott's translations into English. In this case, Walcott influences thus the translator with his own translations, because what Palme Sanavio is translating is not "original", but Walcott's self-translation in the original text, while Keineg is translating directly from the Creole.

Another interesting aspect of this translation is that Keineg at times replaces the Creole with French, especially in passages in which the two are very close, but do not coincide exactly, as in the case of Walcott's "*bon jour*" (*TJ* 105, 117), replaced by "*bonjour*" (*TJ-FR* 25, 38-39), or "*bettise*" (*TJ* 127) instead of the French '*bêtise*', and replaced with "*sottises*" (*TJ-FR* 48), both without italicization in the French version. Perhaps,

the risk in keeping the Creole was to have something too similar to the French, but which could look like a typographical error. It is in fact revelatory that almost the same expression is left in Creole when there are more signs that it is not a mistake in French, but a different language, as in Ti-Jean's greeting to the old man, "*bon jou, vieux cor*'" (*TJ* 138; *TJ-FR* 59), which is kept in Creole and in italics in the French translation.

To look at another play, which has been translated into French, we can see that in a song in *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, Walcott uses the same process of varying the translation of the same word as pointed out above, by translating the verb "*levez*" both as "rise" and "wake up", and the verb "*descendre*" both as "come down" and "go down":

> Singer: I'll show you how it happen: *Il dit Levez, Makak.* [He said Rise, Makak] (…) *Quittez charbon en sac*. [Leave your bags of coal] (…) *Negre ka weh twop misere.* [Niggers see too much misery] (…) *Ous kai weh ou kai weh*. [You'll see it for yourself] (…) *Il dit Levez, Makak.* [He said Wake up, Makak] (…) *Il dit Descendre, Makak.* [He said Come down, Makak] (…) *Descendre Morne Makak.* [Go down Monkey Mountain] *Il dit…* (*DMM* 263-264)

Once more, both translations are correct, and reveal different perspectives on the same term, by expressing different meanings that these words possess. Is Makak "coming" down the mountain, or is he "going" down? Is he "waking up" or is he "rising"? The Creole terms used implied this ambiguity, and the double self-translation by Walcott keeps and favors this ambiguity. If we look at the French translation of this play, entitled *Rêve sur la montagne au singe* (*DMM-FR*), and published by the Swiss publisher Éditions Demoures in a translation by Claire Malroux, we can see that this variation is not always respected. In the case of this passage I just quoted, for example, the variation for the verb "*levez*" is kept, but the same does not happen for "*descendre*", which is the French equivalent of both solutions found in English by Walcott:

> Le chanteur : *Il dit Levez, Makak*. (Il a dit : Lève-toi, Makak.) (…) *Il dit Levez, Makak*. (Il a dit : Réveille-toi, Makak.) (…) *Il dit Descendre, Makak*. (Il a dit : Descends, Makak.) (…) *Descendre Morne Makak*. (Descends de la Montagne au Singe.) (*DMM-FR* 58-59)

An intriguing aspect of this translation which could seem like a detail, but which becomes decisive for an understanding of the linguistic complexity of the original, is that the translator chooses to avoid using italics for most of the passages in Creole, as we can see in the following examples:

Ça qui religion-*ous?*	Ça qui religion-ous ?
Levez la tête-ous!	Levez la tête-ous !
Montrez-moi la main-ous!	Montrez-moi la main-ous !
Marchez! Marchez! (*DMM* 219, 222)	Marchez ! Marchez ! (*DMM-FR* 16, 18-19)

This strategy often brings the reader to perceive the French-based Saint Lucian Creole and the French as languages of the same status, and even fuses them together at times, since it is not always easy to tell the Creole apart from the French. When we read in the French version "*Qu'on entende la langue officielle*" (*DMM-FR* 17), which translates "Let us hear English!" (*DMM* 220), the question is whether we have not heard too much of the "official language" through a hiding of the Creole in this French version. On the other hand, in at least one case, the choice is exactly the opposite: Walcott uses the italics for the term "*diablesse*" (*DMM* 236), to signal the Creoleness of the term, and the translator keeps these italics, treating it as a foreign term, though "*diablesse*" (*DMM-FR* 32) is obviously also a French word.

Walcott's language, clearly divided between English and the French-based Creole, becomes here often a mashup of the two. If the result can be a more homogenous language, and a fascinating way to unveil the French bases of Creole, which allows to perceive more easily and more naturally the proximity between the two languages, on the other hand, the linguistic complexity of the original is obviously somehow lost.

"A more daring variation": Conclusion

Walcott's self-translations contained in his drama are of different kinds: some respect the metre and the rhyme structure, while some do not, and some are closer to the original text while others seem to be more rewritings than simple translations. The language chosen for

the translation also varies: while in some texts he translates from Creole into English, for some other songs (mainly in the cases of implicit self-translation), Walcott chooses to translate into Caribbean English Creole.

A fundamental aspect of all of Walcott's translations, however, is variation: he offers several times more than one translation for the same words, even when they appear in the same context and in the same lines, or in the same song. This process engenders in the target text a wider perception of the terms or lines translated, whose multiple meanings are revealed through a variation in translation. Introducing variation to replace repetition is quite a risky choice in translation, and is certainly one that many translation critics would not accept from a translator who is not the author of the original as well, and therefore a self-translator, since keeping the same intratextual connections of the original is fundamental in order to avoid losing textual coherence.

Commenting on Joyce's self-translation of passages from his *Finnegans Wake* into Italian, Jacqueline Risset wrote that the text was not to be taken as a "pursuit of hypothetical equivalents of the original text (as given, definitive) but a later elaboration representing (in relation to the first text seen as really – literally – 'work in progress') a kind of extension, a new stage, a more daring variation on the text in process" (Risset 1984: 6). Although we are dealing with a practice that is clearly very different from that followed by Joyce in his translations into Italian, and although we are dealing here with much shorter examples, what we can see also in Walcott's translations is a certain kind of non-definitiveness of the "original" text, both in English and in Creole, which is revealed and displayed by a translation which does function as an "extension" of the meanings implied in the original. By giving more translations for the same words, Walcott is not only varying but also extending the "text in process", to use Risset's words. He is putting on the page several possible meanings and forms for the same words, and this allows them to coexist and to offer a wider perception

of the text, pointing towards an unveiling of the inner fluidity of all drama, and indeed of all literature.

This kind of translation can thus offer us a hint at how translation could contribute to creatively reshaping the text, and to offer a wider image of the text than the one we would have by holding only the original source text in our hands. More specifically, it can testify to the amount of creativity that can be introduced in translation when one is not forced to deal with the supposed authority of the author over the text, and it can open up to a perception of translation as a much more creative textual, linguistic and cultural practice of interaction and exchange, especially in a multilingual context, such as the Caribbean.

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1 Walcott's "*bechés*" stands in fact for *békés*, a term indicating the white descendants of the European settlers in the French Antilles, and the division into mulattos, *békés* and blacks seems to point at the tripartite social class distinction of the country, rather than simply to the skin colour of its inhabitants. To this purpose, it is very interesting to read Aimé Césaire's essay on Toussaint L'Ouverture, in which he tells the story of the three attempted revolts of Haiti, the first by the white colonials, the second by the *mulâtres* and the third by the black slaves, with only the latter one achieving the actual independence of the country (Césaire 1961).

2 According to David Patrick Geggus: "twenty rebels were executed, Ogé and Chavannes suffering the excruciating punishment of being broken on the wheel" (Geggus 2002: 11).

3 According to Carol Martin: "Jamette or jamet refers to followers of *canboulay* bands in the latter half of the nineteenth-century carnival. Carnival during this period is sometimes called 'jamette carnival'. Jamette also refers to women who followed *kalinda*. Later its usage designated prostitutes and street-tough women who followed *steelbands*" (Martin 2004: 288).

4 It must be remembered that "boy" was used in the colonial context also for adult natives, or more specifically for servants. Though this is not the use it is made of the term in the context of Walcott's writing, an echo of that acceptation of the term is obviously present.