

those that call for the continuous use of English and the abolition of Jamaican; and (ii) those who consider Jamaican a normal language that needs to be recognised properly. I will refer to these two groups as the progressionists and the nationalist, respectively.

In the current work I undertake a critical reading of these articles, with the purpose of deconstructing their sub-textual implications in light of the linguistic and socio-ideological context in which they were/are created. Numerous important themes are raised by the various authors, but it is not the intention here to identify or comment on all of them. On a somewhat arbitrary basis I have singled out a few of the most striking themes to discuss here, and I hope to address the others in a future work. I am interested in several aspects of the articles: (i) their status as text, i.e. written discourse on a national issue; (ii) the sub-textual ideology that enables their existence (which forms the pivot of the discussion); and (iii) the extra-textual context which is responsible for the scripted ideas and the social and political ramifications which their writers probably intended.

Admittedly, the hermeneutics of such an enterprise is inevitably subject to prejudice on the part of the researcher, a phenomenon that can be taken up by meta-theoreticians on ideology. While, I am compelled by my science to be as objective as possible, my personal stance is *postcolonial*, or more clearly *anti-colonial* and so one side of the discourse will come under more criticism than the other. The reader will notice that I have quoted extensively from the articles under study. There is one significant reason for this. While the denigration of the speech of political minorities occurs everywhere (Mufwene 2001: 108-109), one of the aims of the current chapter is to provide illustrative evidence of the ways in which the discourse on language is carried on in Jamaica.

The chapter is structured as follows: In section 2, I give a brief background to the language situation in Jamaica and how this situation has evolved into a game of identifying the public enemy. Section 3 makes the important link between the socio-historical-cum-psycho-social and the linguistic ideology of numerous Jamaicans. Section 4 locates the origins of neo-colonial attitudes towards Jamaican Creole² in the island's history of colonialism. Section 5 explores the neo-Darwinian arguments which form part of the discourse, while section 6 attempts to identify the psycho-social factors that are responsible for negative attitudes towards the language. Section 7 concludes the chapter.

CHAPTER TEN

FOLK LINGUISTICS AND POST-COLONIAL LANGUAGE POLITRICKS IN JAMAICA

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1. Introduction

While in Jamaica, I was a bona fide user of creole like most of my peers. However, when I attended school and worked at a part-time job in Canada, I recognised that a majority of people who were not Jamaicans felt that people from our country were uncivilised because they use creole.
—Jenning, 2004

Opening this chapter with the "native voice" is both deliberate and strategic. It is deliberate since any academic investigation that has the "folk" as its point of reference, must ensure that it provides occasions for the folk to speak, i.e. for the native voice to be heard. It is strategic because this passage offers an extremely good example of the kind of thinking which is the subject of this work.

The major focus of this chapter is a collection of clippings, which deals with language-related issues as discussed in the Jamaican print media. Most of the clippings are from articles, letters to the editor, forum contributions, etc. published in two prominent Jamaican newspapers: *Jamaica Observer* and *Jamaica Gleaner*.¹ The collection spans over a decade and represents the thinking of a wide cross-section of Jamaican society including ordinary working class people, journalists, politicians, teachers at all levels of the education system, and Jamaicans in the diaspora. The articles in themselves provide a very good representation of the national discourse on language in Jamaica, and they contain examples from the two main schools of thought on the subject; even though one will find that the collection is heavily biased in one direction which may be interpreted as an indication of the prominence of the socio-ideological thinking promulgated by this camp. These two schools of thought are, (i)

2. The language situation in Jamaica: A brief sketch

Jamaica, a Caribbean island-state with a population of approximately 2.6 million (*Population Census 2001*), has English as its *de facto* official language, owing to its history of colonisation by Britain (1655-1962), although there is no legislation which assigns English official language status. English is the language of parliament, schools, orthodox churches (e.g. Roman Catholic, Anglican), and the white-collar business world. However, a significant portion of the population (probably in excess of 90%) speaks Jamaican (Creole), also called (Jamaican) Patois by native speakers. Jamaican is an English-based Creole formed through contact between speakers of various African languages and speakers of British (English, Irish, Scottish) dialects in the late 17th to early 18th centuries during the period of slavery. The current linguistic landscape has been described as a *post-creole continuum*, with Standard Jamaican English (SJE, also called the acrolect) at one pole, Jamaican (the basilect) at the other, and a range of mixed varieties (mesolects) springing from the interaction between these two extremes (DeCamp 1971). Monolingual speakers of SJE, the acrolectal variety, are rare, and it is also believed that monolingual Jamaican speakers are rare, but no research has been conducted to verify this claim. Most Jamaicans control a range along the continuum and may be considered bilingual, although various researchers have claimed that it is extremely difficult to say where Jamaican ends and where SJE begins (see Bailey 1971).

This complex linguistic situation has resulted in a gradation of linguistic varieties, which is very much like the old (skin) colour segregation which was the hallmark of the colonial period. The problem with this sort of philosophy is that it is generated to hold "blackness" and things associated with it in the background. It projects an image of "whiteness" as acceptable; hence those who would wish to advance must strive for the ideals associated with this system of thought. My intention here is not to infer that English is a language for whites only, but to highlight that since it was acquired from Europeans, many Jamaicans automatically believe that it is inherently superior to anything that they possess. There is a little saying in Jamaica (see below) which reflects the racial/colour ideology prevalent in the country, but which can be translated into its linguistic reality (i.e. the various lects which are claimed to exist on the continuum):

If yuh white, alright.
If yuh brown, stick around.
If yuh black, stay back.

Acrolect
Mesolect
Basilect

This little jingle which was probably created by black power activists as a pithy summary of the "colour situation" in Jamaica reflects a kind of evolutionary continuum with improvement or progress being synonymous with whiteness. Ironically, in a country which prides itself on not having a "race problem", people classify themselves and each other according to a complex system of skin shades: white, high colour, red, brown skin(ned), cool, dark, light brown, dark brown, coffee, etc. This overarching ideology of racism and its more recent incarnation as *colourism* or *shadism*, is (un)consciously translated into various discursive and institutional forms. Most conspicuously, it manifests itself in the linguistic ideology of many ordinary Jamaicans. Therefore, Jamaican is associated with backwardness and aggression while English is linked to intellectual and social progress and genteel behaviour. Below I argue that this has nothing to do with Jamaican as a linguistic system, but is rather a product of the existing relations of power in Jamaica.

3. Complicity and re-writing errors

3.1 Identifying the public enemy

Ralph Thompson, a highly influential Jamaican businessman, poet, painter, and journalist is reported in an anonymously written article (Anonymous 2003) as saying that "standard English is being beaten to death by patois in the name of nation-building." His sentiment summarises the feelings of numerous Jamaicans who think that any recognition of Jamaican is a step destined to set the country back developmentally. This kind of rhetoric would suggest the existence of two groups—those who see themselves as nationalists, proposing the recognition of Jamaican, and their detractors who oppose any such move—the progressionists. As with most ideological phenomena, the matter is not that simple, and no dichotomy of the sort can be created without being highly questionable. Here is where the concept of *politricks* [*< politics + tricks*] becomes important, given that each camp sincerely believes that the other is playing politics in order to continue oppressing the masses, albeit in a neo-colonial style. Jamaica gained independence in 1962, thus ending 307 years of British colonial rule. However, there are members of the Jamaican intelligentsia who have always believed that this changing of the guard was not accompanied by a change in the hegemonic institutions that oppressed the majority of the population during colonialism.

Those who support the move to recognise Jamaican as an official language, are seen by the opposing side as wanting to further their own

personal interests. These personal interests are supposedly served by keeping Jamaicans in intellectual darkness by having them continue communicating using an inferior linguistic code. The argument against the anti-Jamaican group, which has been forwarded by those who see Jamaican in a positive light claims that the elite maintain their position of power by promoting English as the only means of progress, and by so doing, they impede the progress of Jamaicans who use Jamaican rather than English. The following extract summarises how the anti-Jamaican group sees those who promote the language:

It would appear that the proponents of patois are more interested in enhancing their own intellectual curiosity and career development than in advancing the linguistic interests of all Jamaicans. It is a fact that these intellectuals have reached the pinnacle of their respective careers through the avenue of the English language. And yet, these are the very people who are unwittingly seeking to handicap the Jamaican populace instead of empowering them. (Johnson 2003)

The crux of the matter lies in identifying what kind of policy is in the linguistic interests of Jamaicans, and determining how much those linguistic interests must take social, ideological, and socio-economic factors into consideration. Since both groups accuse each other of having the same hidden agenda, it is extremely difficult to, in an unbiased way, say which is actually employing neo-colonial *politricks*.

3.2 Re-writing history wrongly

In a clearly anti-colonial stance many advocates of Jamaican have sought to re-write linguistic history by counteracting the popular belief that Jamaican is nothing but a dialect of English or even worse, just "broken" language, bad or lazy speech. However, in doing this they have made several mistakes which are the usual end products of hasty ideological responses as opposed to serious thought backed up by empirical evidence. The re-written errors manifest themselves in many forms. The quotation below taken from an article by Karis Chin-Quee (2006) illustrates one such manifestation:

It is somewhat ironic that the people who would look at patois with scorn may not have realized that it is their English traditions and culture that they are also rejecting. My mother often tells me the story of how she was laughed at when she used the word 'copaccetic' as a child. Her teacher told her it was not a word. I would guess that many people would be surprised that not only is it a word, but to this day, the way in which we use it in

Jamaican vernacular shows that its original meaning has been perfectly preserved. It really does mean 'fine', 'very satisfactory'.

If we read between the lines, Chin-Quee apparently sees these archaisms as badges of honour, heirloom which advertise the pedigree of Jamaican. Her willingness to offer any status to Jamaican appears to be inextricably linked to its ability to demonstrate that it has its roots in a "nobler" tongue, English. The next extract, rightly contests another popular view regarding the genesis of Jamaican and the implications of that genesis for its recognition as a language.

The revisionists among us, in an attempt to advance their agenda, have now put a new spin on this and are attempting to romanticise this inadequacy of our ancestors by saying that patois was born out of their unique blend of Spanish, African dialect, English, etc, consciously conceived in an attempt to confuse "backra" [master]. This is nonsense! (Russell 2002b)

I agree with Russell's stance, but the background to the problem deserves some explanation. During the period of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, Africans were taken to Jamaica as late as up to the mid 19th century, i.e. after the abolition of the Slave Trade. There is also evidence that suggests that many times there were communication problems between masters and slaves because newly arrived slaves still spoke their native languages. If slaves wanted to disguise their speech—especially those born in Africa—all they had to do was maintain their mother tongues. Fayer (2003) suggests that interpreters were often used so that Europeans could communicate with Africans.

More or less along the same lines is Nettelford's (1990) well-meaning pronouncement in defence of the language: "Jamaica Talk is one of the creative achievements of our people." Nettelford's intentions, while pure, are a part of the reactionary rhetoric that has been constructed over the decades in response to notions driven by prejudice. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that since Jamaicans did not purposefully create Jamaican we cannot count it among our "creative achievements" in the same way that the English language is not an achievement of the English people, Spanish is not an achievement of the Spaniards, and so forth.

4. Neo-colonial attitudes

The 15th century Spanish grammarian Antonio de Nebrija (1931: 1) in his *Gramática castellana (Grammar of the Castilian Language)* pointed out that language "has always been the companion of empire" (trans.

mine), a concept not too far removed from the modern catch phrase of sociolinguists that a language is a dialect with an army and a navy. To apply this to the Jamaican case we can say that Jamaican continues to suffer because it lacks the support of the essential institutions of power.

This signals that in Jamaica the physical dismantling of the bonds of empire did not signal the disbanding of the ideological ethos which drove the system of dominance and subjugation that it perpetuated. Many think that acceptance of Creole will somehow diminish the positional superiority which English offers them both on the national and international levels. Apart from the few for whom English and Jamaican are languages in their own right, a significant section of the population suffers from a type of linguistic schizophrenia, where both languages are used for separate things, but one is consistently denied languagehood. This "double consciousness" manifests itself in a Derridean *différance* (Derrida 1998: 385), in which Jamaican differs from English, but in most contexts must defer to it as the language of power. This *différance* is indicative of the "epistemic violence" which is wreaked on other languages by an increasingly global language, which bids all others to roll over and play dead, if not to die.

The anti-Creole side of the debate is shaped by an ideology born out of an experience of slavery and domination, with a sharp demarcation between *bakra* and slave. During slavery, there was a plethora of things linked to *bakra* culture which all signified a better way of life i.e. better than miserable slavery. Some slaves came to recognise *bakra*'s music, dance, food, language, etc. not as mere alternatives equal to their own, but as inherently better. Here lies the genesis of a long process of negotiating what is truly a part of self and what ought to be incorporated into the emerging hybrid identity.

5. The origin of the Jamaican species

The national discourse on language has sometimes been carried to an all time low especially by middle-class intellectuals who resort to various harsh metaphors in order to characterise Jamaican and its speakers. This discourse pivots on the axis of *othering*, which makes the speaker of Jamaican no less than barbarous, a word which finds its etymology in the Greek imperial enterprise: Greek βαρβαρος "foreign, non-Hellenic, rude, brutal" (*OED*). The imperialist project of *othering* sets up differences—be they real or imagined—between the imperial *self* and the savage *other*, with the aim of justifying the "epistemic violence" wreaked upon that *other* by its *mission civilisatrice*. The spirit (*Geist*) of this imperialist positioning can also be found in the collection of texts under study. Some

of the authors manifest this spirit in two separate but inter-related ways: (i) the denigration of Jamaican and its speakers as lesser beings; and (ii) the characterisation of Jamaican as being representative of a pre-cognitive or semi-cognitive state of mind.

5.1 Language and evolutionary progress

If we turn briefly back to the "native voice" which served as the preface to this chapter, we will recall the writer's consternation over the perception by others that Jamaicans are uncivilised because of the language they speak. For her, this served as a re-affirming signal of the importance of acquiring and speaking English. Issues regarding how the language one speaks can be a barometer of one's civility, and of who sets the standards, were never raised in her letter. Unfortunately, hers is not a solitary voice crying in the wilderness, it forms a din with the voices of like-minded persons who continue to allow external forces to determine how they define and see themselves.

The rhetoric of the discourse produced by those who possess a mortal fear of Jamaican often borders on racist ideology. Witness the views of Burgess (2003a):³

When the British came here in the 17th century the native Tainos were extinct. The few Africans that the Spanish had brought to Jamaica were more or less escapees into the wilds, to be known as Maroons, a word derived from Spanish. They were not native Jamaicans, using a native Jamaican tongue. It was now up to the British to provide Jamaica with natives, slaves from Africa. These used language, for the reason that they were human, but they did not bring a language to Jamaica. And so the stage was set for the emergence of what was to be called Jamaican, the so-called language of Jamaicans. The slaves on arrival in Jamaica had a prime concern—survival. This was to be dependent on the ability to exchange words with their masters.

The latter wasn't interested in African lingo, of which we knew nothing anyhow, so the strain fell on the slave to adjust, learning words from the master and from resident slaves.

There are two main issues to point to in this passage: "These used language, for the reason that they were human, but they did not bring a language to Jamaica." This extract is extremely informative with regard to how the author views Africans and their linguistic abilities since in his opening paragraphs he had sought to clarify for his readers the difference between "language" and "a language".

In simple terms language is a means of communication among animals, including mankind. We know of communication, audible and inaudible, that takes place between such as: mother dog and pup; hen and chicken; lioness and cub; chimpanzee and offspring; through personal experience and acquired knowledge.

We know, too, that the deaf and the dumb and the blind among us are able to have understandings with others. And this is what language is all about, and Jamaicans use language. (Burgess 2003a)

Burgess, through his definition seeks to demonstrate that Jamaican is on the same level as animal communication. For him, "a language [...] refers to a means of communication involving rules for the formation and transmission of expression, oral and written, and capable of analysis in terms of orthography, etymology and syntax." Seeing that Burgess' concept of a language is heavily influenced by the presence of a writing system, we can now understand why he has denied the African ancestors of most Jamaicans the privilege of a language. The absence of orthographic systems and prescriptive grammars for many African languages—in his eyes—has served to concretise their status as "lingoes".

Given the current trends in the study of language and evolution, the suggestion that African languages and Creoles do not possess syntax has deeper implications. The growing body of research on language evolution is demonstrating that contrary to many of our formerly held beliefs, some animals appear to have quite complex communication systems. Plus, many are biologically designed to produce sounds that resemble human speech. However, there is still a sharp divide between human language and animal communication for the mere fact that, as far as we know, the latter lacks syntax (Bickerton 2003: 82). Therefore, to claim that the communication system used on a daily basis by a group of people has no grammar or syntax, is to place them on a significantly lower rung of the evolutionary ladder.

With regards to Jamaican, the late columnist Morris Cargill (1999), known for his directness, stated: "I prefer to describe what we call our patois as either slave talk or yahoolish, for that is what it really is". A few years after Cargill's metaphor, Burgess expressed similar sentiments using a different derivative of the Yahoo root, the definition of which had quite different social implications: "Yahoolingua, the spoken language of the people who know better and should do better but cannot, for they haven't got what it takes" (Burgess 2003b). The appeal to the Yahoos in Jonathan Swift's (1892) *Gulliver's Travels* is a fitting description for how these two authors see those who insist on speaking and supporting Jamaican. In Swift's novel, the Yahoos are a tribe of savages who, even though human

in form, are wild and do not possess any language. Interestingly, this linguistic lack relegates them to an existence punctuated by fits of aggression and sexual depravity. These Jamaican writers attempt to demonstrate that a link exists between the island's high incidence of crime and violence and the absence of a "genteel" mode of communication. Essentially, their thesis is that one's language is a reflection of one's mental state and a language that is primitive and aggressive is assumedly evidence of an equally primitive and aggressive mind. Incidentally, this thesis is supported by Chang (2001) who believes that linguistic underdevelopment "is also a major source of violence as men, unable to express pent up emotions coherently, often lash out in frustration and anger."

There are several poignant questions which need to be posed here: (i) Who has decided, and upon what basis, that Jamaicans are linguistically under-developed? (ii) Why is this linguistic under-development automatically associated (as the rest of the article suggests) with the absence of English? From a close reading of these articles we realise that for these writers linguistic development has nothing to do with the capacity to speak just any language. For them, linguistic development is unequivocally based on fluency in English. So, the argument proposed by Cargill, Chang, and Burgess is that if Jamaicans could be taught to speak properly, which for them is synonymous with speaking English, then they would be less aggressive.

The answer to the second question demands an understanding of the linguistic landscape of Jamaica and the psycho-social and political realities which it constructs for the average Jamaican. Some people might be led to the point of frustration or even violence not because their language is intrinsically violent, but because they are being forced to deal with a system that refuses to take them and their mother tongue seriously, and by so doing, denies them their linguistic rights (see Devonish 2000a, 2000b) and the identity they want for themselves.

5.2 Language and cognitive abilities

Not very far from the suggestion that there is a link between language and emotions is the belief that the language one speaks is a reflection of one's cognitive abilities. In the words of Cargill (1999), "our patois is nothing more than hopelessly broken English, unstructured and incapable of dealing with abstract concepts, without tense or number"—a view which is shared by numerous prominent Jamaicans. This particular strain of the folk-philosophy on the languagehood of Jamaican is similar to the view of Creole languages by some 19th century scholars. Saint-Quentin

(1989 [1872]: 40-1) concluded that Creole grammar "is therefore, a spontaneous product of the human mind, freed from any kind of intellectual culture. [...] that imposes so little strain on memory and that calls for so little effort from those with limited intelligence" (qtd. in DeGraff 2001: 215). Cargill (1999), in a similar manner, insists:

Although a few Jackasses, some of whom are at the University, keep on claiming that Patois is some kind of language, it is nothing more than an undisciplined and unstructured kind of chattering. An undisciplined and disorderly way of speaking makes for an undisciplined and disorderly mind. Of course the converse is also true. A disorderly and undisciplined mind also brings about a disorderly and undisciplined way of talking. [emph. mine]

In 2002 an irate reader responded by e-mail to my letter to the editor of the *Jamaica Gleaner*, which was in support of Jamaican. He thought that if Jamaican was such a good thing "we should scrap the English classes we do in school and let us make a nation of creoles idiots [sic]." Chang (2001) puts it more clearly when he states that:

the ability—or inability to speak English properly seems strongly correlated in this country with practical aptitude and comprehension skills. [...] Linguistic underdevelopment not only limits employment opportunities but also impoverishes every aspect of an individual's existence.

Indubitably, there is a parallel between these arguments about language and progress and Darwin's work on competition and natural selection. However, that parallel will not be taken up here. Even though in reality, there is a kind of symbiotic relationship between Jamaican Creole and Jamaican English, many nationals think that there should be only one "alpha-language", English. For these Jamaicans the competition between Jamaican and English may be solved on simple logical grounds. Since, English is the global language of commerce and technology, Jamaican should yield to this more dominant "opponent". Not too long ago, Ken Jones, a prominent freelance journalist upbraided the print and electronic media for their frequent use of Jamaican. He saw it as "a direct assault on the civilising efforts of parents and teachers." Of course this begs the question as to why Jamaican children need to be civilised and why this illusive civility is in danger on account of the use of Jamaican by the media.

Thirteen years prior to Burgess' Yahoo metaphor applied to speakers

of Jamaican, John Hearne (1990) only managed to be a little less deprecatory on his choice of animal metaphor:

To claim [...] that a Creole speaker 'understands' Physics or Mendelian Genetics seems to be a dangerously inaccurate claim. At infrequent best, the Creole speaker may roughly formulate an approximation of what is being said in the more developed language, or he may be able to make lengthy parrot's recitation of the concepts he is studying.

Hearne does not note that the reason for the Creole speaker's inability to grasp Physics and Mendelian Genetics is that it is presented in "the more developed language", and not in the code s/he is familiar with. This places the cognitive capacity of the Creole speaker in focus. The underlying assumption is that failure to understand science is not a product of the state of mind of a particular individual—it is linked to a particular linguistic capacity. If we take this argument to its logical conclusion then a shift to English by the Creole speaker should make all the intricacies of science clear. Hearne's sentiments were re-echoed in a more subtle voice recently by Chang' (2001):

Now language not only shapes the way we think, it determines what we think about. And while patois is a wonderfully emotive language, you cannot discuss complex concepts in the limited vocabulary of a merely spoken tongue. [...] It is impossible, for example, to talk about the theory of relativity in dialect.

The mark of a sufficiently evolved language is thought to be the ability to handle abstract and complex ideas. The assumption here is that only things such as physics, mathematics, and the theory of relativity are abstract concepts. The particular stance taken by writers such as Burgess, Cargill, and Chang ignores the fact that on a daily basis Creole speakers converse about abstract concepts such as God, evil, death, and also share the wealth of folk philosophy encapsulated in proverbs, stories, songs which form part of the oral heritage of the Jamaican community. The cases of persons linking English to higher cognitive abilities is quite frequent. This section comes to a close with the unmistakable manifestation of this linguistic prejudice in one of the most recent articles by Chester Burgess (2003b):

In the meantime, I shall insist on the reality that Jamaican is not a language, it is merely degenerate English, that English is the national language of Jamaica, and that since this is so, an effort could be made towards making Jamaicans sound more like English-speaking people, less like *Homo Erectus* and more like *Homo Sapiens*. [emph. mine]

Possibly, the dis-ease which is troubling neo-Darwinians such as Burgess is that Jamaica's face/voice to the world is generally represented by Creole speakers who dominate the arenas of sports, music, literature and the arts. It is a general angst which does not want the *self* to be identified with the savage *other*—a need to assert one's fitness in the on-going quest for survival. However, even for those who do not place Jamaican speakers so far down the evolutionary ladder, they still tend to believe that it is a disfigurement of speech, a defect which needs to be remedied at all costs. These biases will not cease until everyone comes to view language as something that every child acquires given linguistic data from his/her environment regardless of race, social class, religion, access to education. Issues of "good", "bad", "broken" language have no biological foundation, they are social labels attached to particular varieties in order to institutionalise and perpetuate hegemonic power relations.

6. Should we *membra*? Language and memory

Language is the armoury of the human mind; and at once contains the trophies of its past and the weapons of its future conquests. (Samuel Taylor Coleridge)

The debate on language in Jamaica is also wrapped up with notions of memory, as a form of inter-temporal transaction between the present and the past. Memory imprints things on the sub-conscious that we are barely aware of and forces us to re-member (i.e. *membra* again)—perhaps in paying homage to our many dismembered ancestors. In this instance, I would like to (re)appropriate the Jamaican verb *membra* which has maintained its ambiguity taken from some English dialect or the other. It means both "to remember" and "to remind." Therefore, we can say that Jamaican Creole forces Jamaicans to *membra* what many would rather forget. This is the tone of the view expressed by John Russell in an article published in the *Jamaica Gleaner* on the 8th of February 2002: "They speak of Patois as being a part of our heritage. This is true; its genesis is from our dark backward era when our ancestors were illiterate and unread" (Russell 2002a). Obviously, Russell's views were so profound for some people that his article was reprinted some days later in the other national daily—*Jamaican Observer*—with some minor stylistic changes (Russell 2002b). Russell, like most of those who prefer not to *membra*, fail to realise that English—like all written languages—stretches back to a period when its speakers were "illiterate and unread." Popular Jamaican comedian Tony Hendricks concurs with this line of analysis when he says: "Unfortunately many, old-time, upwardly mobile, middle class Jamaicans and nouveau

Christians believe our dialect typifies the essence of what they want to rid themselves of as a reminder of Africa and slavery" (Hendricks 2002).

For critics such as John Russell, if Jamaica is ever to evolve into a developed country, it has to leave behind those aspects of culture which identify it as under-developed, and for many, Jamaican Creole is one marker of under-development. How then do we negotiate the ideological matrix created by the tensions between practicality and a fragile cultural identity? They argue that even though English is Jamaica's official language owing to the roll of the dice of history (i.e. colonialism), it should be regarded as the greatest legacy that we have received from our former colonial masters. On the other hand, they maintain that since Patois was born out of our colonial past we should forget it, but this argument strikes back at the English that they hope everyone will adopt for it too is a reminder of our history of oppression.

As with other matters, the upward socially mobile and well-offs have taken a band-aid approach to the collective past which many of them share with their working-class countrymen. Economic progress has the power to make persons a(nti)-historical, not wanting to be reminded of where they are coming from and how they got there. Some who have made the proverbial (and not always figurative) journey from "cane-field to boardroom" see the process of forgetting as intrinsic to present happiness in their new station. Those for whom Jamaican is a glitch in the matrix of their identity, a virus which should be sought out and destroyed at all costs, are not fully cognizant of the costs of giving up one's way of speaking. Hence they continue on their blind project of wiping out historical memory and consciousness, hoping that in that way the world will forget that their ancestors were once slaves. When the members of this camp conveniently have any random access to cultural memory it is one that is largely Eurocentric; denying the African component.

7. Conclusion

The current chapter has essentially provided a case study of linguistic identity in one Caribbean territory—Jamaica. Linguistic identity and its link to cultural (historical) memory are interpreted differently by Jamaicans in their support for, or opposition to, the use of Jamaican Creole in national domains. The conclusions made here were arrived at through an examination of several contributed articles in the print media (spanning roughly 15 years) on the on-going national discourse on language. The major objective was to expose and critique the folk-linguistic sentiments current in Jamaica, showing how they are produced and how they come

into being. Anti-Jamaican Creole sentiments, while not the only voice in the debate, crowd out those in favour of recognising Jamaican as an official language or even as a language in its own right. The heated debate generally sparks accusations from both sides that the other side is complicit with the oppressive neo-colonial system which perpetuates old colonial ideologies under new disguises. It was argued that the anti-Jamaican sentiments find their roots in the country's history of colonisation where European cultural phenomena (including language) were accorded greater value, than African or locally innovated ones.

The treatment given here in no way exhausts the broad range of topics contained in the corpus. It represents an initial step towards providing a thorough analysis of all the aspects which form part of the discursive space within which these ideologies exist. This brief study has shown that for researchers interested in folk-linguistic attitudes towards Jamaican, the print media are an extremely good source.

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Dedication

This chapter honours the life and work of Dr. the Hon. Louise Bennett-Coverly (1919-2006), who did much in helping to raise the consciousness of her fellow Jamaicans by her artistic use and "scholarly" promotion of Jamaican Creole at a time when most Jamaicans denied it any significance. Indubitably, it is to her efforts that we owe the covert prestige that many Jamaicans now attach to the language. A version of this paper was delivered in January 2006 at the Albert-Ludwigs Universität Freiburg. I would like to thank the Anglistik Department for giving me the opportunity to present my work. I would also like to thank Hubert Devonish of the University of the West Indies (Mona), for supplementing in a substantial way my clippings file with his which had much older material.

Notes

- ¹ These newspapers are available online at: www.jamaicaobserver.com/ for *Jamaica Observer* and www.jamaica-gleaner.com/ for *Jamaica Gleaner*.
- ² Jamaican Creole is also referred to as Jamaican. Both references are used interchangeably in this chapter.
- ³ Chester Burgess is an honorary director of the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce. He has launched a campaign of more than a decade to save English in Jamaica from the effects of Jamaican Creole.
- ⁴ Note that while Chang writes the names of all other languages with uppercase letters, he never once does so for Patois.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ON CANNIBALISTS AND SOCIOLINGUISTICS: CULTURAL CANNIBALISM AS A CRITICAL THEORY OF HYBRIDITY

ROY BENDOR

To live differently implies [...] that change be perceived as a process which starts from within, and defines [...] one's creative journey into the unknown. It does not mean to conform to a preordained pattern or ideal designed by others, or even one designed by one's own illusions and conditioned ideals. For change to happen and to make sense, it should represent the open-ended quest and interaction of free and questioning persons for the understanding of reality. (Majid Rahnema)

1. Introduction

In the 1920s, as Europe sublimated the woes of the First World War with a surge in cultural and political creativity, a host of social transformations in Brazil prompted a group of modernist artists and intellectuals to envision a new Brazilian cultural identity. As a symbol of its project, Antropofagia ("Cannibalism")¹ brandished the image of the precolonial Tupi cannibal whose nearly mythic prowess set the tone for an innovative cultural project that sought to hybridise indigenous and European vocabularies and epistemologies into a unique Brazilian mélange. For the Cannibals, the act of cannibalistic incorporation stood in stark contrast to the equally daunting possibilities of outright assimilating European culture and values or relapsing back into a peripheral colonial existence. The cannibal's ability to digest his enemies and absorb their power while remaining distinctively autonomous served as a potent allegory to what Cannibals sought to accomplish: absorb European contemporary culture while remaining distinctively Brazilian; resist European cultural imperialism while maintaining the ability to borrow from its ideas, motifs and styles. Cannibalistic incorporation, thus,